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# IS/IT Strategy

2010 - 2011

An Executive Agency  
of the Department for  
Environment, Food and Rural  
Affairs

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## **1 Introduction**

This document provides an overall IS/IT strategy for the Veterinary Laboratories Agency. It links the Agency's business plans and corporate objectives with the deployment of information and communications technology (ICT), thus providing a clear link between IT activity and business need.

The strategy document is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Sections are included to provide a "stock-take" in the form of an annual review of previous strategy objectives as well as proposing a portfolio of projects (both business focused and infrastructure investment) to form the basis of future workload. The future direction will reflect major external influences likely to impact VLA over the next five years and also indicate major IT infrastructure investment to form part of a rolling capital investment programme. This strategy is published under the auspices of the IT Sub Committee (ITSC) as the committee overseeing IT in VLA in advance of any governance changes implemented as part of the proposed merger with Animal Health (AH).

## **2 Link to VLA Business and Science Strategies**

The VLA's corporate and business plans are articulated in the form of a number of aims and objectives as stated in VLA's Annual Business Plan 2010/11 and the longer term Strategic & Corporate Plan 2009/10 – 2013/14. Highlights from the Annual Plan include an emphasis on:

- Raising VLA's profile and influence.
- Embrace new technology to provide excellent scientific knowledge and services.
- Implementing a sustainable surveillance capability.
- Develop a strategic HR agenda.
- Exploiting intellectual assets and develop the "VLA Scientific" brand.

### ***2.1 Profile, influence and responsiveness***

VLA will enhance the Agency's profile with UK stakeholders and develop relationships with other government partners such as Animal Health, FERA, CEFAS, IAH, and HPA. Electronic links with Animal Health and IAH have been implemented through the MoSSII system to improve sample handling between the field and testing laboratories during disease outbreaks. Further work to integrate with Animal Health's Business Reform Programme "SAM" will take place in 2010/11, notably in regard to VLA TB systems and sample handling interfaces. SharePoint and other web collaboration tools are now embedded and increasingly used to enhance VLA's web presence and raise the Agency's profile. Reviews/audits of SharePoint will provide recommendations and identify improvements to support electronic collaboration.

### ***2.2 Excellent scientific knowledge and services***

The IT strategy will contribute to the delivery of VLA's scientific programmes through a range of IT projects. Further use of VLA's parallel network "Planet" for research systems and particularly Linux and open source software incompatible with GSi will be led by CERA scientists. Support for VLA's NRL and EU Reference Laboratory activities will continue to be achieved through web-based systems e.g. Flu-Lab-Net, TSE-Lab-Net. Projects to support improved data analysis, Herdsure and commercial testing schemes have been enhanced by secure web access to VLA Weybridge test results via a LIMS Web Portal.

### **2.3 Surveillance Programme sustainability**

IT projects will contribute to the operational efficiency of VLA's laboratory services, and underpin Defra's demand for an efficient and optimum disease surveillance capability. Scrutiny of the Agency's surveillance programme is likely to identify changes to FarmFile, existing business processes and could radically change the diagnostic processes currently in place. The analysis will also need to identify savings in veterinary and admin resource. Improved IT laboratory systems will help meet the Corporate Scorecard objective to deliver a more efficient surveillance programme through strategic use of SampleManager LIMS. This will be achieved by further roll-out of LIMS to automate a range of tests carried out at all Regional Laboratories commencing with parasitology. Sample despatch and handling between Weybridge and Regional Laboratories will also be an early focus for improvement through further LIMS functionality.

### **2.4 Strategic HR**

The strategic direction of HR services and continued reliance on Defra Oracle HR "4Me" will be evaluated during the year, although the future direction and any proposed change to HR systems is likely to be heavily influenced by the AH/VLA merger.

### **2.5 Commercial strategy**

The drive to deliver further commercial services will continue with assessment of reagent sales and e-commerce web-basket technology to enable online transactions and payments. In addition, two further ICT enabled proficiency testing schemes will be added to Vetqas, these being slide staining and slide reading schemes.

### **2.6 LIMS strategy**

During the coming year an upgrade will be planned to both LIMS hardware infrastructure and SampleManager. Further extension of LIMS to the Regional Laboratories will be achieved through implementing commercial tests and high volume surveillance tests such as parasitology, campylobacter, trichomoniasis, CEMO and *Pasteurella multocida* ELISA. Streamlining of processes for the routing and handling of samples sent from Regional Laboratories to Weybridge will also be addressed through LIMS automation of despatch sheets, post books and sample tracking.

