

IT Transformation Project Review

The purpose of this paper is to provide a single reference point for the many questions asked about the IT project that BE started in 2015. It describes the background to the IT project, an overview of the IT capability that has been delivered, a summary of the issues that arose and steps taken to address those, a clear statement as to the cost and an outline of the next steps.

Background

In 2012, the then Board approved a project to redevelop the BE website. This involved two contractors, one for the website design, and one to develop the background functions. There were some significant challenges between the two contractors and in addition BE acknowledged that a new 'database' was required before a new website could be developed. In 2014 it was decided that the project would be ceased.

However, the requirement for a new website, and a new platform on which to deliver the sport remained, and Leadent Consulting were retained by BE as IT advisors. A newly formed IT Working Group, which included Board Directors, the Head of IT and Leadent Consulting was created, to select the most suitable IT platform, and to manage a tender process to appoint a system integrator to develop a system that met BE requirements.

In 2015 the then Board agreed to a new project, called ITTP, which comprised four significant phases, each delivering a component of an end to end IT system that would enable the sport to be managed and run. The four components were;

1. Development of a database and new Safety App for the Technical Advisers to use in the field;
2. Implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform;
3. Development of an entry management and scoring system (EARS);
4. Rebuilding the BE website.

The new project team for ITTP considered that Salesforce was the most suitable Customer Relationship Management platform, and that the website development would be written in code, which is known to work well with Salesforce (Drupal Code).

