CommunITel

ADFS Viewdata System.

CommunITel ADFS System notes

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1: Introduction

1.1 Although the CommunITel package does it's best to overcome the 31 file limitations of the standard BBC disk system, some people have found that even the 195 frames allowed for are not quite enough.

It has always been possible to use the CommunITel system, with an Econet, but this was out of reach of many would be users due to the number of computers it would require.

The 'tree' structure of the Advanced Disk Filing System provided an obvious answer to this and now it is possibleto have a database of over 600 frames on one floppy disk, or many thousands of frames on a winchester hard disk unit.

These notes will, when used in conjunction with the existing manuals, enable the user to set up an extensive viewdata base used either locally (Level 1) or with an online host system, (Level 2).

1.2 Before using your ADFS CommunITel package, you should ensure that your computer is correctly set up.

On the BBC Master range, the following commands should be entered to set the correct default status.

***CONFIGURE FILE 14**
***CONFIGURE DATA 5**
***CONFIGURE MODE 7** (or 135)

If you do not wish to have ADFS as your default filing system, or you have a BBC model B or B+ with another filing system in a higher priority rom socket, it is possible to still use CommunITel by holding the 'A' key down whilst pressing SHIFT and BREAK.

Note. This system will ONLY run on a BBC micro that is fitted with an ADFS rom and a 1770 (or 1772) floppy disk controller.

2: The Main Menu

2.1 To start the system, insert the system disk in disk drive 0 and press BREAK whilst holding down the SHIFT key. The disk drive light should illuminate and the disk should start to rotate. After a short delay, a menu should appear on the screen, similar to the picture on page 1 of the Tutorial Manual.

The only readily noticeable change is that the option "CREATE A NEW DATABASE FILE" has been replaced with "SCROLLING TEXT TERMINAL". Use of this program is explained in section 4.

3: The Viewdata Editor

3.1 Although the file handling characteristics of the editor have undergone a certain amount of re-arrangement most of this should be transparent to the user.

The most obvious difference is to the **"CHANGE THE CURRENT FILER"** option, it was decided that the **"TAPE3"** option was not really of any use, as if a tape filing system is used, then the 1200 baud speed was adequately reliable.

This option has been replaced with a **"*ADFS"** option, allowing the user access to four filing systems in total (TAPE is not available on the Master Compact, and DFS (DISK) is not fitted as standard).

Options now available are:

NETWORK (Econet)

TAPE (Cassette)

ADFS (Advanced Disk Filing System)

DISK (Standard DFS, NOT multiple frames/file)

3.2 Page names are allowed a full nine characters plus the frame id [a-z], certain characters, however, have special meanings on an ADFS system. It is therefore not advisable to attempt to use any of the following symbols in a page name: **&,$,*,#,@,^**, and to reserve the use of **"."** for directory delimiters.

(DFS filenames are limited to six characters and a frame id.)

3.3 New Sub-directories for frames may be created via the Editor using the **"SYSTEM" "*" COMMAND"** option.

First select the correct option from the main editor menu, then when the message **"ENTER COMMAND: *"** appears enter **"CDIR** [*name*], where *name* is the name of your new sub-directory.

Several error messages could appear at this point, refer to your ADFS user guide for an explanation of what these mean. Normally it will be something fairly simple, for example the directory may already exist or the main directory may have the maximum of 47 entries.

It is wise to keep directory names as short as possible as otherwise it will limit your choice of the page name.

4: Scrolling Text Terminal

4.1 This is an extra program included in the ADFS package , it is a scrolling type terminal and allows access to bulletin boards that do not use viewdata format, e.g. TTNS, Telecom Gold, BT MUD etc.

The default screen mode is 3 to allow 80 columns text, but can be altered. The terminal functions are obtained by shifting the red function keys (i.e. press **SHIFT** and the required function key together), this is to leave the normal operation of the function keys free for the user to program.

The functions are as follows:-

f0 Help	- produces a list of the functions obtainable
f1 OSCLI	- allows * commands such as ***FX6** or ***EXEC** filename
f2 Printer	- toggles the printer on and off
f3 Mode	- changes screen mode
f4 Call	- dial up. RETURN alone will use the default shown
f5 Disconnect	- Hangs up the modem
f6 DSL	- Deletes to the start of the line
f7 Set rates	- Changes the speed of the modem (baud rate)

To leave the terminal, press **CTRL** and **ESCAPE** together.