### **2.7 Security and information assurance**

VLA will contribute to Her Majesty's Government (HMG) and Defra Information Assurance programmes. Work towards formal GSi Code of Connection (CoCo) accreditation will require construction of a comprehensive Risk Management Accreditation Document Set (RMADS).

### **2.8 Sustainability and green IT**

During 2010/11 the VLA will embed SOGE best practice and energy saving "quick-wins". Green efficiency savings will contribute to OEP targets through a policy of printer rationalisation and enhanced publicity to all staff to embed best practices and adoption of a range of simple ways to reduce costs and improve sustainability.

## **3 2010/11 Strategy priorities**

As well as supporting the Agency strategies above, prominent issues emerging during

2010/11 will significantly impact IT plans and priorities:

### **3.1 *Animal Health and VLA merger***

The merger of the two Agencies will demand extensive work to integrate back-office systems, rebranding and efficient coordination of IT services. Existing plans for closer integration of AH SAM and VLA LIMS will be largely unaffected but remain vulnerable to wider efficiency cuts across Defra and consequential impact on AH BRP Programme.

### **3.2 *ICT funding and efficiency savings***

Contribution to last year's OEP efficiency benchmark and further analysis of ICT spend initiated by the new Government have targeted future significant IT savings of at least 30%. Along with greater central control of ICT procurement and stringent controls on use of consultants, emerging central ICT governance will have a significant impact on VLA's IT strategy. During 2010/11 the impact will primarily be the restricted use of consultants and a change of emphasis to internally resourced development projects. The VLA will continue to participate in wider Government reviews of the ICT delivery landscape and contribute to further data requests from the Cabinet Office.

## **4 Core IS/IT principles**

Whilst the application of IT to help meet strategic objectives will be achieved through individual, discrete projects, an IS/IT strategy must also set out a number of higher level "core principles" or aspirations which must influence the "what", "why" and "how" of IT delivery. The principles for the VLA are set out below.

### **4.1 *IT provision will be business focused, forward looking, and flexible***

Deployment of IT resources will be aligned with VLA's business objectives and priorities. In considering allocation of resources, ITSC will use the VLA's stated aims and objectives as key prioritisation criteria.

The VLA's Corporate Plan notes our strategies must reflect that "there are many changes and consequent decisions that are far reaching and over which VLA has limited control". This means flexibility must be built into systems, to enable IT to assist VLA's ability to react to changing Government policy, industry influences and disease outbreaks.

### **4.2 *IT provision will be safe, secure and reliable***

The IT systems that support VLA's activities must be robust and reliable. Accuracy and turn-around time are noted in the Agency's corporate plan as being critical to UK international trade and many of VLA's core surveillance responsibilities. Resilience must be designed into all IT systems and used as key criteria in the choice of hardware and software components.

As a Government body, VLA does not invest or rely upon high-risk or unproven technologies. Only in areas of groundbreaking scientific research will the use of new or unproven technologies be contemplated. Partnerships with sound technology suppliers will be critical in evaluating the value and mitigating the risk associated with such IT investments.

### **4.3 *VLA's IT will offer value for money***

VLA is a Government body and therefore public accountability demands that we make best use of taxpayers' money. IT systems must be justified and measured through documented,

robust business and project management processes. IT services are regarded as an overhead to the Agency's core activities, so efficient use of IT funds will minimise the scale of overheads on other VLA Departments. Ensuring VFM will also enable VLA to be competitive, thus increasing the opportunity to develop private sector customers and commercial income. The principle of offering good VFM will become a critical driver to meet the drive to reduce back-office costs across UK Government.

#### **4.4 VLA's IT will follow HMG and Defra strategies - e.g. information security and environmental sustainability**

Although this strategy defines the architectures, standards and software to be used internally by VLA, increasingly Defra, UK Government and European standards are emerging in many technical areas. VLA's use of IT will pay due regard and adopt these wider standards where mandated.

A major influence emerging is the HMG Green ICT agenda which has set out a strategy for reducing the environmental impact of our computer systems. This has two primary aims: to make energy consumption of our ICT systems carbon neutral by 2012, and to make them carbon neutral across their lifetime (including manufacture and disposal) by 2020. VLA will implement HMG best practices and work towards ICT carbon footprint baseline measurement and reduction measures.

Longer term VLA will need to follow emerging Government strategies such as the G-Cloud and PSN. The ITU will continue to represent the Agency on Defra and wider Government forums involved in formulating these strategies.

