

## **The Phoenix is Rising!**

At the Council meeting in February we announced that the introduction of on-line services had been a great success, with over 5,000 people signed-up as users. We also explained that on-line access would have to be followed by a complete system replacement if GCCF was going not only to continue to function, but to be able to grow and improve both the quality and extent of its services to breeders and owners.

Our current computer system, the iSeries, is over 30 years old, and although it might be able to creak on for a little longer, the risk of it failing is increasing. Commercial support and expertise would be needed to ensure it can continue to operate and deliver an acceptably professional service, this would become more expensive and difficult to achieve as time goes on and the system becomes more outdated and unfit to deliver modern business processes.

The Board was able to approve action on this fairly swiftly thanks to Sally Rainbow-Ockwell, who was able to recommend a company she knew that had a good track record. Thus, by early April, we were able to appoint Digital Trading Creative to scope the functionality of the present system, map all current business processes, and design a new replacement system, which will be able to both support current functions and permit the company to expand its services. It was expected that this part (Stage 1) of Project Phoenix would take three months and cost about £24,000.

I am delighted to report that this work was completed by the end of June and came in a little under budget. Use of the professional expertise of a commercial partner combined with the technical knowledge and project management skills of volunteers from within GCCF, proved highly effective in securing delivery of the scope, design and structure of the new system.

Stage 1 has provided us with a route map for building the IT system we need. The choice before the Board in July was whether to progress onto Stage 2, now knowing the complexity and cost of a new system, and whether to look for alternative partners or stick with the one we knew. After weighing up the options and relative costs, the decision was taken to award the contract to Digital Trading Creative, permitting work to begin from September.

Remaining with what we have currently was not considered viable, because of the growing risk of failure which would eventually lead to a decision at some point that we must replace it. Consideration was given to going out to tender, but this process itself would add both time and cost.

Satisfaction with the work produced by DTC for Stage 1, particularly the considerable effort made in the GCCF Office to learn about the work carried out directly from the staff was impressive and was a positive factor in the decision making process.

A great deal of hard work will now take place behind the scenes to build the new IT system and then to trial and test it. The question raised at June Council – when will we actually have a new computer system? – can now be answered more positively. We can be confident that it will happen and by October Council I should have a good idea of the timescale and likely completion date.

I will keep you all informed of progress.

Best wishes,

Steve

*Steve Crow*  
*GCCF Chair*