CSM meeting with CCP, 18th – 20th of May 2011, Iceland

CSM Intro

Present: CCP Dr.EyjoG, Ívar – Director of Customer Support, CCP Diagoras, CCP Xhagen

The CSM wanted it noted that the meeting, being the first meeting of the summit and conducted at 9am, was not off to a late start because of late arriving CSM members. It is however recognized that breakfast is the most important meal of the day and thus this tiny, rocky start, was forgiven.

CCP began by announcing a formal organizational change that has been made within CCP. The CSM project has been moved out of the Research and Statistics department and is now alongside Customer Support, Community Management and The Volunteer Division – since all these communicate directly with customers it makes perfect sense to have them all under the same person for maximum synergy. Ívar, the current Director of Customer Support is this person. Ívar is a co-founder to CCP, a former CEO of CCP, former CFO and has basically served any and all roles imaginable within CCP.

This move of the CSM project had been planned for a while, as the CSM has been proven as a concept, and is such a natural progress of the project.

CCP asked the two re-elected members how the 6th CSM compared to the previous CSM. The answer was that the CSM had a faster and perhaps smoother start than previously, both because of the other candidates themselves and because of the increased communications with CCP. The kinks of working together are not yet completely worked out, but there has been no significant interpersonal friction.

Each CSM has more history of what did – and didn't – work than its predecessors, and thus the 6th CSM has had an easier start than the previous ones – the institutional memory of the CSM is increasing and errors or mistakes are more easily avoided. The tools brought onboard by the new people have proven to work well and "the CSM learns faster how the sausage is made" was a description of the situation.

One complaint the CSM voiced, and it has voiced it before, is their access – or lack thereof – to internal CCP information. Teams' backlogs, what is being done, who is doing what; this information is necessary to in order to make informed decisions. The teams and persons that do communicate to the CSM provide them with invaluable information. Teams that are not necessarily in direct contact with the customers as much as the high profile ones are often the unknown variable in the equation; CSM needs an overview of them in order to function properly.

For example, the CSM might prioritize matter A above matter B, believing that the teams they are in contact with will have an easier time doing A than B. The exact opposite might then be found to be true,

not because of the team in question but because of interdependencies that team has with another team that the CSM is not well connected to.

The bottom line is that the more information the CSM has, the better advices it can give to CCP.

One of the techniques to lower the barrier between the CSM and CCP is more communications, in a less formal matter. The introduction of the Skype channel shared by CSM and CCP is one of the tools that are being used in this endeavor.

The CSM furthermore elaborate on that the more visibility the CSM gets the more legitimacy and influence it gains, both within CCP and among the playerbase. CCP added that newer players, less than one year old, are a very large portion of the playerbase and reaching them is more challenging than reaching the older players. More CSM visibility would help reaching that audience.

A discussion was had on the CSM voting system, and how the system could be changed in order to get a stronger election. It was agreed upon that this topic would not require deep attention immediately, and it would be taken up outside the summit. The goal will be to simplify the system, make it easier for the voters to make an informed decision.

The meeting concluded on the note that facetime between CSM and CCP is extremely valuable to the CSM and that more would be better.

Team BFF & the Little Things

Present: CCP Soundwave, CCP Greyscale, CCP Zulu, CCP Tallest

CCP showed the Sprint cycles of Team BFF to the CSM, with each task broken down by estimated man-hours and prioritized by the MuSCoW system. The Little Things backlog was also shown to the CSM; it currently has around 180 items, down from over 300+ originally. Each 'story' is rated by a point system (1/3/5/8/13/20 – where 1 could be interpreted as being one man-day and 13 maybe the whole team for two sprints) to show implementation difficulty. Most of the small-point stories have been done by now, and most of the nullsec entries in the Little Things backlog have been moved to a separate nullsec backlog for the upcoming nullsec revamp.

CSM expressed a desire to see Little Things/Thousand Papercuts continue as an ongoing institution, as well as to see more regular communication with the playerbase about the status of the Little Things projects. CSM also emphasized the importance of access to the Little Things backlogs, not just the 'CSM issues' backlog. Zulu said CSM could have a selection of the Little Things backlog, and Soundwave wants the CSM to give him a 'top 10' list drawn from it – i.e. to have the CSM prioritize the items so BFF can get a better feel for what is important to players. The CSM suggested that a backlog review/top 10 list becomes a continuous CSM/CCP cycle, rather than a one-time event.

CCP doesn't always know at the design level how hard a task is. One example is fighter bays (which would only hold fighters and fighter-bombers, but not regular drones). This began as a 3 point story and exploded into 5-8 point story, so it was moved out of Little Things and added to the Winter nullsec expansion where it will slotted in if time and resources allow.

CSM noted that the playerbase associates Team BFF with Little Things, and warned that there will be some blowback when they find that Team BFF will be working on non-Little Things projects (such as the nullsec revamp).

9 months ago, CCP moved towards distributed patching (or patching phases) rather than 2 big releases every year. The CSM is very much in favor of smaller regular updates and tweaks to improve the game; regular patching shows that work is being done.

Finally, CCP Greyscale revealed the dark secret of storytelling in EVE: anything can be explained by Nanobots or Jovians.

