

THE REQUIREMENT

Every ten years, the UK Government undertakes a census across the households of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, in order to derive population statistics which subsequently inform decision-making for national and local Government bodies.

Whilst the 2011 Census – the largest census project of its kind ever attempted – culminated on 27 March 2011, the whole project has involved years of preparation and planning, and the analysis of data collected from the 24.5 million delivered census forms will continue for years to come.



The overall project is managed and owned by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which for the 2011 Census for England and Wales appointed Lockheed Martin UK as the consortium leader. It, in turn, enlisted partners with proven reputations for service excellence. In addition to Barron McCann, these included Cable & Wireless, Steria, Royal Mail, Polestar, BSS and Logica.

The entire exercise costs £480 million.

Central to the success of the project, was the provision and support of a first-rate IT infrastructure. That infrastructure, and associated support processes, had to be designed to be highly secure – given that all information provided by the public would be regarded as confidential.

Barron McCann's expertise as an independent IT service provider, specialising in the installation and support of distributed IT systems for government and industry alike was crucial to the overall success of the project.



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THE SERVICE

Some two years prior to the actual census, Barron McCann and the other Consortium partners undertook a series of pilots, in order to test the proposed solutions and services.

For the 2011 census, Barron McCann specified and procured, configured and maintained computer systems used by the 2,500 temporary Field Managers responsible for the 29,000 census collectors throughout England and Wales. Additionally, Barron McCann provided a Technical Helpline – providing vital assistance to the same Field Managers when they most needed it.

Each of the Field Managers in England and Wales was provided with a laptop, barcode scanner, printer, internet access, and crucially for such a sensitive project a security key, known as a “dongle”.

Barron McCann began the task of configuring the computer systems in May 2010, with the first batch of completed units being handed over to ONS representatives in January, ready for the first stage of the census going online in Northern Ireland from the start of the year.

The round-the-clock Technical Helpline for the Field Managers saw calls peaking at over 1,000 per week and averaging six minutes in length. Instead of just the technical questions, staff, many of whom were relatively inexperienced in IT, wanted basic information such as ‘where do I put my dongle’. “The vast majority of these people are working in an isolated environment for the first-time, so we get all kinds of calls outside of our remit, such as ‘my mobile doesn’t work’. But we’re always happy to help – Barron McCann staff are highly trained, and adaptable finding a solution to any problem,” confirmed Service Manager Paul Lawrie.

“Obviously you can’t build a business around a census that happens only once every 10 years. You have to tweak expertise and draw on wide-ranging cross-industry knowledge to adapt core engineering and IT skills, in addition to providing the infrastructure support across the UK. As independent specialists, we have a wide view of the market and can adapt wherever required by tailoring core skills to meet unique requirements.”



■ ■ As a result of the pilot schemes, numerous additional service options were identified to enable delivery of the optimum operational and commercial solution to the ONS. This ability to add value to multiple elements of the project, subsequently led to our greater involvement in the overall census activities.

Barron McCann, on behalf of the ONS, benchmarked a number of hardware solutions to ensure the best quality and overall value for money from the 3,200-plus units required”

NEIL TRUAN
Operations Director for Barron McCann

THE RESULT

For the Office for National Statistics, Barron McCann's contribution has been crucial. Graham Emmons, Lockheed Martin UK's Census Director, said: "Barron McCann has demonstrated across-the-board expertise that has played a crucial role - both through the provision and support of a first-rate IT infrastructure, and the Technical Helpline to support the Field Managers." The company was required to provide the highest level of security and expertise to ensure there would be no data leaks that would damage public confidence.

"There is no doubt that the effective operation and support of the Field Managers has played a big part in bringing in millions of census forms. Barron McCann has been an important partner in delivering this major project."

Barron McCann achieved success through good management and working with other acknowledged experts in their respective fields, understanding the objectives from the outset. They adapted good existing business practices where they existed, and designed and rigorously tested new ones where they did not, in order to meet the exacting demands of the census.

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Largely as a result of the preparation required for the census, Barron McCann achieved Certification to the Information Security Management System (ISO/IEC 27001:2005) in August 2011. This independent assessment illustrates Barron McCann's commitment to manage client information and IT assets in a secure and proven manner. We are currently transitioning to ISO/IEC 27001:2013 the replacement Standard.



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GRAHAM EMMONS
Lockheed Martin UK's Census Director



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