



### Millbank Island Site: cabling

Responsible Board Member(s) Carl Woodall

Paper prepared by Tom Wilson, Secretary to the Millbank Island Site Project Board

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Summary of actions requested: • Take note

### Introduction

1. This paper outlines the process leading to the Management Board's decision to reaffirm the decision to use Category 5e cabling throughout the Millbank Island Site, rather than to accept PICT's recommendation that the higher standard Category 6a should be used.

### Chronology

2. The original project brief specified that Category 5e cabling would be used throughout the Site, but the minutes of the Millbank Island Site Project Board's meeting on 22 May 2007 stated:

“Serial 07 (upgrade to Cat6 cabling) had been requested by PICT. The added value of the work was questioned given the substantial cost attached. The Board agreed that PICT should be invited to put the case for the work at the next meeting.

**Action: Richard Ware to provide a comment on the case for serial 07 for the next meeting of the Board.”**

3. However, on 6 June 2007, Richard Ware (Director of Resources at PICT) sent an email to Adam Watrobski as follows:

“Adam,

I undertook to consult further within PICT on the question of the cabling standard required for 1 and 2 Millbank. The conclusion is that PICT would be content with CAT5e being installed, which would be in line with the current infrastructure and new cable runs in other areas of the estate. There is currently no bandwidth driver for CAT6. While we would be keen to future-proof the project as far as possible, it is likely that when the driver for higher bandwidth is felt in the future we would skip a generation of cabling and be looking to install CAT6e or even CAT7.

I hope that this is helpful,  
Richard”

4. Accordingly, the case for Cat 6 cabling was not put to the Project Board at its next meeting. Indeed, on 19 June 2007 the Project Board considered and endorsed the Project Brief for the refurbishment of the Site (OM/06-07/13) which stated clearly in paragraph 116 that “Cat 5e cabling is to be used throughout”.

5. The standard of cabling was not discussed again until Dave Denton (Data Architect, PICT) raised it at a meeting of the Project Board some two and a half years later on 27 January 2010. After discussion, Dave was invited to provide details of the latest IT standards and identify disparities with the specifications in the original brief.
6. At the following meeting of the Project Board, on 22 March 2010, the minutes record:

“The Board discussed the standard of cabling for the Millbank Island Site. PICT wanted the Board to consider using Category 6A cabling in 1 Millbank in order to future-proof the building, although they accepted that the existing (inferior) cabling in 2 Millbank could be kept. Whilst Category 5E would last for 5-10 years, new technologies would require increasingly high standards of cabling and retrofitting would be expensive.

The Board was concerned that changing the cabling specification could seriously delay the project and carry significant additional costs. It was agreed that the issue should be taken to the Management Board, together with estimated costs. The Chairman asked Dave Denton, who was about to go on leave, to nominate somebody to work on producing an estimate of the cost of (a) changing the specification to Category 6A and (b) retrofitting Category 6A cabling at a later stage if it was decided to install 5E for the time being.

*Action: Dave Denton to arrange for cost estimates to support PICT's cabling proposals.”*

7. The Management Board considered the standard of cabling on 29 March 2010. The minutes record:
  - (a) “The Board discussed the proposed standard of ICT cabling in the Millbank Island site. Carl Woodall noted that the Project Board had previously made a decision to install Category 5E cabling. This was the standard across the Estate and had been installed in the mid-1990s at which time it had been estimated to have a lifespan of about 15 years: this had proved to be the case.
  - (b) However, PICT's longstanding recommendation for this site was the use of Category 6A cabling: this was now industry standard although it had not yet been introduced on the Parliamentary Estate outside of 4 Millbank. Innis Montgomery explained that Category 5E's predicted lifespan was now only five years, due to the exponential increase in demand for bandwidth across the Estate. This demand had been driven by increased use of video on the Parliament website and demand for rich web content, and future demand was anticipated for VOIP telephony, High Definition TV and 3DTV, as well as from traditional ICT such as the Annunicator.
  - (c) Carl Woodall explained that the total cost of switching to Category 6A at this stage would be £3.4 million; there would also be a delay to the project of two months. The balance of risks was thus between an overspend and delay to the project, or the possible need to undertake further work, requiring decant, should the Category 5E prove insufficient before the end of its usual replacement cycle.
  - (d) After discussion, the Board agreed to proceed with Category 5E installation in Millbank House in this phase of works, that Category 6A or higher should be

installed in 5 Little College Street when that was refitted, and at that time some retrofitting of Category 6A or higher to the rest of the site would also be suitable.”

## **Conclusion**

8. In conclusion, it appears that PICT dropped its request for Category 6a cabling at an early stage of the project, but then revived that request when it was too late to make such a fundamental change, particularly since the project was already behind schedule..

**15 April 2010**

**Tom Wilson**