

Acceptance at Release Authorisation

A suggestion has emerged that Contractual Acceptance could be given at New Release 2 Release Authorisation, rather than waiting the completion of the formal Acceptance process. This note seeks to outline likely dangers in this approach.

- The only *contractual right* that the sponsors have to obtain any assurance that the ICL Pathway service will meet the contract is via the Acceptance process. Assurance without acceptance is not supported by the contract and has, to date, been only of limited effectiveness due to the reluctance of ICL Pathway to provide access to the detail of their solution. This situation has only been sustainable on the basis that the Acceptance process would provide an backstop for assurance.
- The current approach to assurance involves the review and agreement of a high level design, together with a full audit trail from the Requirements to associated trials and reviews within the Acceptance process. The assurance process is therefore closely linked to the Acceptance process.
- Although a number of the tests used in the Acceptance trials may already have been run in some form (or due to be run in the coming few weeks), many of the Acceptance Reviews will not have taken place before the Release Authorisation Board has sat. A large number of deliverables cited for Acceptance Review have yet been made available to Horizon, as these are scheduled to be produced during the Operational Trial.
- The current approach will provide assurance to the Release Authorisation Board that the associated “functionality” will work however it will not fully prove the service deliverability. The ability of ICL Pathway to deliver the service (rather than just provide software) will only be demonstrated through the period of Live Trial, which by definition occurs after the Release Authorisation Board.
- Release Authorisation will only consider that functionality supplied for New Release 2; by its nature of being release orientated it does not consider that core functionality postponed by ICL Pathway to New Release 2+ or thereafter.

Conclusion

The current Acceptance Process acts as a safety net for the Contracting Authorities, offering a level of protection from having to accept and rollout an inadequate service. We believe it would be very dangerous to accept any proposal which would remove the protection offered by the Acceptance process.

Without this protection, the Authorities would be exposed to having to rely for Acceptance on a Release Authorisation process which was been designed for a much less significant purpose, that is to authorise the implementation in 300 offices for a limited period of time. Without a live trial and associated Acceptance activities, the RAB is unlikely to have adequate evidence by which to make an informed Acceptance decision.

This could result in the Acceptance of a service which, although demonstrated in “lab conditions”, would be totally unsuitable for rollout to the network.

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