

An aerial night view of London, featuring the Shard skyscraper and a dense urban landscape. The image is overlaid with a network of glowing white and blue lines connecting various points, and vibrant light trails in red, orange, and yellow from traffic on the streets below. The overall aesthetic is modern and technological.

xserve

UK LINK SUSTAIN

INVESTMENT PROPOSAL

November 2024

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UK Link Sustain

Overview

Need:

A robust, secure and highly available UK Link is critical for all of our customers and their consumers. The majority of central services are either processed in or receive data from UK Link, and so maintaining the platform is mission critical for the gas industry.

Approach:

We have created this investment proposal, which will deliver all of the scheduled maintenance activities that are required to address vulnerabilities and undertake essential version upgrades to applications, operating systems and databases during 2025-28. This period is critical to ensure a continuous and reliable service delivery to our customers and the energy market while ensuring a stable foundation for Project Trident.

Benefits:

Central services will continue to be robustly and securely delivered via a highly available UK Link platform.

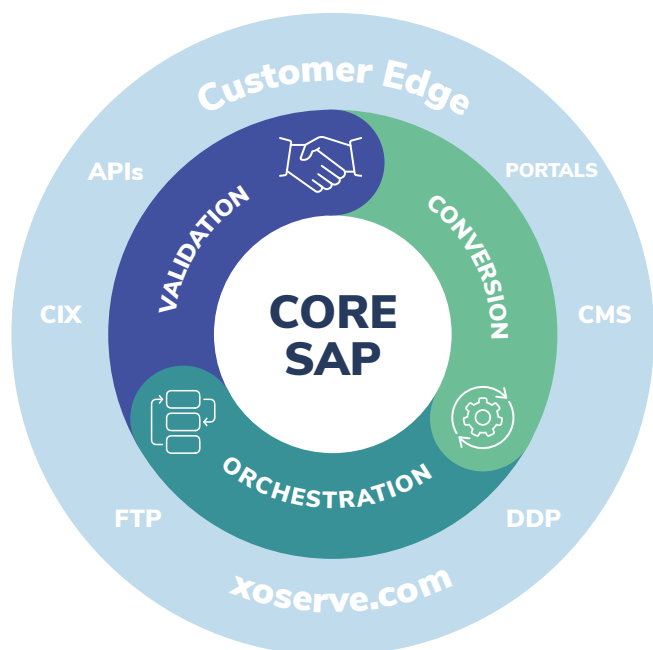
Context

The UK Link platform is critical to the provision of secure, robust services, which are discharged by Xoserve (as the Central Data Service Provider (CDSP)) and its supply chain via the Data Services Contract (DSC).

The platform facilitates key gas industry processes (e.g. settlement, invoicing, switching and demand estimation) as well as feeds into other key industry services (Gemini, GES etc). These need to occur seamlessly and robustly, so that Xoserve's customers

and stakeholders can operate in the market. If the performance of UK Link (e.g. system availability / processing capacity) were to drop below the levels as described and measured via a wide range of Key Performance Metrics (KPMs) and Performance Indicators (PIs), there would be a material impact on the gas industry. Its continued performance is therefore crucially important to Xoserve's customers, stakeholders and UK consumers.

Within BP24, customers funded a "discovery phase" looking at the future of UK Link, which was delivered and has reaffirmed the need for and importance of project Trident, albeit slightly earlier than expected. However, with project Trident looking at options for the future of the UK Link platform, there are certain elements of the discovery's output that highlighted known activities that are required in the short term (1-3 years) related to the upkeep of UK Link and its components, such as ensuring the current estate is maintained through patching and the procurement of licenses and subscriptions for its 'customer edge' and/or the VCO (Validation, Conversion, Orchestration) layer. The funding required for this sustenance activity has historically been secured via the 'UK Link Sustain' investment area, and once again in BP25, there is a requirement for Xoserve to ensure that the system is sustained throughout the period (2025-2027), so that it can maintain performance v DSC Key Performance Metrics and Performance Indicators.



This investment proposal is looking to secure £2.4m for BP25 with a proposed £2.6m for BP26 and £3.4m for BP27 totalling £8.5m in overall investment for the period covered under the investment. This aligns to what was specified as being needed from BP24 and provides customers stability in costs, covering the known upgrades and margins to mitigate risks. As detailed below, this investment will be a “drawdown” and work will be sanctioned and called off as and when needed in accordance with the UK Link roadmap and any mandatory sustain activities over the next 3 years. Where there are remaining funds not allocated or used within the appropriate business planning years, this will be returned to the customer.

Scope

The scope of this Investment Proposal encompasses the activities required to sustain the core UK Link system and its related components over the next three years. This period is critical to ensure a continuous and reliable service delivery to our customers and the energy market while ensuring a stable foundation for project Trident.

The required work looking to be covered under this investment is summarised in the following key areas:

- Essential Maintenance:** Scheduled maintenance to address vulnerabilities and essential version upgrades covering applications, operating systems and databases (Microsoft SQL, Oracle Linux and Windows all of which reside on the Azure Cloud, servicing UK Link components¹). The necessary upgrades are based on the end of support/extended support by the vendor. Keeping components in vendor support and ensuring system reliability and uptime.
- Sustain:** Strategic decisions on a number of key UK Link components comprising of sustain or upgrade activities over the next three years to ensure the right decisions are made regarding the architecture of the platform prior to Trident. All work will be assessed against project Trident to minimise regret spend where possible.
- Service Essentials:** Continuation of service essential activities such as migration, decommissioning and the planning for future upgrades for Enterprise Hub (vulnerability scanning, monitoring and event management) and Network Maintenance.

Why is the investment needed?

The proposed investment in sustaining UK Link core and associated components over the next three years is essential for maintaining the reliability and performance of a system that underpins critical services for our customers and the industry as a whole. With project Trident looking at the replatforming of UK Link, this investment focuses on ensuring a stable and secure operational environment in the interim and mitigating the risks associated with an unsupported system.

The below covers off and specific details around the Efficiency, Innovation, Risk Avoidance and Opportunity elements of this investment proposal.