#### **4.5 ITU will keep a watching brief over new technologies, and recommend beneficial change via ITSC**

As new technologies emerge which are of interest to VLA, R&D projects will be defined and submitted to ITSC for consideration. As part of the annual IT/IS strategy review process, key emerging technologies likely to be of interest to the Agency will be identified. VLA will also continue to use IT partnerships with Defra's IT supplier (IBM) as well as with colleagues in other Defra Agencies to keep up-to-date with new technology.

## **5 IT Governance**

### **5.1 ITSC**

In 2009 the VLA committee structure was reviewed and a more streamlined IT governance structure implemented. ITEC has been disbanded, with a reformed IT Sub-Committee (ITSC) reporting to DSSC.

The ITSC provide an overall structure for the governance of VLA's IT and thus ensure all IT resources are firmly directed and aligned with VLA business need. ITSC own, support and enforce this IS/IT strategy reporting to the DSSC and SSC as appropriate. ITSC meet quarterly to:

- identify the key business objectives of the VLA and the IT functions needed to support their delivery;
- review recommendations for inclusions or changes to the strategic plan including new project proposals;

- monitor the adequacy of existing and planned systems against current and emerging business needs.

## **6 IT services provision**

### **6.1 VLA IT Unit (ITU)**

*To provide an effective and efficient IT service that is focused on delivering quality solutions as well as supporting the Agency's key aims and major programmes of work.*

To achieve this, our efforts will be focused on the following:

- Technologies which streamline processes, and reduce laborious or bureaucratic activities at every level in the organisation with an emphasis on scientific and laboratory systems.
- Technologies which facilitate easy collaboration, and information sharing, both within the VLA and within the scientific and Defra communities.
- Technologies which support VLA's drive towards dry science and data sciences.
- Technologies which support the specific objectives of each VLA department and programme, so for example supporting Laboratory Service (LSD) in their drive for cost savings and rationalisation, and Veterinary Services (VSD) in their search for more sustainable surveillance processes.
- Above all, technologies that will enhance and protect VLA's future at the forefront of veterinary science.

### **6.2 IT Unit services**

The ITU achieves its mission through delivery of the following services to VLA customers.

#### **6.2.1 Business and process analysis**

The ITU has specialist skills in both business and process analysis, and considerable expertise in helping to streamline laboratory, scientific and administrative processes, both at Weybridge and across the network of Regional Laboratories. Recent examples include the analysis done for MoSS, expansion of LIMS into Regional Laboratories and Herdsure.

#### **6.2.2 Application development**

The ITU has an extensive history of successful application development. Many projects involve extending the use of laboratory process management software to new groups of users, or to new types of science. Others provide support for completely new business areas, and thus support VLA's drive to raise its profile and find new customers.

#### **6.2.3 Application portfolio management**

The ITU manages a portfolio of over 100 active IT systems, ranging from large corporate applications such as FPS/PACT and LIMS, through to specialised applications for scientific

data capture.

#### **6.2.4 Information design**

The ITU is responsible for management of many of VLA's most important data assets, including LIMS, management accounts, the GB surveillance data warehouse, etc. The Unit services include professional database design and construction, data management and data quality policies, and integration with Defra data sources such as RADAR and CTS.

In collaboration with CERA, the Unit also provides a data analysis service, both in response to ad hoc requests for analyses, and in the design and build of regular scheduled analyses and end user query tools.

#### **6.2.5 Infrastructure support**

The ITU maintains a modern IT infrastructure supporting all VLA's IT requirements, from office applications to LIMS, desktop and server hardware, operating systems, network connectivity components, printers etc. at all 16 VLA laboratories. 30 internal staff, supplemented by small numbers of external consultants and contractors form the core Unit resource. Over 100 systems ranging from VLA-wide LIMS to standalone Microsoft Access applications are supported by the ITU.

IT support is focused through a centrally managed ITU Help Desk – which offers a single point of contact and handles over 500 calls per month. Other communication links with the business are handled through formal committees such as ITSC, close customer liaison and account management.

The IT Unit designs, implements and supports systems that improve business efficiency and quality of data, provide management information and workload monitoring features, and aid collaboration in VLA's dynamic project structure. Systems developed by ITU help VLA to minimise bureaucracy, and allow scientists and vets to concentrate on their specialist skills.

In support of the above, a key objective for the IT Unit is to maintain an understanding of all aspects of the VLA's business. Thus the ITU can be as much expert in the work of the VLA, as in the use and delivery of new technology. The ITU will always need to plan for and maintain capacity to support Defra's disease emergency response capability. In general this will involve responding rapidly to requirements for additional surge capacity and new laboratory systems.