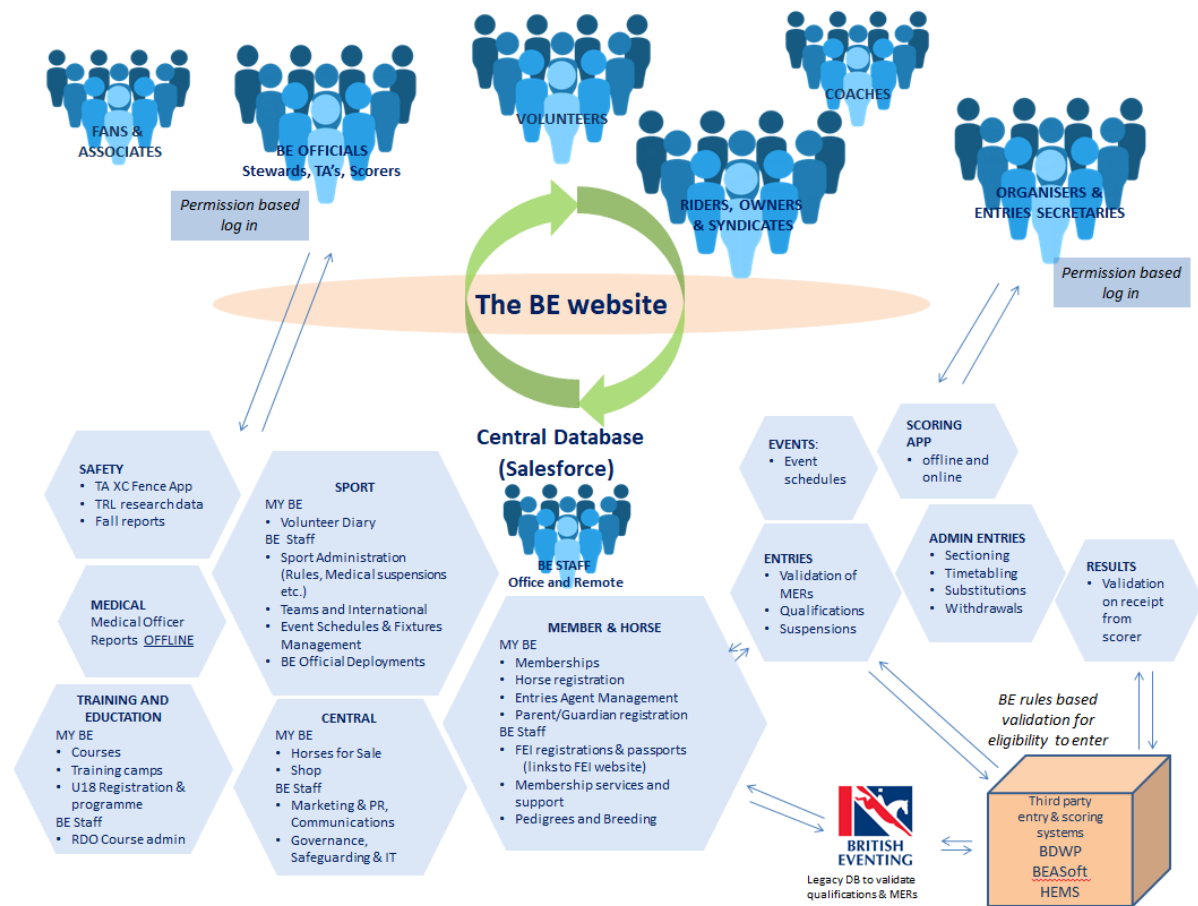
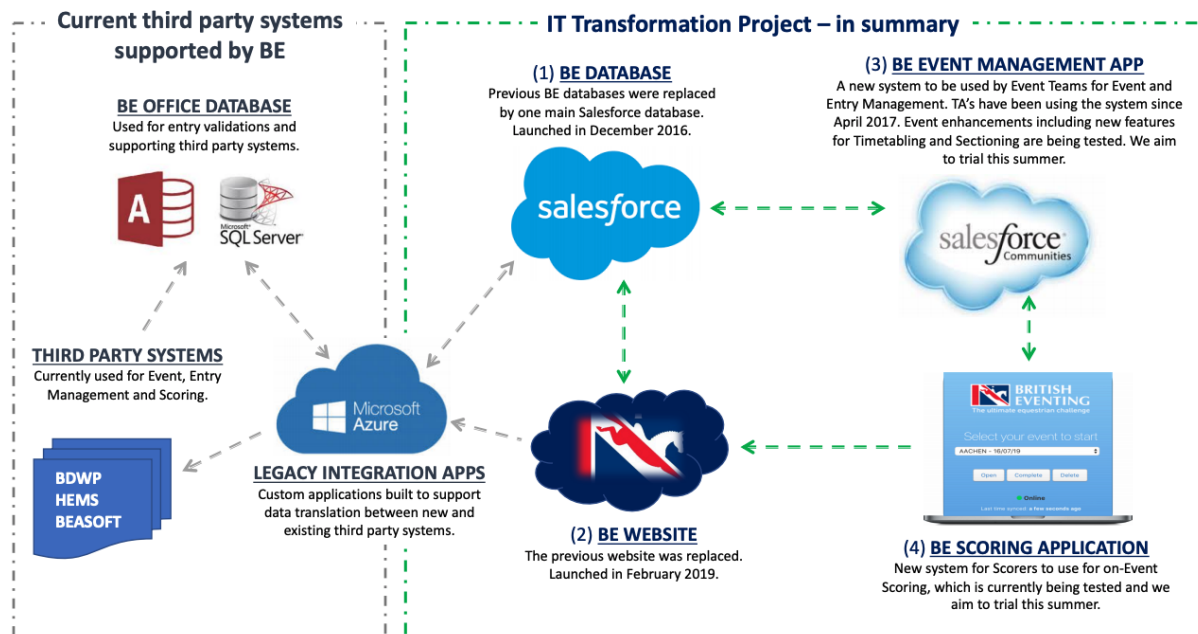
Appointing the contractors

Whilst Salesforce provided a CRM platform it needed to be developed further to meet the BE requirements and it also needed to integrate with the website. BE selected a specialist Salesforce system integration services company, Make Positive. This was done through a tender process. Once the contracting was complete, Make Positive started with the Discovery Phase in January 2016. Make Positive subcontracted the website development work to a company called

Brightsites, and carried out the work on the Salesforce elements, including EARS, themselves.