3 Year Plan – Sustain MVP

BP Themes				Roadmap			
Themes	BP2025/26	BP 2026/27	BP 2027	2025	2026	2027	2028
Essential Maintenance*	Yes	Yes	Yes	SAP Applications Yearly Maintenance	SAP Applications Yearly Maintenance	SAP Applications Upgrade/Sustain App/OS/DB	
	Yes	Yes	Yes	AMT Sustain	AMT Sustain	AMT Maintain (Application, OS, DB)	
	N/A	Yes	Yes				
	Yes	N/A	N/A	Batch			
Sustain/Transform**	Yes	Yes	Yes	EFT Upgrade/Data Centre Move	EFT Upgrade/Replace		
	Yes	Yes	N/A	Compatibility Upgrade			
	N/A	Yes	Yes		MoveIT/API Gateways		
	Yes	N/A	N/A	DCC Gateway (HSM) Replatforming			
	N/A	Yes	Yes	UK Link Security Maintenance	UK Link Security Maintenance	UK Link Security Maintenance	
Service Essentials	N/A	Yes	Yes		Enterprise Hub		
	N/A	Yes	Yes		Service Network Maintenance		
	Yes	Yes	N/A		PIX Decommissioning		
Enabling changes							
Transformation changes	TBC	TBC	TBC				
Key dependencies and risks	Product Vendor Releases and Support Models, Industry Activity, Trident timelines (Xoserve Strategy & Programme timelines influences the sustain landscape and activities)						

*Maintenance and upgrades are performed for a variety of purposes, including improving the software overall, addressing faults or bugs, increasing performance, fixing security issues and adopting more features, once the software/hardware is upgraded. Maintenance is also essential to stay within vendor support and may be mandated by Product vendors.
 **These items may require a transformation away from current technologies where the solution may be deemed as unsustainable or transformation to a new product may be more economical or future proof

Efficiency

Investing in the sustainment of UK Link over the next three years is crucial for enhancing operational efficiency across the diverse industry functions and services it supports. The inefficiency is not necessarily present in the context of UK Link Sustain investment, however by focusing on targeted software updates and system optimisations, we are looking to improve system performance, mitigate unforeseen downtime, and ensure that our operations remain as efficient and cost-effective as possible. The key areas of efficiency improvements include:

1. **Performance Optimisation:** Regular software updates and patches help optimise system performance, ensuring that UK Link runs smoothly and efficiently. This includes updates to core system components such as operating systems, databases, and application frameworks, across the various layers, which can significantly improve transaction processing speeds and reduce latency.

2. **Mitigation of Downtime and Disruptions:**

Proactive maintenance and timely updates reduce the risk of unplanned downtime and system disruptions. By addressing potential issues before they escalate into major problems, we can maintain our contractual system uptime, ensuring continuous service delivery while minimising the impact on our customers and internal operations.

3. **Resource Utilisation:** Updating and optimising software components can improve resource utilisation, making better use of existing infrastructure. This can lead to cost avoidance and savings by extending the lifespan of current components and providing flexibility on the approach for future upgrades or replacements.

4. **Automation and Streamlining:** Implementing essential vendor software updates may provide opportunity to enhance through automation and streamlining of processes.

5. **Improved User Experience:** Regular updates and performance enhancements contribute to a better user experience for both internal users and customers. A stable and responsive system reduces frustration and improves productivity, leading to higher satisfaction and engagement.
6. **Cost Efficiency:** Investing in proactive sustain activities helps avoid higher costs associated with emergency fixes, extensive downtime and reactive maintenance. Proactive updates and essential optimisations are generally more cost-effective than addressing critical issues after they have occurred.
7. **Preparation for Replatforming:** Efficiently maintaining UK Link ensures that it continues to meet current operational needs while preparing for project Trident. By keeping the system in optimal condition, the complexity and risk for transitioning to a new platform is reduced.

Innovation

While the primary focus over the next three years is not implementing major innovative advancements to UK Link, the investment in sustaining the core system and its components is critical for ensuring continued delivery of DSC & industry services and provide a stable baseline for project Trident. During this investment period, our goal is to maintain system integrity and performance with minimal disruptions, ensuring that the core functionalities are robust and reliable.

1. **Consistency in Service Delivery:** Maintaining the current system's reliability ensures that customers continue to receive stable, high-quality services. This stable performance baseline will provide a clear reference point for replatforming, ensuring that all options that are being considered are built upon a solid foundation.
2. **Incremental Enhancements:** Any vital enhancements made during this period will be minor and strategically aligned with the future platform requirements. This means we can implement necessary security updates, compliance

measures and performance optimisations without overhauling the system, thereby minimising regret spend and ensuring compatibility with future innovations.

3. **Risk Mitigation for Replatforming:** By focusing on maintaining a stable and reliable system, we mitigate risks associated with system failures or security breaches, which could complicate the re-platforming process.

In essence, the perceived lack of innovation during this period is a strategic decision to ensure the stability and reliability of UK Link, providing a solid foundation for the re-platforming project. This approach balances the need for minimal disruption now with the potential innovation and advancement in the future, aligning our immediate actions with our long-term vision.

Risk Avoidance

Investing in the sustainment of the UK Link systems over the next three years is essential for mitigating several key risks. These risks include system failures, security breaches, and non-compliance with regulatory standards, which can have significant repercussions given the critical role UK Link plays in underpinning various industry functions and services.

1. **System Reliability and Uptime:** UK Link is the backbone of our operations, and any downtime can severely impact on our ability to deliver services to our customers and the industry. Regular software updates and patches are crucial for maintaining system reliability. By investing in proactive maintenance, we can address potential issues before they result in system failures, ensuring continuous service delivery.
2. **Security Threats and Data Breaches:** Outdated software is more susceptible to security vulnerabilities. Investing in regular security updates and patches helps protect against the latest cyber threats, reducing the risk of data breaches that could lead to significant financial and reputational damage.

3. **Regulatory Compliance:** Regulatory standards are continually evolving, and non-compliance can result in hefty fines and legal challenges. Ensuring UK Link remains compliant with industry regulations and standards will mitigate penalties.
4. **Operational Continuity During Transition:** With a major replatforming project on the horizon, ensuring operational continuity during this period is critical. By investing in the sustainment of UK Link, we can ensure that our current operations remain stable and effective, providing a seamless experience for our customers as we prepare for the transition to the new platform.
5. **Vendor Dependency and Support:** Relying on outdated software components can lead to increased dependency on vendor support, which may become limited or costly as products reach the end of their lifecycle. By investing in regular updates and maintenance, we reduce our dependency on emergency vendor support, ensuring we have the internal capability to manage and maintain the system effectively.
6. **Technical Debt and System Complexity:** Accumulating technical debt through deferred maintenance and non-essential updates can increase system complexity and the likelihood of critical failures. Proactively addressing technical debt through regular updates and patches reduces system complexity and enhances overall performance, making future upgrades and transitions smoother and of lower risk.
7. **Risk of Replatforming Delays:** Any significant issues with UK Link during the sustainment period could delay the re-platforming project, extending the timeline and increasing costs. By maintaining a stable and reliable system, we mitigate the risk of such delays, ensuring that the re-platforming project can proceed as planned.

Opportunity

While the primary focus over the next three years is on sustaining UK Link, will be to “keep the lights on”, this investment presents several strategic opportunities that align with our long-term goals, particularly in preparing for project Trident.