Service reporting introduced at quarterly ITSC meetings demonstrates the ITU is continuing to provide a robust and reliable IT infrastructure and associated services. These arrangements are closely aligned to IT industry best practice and follow recognised ITIL standards. As part of ISO9001 process improvements, service levels are now reviewed annually with business representatives to ensure they continue to meet the Agency's needs.

The 2009 OEP benchmark of all UK Government bodies underlined the VLA's IT performance with no other Government body achieving both a lower cost of IT and a higher stakeholder rating. Put another way, every Government body that outscored VLA's Stakeholder perspective score spent a higher percentage on IT. Two bodies equalled the VLA stakeholder score (4.3) and claimed lower cost of IT, another one scores exactly the same, effectively positioning VLA IT equal third in performance across all UK Government.

### **6.3 IT provision – CERA**

Close cooperation between the ITU and CERA 3 Data Systems has continued to provide an effective and coherent technical strategy. Sharing of development procedures and

knowledge between the ITU and CERA has become especially important for the effective delivery and support of web based systems.

There have been a number of successes in the field of Geographical Information Systems (GIS). These include:

- Delivery of the next version (V3) of the Spatial Interactive Disease Atlas (SPIDA). SPIDA is a GIS interactive tool for the display of TB data within the DEFRA Intranet
- Completion of a Google maps application for the display of FarmFile data.

CERA GIS staff are now working on a web-based application for the display of RADAR data.

The amalgamation of the two systems that currently handle Scrapie Surveillance data is now 90% complete. The completion of this project will result in one web based system handling all inputs and outputs. A database to monitor consumable usage for TSE work was also developed.

The Badger Vaccine Study (BVS) database that supported the trial was in use throughout the year. Much of the success of the trial has been down to the quality of the data produced, for which the BVS database was a major contributing factor. A database has also been produced by CERA staff for the Vaccine Efficacy Study (VES).

A major success for CERA was the ability to respond quickly to a number of database requirements at very short notice, these included:

- The development of a database for a case-control study of Bleeding Calf Syndrome.
- The development of a database for the blue-tongue prevalence study.
- The development of the VERDO database. This database is designed to capture Epidemiological disease data during an outbreak situation.

#### **6.4 IT provision - partnerships**

The delivery of IT services to VLA requires a wide range of technical and business skills as well as a level of resource not available from in-house staff. Therefore VLA uses a range of partnerships with external IT providers to ensure IT can meet future business needs. These partnerships include:

##### **6.4.1 SfW Ltd**

For the past eight years SfW have provided technical skills to the ITU on an ad hoc basis via standard S-Cat arrangements. Use of SfW resources through 2009/10 has included project management, fixed price application development, consultancy and system support contracts. Assistance provided by SfW has significantly increased the ITU's capability to meet the Agency's demand for IT systems. Through MOSSII and Profiles projects, SfW are also providing application development services to the wider Defra family. With the expiry of the S-Cat framework, an alternative procurement route will be investigated to provide application development and support services.

##### **6.4.2 Defra/IBM**

IBM continue to be used for provision of IT network (WAN, LAN and network gateways) as well as external VLA static web site hosting. These services are provided via the Defra "e-Nabling" contract with IBM. The benefits and case for wider adoption of e-Nabling IT outsourcing continue to be kept under review.

### **6.4.3 Thermo Scientific**

Thermo Scientific provide the VLA's strategic LIMS software. The current SampleManager version used across VLA is 2004r2. Later versions of SampleManager – the latest version 9 and v10 due for release Q4 2010 are of particular interest to VLA as the underlying technology is based on Microsoft dotNET rather than proprietary Thermo software. This offers significant potential and should offer VLA the opportunity to integrate current and planned dotNET systems with the LIMS thus increasing LIMS delivery using internal and partner dotNET skills. The ITU will consider plans and options to migrate to more current versions of SampleManager.

## **7 Business support systems**

### **7.1 Laboratory management & surveillance systems**

VLA has used the Sample Manager LIMS system (known as SMS) since 1995, and its use has extended to a wide range of laboratory areas at Weybridge and the Regional Laboratories. SMS manages registration of submissions and samples, allocation of tests, collection of results from instruments, and collation of results for customer reporting. Increasingly the LIMS offers a degree of process automation that anticipates test requirements without manual intervention, and can steer users through complex processes that would previously have required considerable skill, training and documentation.

