

## **Why the Committee has decided to invest in Google Apps for Business**

How committee members have communicated before now

Until now, committee members have used their own personal email accounts for communicating in between meetings, saving documents on their own computers and emailing them as attachments. The main problem with this is that when members leave the committee, all their communication and saved documents leaves with them.

This means that at times in discussions when questions arise that no one on the current committee knows the answer to, there are no archives through which we can look through. There is no way to refer to past communications with members, or conference attendees, or check queries regarding past correspondence. We don't have an office, staff, filing cabinets, a physical address, but we want to grow and develop as an organisation, without wasting time and energy re-inventing the wheel with each new configuration of the organising committee. So this is why we decided to sign up for a virtual office.

The options known to members or came recommended were Dropbox and Google Apps for Business, the second one seemed more useful. Google Apps for Business is a service that charges £3.30 per user per month, and we decided to trial a couple of months to see how it goes (there is no tie in contract, and user numbers can be changed whenever you want), which includes email addresses, cloud access, document editing, youtube account, research engine, calendar, social media etc.

It has supported the professionalisation of the organisation and is a foundation on which we are building.

### **Google Apps for Business has two main functions:**

1. Enables you to link your domain to your account, so that you have a more professional email address ending in (for example) ukagp.org.uk rather than gmail.com.
2. It links and synchronises various individual google accounts under one umbrella organisation.

### **Practicalities**

All the functions we want are exactly what google apps has been designed for. Although possible to get a lot of this through individual accounts, it would be impractical and time consuming to do so, especially when committee members change.

### **Accountability**

All correspondence will be accessible to future committee members, with archives available to refer back to. This will also encourage committee members to be mindful of their work which is being done on behalf of the community.

### **Transparency**

The administrator can see which users have logged in and when, and what documents they have created, edited and deleted. Archives are there for future reference.

### **Logistics**

Useful automatically synced, disk share.

### **Why Google Apps?**

It was known and recommended by another small organisation. Many people are already familiar with gmail accounts. It does everything that Dropbox does and more.

### **Emails**

Gmail is a user friendly email account; you can configure the inbox to filter junk mail by scanning content and putting them into categories to sort emails into primary/social/promotion/updates folders. You can search for an email by a keyword from any word within the email or specific part of it i.e from: name

### **Drive**

An online cloud file and folder system where you can choose who you share your documents with, who can view and/or edit. Documents can be uploaded or created online. Online editing can't be done in Dropbox.

It is possible to edit live with others online whilst in discussion.

There is no need for constantly changing versions of documents being emailed backwards and forwards, the version you see is always the latest one which is updated continuously as people work on it, although you can refer back to see who has made which changes.

Sending emails alert users to which document you've shared/edited/created etc.

The ability to decide who can view and/or edit a specific folder or document, enables the committee to share relevant documents with members outside the user group. This will be useful for members who are involved in the conference organising group but not on the committee.

**Calendar** Creates events & invite guests, i.e. Set meeting date and deadline for agenda, reminder before meeting, link to map of venue etc. Send emails to invite users, when they accept it appears on their calendar. Inviter can see who's read/accepted/rejected invitation.

**Forms** An easy way to create questionnaires and email out for responses, then collate into spreadsheet and graphs.

**Presentations** Similar to powerpoint

**Spreadsheets** Similar to excel