1. **Foundation for Future Innovation:** By maintaining a stable and reliable system, we establish a solid foundation for project Trident. This stability ensures that when we transition to a new platform, we do so from a robust baseline, minimising disruptions and facilitating a smoother migration process.
2. **Risk Mitigation and Preparedness:** Investing in the sustainment of UK Link allows us to address and mitigate potential risks proactively. By maintaining the system's security, compliance, and performance, we reduce the likelihood of encountering significant issues that could delay or complicate the re-platforming project. This risk mitigation is critical for ensuring that we can transition to the new platform on schedule or parallel run the new systems alongside the current without fear of issue..
3. **Customer Trust and Satisfaction:** Continuously providing reliable services helps maintain customer trust and satisfaction. A stable system ensures that our customers experience minimal disruptions, reinforcing their confidence in our ability to deliver consistent and high-quality services.

Strategic Journeys

In May 2024, Xserve introduced 5 strategic journeys that plot out a course that the organisation needs to take in order to delivery maximum value to its customers, stakeholders and consumers. Each theme represents a pathway from the current / to a future destination, each one being critical to the required evolution.



From **transparency**
to **trust**



From **assurance**
to **confidence**



From **system custodian**
to **transition facilitator**



From **stakeholder servants**
to **serving stakeholders**



From **code delivery**
to **code management**

The criticality of the UK Link Platform makes the proposed investment absolutely key to us maintaining all of the current destinations, and as such, crucial to each of the 5 journeys.

In particular, sustaining UK Link is central to building from 'System custodian to transition facilitator', but all are represented within this investment.

- From transparency to trust:** A key goal has been to ensure that our customers are fully informed about the status, performance, and future plans for UK Link. This proactive maintenance builds confidence in our system's ability to meet customer needs and support their business operational activities/obligations to demonstrate our reliability and commitment through consistent results for the delivery of DSC services which aims to solidify trust.
- From assurance to confidence:** To achieve this, the sustain activities for UK Link systems aim to enhance the long-term reliability, security, and performance which in turn will continue to enhance stakeholder confidence in our ability to deliver consistent, high-quality services.
- From system custodian to transition facilitator:** This evolution is critical as we prepare for the future and project Trident. By investing in targeted sustain activities, we ensure the smooth operation of UK Link while simultaneously laying the groundwork for a seamless transition to a new platform.
- From stakeholder servants to serving stakeholders:** UK Link sustain is essential for this evolution by emphasizing proactive maintenance, value-added activities, strategic alignment, and risk mitigation, we can ensure our system remains reliable, secure, and efficient while supporting project Trident. This evolution not only meets current stakeholder needs but also positions us to deliver ongoing value and build stronger, more trusting relationships.
- From code delivery to code management:** UK Link systems underpin >300 code obligations that we facilitate or help our customers adhere to. The need for us to make sure these obligations are satisfied, and just as importantly, that our customers can rely on UK Link to meet their own code obligations, is paramount. In any future, the reliability of UK Link is key.

Benefits

The proposed investment in sustaining the UK Link suite of systems over the next three years is crucial for continuing to deliver critical data services to our customers, ensuring their compliance with code obligations and key operational processes including the wider industry. By ensuring reliable service delivery and mitigating operational risks, we can provide a stable and robust infrastructure that continues to serve our customer's needs.

The main driver and benefits for the continued sustainment of the UK Link system estate are the mitigation of risks associated with ageing and unsupported systems.

- **Alignment with Customers needs:** A robust and reliable system provides the foundation for getting the basics right and ensuring minimal disruption to core industry processes and mitigate against unforeseen costs associated with unstable and unreliable systems.
- **Security & Compliance:** Regularly updating security patches and installing essential software updates helps protect against the constant evolution of cyber threats, ensuring continued vendor compliance, safeguarding customer/ industry data, operational processes and risk of legal penalties.
- **Mitigation of Outages:** Providing high system availability across the estate through proactive maintenance and targeted software updates to minimise downtime and unexpected outages that could result in service interruptions.
- **Robust Performance:** Continuous optimisation of UK Link system performance will ensure it operates efficiently, meeting the high-demand requirements of our customers, ensuring smooth, reliable service delivery.
- **Preparation for future transition:** The sustaining activities will provide a stable foundation that will aid future development and re-platforming of UK Link as part of project Trident.

Outputs

The main output from this investment is a UK Link system estate that can maintain high performance and support system demand against the associated DSC KPM and PIs throughout 2025-2028 along with the continued mitigation of associated risks and maintaining the reliability of an aging UK Link system.

Performance statistics can be found within the [BP24](#) (p79).

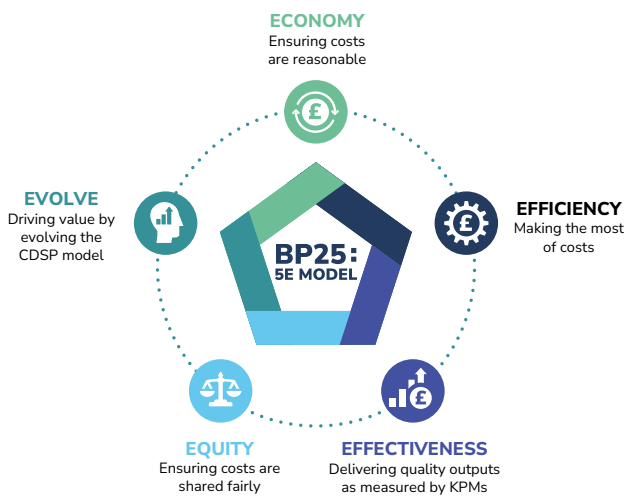
3rd Party Provider requirements

Correla maintains the UK Link portfolio suite of systems on Xoserve's behalf as the appointed primary service provider to the DSC+ contract. As a result, they are required to feed into this investment proposal by way of the current UK Link architectural roadmap and details surrounding the financial elements for the in-scope activities proposed to be undertaken under this investment and any additional indicative elements needed to mitigate the associated risks over the three year period covered under this proposal.

It is acknowledged that a number of potential activities needed to maintain UK Link over the next three years (specifically year 2 & 3) are unknown, so the funding being requested as part of this investment proposal will be indicative and any work initiated under the sustain investment for years 2 & 3 would be made firm as part of future business plan cycles. For further control, several SoWs will be used over the associated period to sanction spend when activities are agreed to be needed required and formally scoped between Xoserve and the service provider, with any longer-term work being included into the UK Link Roadmap to feed next year's BP.

5E VfM Framework

Xoserve is committed to providing Value for Money (VfM) CDSP services. We articulate VfM via a '5E' framework. All costs presented will use the framework as a means to articulate the value of each IP.



