

COVID-19 and Data Centres

Update and actions from call 3rd April



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1 DCMS team strengthened

The DCMS Data Infrastructure Resilience team has been further strengthened and continues to liaise with the sector through techUK. Their remit: to support the sector to ensure operators can continue to service other parts of national infrastructure, public service provision and the wider economy.

The team will work with techUK and operators to understand the role of the sector, explore risks to functionality and identify where government/ policy intervention might be necessary.

The team submitted a list of questions they hoped the sector could respond to. Some can be answered relatively quickly and others will require a more iterative approach. techUK to liaise directly with DCMS team to schedule and prioritise activity.

2 Key workers

Key worker lists were published in March and are being further refined. Government might need to make policy adjustments and/or clarify guidance regarding school /childcare provision and movement of workers.

Potential issues had arisen relating to consistency and enforcement. Operators had responded promptly to a call for information on the effectiveness of childcare provision and information had been submitted on time (summary [here](#)).

Government is trying to find a solution. Policing and enforcement issues are being resolved on a local basis. Govt is providing further guidance to the police and improving cross-departmental communication. A newly established group is resolving inconsistencies across the operational spectrum of police enforcement and feeding back to the NPCC.

3 Construction sites

Construction sites can continue to function at present and construction workers should be allowed to access sites. Guidance is being reiterated to the police to this effect. Dialogue will stay open and further refinements to policy, guidance and communications applied as needed.

4 Questions and points form operators

Statutory maintenance: Operators are all continuing with statutory maintenance. Where social distancing rules could not be applied, PPE is being issued.

Summer readiness: as external temperatures rise more vigilance / maintenance is needed to ensure correct envelope of operating temperature & humidity maintained. A potential issue was identified

if National Grid has to manage excess supply but this was thought to be low risk as drop in demand could be anticipated.

Static vs. dynamic infrastructure: capacity is being added all the time in dynamic infrastructure to keep up with demand – it is not like static infrastructure that can be run by a skeleton crew and “tick over”: the demands are different and risk scenarios are different.

Complexity of infrastructure: The data centre critical functions are not just the infrastructure (power, cooling etc), but also ensuring the customer IT function is fully supported.

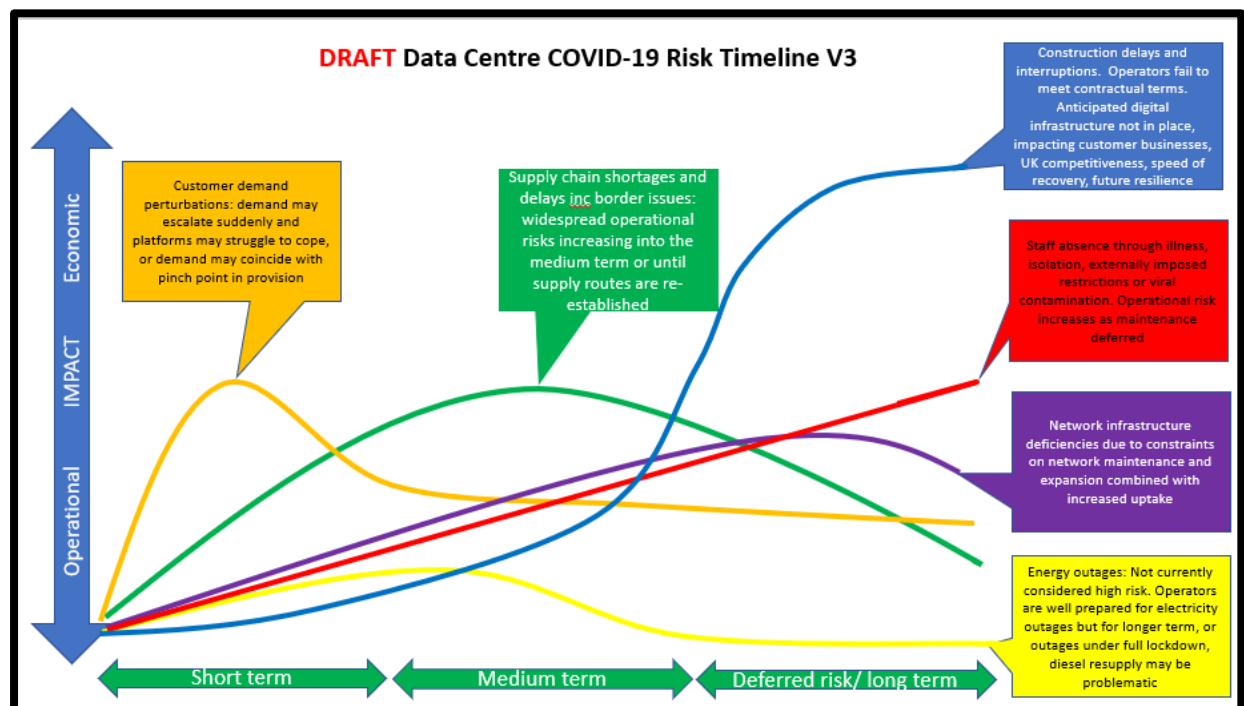
Crisis scale-up scenario: like hospitals, data centre might need many people on site to deal with an emergency at very short notice, so managing risk in these environments is not just about minimising footfall but being able to respond. An issue in a data centre that affected internet services would have far reaching effects. So emergency scale-up scenarios should be accommodated.