### **7.2 Finance and management accounting**

Finance processes are computerised using the Integra system from iSOFT Business Solutions. Integra provides basic financial ledgers as well as other components such as purchasing and stock/stores. FPS and PACT are used for management accounts.

e-procurement is embedded and used by all requisitioners across VLA. This system implements a remote requisition entry for all VLA laboratories and locations using the Integra Web Basket module and remote Goods Received Note (GRN) entry using the Integra E-Buyer module.

An upgrade to implement single sign-on integration with Microsoft Active Directory is planned for 2010/11.

### **7.3 Human Resources (HR) and payroll**

"4 Me" HR IT services based on Oracle e-HR continue to be hosted and supported by Defra. The e-Payfact payroll system is provided via the Treasury framework contract for payroll provision negotiated with CMG/Logica.

The 4Me on-line self-service system for competency based appraisals is in its third year of use. Further work on developing a strategic HR agenda is scheduled as part of VLA's Annual Business Plan.

### **7.4 Office systems and communications**

#### **7.4.1 Office systems**

VLA continues to use Microsoft office tools extensively. With the loss of VLA's Chest

academic status, alternative sources for Microsoft software licences will be evaluated.

VLA's intranet named "intraVet" provides a sophisticated content management system based on OpenText WCM allowing individual department authors to maintain pages in a secure way following defined style guidelines. VLA's external website is based on static pages hosted by IBM.

Active Directory offers a potential infrastructure for further applications and offers an option for the replacement of the Corporate Directory when Defra withdraw the current bespoke system. The feasibility of implementing a 3<sup>rd</sup> party Active Directory software module to replace the Corporate Directory and potential interfaces to 4 Me have been evaluated and a date for decommissioning Defra's Corporate Directory is now awaited.

#### 7.4.2 Electronic Document Management (EDM), web based "virtual teams"

The VLA continues to use OpenText Livelink EDM to handle UKAS Testing Group procedures, documentation and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Livelink integrates with the Opentext WCM system used to maintain intraVet. An Information Management Steering Board is in place chaired by Corporate Planning and Communications to oversee further use of both Livelink and other information management tools such as Microsoft SharePoint as used for external research project collaborations. This board will also review the strategy for collaboration tools and adoption of a coherent approach across the Agency.

#### 7.4.3 Flexible working

The Blackberry service piloted during 2009 is now a stable, live supported service, although high costs have necessitated a business case to be approved for each unit.

## 8 IT costs

The Agency's corporate IT costs for the previous years were as follows:

Heading	2003/4 cost £k	2004/5 cost £k	2005/6 cost £k	2006/7 cost £k	2007/8 cost £k	2008/9 cost £k	2009/10 cost £k
Staff costs – pay + overtime	£873	£924	£984	£1,156	£1,164	£1,201	£1,226
Non-pay ITU costs	£139	£99	£100	£141	£111	£108	£198
Corporate IT hardware maintenance (Fujitsu)	£151	£156	-	-	-	-	
Corporate IT maintenance (other)	£414	£357	£561	£645	£721	£593	£633
Corporate IT consultancy	£170	£565*	£471	£394	£399	£297	£219
Other costs – fixture, hospitality, professional services	£7	-	£46	£21	£140	£57	£36
IT Capital	£360	£360	£360	£ 223	£172	£150	£163
Defra IT (soft charge)	£357	£357	£230	£133	£149	£150	£150
<b>Total for year</b>	<b>£2,471</b>	<b>£2,818</b>	<b>£2,734</b>	<b>£2,705</b>	<b>£2,856</b>	<b>£2,511</b>	<b>£2,625</b>

\*an extra £400k consultancy was allocated during 2004/5 to cover e-HR, Payroll and collaboration projects.

These figures represent an annual per staff cost of:

- £1,905 per employee (1378\*) for 2009/10
- £1,757 per employee (1429) for 2008/9
- £2,209 per employee (1293) for 2007/8
- £1,983 per employee (1364) for 2006/7
- £2,254 per employee (1213) for 2005/6
- £2,171 per employee (1298) for 2004/5
- £1,809 per employee (1366) for 2003/4

\*staff numbers from Staff In Post list August 2010

Research project technology costs allocated directly to science programmes and projects are excluded from these figures.

## **9 Strategic plan 2009/10 – look back**

As part of the quality review process for VLA IT and the ITU, the annual strategy review documents a set of objectives to be reviewed in the following year. The table below notes 2009/10 objectives. The Strategy Reference column refers to the 2009/10 or previous IS/IT Strategy document references.

