

Project Semaphore Contract Awarded

03 November 2004

A three-year contract to deliver Project Semaphore, the first stage in the Government's e-Borders (electronic borders) programme has now been signed with IBM

By the end of this year, the project will be processing advance passenger information and passenger name records provided by the airlines.

e-Borders is a cross-cutting initiative co-ordinated by the Home Office in partnership with key border control, law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

The Immigration Minister, Des Browne said:

"The signing of this contract with IBM marks the next stage in the Government's programme to transform and strengthen UK border controls. Project Semaphore will enable us to record simply and effectively details of passengers intending to enter or leave the UK before they begin their journey.

"e-Borders will use cutting edge technology and will play an important part in safeguarding against terrorism, serious and organised crime and illegal immigration. At the same time, it will allow legitimate passengers to travel more efficiently and securely both into and out of the UK."

The e-Borders system will identify people who have boarded transport destined for the UK, check them automatically against databases of individuals who pose a security risk, and keep a simple electronic record of entry into the country. The system will also enable authorities to record people leaving the UK, helping to identify those who overstay.

Notes to Editors:

Project Semaphore was announced in September 2004 (see Home Office Press Notice 208/2004)

Project Semaphore will begin to be implemented by the end of the year. Routes have been chosen on the basis of risk assessments by the border agencies (the Immigration Service, Customs and Excise and the police). Semaphore will test and confirm the technical and business process design for the main e-Borders programme as well deliver immediate operational improvements across participating agencies.

Project IRIS (Iris Recognition Immigration System), a secure, automated border entry system using iris recognition technology to speed up the admission of pre-assessed bona-fide travellers is due to pilot towards the end of this year and be fully operational by the summer of 2005 (Press Release 208/2004).

The procurement process for Project Semaphore began in July 2004, following a rigorous evaluation process IBM were selected as the preferred supplier. IBM is a leading supplier of technology, consultancy and IT services to the UK public sector.