Economy: The proposed investment in sustaining UK Link over the next three years is designed to ensure cost-effective use of resources. By investing in proactive maintenance, regular software updates, and performance optimisations (where possible), we can prevent costly emergency repairs and extend the lifespan of the current system. This approach ensures that funds are spent efficiently, reducing unnecessary expenses and providing our customers with a reliable and affordable service.

Efficiency: This is achieved through the strategic allocation of resources to maximise system performance and reliability. The investment will support targeted upgrades and optimisations, enhancing the system's ability to handle increasing workloads without significant increases in operational costs. Streamlined processes and advanced monitoring tools already in place through previous investment will ensure that UK Link operates at peak efficiency, reducing waste and improving service delivery.

Effectiveness: The effectiveness of this investment is reflected in its ability to maintain and secure the functionality of UK Link. By ensuring the system remains robust, secure, and compliant with changing software and vendor standards, we can provide high-quality services that meet the needs and expectations of our customers. This investment supports continuous improvement initiatives, ensuring that UK Link remains effective in delivering critical services and supporting customers' operational goals.

Equity: The investment proposal ensures that all customers have fair and equitable access to the benefits of UK Link in accordance with the agreed DSC charging methodology. By maintaining a stable and reliable system, we can provide consistent service quality across different customer segments, regardless of size. This equitable approach helps all customers achieve their operational objectives, promoting fairness and inclusivity in service delivery.

Evolve: This investment proposal for UK Link in the short term is mostly about sustaining current operations and performance. However, preparation for the transition to a new platform via project Trident could also be considered if regret spend is minimised and changes are on the strategic path. These evolutions should be reviewed by Xoserve prior to the undertaking of any work. This forward-looking approach provides opportunity for UK Link to evolve in line with changing customer needs, positioning it for long-term success.

Executive Summary

Background

The proposed continuation of investment in sustaining UK Link over the outlined period is critical to ensuring the continued reliability and performance of system components that underpin UK Link, and therefore a wide range of integral industry functions and services for our diverse customer base. With the replatforming of UK Link leading into 2027-2028 (option dependent), this interim investment focuses on maintaining system stability, security and processing efficiency to prevent service disruption/ degradation which would impact customers operational practices. By proactively addressing maintenance needs and carrying out targeted and strategic upgrades this investment aims to safeguard our customers interests and uphold the high standard of service they rely on.

Scope

The UK Link Sustain investment is looking to fund the activities required to sustain the core UK Link system and its related components over the next three years. This period is critical to ensure continuous and reliable service delivery to our customers and the industry, while ensuring a continued and stable foundation for project Trident.

The required work looking to be covered under this investment are summarised in the following key areas:

- **Essential Maintenance:** Scheduled maintenance to address vulnerabilities and essential version upgrades covering applications, operating systems and databases (Microsoft SQL, Oracle Linux and Windows all of which reside on the Azure Cloud, servicing UK Link components²). The necessary upgrades are based on the end of support/ extended support by the vendor. Keeping compo-

nents in vendor support and ensuring system reliability and uptime.

- **Sustain:** Strategic decisions on a number of key UK Link components comprising of sustain or upgrade activities over the next three years to ensure the right decisions are made regarding the architecture of the platform prior to Trident. All work will be assessed against project Trident to minimise regret spend.
- **Service Essentials:** Continuation of Service essential activities such as migration, decommissioning and the planning for future upgrades for Enterprise Hub and Network Maintenance.

Strategic theme

The UK Link Sustain investment proposal touches on all the strategic themes as outlined in the detailed sections, but the main strategic themes is from 'System custodian to Transition Facilitator'.

The evolution from being a system custodian to transition facilitator is supported within this investment to ensure we provide a stable and supported UK Link system to set up and support the Trident project which is looking at options for re-platforming the core UK Link system, which is a key strategic programme, looking to evidence Xoserve as a transition facilitator to drive and shape the future.

Customers have actively stated that getting the basics right will build trust and aid our aim to move from code delivery to code management, something UK Link sustain will greatly assist with. We're aiming to make sure that the basics are continued to be delivered to a high standard, focusing on ensuring greater compliance, efficiency, and adaptability in our service delivery offerings.

² Further detail is available in 1006 - UKL Product Version Report v1.0

Solution

Within BP24, there were a number of solution options presented due to the need to scope out the future roadmap of UK Link with the mandated upgrade in 2027 (2030 with extended support). The outputs from the discovery phase undertaken in BP24 has resulted in the need for project Trident and therefore the UK Link Sustain investment for BP25 focuses on the activities required to sustain the core UK Link system and its related components. To this effect there is only one solution being presented, besides the “do nothing” option, however this is not viable due to the required updates/maintenance needed to keep UK Link supported and as efficient as possible.

Outputs / Outcomes

The main output from this investment is a UK Link system estate that can continue to maintain high performance and system demand against the associated DSC KPM and PIs throughout 2025-2028 along with the continued mitigation of associated risks and maintaining the reliability of an aging UK Link system.

Benefits

The customers are reliant on UK Link and the services it underpins for the provision of data and executing obligations across the industry and therefore ongoing sustainment is required. The core benefit for UK Link sustain is risk mitigation, which aims to avoid negative impact on DSC service levels by undertaking the near-term sustain activities to remain in vendor support for current architecture.

If this were not to occur, there would be the high risk of application performance lag, bugs being introduced to the platform, application/infrastructure failure or security breaches, which could result in service degradation or sustained unavailability. Carrying out a controlled approach to maintaining the UK Link service, rather than reacting to an increasing service risk profile that may exist by running ‘end of version/

life’ components. This increases the possibility of application and infrastructure errors being encountered that cannot be rectified by the vendors. This approach will deliver greater platform flexibility to respond to potential future customer needs.

Budget

The budget for this investment is driven by several key factors that are essential to ensure the UK Link systems reliability, performance and security. These factors manifest themselves as targeted/proactive updates to system components, maintenance activities to mitigate unexpected downtimes, continued efforts to maintain high performance of systems, security enhancements and strategic alignments with an eye to Trident and customer goals.

The proposed budget for UK Link Sustain investment over the next three years is set out below.

	BP25/26	BP26/27	BP27/28
Totals:	£2.3m	£2.6m	£3.5m

The forecasted uplift in 2027/28 is based on current SAP license costs increasing when the standard SAP support moves into extended support.

Funding will be allocated as per the common funding calculation as set out in the Budget and Charging Methodology.

This means that constituencies with a vested interest in ensuring the reliability and effectiveness of UK Link as it underpins a number of critical services equitably fund the sustenance of the platform, enabling us to continue to provide high-quality, reliable services while preparing for the future transition to a new platform.