Strategic plan look back

Strategy Reference	Objective	Timescale	Progress
2008/9 Para 2.1.2	Review and negotiate network upgrades and develop a business case with IBM in order to improve IT resilience.	3 year	<b>Completed.</b> Upgrade commissioned and installed for Newcastle Regional Laboratory to provide better resilience for scrapie work transferring from Shrewsbury. Based on high Newcastle costs, a robust case for RL wide upgrades appears unachievable. Sufficient funding to finance further upgrades is now highly unlikely.
2008/9 Para 2.1.3	Deploy further IP based portable VC equipment.	3 year	<b>Ongoing.</b> No further units purchased during 2009/10. Further investment in additional units is reliant on additional network capacity (see above).
2008/9 Para 2.2.1	Investigate into the new industry standard (dotNET) based version of SampleManager and potential integration of dotNET code with SampleManager.	3 year	<b>Ongoing.</b> Some further investigation carried out during 2009/10, but awaiting Thermo official release (“rolling thunder”) in late 2010. Further work will be commissioned as part of the SampleManager LIMS hardware upgrade.
2008/9 Para 2.4.2	Extend SharePoint collaboration portal to cover veterinary practices	3 year	<b>Not met.</b> No business drive to progress at the moment. On hold whilst a review of surveillance and interaction between VLA and veterinary customers is carried out.
2008/9 Para 3.1.2	Extend surveillance data using RADAR animal population data, interactive mapping and electronic data submission.	3 year	<b>Ongoing.</b> CERA are undertaking a GIS web based system for the display of RADAR data.
2008/9 Para 3.6.2	Provide IT solutions to assist development of VLA’s commercial strategy and increase in commercial income.	5 year	<b>Met.</b> Ongoing support and further enhancements to the “Herdsure” system. New Vetqas PT schemes and reagent sales planned for 2010/11.
2008/9 Para 4.3.2	Collaborate with Defra CIOD and technical architects to ensure VLA strategy fits with Defra SOA and “Enterprise Bus”.	3 year	<b>Met.</b> Significant further investment in Defra’s CARA strategy is dependent on funding. Limited opportunity found for VLA use of CARA because of the high IBM “on-boarding” costs.
2008/9 Para 4.6.2	Review implications of Animal Health Business Reform Programme (“SAM”) on VLA’s IT and particularly LIMS strategy.	3 year	<b>Ongoing.</b> Liaison with AH in place and interfaces, especially sample management to be discussed during 2010.
2008/9 Para 6.3.1	Consider use of Microsoft Active Directory as a replacement for Defra provided Corporate Directory	3 year	<b>Ongoing.</b> Technical options evaluated and various feasible solutions identified. Now awaiting formal notification from Defra that the CD service is being withdrawn.
2009/10 Para 4.1	Publish two IT/scientific papers during the year	2009/10	<b>Not met.</b> Shortage of time and impact of higher priority work has impacted this objective.

2009/10 Para 4.3	Explore the commercial potential of VLA's digital image archives	3 Year	<b>Ongoing.</b> Communisis system commissioned and now in place to host externally accessible images. Potential income from image sale is unclear due to Crown Copyright and issues relating to restriction on the sale of such material.
2009/10 Para 7.1	Review IT SLA's with the business on an annual basis	2009/10	<b>Met.</b> SLA review carried out at October ITSC meeting.
2009/10 Para 7.3.2	Contribute to Defra/IBM e-Nabling negotiations through the ITDR project	2009/10	<b>Met.</b> Revised IBM contract let in January 2010
2009/10 Para 7.3.3	Consider options to migrate to a newer version of SampleManager	2009/10	<b>Ongoing.</b> Beta version installed and limited investigation underway. Awaiting full release of SampleManager 10 due in Q4 2010.
2009/10 Para 8.1	Review service management processes and identify potential improvements to be incorporated as part of the ITU's quality systems.	2009/10	<b>Met.</b> Upgraded Supportworks system implemented during Spring 2010.
2009/10 Para 8.1	Carry out 2 Post Implementation Reviews (PIR)	2009/10	<b>Not met.</b>
2009/10 Para 8.2	Extend IT BCP to cover external hosting environment.	3 year	<b>Ongoing.</b> Server environment now covered by BCP contract however telecoms links required for network resilience are unlikely to be funded.
2009/10 Para 8.3	Implement HMG carbon reduction actions including baseline calculations of IT carbon consumption	3 year	<b>Ongoing.</b> Energy consumption baseline metrics now in place. Programme of actions underway.
2009/10 Para 9.3	Assist with the development of a VLA HR strategy to meet the Agency's future needs.	2009/10	<b>Not met.</b> No assistance required and merger has delayed further activity.
2009/10 Para 9.4.1	Research alternative VFM sources for Microsoft licences	2009/10	<b>Met.</b> MS Office licences bought at end of 2009/10. No further options for purchase under Chest identified.
2009/10 Para 9.4.1	Research use of tools such as Active Directory to replace the Corporate Directory.	2009/10	<b>Met.</b> Review complete and a number of tools identified able to integrate into Active Directory.
2009/10 Para 9.4.1	Evaluate feasibility and benefits of following Defra's lead in adopting single laptop devices for some users	2009/10	<b>Met.</b> Biosecurity demands limit widespread potential for single device policies.
2009/10 Para 9.5.1	Evaluate AT&T wireless hotspot software for use by VPN users	2009/10	<b>Not met.</b> No further communication from Defra on the provision of access at commercial hotspots.

