

## If we want decent IT then the government has to fund it...

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The weakness in government IT has been horribly exposed over the last few days. Everything from Trident to many hospitals run on Microsoft operating systems that the company no longer properly supports. There are, however, good reasons for that. Windows XP does all that the operations in question require. The industry has moved on to meet the demands of boys for toys, but in the real world where most people use IT the demands are pretty basic. Email, a word processor, maybe a spread sheet, access to the web where the demands are not that high, and the ability to run pre-programmed database operations linked to a file server. That is pretty much it.

Does that require enormous computing power? The evidence of my phone, which can do all of those things and is very far from top end, is that in current terms it does not.

The evidence from most office workplaces is, I am sure, exactly the same. Most hospitals, GP surgeries, tax offices, MoD installations and the vast majority of business offices need something that is clutter free, simple to use, and functional. Google have the idea with Chrome but I would not wish to run the government on Google.

So we need a functioning business IT system for use by the UK government that would happen to be of considerable commercial significance. It could back end with Linux servers: many of the best systems do.

It might front end with Linux too: with investment there is no reason why not. But it has to be secure, dedicated, integrated and come with the systems to make it user friendly in real life. And that will cost money.

Do you want to know why we need a National Investment Bank? This is why. This is exactly the sort of thing it should be funding.

I am not saying for a moment that it should start from scratch. I suggest partnerships with the open source world. I suggest hardware relationships. I like the idea that a commercial training element of this could be linked to the BBC, which had its own computer once upon a time, of course.

What I believe is that the country that developed Raspberry can now develop a low risk, high security IT system dedicated solely to business use that could be of enormous value not just to the NHS and others but around the world. And it should be built for updating: obsolescence has to be designed out.

Because let's get real: barring elimination of the key board and its replacement with voice commands (which is already largely possible, but actually quite irritating, which is why I don't usually use it any more than I do voice activation on a phone) there's not a lot more any of us are really going to demand from business IT. For most people it has hardly advanced for a decade or more now. So there is a real need here.

And post Brexit we could do this.

And build a more sustainable world at the same time where obsolescence was not built in.

So which party is going to propose this? Because it's not going to happen without state support.