Customer access restrictions: Some operators have seen uplift in customer traffic as organisations upgrade in anticipation of uplift in demand for online activity. Most operators, however, are restricting customer access to reduce overall footfall but stepping up customer support (smart hands, hands and eyes). This increases internal activity and workload but reduces routes for infection - more complex multi tenanted facilities house IT from hundreds of organisations.

Supply chain: Operators are urged not to stockpile. Certain items are already in short supply. A list is being compiled. techUK is seeking “green routing” for IT and telecoms hardware. Operators are invited to submit information on any items in short supply so these can be added to the request for green routing.

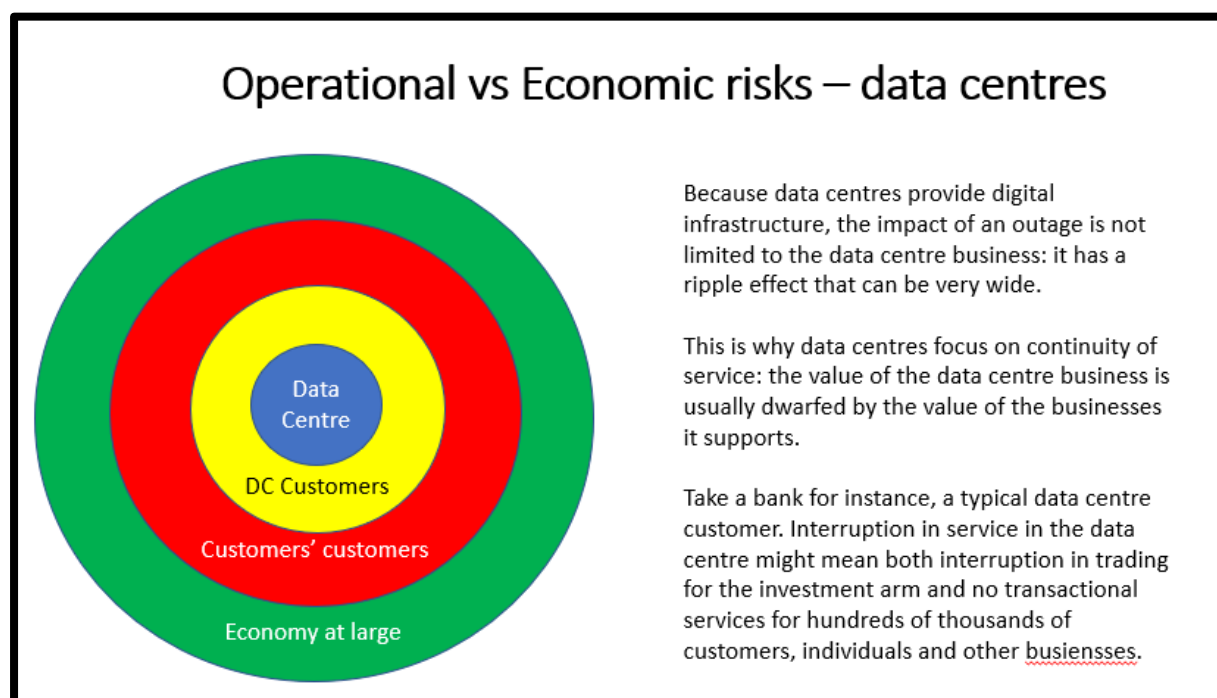
5 Data Centre Risk Timeline

Members discussed the risk timeline (draft below) and commented as follows: A) The energy line needed to include concerns about gasoil production. B) The construction line needed to rise continuously to reflect potential failure to meet customer requirements. C) Staff absence and infection to peak higher in medium term and drop later. D) Network deficiencies to peak higher in medium term and drop later. Updated version to follow.



6 Representing DC customer supply chain

The risk timeline includes a spectrum of risk impact on the Y axis - from operational risks for individual data centres to broader economic risks. Members felt that the dependence of everyday services on data centres should be explained, using the risk diagram tabled as a starting point but including detail e.g. clarifying who the customers are and who their customers are.



7 ACTIONS

- Emma to check out oil production data
- Emma to revise risk timeline to reflect member comments. Operators to submit input
- Diagram to be developed reflecting relationship between data centre and customers and wider economy
- techUK to liaise with DCMS to schedule and prioritise questions