Funding Split

Shipper	Nat Gas	DN	IGT
51.50%	5.90%	41.20%	1.30%

VfM

The proposed investment in the continuation of sustaining UK Link represents value for money for our customers, specifically mitigation of risk and the need for continued reliable service delivery in a landscape of an aging estate. When applying the 5Es, as detailed above, economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and evolution, we ensure that the system remains reliable, efficient, and equitable. This investment not only addresses current needs in the short term but also prepares for the future replatforming in ensuring stability for our customers and the services we provide. Through this comprehensive approach, customers can be confident that their contributions are being used effectively to deliver high-quality, reliable services that support their operational success, strategic goals and industry obligations.



Options Summary

Scope

There is a requirement for Xoserve to ensure that the systems landscape is sustained throughout the period (2025-2027), so that it can maintain performance vs DSC Key Performance Metrics and Performance Indicators.

A sustain only budget is required to undertake minimal sustain/maintain work until BP 2027/2028 (and beyond depending on customer choice). Delivery recommendations from Project Trident in 2024/25 will inform the future of UK Link by Xoserve in conjunction with DSC Customers of which the requirements for Sustain investments through the period 2026-2028 would be refined accordingly.

Approach

The approach to building the Investment Proposal entailed a detailed assessment as per previous practice to build up a comprehensive “Minimum Sustain Roadmap” for 3 business plan years taking into account the need to maintain the systems landscape while preparing for wider transformation. This roadmap ensures that in reviewing the requirements to Sustain the UK Link System Landscape to support the delivery of CDSP Service Provision, a thorough assessment has been completed across application, infrastructure, security and network components.

Due to the nature of the Xoserve System Landscape and the products/technology UK Link components use, different vendors release services packs and upgrades with differing schedules (e.g. SAP releases on a quarterly/half yearly basis). The assessment of the System Landscape has looked at all components, the end of support and extended

support across applications, operating systems and databases to define the scope and approach of this investment proposal.

Two main options were considered for this Investment Proposal: –

1. **Do Nothing** – No funding requested to maintain and sustain the UK Link estate for BP 2025/2026
2. **Essential Maintenance and Sustain:** Sustain Only budget provision to ensure upkeep of system landscape and services architecture.

Option 2 is the recommended option for ‘maintain’ for Business Planning purposes.

Outputs

The outputs from the 3-year Sustain roadmap have been considered for this Investment Proposal.

Cost

The high-level costs for Business Plan year 2025/2026 are c.£2.6 million. Future costs are estimated and illustrated in the section “Executive Summary” under the Budget section.

Impact on S&O

Impacts to S&O are expected to be minimal and will be determined within the individual project lines.

VfM

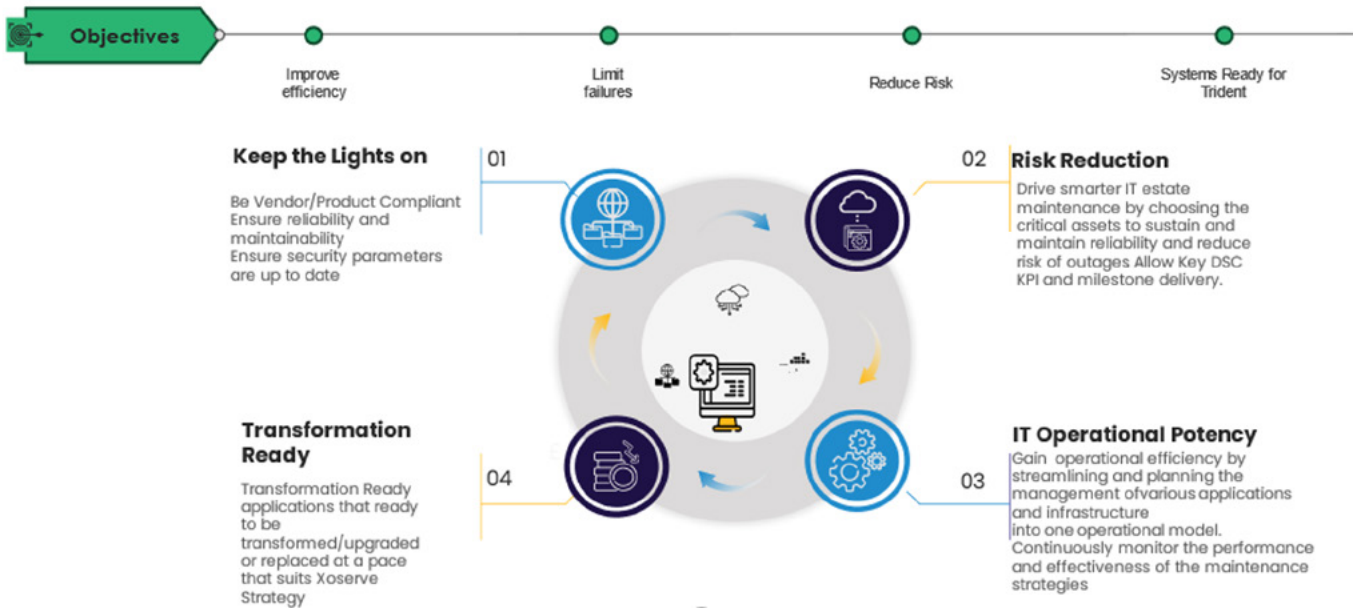
This investment case presents Value for Money via MVP sustain activities and working in tandem with the Trident programme for ensuring limited “no-regret” spend, essential for UK Link sustaining activities, while larger action focus remains a strategic decision via a separate investment proposal.

Risk

This Investment Proposal seeks to mitigate the service delivery risk to UK Link services by maintaining and sustaining the UK Link systems landscape.

Benefit

The benefits and risk avoidance cases are illustrated below:



Delivery approach

Depending on the delivery option chosen, the delivery approach follows on from previous practice of theme-based delivery via distinct projects with centralised programme delivery.

Impact on service levels

This investment mitigates risks and supports the delivery of the services as defined in the CDSP responsibilities.

UK Link Sustain Investment Options			
Options & Timeline	Scope	Customer Impact	Benefits
Option 1 - Do Nothing UK Link Essential Maintenance & Sustain	The Do-Nothing options is not recommended as there are multiple UK Link components within the Systems Landscape that are / will be out of support during the BP25 period	Risk to CDSP Service Provision if any component out of support were to fail that would impact the ability to deliver the required services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No investment cost but is offset by the risk to CDSP Service Provision • Security risks due to non-compliance with essential product updates/emergent threats. • Service risk due to lack of vendor support for older software/technology.
Option 2 – Sustain Only	This option delivers the required investment to ensure that UK Link Essential Maintenance & Sustain scope is delivered during BP25.	Lower level of investment from 2025 to 2026 but high investment from 2027 onwards. Full use of extended support, greater risk of technology failure if the decisions required by Project Trident are not made in a timely manner that considers the mandated SAP Product Roadmap and the end of SAP ECC Support on the 31/12/2027.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid DSC service impact by undertaking near term maintenance and sustain activities required to remain in vendor support of the current architecture. If this were not to occur, there would be the high risk of application performance lag, bugs being introduced to the platform, hardware failure or security breaches, which could result in complete service failure or unavailability. • Greater security compliance and controls • Lesser service risk – estate is kept within the requisite vendor requirements for support continuity and assured break-fix assistance where needed. • Technology upgrades to deliver a more sustainable platform, reducing the risk of future product or infrastructure failure. • The UK Link Sustain theme establishes a controlled approach to maintaining service, rather than reacting to an increasing service risk profile that may exist by running 'end of version/life' components. This increases the possibility of application and infrastructure errors being encountered that cannot be rectified by the vendors. This approach will deliver greater platform flexibility to respond to potential future customer needs.

