



STORM in Scotland

Scotland is currently biting the bullet and planning to have all Scottish forces running the one Command and Control system. BAPCO Journal spoke with Tracey Lee, Head of Emergency Services Group at Steria, about the project and what it may mean for the rest of the UK.



"We expect that there will be quite a queue of people from England and Wales coming to see what has been happening in Scotland."

Tracey Lee, Head of Emergency Services, Steria.

Steria as a company is not new to C&C. Its STORM solution has been around for 12 years in various guises and before that another system had been in use for 18 years. In fact the company points out that STORM is the most installed C&C system in the UK.

Many eyes are keeping a close watch on what Steria is doing north of the border, because it could have fundamental repercussions on operational procedures everywhere.

ACPOS (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland) and SPSA (Scottish Police Forces Authority) are working together to ensure that all Scottish forces can operate on a single C&C system for the whole of Scotland, under ACPOS's Business Change Programme. Consolidating the IT systems is the number one priority of an agenda that started around 18 months ago. "Eighteen months ago we had four of the eight Scottish forces running STORM – now five – so the decision was made to move in a progressive manner with the remaining forces," explains Lee.

The National C&C project is lead by Deputy Chief Constable Tom Halpin of Lothian & Borders Police who has recently implemented STORM and has the vision and drive to make this a seamless national service. He says that he is inspired by the ability to share data with other forces and compare performance across forces.

SPSA is working with ACPOS to define and build a national infrastructure that STORM will operate on. The current local solutions will then be migrated to a single database. Lee remarks that there is much to do to ensure consistency, resilience and integration, but she is impressed with the determination of ACPOS and SPSA to make their vision happen – and quickly.

The Scottish approach to C&C has also been made possible by the Scottish Executive's focus on getting the maximum out of shared services in the public sector. Lee

thinks that there are benefits other than pure cost savings in bringing together the various ways of working with C&C Systems. "Yes there are economies of scale but the cooperation benefits are understood – it will be easier for example to deploy resources across borders for mutual assistance."

C&C is a core business function and Lee admits that it is always a challenge to keep a local focus whilst delivering a national solution. Inevitably there will be questions asked when training and operational procedures need to be implemented. But she adds that this is normal for any process of big change.

Having a common C&C will bring benefits to the citizens too, adds Lee. "There is an impetus to provide the public with a service that they can recognise as being top quality. A part of C&C relates to contact management and being able to resolve enquiries in a way that help the public to feel that they have been treated fairly and professionally, even when an officer has not been despatched. For officers there are benefits too, as the information contained in STORM can be provided on handheld devices and in cars to provide more intelligence to manage incidents. Finally for the control rooms staff, the screens are easy to use, so they can focus on listening and responding to callers and not on the system."

When the project is complete, the question of regionalisation in the police may again raise its head in England, particularly as the ambulance service is proving that it can work – even if the process seems to be dragging its feet as regards fire. "We expect that there will be quite a queue of people from England and Wales coming to see what has been happening in Scotland." One thing is clear in Lee's mind, and that is that the influence of the Scottish Executive has been crucial in this project, and such a robust political will be fundamental in any kind of C&C regionalisation elsewhere.