

CASE STUDY
**DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT,
 FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS (DEFRA)**

“In the first 6 - 8 months since the launch of the project, PSD has saved over 600 hours in staff time by moving to electronic delivery of approvals.”

Andrew Park – Project Manager, Pesticides Safety Directorate



Customer's Challenge

The Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are both jointly responsible for the issuing of an approval (or license) allowing a specified use of a pesticide by the applying farmer. Licenses are also applied for by pesticides companies to introduce new pesticides for sale or to amend current products, even just the way they are labelled.

The PSD issues about 1,500 licenses a year and until a year ago the documents - which need to be signed on behalf of Secretaries of State - were posted and faxed between the agency and the HSE, before being posted out to applicants. They also had to be published in a monthly newsletter update, detailing which pesticides had been approved.

The PSD wanted to speed up this approvals process. There was also a big push from the industry to receive these documents in electronic form, as pesticide suppliers had to enter the data manually into their own systems. Another key issue was the legal enforceability of pesticide licenses. Previous processes and technologies were unable to deal with this seemingly simple requirement.

The project would enable PSD to build an on-line repository of approval documents to be available for public access. This would also contribute to PSD's obligations under the Freedom of Information legislation, to place as much information as it can into the public domain.

Fujitsu's Solution

The PSD wanted a solution that allowed both the PSD and the HSE to be able to digitally sign the approvals and to develop a web based delivery mechanism. Some of the documents associated with the approvals are confidential to the applicants. Any delivery mechanism would require a secure area for applicants to retrieve documents pertaining to them and an open area for public access to approvals. The PSD approached Fujitsu to help with the technical, security and business process design issues. The project uses Equifax digital certificates, Mission-Critical digital signature software, CA's OpenROAD application server and Advantage Ingres relational database.

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

Organisation

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Service/s delivered

Fujitsu's consultants worked onsite with the PSD and the HSE staff in workshops to go through the technical, security and business process design issues of a solution to allow digital signing of the approvals and to develop a web-based delivery mechanism.

Benefits

- Improved accuracy as digital signatures allow easy detection of any changes after they have been downloaded
- Applications are processed quicker, with greater ease and efficiency between the two departments
- Increased quality of service provided to customers
- Significant costs savings for the industry and, so far, the PSD has saved over 600 hours in staff time
- Due to increased work completed electronically, there is less need for their journal which will save 1.5 staff posts per year and publication costs of £60,000 pa
- Signed approvals on-line allows easy visibility of approval conditions without obtaining paper documents
- Project came in 17% under budget.

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Benefits to our Customer

This was the first time two government departments had collaborated in a joint signature process. It was also the first government service that delivered digitally signed documents from government to stakeholders and the public. The original objective was to develop a pilot, but due to its success in just 6 weeks, the decision was made that the PSD would scale up the project and since early 2003, the PSD now digitally signs virtually all regulatory documents that it issues. Now both the PSD and HSE can sign a document electronically, allowing both signatures to be legally valid on the final document. Early technology in this area couldn't cope with multiple signatories, so adding a second signature would change the document and hence invalidate the first signature.

Andy Park, Project Manager at the PSD commented, *“By digitally signing documents we can detect whether documents have been changed or altered after being downloaded and that they originated from PSD. Once issued, approvals are legal documents as they define the conditions under which a pesticide may be used. Therefore any electronic system must be sufficiently robust, secure and non-refutable to stand up to legal challenge.”*

This new development is helping applications to be processed quicker, easier and more efficiently between two departments and is pivotal to one of the key targets of getting government online by 2005, as well as improving the quality of service provided to its customers.

“The PSD estimates that the solution has already delivered efficiency gains for the Agency and saved significant sums for industry. Last year one client alone spent £20K on staff costs simply re-keying paper based approvals information into their system,” states Andy. *“So far the PSD has saved over 600 hours in staff time by moving to electronic delivery of approvals. The project, which was funded by the Treasury's Invest To Save budget, actually came in under budget by 17 per cent.”*

As the PSD now publishes approvals on their website, they have decided to wind down the publication of their journal “The Pesticides Monitor” in which synopses of these approvals appeared. This will save 1.5 staff posts per year in addition to the journal's £60,000 pa publication costs. Approvals can be issued, signed and placed on the web site with an email notification to be collected within a day and general inquiries to PSD's information service, requesting copies of approval documents, are now directed to the web site. By placing signed approvals on-line, inquirers to PSD can consult the up-to-date approval conditions for specific products instead of having to obtain a paper copy of documents from PSD. This has proved of particular benefit to agronomy consultants and agrochemical advisory companies.

Our Approach

The Project began in September 2001 and was completed in November 2002. The system was then extended so it could be used for all approvals in January 2003.

From September to December 2001, the PSD worked with Fujitsu's consultants to produce a technical design and roadmap. Fujitsu's consultants worked onsite with the PSD and the HSE staff in workshops to go through the technical security and process issues, as well as to develop an acceptable and appropriate design.

Our Expertise

The PSD chose Fujitsu as their partner due to their knowledge of the issues surrounding public key infrastructure (PKI) and their experience with other government communications projects. The PSD needed a partner that had close ties with the Office of the e-Envoy and an understanding of the Government Interoperability Framework, (e-GIF).

Andy concludes, *“We approached Fujitsu because we already had links through our parent Department DEFRA. They demonstrated both enthusiasm and relevant expertise in their initial proposal. Importantly, they were also pragmatic and prepared to work with us in a collaborative way to encourage learning on our side.”*

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