Detailed Analysis

Solution Option 1 – Do Nothing

Overview

This option invests nothing into the UK Link estate, leaving several key components exposed to security and/or performance issues. This has the potential to reduce the stability and effectiveness of UK Link, and equally, reduce or limit its existing capabilities.

Research / Market Test / Discovery

n/a

Outputs

UK Link would continue to function without any investment for a certain period of time but opportunities to ensure security, performance and optimisation (in readiness for Trident) would be lost.

Capability requirements

As per current resources and service delivery

Approach

n/a

Timeframe

n/a

Risk

- Service continuity would be at risk

Assumptions

- A component will fail to function in part or full before the lifespan of UK Link comes to an end.

Costs

- Existing S&O costs would remain in place.

Expenditure profile

n/a

Benefits

- No investment costs.

Cost Benefit Analysis

n/a

Detailed Analysis

Solution Option 2 – Sustain Only

Overview

The Xoserve recommended option is for UK Link Sustain to be undertaken as a programme of work as a follow on from previous year's investment sustain phases. The programme structure of this option would continue to provide the oversight and governance across all projects, drive the delivery, providing a consistent view of progress to all customers and stakeholders and seek appropriate approvals at various points of significant investment as per the agreed CDSP governance.

Key BP 2025 projects within the 3 main themes are listed below:

UK Link Essential Maintenance

- a. Sustaining activities associated with UK Link solution components (core application, reporting, data transformation and monitoring layers) and continue to maintain current assets as long as they remain technically viable.
- b. Sustaining and maintaining UK Link batch capability (continuation from BP24).
- c. AMT Marketflow sustaining activities

UK Link Sustain

- a. Sustaining activities associated with .NET Framework (compatibility upgrade).
- b. DCC Gateway Hardware Security Model (HSM) replatforming to ensure that this service capability is in full support.
- c. EFT maintenance and move
- d. UK Link security maintenance

Service Excellence

- a. Physical Information Exchange (PIX) Decommissioning.

This solution option therefore creates opportunities to:

- Maintain and sustain the UK Link Systems Landscape (below architecture).
- Avoid risk to CDSP services and managed services.
- Build upon previous BP years' budget allocations for sustain as specific sustain items are discovered/mandated by product vendors.
- Supports the decommissioning of the Physical Information Exchange (infra/network) once the rollout of Cloud Information Exchange (CIX) is complete.

Outputs

Delivery of the BP25 UK Link Roadmap Sustain scope will ensure that all System Landscape UK Link components requiring upgrades will remove any risk to the provision of CDSP Service Provision as illustrated in the scope section.

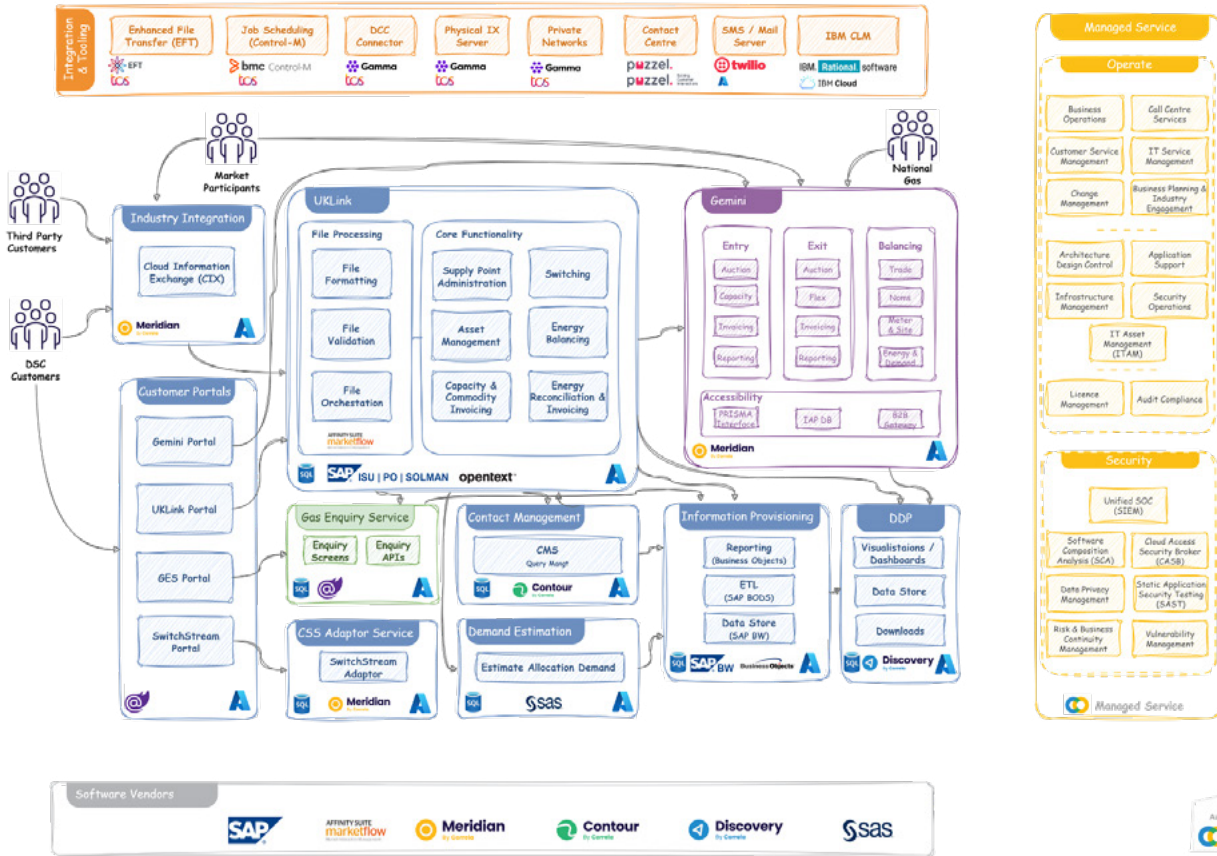
Capability requirements

A number of capabilities are required from the tooling provided by specific vendors depending on type of sustain and/or activity (e.g. SAP Update manager to download SAP Service packs). These standard tooling practices are to be individually evaluated and best practice is to be utilised for the respective projects within the sustain roadmap. Data capabilities are intrinsic within the above tools.