## **10 Business plan 2010/11 – look forward and objectives**

As in previous years, IT project demand continues to outstrip resources and available funding. Prioritisation by ITSC will be critical to ensure the most effective use of the limited resources.

Funding allocations for the ITU and corporate IT for 2010/11 are as follows:

<b>IT Unit (Cost Centre 625)</b>	
- Pay	£1,239,982
- Non-pay	£114,416
Total	£1,354,398
<b>Corporate IT (Cost Centre 704)</b>	
- IT Consultancy	£330,000
- IT equipment/maintenance	£800,000
Total	£1,130,000
Capital	TBC
<b>IT total</b>	<b>£2,484,398</b>

With the inclusion of other projects funded by the EU or VLA commercial activities such as FLU-LAB-NET and Vetqas, the total IT budget reported to Defra as part of the ICT savings review and Cabinet Office return was £2,845,568.

A complete portfolio of IT projects and workload agreed by ITSC for 2010/11 is contained in Appendix E.

### **10.1 Summary of 2010/11 objectives**

The table below summarises the objectives included in the strategy text in addition to discrete projects identified in the 2010/11 project portfolio. Long term three and five year objectives have also been carried forward and included. The objectives below will be used as a basis for the review of the year to be included in next year's strategy.

## Strategic plan look forward

<b>Strategy Reference</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
2008/9 Para 2.1.2	Review and negotiate network upgrades and develop a business case with IBM in order to improve IT resilience.	3 year
2008/9 Para 2.1.3	Deploy further IP based portable VC equipment.	3 year
2008/9 Para 2.2.1	Investigate into the new industry standard (dotNET) based version of SampleManager and potential integration of dotNET code with SampleManager.	3 year
2008/9 Para 2.4.2	Extend SharePoint collaboration portal to cover veterinary practices	3 year
2008/9 Para 3.1.2	Extend surveillance data using RADAR animal population data, interactive mapping and electronic data submission.	3 year
2008/9 Para 3.6.2	Provide IT solutions to assist development of VLA's commercial strategy and increase in commercial income.	5 year
2008/9 Para 4.3.2	Collaborate with Defra CIOD and technical architects to ensure VLA strategy fits with Defra SOA and "Enterprise Bus".	3 year
2008/9 Para 4.6.2	Review implications of Animal Health's Business Reform Programme on VLA's IT and particularly LIMS strategy.	3 year
2008/9 Para 6.3.1	Consider use of Microsoft Active Directory as a replacement for Defra provided Corporate Directory	3 year
2009/10 Para 4.3	Explore the commercial potential of VLA's digital image archives	3 Year
2009/10 Para 8.2	Extend IT BCP to cover external hosting environment.	3 year
2009/10 Para 8.3	Implement HMG carbon reduction actions including baseline calculations of IT carbon consumption	3 year
Para 2.1	Further VLA systems integration with AH SAM	2010/11
Para 2.1	Review/audit VLA SharePoint systems	2010/11