This terminal is a simple one to enable CommunITel system owners to get a taste of scrolling terminals, for more serious use, a more complex terminal capable of XMODEM file transfer, XON/XOFF etc. is recommended. The terminal will work with a DTI specification modem.

5: Other Programs

5.1 The majority of the programs remain unchanged in use.

The only significant difference noticed will be the use of "." within page names to facilitate the use of any sub-directories contained in the main Database directory.

For example, the original page **ASTRO1a** has been moved to be page **1a** in sub-directory **ASTRO**, thus to access this page it is necessary to use the name **ASTRO.1a**.

6: Changing System Settings

6.1 The main change to this area is the removal of the "Disk Drive Settings" option, this is because the ADFS system treats the whole disk as one surface, no matter how many sides it has, or if it is 40 or 80 track.

6.2 To select which drive and directory contain the programs and database, the "Network/ADFS Settings" option is used, if you are to be using a network, then this option must be set up as explained in the Reference Manual.

For ADFS use, this option has to be set in a slightly different format, :[*drive*].[*directory*]

6.3 In the default system, the database and programs are stored on the same disk, so the PROGRAM setting is set to :4.VIEWDATA, and the DATABASE is set to :4.VWDB. (This means drive 4, directory $.VWDB).

To store the database on a second floppy drive, the drive number would have to be :5 (or :1 will work).

Drives 4 and 5 are used in this example to enable the use of a winchester drive, when this is fitted, it becomes drive 0 and the floppies become 4 and 5.

7: Setting Up a New Database

7.1 If you are using a single disk drive, then it is necessary to create a copy of the programs on the system disk first (use the utility program supplied with your ADFS system for this).

First the database disk must be placed in one of the drives and then "mounted" (***MOUNT**, this reads some basic details from the disk), decide what you are going to call your database directory, e.g. VWDB, and create that directory on the disk by use of the ***CDIR** [*dir*] command (***CDIR VWDB**).

7.3 If you are using a level 2 system with the on-line host, you will have to set up an INTRAY directory within your database, to do this, set your current directory to your database directory (***DIR VWDB**) and create a directrory called INTRAY (***CDIR INTRAY**), this will have created a directory $.VWDB. INTRAY, which must be initialised from the host system menu before the host can be used.

7.4 You now have an empty database with a capacity, as it stands, of 46 frames, to use more than this you have to set up a number of sub-directories. For example, if in your main directory you have the four main pages (HALLOa, Message, 0a and BYEa) along with 10 sub-indexes each leading to one of 10 sub-directories, assuming all these sub-directories contain their maximum of 47 frames, this will give you 484 frames total, taking up about 520k bytes of the disks capacity.

7.5 If you are unsure of the commands: ***CDIR**, ***DIR** and ***MOUNT** of have not fully understood the workings of the 'tree' directory structure, carefully read the ADFS manual and try the ADFS tutor program supplied with your ADFS rom.

8: Using a Winchester

8.1 If you find the speed of floppy disks too slow and wish for a larger database, then you can use any ADFS compatible Winchester hard disk unit with your system giving capacities from 5mbytes to 112mbytes.

To use a winchester, you may either:

a) Copy all the programs and database onto it and run it without a floppy drive (change ADFS settings to drive :0) , or,

b) Copy only the database and some boot routines onto the hard disk, and run the rest of the programs from floppy disk (change Database drives to :0 and leave programs on drive :4).

8.2 If you intend to just put the database on the winchester, then you also need to copy files VSMENU, SETTING & !BOOT and with the winchester as the current drive (***MOUNT 0**) set up the boot option with ***OPT 4,2.**

9: Response Pages

9.1 What is a Response Page

A response page is a special type of message page, instead of the caller being presented with a blank page to complete as he/she likes, the system will present a normal page, with up to 10 special areas (Response fields) to be entered (a bit like the HALLOa log-on page). To end each entry, presss # (or **RETURN**), the cursor will then move on to the next field, or if there are no more fields to complete, then a message will be presented on the bottom line giving instructions on what to do next.

9.2 How do I set up my own Response Pages?

The CommunITel response pages were designed to be as easy to set up as possible.

Firstly, decide on the name of your response page, any normal page name can be used, e.g. 123a, RESPONSEa, ORDERa etc.

Three frames are required for each response page, an 'a' frame, a 'b' frame and a 'd' frame (no 'c' frame. This bends the rules a bit).

The 'a' frame is the actual response page, the 'b' frame contains apporpriate details for display if the message was sent, and the 'd' frame has a message saying that the frame has not been sent.