Systems Landscape - As Is with Software Utilisation

2025 (post BP24 deliverables)

The model shows a high level overview of the current Xoserve systems landscape. Only systems that are seen as critical to the core business operation, for ease of reference and understanding are shown aligned. To aid understanding purposes both the 'Business system name' together with the software it utilises is shown.



Key people capabilities from a programme/project perspective are listed below. Any projects that require a sustained need for expertise are mentioned explicitly.

A number of specific functional and technical people capabilities/expertise are expected to be leveraged from Service and Operate (S&O) teams due to the nature of the projects (existing estate upgrades as opposed to new capabilities).

People Capabilities	UK Link Maintenance	UK Link Sustain	Service Excellence
Programme Management	✗	✗	✗
Project Management	✗	✗	✗
Business Analysis	✗	✗	
Architecture support	✗	✗	

Approach

The project in scope of BP 2025 will be delivered under a Waterfall project delivery approach. This due to the nature of maintenance and sustain projects that have to be delivered into a complex DSC Service landscape, and where any outages requirements to Core, VCO or Customer Edge components limit customer service risks/impacts.

Timeframe

The detailed project plans will be developed for BP25 once project(s) move into the respective Start-Up and Initiation phases. The following plan on a page provides an overview of the proposed scope of project delivery through to the end of BP 2027/28.

3 Year Plan – Sustain MVP

BP Themes				Roadmap			
Themes	BP2025/26	BP 2026/27	BP 2027	2025	2026	2027	2028
Essential Maintenance*	Yes	Yes	Yes	SAP Applications Yearly Maintenance	SAP Applications Yearly Maintenance		SAP Applications Upgrade/Sustain App/OS/DB
	Yes	Yes	Yes	AMT Sustain	AMT Sustain		AMT Maintain (Application, OS, DB)
	N/A	Yes	Yes				
	Yes	N/A	N/A	Batch			
Sustain/Transform**	Yes	Yes	Yes	EFT Upgrade/Data Centre Move	EFT Upgrade/Replace		
	Yes	Yes	N/A	Compatibility Upgrade			
	N/A	Yes	Yes		MoveIT/API Gateways		
	Yes	N/A	N/A	DCC Gateway (HSM) Replatforming			
	N/A	Yes	Yes	UK Link Security Maintenance	UK Link Security Maintenance		UK Link Security Maintenance
Service Essentials	N/A	Yes	Yes		Enterprise Hub		
	N/A	Yes	Yes		Service Network Maintenance		
	Yes	Yes	N/A		PIX Decommissioning		
Enabling changes							
Transformation changes	TBC	TBC	TBC				
Key dependencies and risks				Product Vendor Releases and Support Models, Industry Activity, Trident timelines (Xoserve Strategy & Programme timelines influences the sustain landscape and activities)			

*Maintenance and upgrades are performed for a variety of purposes, including improving the software overall, addressing faults or bugs, increasing performance, fixing security issues and adopting more features, once the software/hardware is upgraded. Maintenance is also essential to stay within vendor support and may be mandated by Product vendors.
 **These items may require a transformation away from current technologies where the solution may be deemed as unsustainable or transformation to a new product may be more economical or future proof

Project / Delivery	Project Ref.	Milestone	Description	Target Date
UKLink Sustain 2025	TBC	Implementation complete	All sustaining activities complete for the scope of UK Link Sustain 2023	31/03/2026
UK Link Batch Upgrade	TBC	Implementation complete	Delivery of the agreed UK Link Batch option	31/03/2026
UK Link Compatibility Upgrade	TBC	Implementation complete	Implementation of the UK Link Compatibility Upgrade Project	31/03/2026
DCC User Gateway Upgrade	TBC	Implementation complete	Implementation of the agreed DCC User Gateway Upgrade / Replacement Option	31/03/2026
EFT Upgrade / Replacement	TBC	Implementation complete	Implementation of the agreed option for EFT (Upgrade or Replace)	31/03/2026
PIX Decommission	TBC	PIX Decommissioning	Decommissioning of PIX for those DSC Customers that have been onboarded to CIX	31/03/2026

Risk

- Impact on service delivery while this solution is being delivered / after it has been implemented.
- Market / policy uncertainty that could lead to a stranding risk or 'regret spend'.
- There is a risk that without continued investment in UK Link core components these would not be in support and in the event of an incident this could lead to a loss in service for a sustained period, impacting customers in the delivery of DSC contractual services causing wider issues across the UK Gas industry. This risk is being mitigated by requesting the continuation of funding for maintenance and sustain projects to ensure all components are suitably sustained in the coming years.
- There is a risk on the security of CDSP Service Provision if Maintenance / Sustain projects are not delivered by not having the Product Vendor security patches installed across the UK Link system landscape.
- The delivery of the technical solutions is dependent on Xoserve's Trident project aligning decisions on solution option(s) for the future of the UK Link Roadmap which considers the SAP ECC end date of mainstream support on the 31/12/2027.
- There is a risk to delay of Project Trident making timely decisions for the design and implementation of the new platform given the scale and complexity of the roadmap delivery. This risk will have to be monitored through the current business plan to determine the impacts to the Operation of CDSP Services.
- There is a risk to the solution around the timing and scale of additional regulatory changes due to the unknown nature of decarbonisation programme plan as it awaits key government decisions. We continue to work closely with all industry participants to plan adequately to face into this uncertainty.
- Risk of paying higher maintenance costs for extension in 2027 (this is subject to the SAP End of Service Life (EOSL) date (31/12/2027) and support charges which could be revised by the vendor). This risk is critical to the operation of the Systems Landscape and decisions are required as part of Project Trident to align near term Maintenance and ation of the UK Link Roadmap to ensure investment does not result in regret spend³.
- Risk that minor outages are required to Xoserve services to ensure suitable upgrades and essential maintenance activity is undertaken in a timely fashion.
- There is a risk that the product vendors' support policy and/or frequency & size of releases forces us into greater levels of sustain activity not budgeted in this investment proposal.
- There is a risk of 'end of support' policies, compatibility issues or product deprecation within UK link estate could happen requiring a greater level of change to the UK link estate.
- There is a risk of some regret spend on components being sustained if a "replace"/" remove" policy is adopted via Project Trident sooner than anticipated.
- There is a risk that forecast costs for BP25 Projects could increase as these are based on historic Sustain projects and scope – the true costs will be known once Vendor Product upgrades are released in the future as the scope is unknown at this point in time.