Para 2.2	Continue support for AI and TSE EU Reference Laboratory activities through Flu-Lab-Net and TSE-Lab-Net	2010/11
Para 2.3	Implement Regional Laboratory parasitology testing on the LIMS.	2010/11
Para 2.3	Improve Regional Laboratory/Weybridge sample despatch and handling through LIMS automation	2010/11
Para 2.4	Contribute to the strategic review of HR	2010/11
Para 2.5	Implement reagent sales and web-basket e-commerce facilities	2010/11
Para 2.5	Implement two further commercial Vetqas schemes to support slide reading and slide staining	2010/11
Para 2.6	Prepare for LIMS infrastructure upgrades	2010/11
Para 2.7	Create RMADS documentation as part of planned CoCo accreditation	2010/11
Para 2.8	Implement SOGE energy saving quick wins including printer rationalisation	2010/11
Para 3.1	Contribute to Integration of back-office systems as part of Agency merger	2010/11
Para 3.2	Provide data and returns to the Cabinet Office as part of the ongoing review of the ICT delivery landscape	2010/11
Para 3.3	Add remaining commercial tests carried out at RLs to the LIMS and report results via the web portal	2010/11
Para 4.4	Follow emerging Government G-Cloud and PSN strategies	5 year
Para 6.3.5	Review IT SLA's with the business on an annual basis	2010/11
Para 6.5.1	Investigate alternative OGC framework for provision of application development and support services	2010/11
Para 7.4.1	Investigate alternative sources for Microsoft licences	2010/11
Para 11.2	Publish a revised Security Policy and Information Assurance (IA) Agency Procedure	2010/11

## **11 Conformance to standards**

### ***11.1 ISO9001/2008 Quality***

In January 2010 the ITU and CERA successfully maintained the ISO9001 accreditation as part of the Agency-wide reaccreditation programme. The ITU will continue to sustain progress on the IT QMS and the actions contained therein, evaluating how changes to the standard will enable sustained improvements to the management systems, thus delivering better managed products and services to the VLA. Quarterly progress reviews on quality related actions take place within the ITU to monitor the quality system.

Formal accreditation against ISO20000/BS15000 IT Service Management is not an objective, however, further improvement of ITU processes is envisaged particularly in the areas of incident/problem management, project estimating and project time recording.

Post Implementation Reviews (PIR) will continue to be used as a mechanism to evaluate the success of IT projects, identify issues and possible improvements as part of the ISO9001 system. A PIR of SharePoint will be scheduled during 2010/11.

### ***11.2 Data management and information security***

During 2010 the VLA will introduce a new Security Policy and Information Assurance Agency Procedure to integrate IA with the Agency's ISO9001 systems and align with Defra and wider UK Government approach to IA.

Separate GSi accreditation required by Defra will be progressed through development of full supporting RMADS documentation.

The IT Business Continuity Plan (BCP) originally adopted in March 2005 continues to be updated and the latest reissue was in June 2010.

Long-term plans to extend the plan to cover the external web hosting server environment have progressed, although network resilience has not been implemented due to the Cabinet Office moratorium on ICT network spend.

### ***11.3 HMG Green ICT strategy and ISO 14001 sustainable development***

The sustainability agenda is a key focus for Defra and VLA will need to follow the core department closely and ensure the sustainability of all IT investments. During 2008 an additional IT "Greening Strategy" appendix was drafted.

The HMG strategy aims in the short-term to reduce ICT in-use footprint in line with SOGE Carbon Neutral targets for the Government estate. For the longer term a wider scope will seek carbon neutrality across the ICT lifecycle from production to disposal as well as seeking to address other environmental and some social issues. Department action plans and targets are being set including calculating baseline IT carbon consumption, practical actions best practices and top tips.

## **12 IT technical strategy**

## **12.1 Introduction**

VLA's technical strategy is increasingly driven by external standards such as the e-GIF. The e-GIF standards are mandated across Government and are based on principles of:

- Interoperability
- Market Support
- Scalability
- Openness

The VLA's **Technical Strategy Statement** contained in Appendix B brings together individual technical components used by the Agency and the governance that applies to each. The strategy is structured in four key areas covering:

- Business processes
- Architecture
- Applications
- Infrastructure

Governance statements relating to technical components will be agreed by ITSC and published on intraVet. In many areas these statements will represent mandated policies for the use of IT in the Agency and be incorporated in the relevant VLA Agency Procedures.

The VLA IT Unit, through governance at ITSC, enforces the framework. This framework will include a number of components both process related and technical.

Each entry in the table in Appendix B notes a policy or standard within the VLA, including future direction or imminent change where applicable. The importance of governance will vary depending on the standard. For some (corporate email for example), strong governance is critical to ensure effective business communications. For others a lighter touch would suffice and mandated standards are unnecessary.

The VLA's technical strategy is maintained and adapted to integrate laboratory equipment procurement processes as the convergence of IT and laboratory continues. Close cooperation with Defra and CERA IT colleagues will also continue to ensure VLA technical standards meet the widest Agency needs.

## **Appendix A - Glossary of terms**

## **Appendix B –Technical strategy and corporate governance Framework**

## **Appendix C – Not used**

**Appendix D - References**

**Appendix E – 2010/11 projects portfolio – To Be Done (TBD)**