Overview of the System developed

The IT Transformation Project (ITTP) is complex, as the diagram below illustrates:



Phase 1&2 2016 - 2017: The Database and Safety App

The first phase of the project, the database system used at BE, was rolled out in December 2016. This is the element of the project which holds all the data about events, members, horses and results. The second phase, the Safety App, was rolled out during the early part of the 2017 season.

Phase 3 -2017- 2019: The Website

The third phase of the project was due to be EARS. However, this was a period when no significant progress was made due to contractual disputes; between Make Positive and their subcontractor Brightsites and between Make Positive and BE relating to the scope of requirements and quality of work and personnel. In December 2017, the Board made the decision to reprioritise, and the work to rebuild and design the website was brought forward. The Board took this decision as the project was behind schedule and it was thought that the membership could benefit from the website ahead of EARS being developed.

Make Positive and their subcontractor, Brightsites, continued to work on the project. However, it became clear that disputes between all the parties was delaying progress of the website development. During the summer of 2018 the Board made the decision that a new contractual construct was required and so BE contracted directly with Brightsites on the website development. It was also clear that the complexity of the requirements of the EARS system and the level of sport knowledge required to develop the system was causing inefficiencies in the ways of working with the external IT providers. As a result, in the autumn of 2018, the Board decided to complete the work in-house, which was expected to reduce cost, increase speed of development, and most importantly reduce our reliance on a third party longer term.

The website launched in January 2019 and was not entirely successful. BE reverted to the old website whilst further development work was done. A subsequent relaunch took place a couple of weeks later in February 2019. Entries were taken via the website for 35 events during 2019, and critical issues identified through the year were rectified ahead of the 2020 season opening.

Phase 3b 2017- 2020 EARS

For many years the entries system was provided by a number of third-party systems namely BDWP, HEMS and Beasoft. BDWP, the most commonly used entries platform, would no longer be available for use for BE events from 2020 onwards. It should also be noted that the technology used by BDWP is obsolete and cannot be upgraded to be used with the new IT systems, which meant that work had to be prioritised to ensure the BE website could deliver the entries platform required. The project has not been straightforward, and it is a significant move for the sport to have the entire process handled by the governing body's IT system.

EARS was rolled out at the start of the 2020 season, and there were (and still are) a number of issues identified. The IT team have used the time during the COVID lockdown to work on some of the more critical issues that were identified during the first few weeks of the season.

Primary among the issues was the functionality of the scoring app. There were issues with memory leakage whilst the app was uploading to the salesforce database which led to the need to rekey a number of entries. There were also issues with timeouts, which were frustrating and time consuming for our scorers. After considering feedback from users and status updates from the BE team in March 2020, the Board decided that other scoring systems could be used whilst work was done to improve the usability of the BE Scoring App. This meant that work on the BE Scoring App would be deprioritised to enable the team to focus on other issues raised on EARS functionality. An EARS working group was set up, comprising the chair of the BEOA, scorers, entries secretaries, a steward and an entries agent. This group have had regular meetings with the BE team, and have been involved in testing and specification clarification.

Since March, the BE team have also worked with Miranda Collett, who operates Eventing Scores and who is part of the EARS working group. Eventing Scores already held some of the functionality needed by the sport, and Miranda has developed additional functionality to handle sectioning and times. BE have worked with Miranda to integrate some of this functionality with the EARS system. This integration has been in place since the restart of the season and it is testament to the hard work of both Miranda and the BE team that this has been ready to be rolled out across the first few weeks of the restart of sport.

As at 20th July, the BE website had taken 11,352 entries over the first 15 events of the season. There have been system errors affecting approximately 1% of these entries and there have been some user issues – some at BE end as well, which has highlighted the need to apply consistency in process and more training. These are all addressable issues. We also acknowledge that the website is not as mobile friendly as we would like, and we will develop this in due course.