³ Xoserve to align with Project Trident Investment Case and the required decisions to be taken in conjunction with DSC Customers / Stakeholders / Investors

Assumptions

- Assumption that Project Trident will align any dependencies and decisions to the UK Link Sustain investment case with the scope of this programme.
- Assumption a timely decision whether to extend SAP ECC maintenance be made.
- Assumption that Xoserve will confirm the UK Link Roadmap position for EFT and confirm if this will be a replace or upgrade.
- Assumption that Product Vendor upgrades will be those available as of the 01/04/2025 to define the scope of the BP25 projects.
- Assumption that Xoserve agree with the DCC on the DCC User Gateway Security Requirements and define the architecture requirements directly with the DCC and confirm these requirements to Correlia to undertake Options assessment (and alignment to the SEC).

The sustain activities and decisions are to be taken by Xoserve in a timely fashion so as to mitigate CDSP service, delivery and other commercial/financial risks.

Costs

See Itemised costs and cost drivers in the following table:

Element	BP 25/26	BP 26/27	BP 27/28
Programme Costs	650,000	715,000	715,000
Batch Upgrades inc. Decommissioning	100,000	-	-
SAP Applications Yearly Maintenance	510,000	510,000	1,500,000
AMT Sustaining Activities	75,000	-	300,000
EFT Upgrade/Move	250,000	500,000	-
Compatibility Upgrade	150,000	-	200,000
DCC Gateway HSM Upgrade/Move	450,000	-	-
MoveIT/API Gateways Upgrade	-	250,000	250,000
UK Link Security Maintenance	100,000	100,000	100,000
Physical IX Decommissioning	50,000	150,000	-
Enterprise Hub	-	150,000	150,000
Service Network Maintenance	-	100,000	100,000
TOTAL	2,335,000	2,475,000	3,315,000

Cost Split

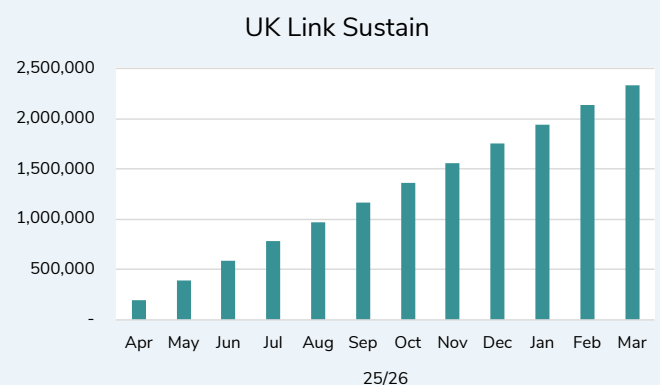
We propose to apply the 'common funding' default split between parties to reflect the expected shared benefits:

Shipper	Nat Gas	DN	IGT
51.90%	5.80%	41.00%	1.30%

The means for calculating this funding split is set in the [Budget and Charging Methodology](#) (section 7.2, p,20).

There are no perceived impacts to future S&O costs, but this would be confirmed in each project.

Expenditure profile



Benefits

The expected benefits associated with this solution are as follows:

Sustain MVP BP 2025/26

This summary presents schedule for technology sustain/risk management helpful in keeping track of risks and solving them properly on time. It includes date and likelihood of risk occurrence, impact, timings for each risk to promptly action critical risks and develop change plans to sustain the components

Area	Activity	Risk and Likelihood of Occurrence	Impact of Risk	Timing/Owner	Mitigation Plan
SAP & AMT Maintenance	SAP and AMT regularly release service notes known as service packs (SP) for improving performance, security or resolving any standard bugs identified globally. These are deemed as essential maintenance cycles and recommended Y - O - Y to keep ECC suite running at optimal levels	Application performance, stability impact and/or service failure Medium/Low	V. High	Apr 2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish standardised change processes for release management Perform Sustain activities Y - O - Y Quarterly review for critical applications (Risk/Urgency)
DCC SMART Gateway & Batch	DCC HSM Application and Infrastructure upgrade and Move to a new DC Batch Replacement Continuation from BP 2024/25	Application and Infrastructure performance, stability impact and/or service failure Medium	Medium	Apr 2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade and Move DCC Gateway physical servers to a suitable Data centre Pursue cloud options with DCC to minimise cost for Physical kit and maintenance
Sustain/Transform	Move IT upgrade Compatibility Upgrades (.NET Frameworks for Twilio, API Gateway & UKL P) EFT Upgrade/Move - Data Centre Move and upgrade/replace decisions	Application and Infrastructure performance, stability and or failure Integration failure with more modern technologies Lack of Microsoft support High	High	Apr 2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade relevant components and Test/Remediate functionality EFT Tactical decisions in line with application strategy and Data Centre move from TCS ECP
Service Essentials	PIX Server and agent decommissioning within CDSP landscape (dependent on CIX Rollout) Security Maintenance	Stranded Application/Infra costs Security risks Integration risks Medium/Low	Low	Apr 2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ramp down PIX infrastructure at appropriate points Decommission EFT - PIX links

Cost Benefit Analysis

UK Link Investment Options					
Options & Timeline	Scope	Customer Impact	Benefits	Costs	Ranking
Option 1 – Do Nothing UK Link Essential Maintenance & Sustain	The Do-Nothing options is not recommended as there are multiple UK Link components within the Systems Landscape that are / will be out of support during the BP25 period	Risk to CDSP Service Provision if any component out of support were to fail that would impact the ability to deliver the required services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No investment cost but is offset by the risk to CDSP Service Provision Security risks due to non-compliance with essential product updates. Service risk due to lack of vendor support for older software/ technology. 	£0	2
Option 2 – Sustain Only	This option delivers the required investment to ensure that UK Link Essential Maintenance & Sustain scope is delivered during BP25.	<p>Lower level of investment from 2025 to 2026 but high investment from 2027 onwards.</p> <p>Full use of extended support, greater risk of technology failure if the decisions required by Project Trident are not made in a timely manner that considers the mandated SAP Product Roadmap and the end of SAP ECC Support on the 31/12/2027.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid DSC service impact by undertaking near term maintenance and sustain activities required to remain in vendor support of the current architecture. If this were not to occur, there would be the high risk of application performance lag, bugs being introduced to the platform, hardware failure or security breaches, which could result in complete service failure or unavailability. Technology upgrades to deliver a more sustainable platform, reducing the risk of future product or infrastructure failure. The UK Link Sustain theme establishes a controlled approach to maintaining service, rather than reacting to an increasing service risk profile that may exist by running 'end of version/ life' components. This increases the possibility of application and infrastructure errors being encountered that cannot be rectified by the vendors. This approach will deliver greater platform flexibility to respond to potential future customer needs. 	£2,400	1



BPIR Assurance

The independent [BPIR Assurance report](#) can be downloaded from the BP25 hub.



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