Next, using the HEY PRESTO editor, design the page layout clearly marking the areas where the fields will be, a suggested marking is " . . . . . " followed by a hash (to imply 'press hash to end'). Up to 10 fields can be used, each can have up to 38 characters.
N.B. *fields must be contained within one line, they cannot go past the end of the line.*

The next step is to let the system know where each field is, the easiest way of doing this is to plan your page on paper, writing down the information to be entered in each field: The horizontal position of the first character of the field, the vertical position of the field (these can be found from the editor by looking at the H and V numbers in the top left-hand corner) and the number of characters in the field.

You should now have 3 numbers for each field.

Now go back to the editor menu and select the **'SET UP PAGES ROUTING'** option. As a response page needs no routing, it was decided to use the route spaces for the field data. The fields can be stored in any of the 10 routes, but must be in the order in which they are to be entered, i.e. the field corresponding to route 4 will be entered before the field on route 7.

The data must be entered in the format **"@HHVVLLA"**, that is: an **"@"** to inform the host that this is a response definition, followed by the **H** value (*this must be 2 numbers, if it is only 1 (0-9), put a 0 in front*), then the **V** value (*also 2 numbers*), then the length (*2 numbers again*). Lastly, an **"A"** needs to be put on the end, this is not used in this version of the system, but is reserved for future expansion. Press **RETURN** to enter the data.

Repeat this for all of your fields (*leave any unused routes blank*).

Finally, go up the **"Frame type"** area and enter **"r" <RETURN>**. The response frame itself is then ready and can be saved.

Now create a 'b' frame for the response page saying something like "Thank you for your message" and a 'd' (*not 'c'*) page with a message saying "Your message has NOT been sent" (*or something along those lines*).

The routes from the 'b' and 'd' frames have to be set up as normal. It is advisable not to set up a 'c' frame for this page.

9.3 Reviewing Response frames

From the host menu, select the **"Review Responses"** option.

You are then asked **"Do you want a print out?"**, if you enter 'Y' (or 'y') to this option, ALL the response frames will be printed out on a printer (if no printer is connected, or it is not in a 'ready' condition, the computer will 'hang').

Entering anything other than a 'Y' (or 'y') will be taken as meaning **'No'**.

When reviewing, each response frame will be displayed, along with the Caller's name and the original frame's name. A prompt on the bottom line will tell you to press the **'COPY'** key to print the frame on a printer, press **'RETURN'** to see the next frame, or press **'ESCAPE'** to leave the review program.

When the last response page has been viewed, you will be asked to press

'RETURN' to exit. Pressing 'RETURN' at this stage will take you back to the Host System menu.

10: Summary

10.1 General notes on ADFS housekeeping

Every now and then it is advisable to check your ADFS disk for fragmentation of space (this is when lots of gaps occur between files). To see what state the free space is in, insert the disk and type ***DIR** this will load the information from the disk, into the computer. Then type ***MAP**, this will list out all the gaps on the disk. If more than 2 gaps show up, enter ***COMPACT**, on some machines this will cause the screen to fill with 'rubbish' for a time.

When the disk stops, press **CTRL** and **'L'** (this clears the screen), and repeat from the ***MAP** stage until the gaps are reduced in number.

10.2 Organising the Intray

When the Intray is initialised the logging files are cleared, however the frames are not deleted and must be removed manually.

To do this, enter the editor and set the current DIR to your Intray. Then select the **'System star command'** option and enter **CAT** and press **RETURN.** This will show the three logging files (Responses, Callers and Infrms) and all of the frames that have been sent in. To remove the frames, for each one enter: **'DELETE** *name* **'** (where '*name* ' is the name of the next frame to delete).

Do not delete the three logging files.

It is advisable not to leave frames in the Intray for too long as it only has a normal capacity of 44 frames and can easily be filled up on a busy host system.

10.3 As always, careful planning of your database is essential to ensure you get maximum capacity from your disks, keeping a plan on paper of your main indexes and routes is a sensible precaution.

Keep directory names as short as possible, this gives more space for a meaningful page name.

Keep a backup of your disks, there is nothing worse than setting up a large database only to lose it if your disk drive fails.

In case of any difficulty, contact CommunITel at:

189 Freston Road, London W10 6TH or 'phone 01-960-7998

or PRESTEL mailbox 019607998

To keep up to date on the latest developments from CommunITel, call our host system on 01-968-7402 24 hours a day.