COVID restart 2020

The restart of Sport under protocols presented us all with some new challenges, for example:

- Start fees being collected at the point of entry. We all recognise this would be easier if it was mandatory and this a scheduled piece of development work.
- There has been a reduced timeframe between entries opening and ballot date, and between ballot date and event itself. This has led to increased pressures for both BE and users.
- There has been unprecedented numbers of entries and extra days being added to meet demand. As is inevitable, more entries = more queries, and this has proved to be the case. There have also been high levels of contact in relation to COVID restart requirements and balloting.

Summary of the Key issues with ITTP

There is no doubt that the ITTP has been a huge undertaking, the complexity of which was grossly underestimated, the current Board have endeavored to rectify the issues and to make the best decisions they could with the information available to them at that time. Despite many claims, there is no existing or 'off-the shelf' alternative solution which delivers the functionality required by the BE IT system.

The main issues can be summarised as follows:

1. When an organisation embarks on developing new IT systems it is essential to have an agreed set of requirements that the system is designed and developed to meet. Any changes to this set of requirements should be carefully governed throughout the project lifecycle. In BE's case, the requirements were not well enough defined, nor were they adequately captured, furthermore, changes were not controlled and governed through a change control process.
2. The estimate of the resources and time it would take to design, build and test the system was underestimated by a significant amount by all parties. This led to quality and productivity issues with Make Positive and ultimately to commercial discussions.
3. There have been issues with the quality of coding done by Make Positive and Brightsites. The impact of this is that it takes the BE team longer to identify the root cause of an issue or 'bug' and then it often requires more time to fix as rework has to be done. This impacts workload management and 'time to fix' estimates.
4. The contract with Make Positive was poor and did not provide BE with adequate cover for the difficult commercial discussions that ensued. Through robust negotiations conducted by members of the current board, BE were able to hold Make Positive to account on many aspects of their obligations – in both delivery and commercial. Ultimately it was decided to bring development in house and to contract directly with Brightsites for the completion of the website.
5. Change management is a critical component of developing and introducing a new system to the user community. The BE user community is diverse in its needs and expectations, in its use of the system and in their level of familiarity using IT is wide ranging. Communicating, educating and training such a diverse group is a complex task for the most experienced of professional integration companies and to do this properly requires significant investment. This was missing from the initial inception of the project and once underway BE did not have the budget nor resources to embark on such change management to the level of investment required.
6. Crucially, the website was launched in January 2019 and had issues this led to a suspension in use and a relaunch in February 2019, and EARS too has presented many challenges. Both eroded the user community's confidence and trust in the system and BE and the willingness to accept change was, in essence, lost. This is a very hard situation to recover from.

Assets delivered and Expenditure

The total cost from 2015 to date for development is £2.75M. This covered all the phases described above and has delivered:

- New cloud-based database fully integrated with the website
- Safety App
- Fully functioning website
- EARS hybrid with Eventing Scores. A fully integrated end to end entries management system replacing three systems provide by third parties

As all elements of the system have now gone into live use, we have completed the Transformation project and the ongoing IT costs will now relate only to annual license costs and ongoing maintenance and development. The ongoing IT support costs are provided in the accounts, for 2020, these are estimated at £500K, which includes all IT costs related to running the office and the sport.

Looking Forward

At the end of the season we will evaluate EARS/ Eventing Score hybrid against the continued development of EARS as an end to end system and to make a decision on how we go forward.

Conclusion

Clearly the expenditure has been significant and reserves had to be used to complete the project, mistakes were made and steps have been taken to rectify those, it is clear the journey could have been a lot smoother had the initial decisions been different and the ongoing project management adopted a more robust set of the necessary process and controls.

Previous IT updates can be found at here

<https://www.britisheventing.com/about/behind-be/governance/strategy-and-project-updates/ittp-updates>