EVE: Flying in Space

Present: CCP Soundwave, CCP Greyscale, CCP Tallest and CCP Zulu

Bright-eyed and bushy tailed, CCP Soundwave, CCP Greyscale, CCP Tallest, and CCP Zulu laid the groundwork down for future presentations with this Flying in Space (FiS) presentation, one of the first of the CSM Summit. Since this was one of the first presentations, it focused mostly on giving the CSM some things to think about and discuss during later sessions.

The presentation began with Team BFF representatives Soundwave and Greyscale introducing the plan for the execution of the Winter expansion. The plan involved releasing not just one large expansion on Christmas, but instead several moderately-sized expansions leading up to the main Winter expansion. The main theme of this Winter expansion, at least with regards to FiS, would be iterations on 0.0 space. Specifically: null-sec sovereignty related features, supercap proliferation and the rule of super-capitals, and various other "Team BFF" tweaks.

For most CSM members (barring two), this was the first introduction to intra-departmental limitations at CCP. When discussing POS changes Soundwave explained that many of the modifications we were talking about might look like an easy thing, but that there would be a logjam in implementation – the fact remains that changing things related to POSes is a technically difficult and resource intensive task, no matter the size of the task. As an example of this, the CSM would come to learn that Team TriLambda (an art focused team) had their plates full. Any changes that require graphical overhaul, or even any graphical work, would have to be tagged onto the end of their queue.

Soundwave then spoke briefly about the non-FiS aspects of the Winter expansion and how they would relate to walking in stations. Establishments, the progression of Captains Quarters introduced with Incarna 1.0, would also deal with smuggling contraband and boosters.

Soundwave and Greyscale reviewed the current game mechanic wherein NPC customs officers are responsible for confiscating contraband. The change that they envision would see this enforcement fall into the laps of players. A vague mechanic was discussed with the CSM about how the players would scan and enforce "the law". The CSM response was positive, emphasizing that corruption and bribery amongst player-enforcers should be a viable mechanic. CCP agreed.

With more back-and-forth between the CSM and CCP, the CSM once again brought up POS's, albeit in a slightly different light. The notion of certain POS modules being moved outside of the forcefield so that smaller gangs could further harass established empires was mentioned. CCP seemed to agree, and took it one step further to including Capital Ship Assembly Arrays. CSM and CCP brainstormed and both seemed to be very receptive and on the same page, though the talk was curtailed quickly citing an entire presentation on both 0.0 development and POS structures in the future.

Taking a slight tangent, both Zulu and Soundwave discussed the importance of incentivizing space, both for larger alliances and smaller alliances. Their belief is that the alliance level should want to invest in

space not only for the abstract "we take care of our members" notion, but also give them a tangible reward for such investment. CCPs commitment to keep small alliances viable was strong.

No talk about the value of space could be complete without discussing the anomaly nerf. The CSM brought up a potential problem with the distribution rate of Havens and Sanctums which sent Greyscale and Soundwave running to their charts to make sure everything was going as planned. While nothing could be gleaned from the charts, CCP did say that they would look into the problem and fix it if one existed.

The CSM then did some light brainstorming with CCP, and a few topics were discussed beginning with treaties as an in-game mechanic. Soundwave had some concerns about the efficacy of these treaties and was worried they'd be used as a tool to hinder development of smaller entities.

Focus then shifted to null-sec station proliferation. The notion of wreckable stations was introduced by the CSM and while CCP was not turned off completely with the idea, resource allocation issues would sideline the issue at least in the short term.

CCP then brought up Supercaps, and the CSM were basically on the same page. Supercarrier changes were discussed, with everyone agreeing that a fighter- or bomber-only drone bay would be a welcomed change. The CSM agreed that Titans in their current state are fairly balanced, and that the focus should be placed on the Supercarrier. Soundwave and Greyscale noted that the coding involved in such a change would represent a large portion of resources that could otherwise be used for several smaller changes. Given the importance of SCs, the CSM suggested that it was well worth the resources to focus on this one thing and it seemed as though CCP agreed.

Brainstorming sessions took place about the role of other capital-class vessels, such as the dreadnaught. However, with a session about ship rebalance looming the conversation quickly died out with some interesting ideas for both parties to ponder.

While it may seem like not much was accomplished during this meeting, the intangible benefits were massive for both the CSM and CCP. CCP had a better understanding of what the CSM valued, and the CSM got a look behind the curtain, so to speak, on how CCP operates, which changes would be viable, and where the potential log-jams would be.

Eve Future

Present: CCP t0rfifrans, CCP Zulu

CCP began by detailing the contents of the Incarna summer release, and assured the CSM that no "hidden content" would be added after June 1. Instead, all the existing content would simply be refined to ensure everything was operating as intended.

Discussion then shifted to Torfi's vision of developing Eve. In previous expansions new content was the focus; in the upcoming expansions iteration on current features would have the lions-share of the attention. While iteration would be the primary goal, there would still be room for adding new content. Ideally this new content would be added as an iteration of a current feature.

Conversation then moved onto the Winter expansion and what changes that would bring. A 0.0 re-balance and sovereignty re-design captured the attention of the CSM, though a special presentation devoted solely to these features was slated for a later time and thus a detailed discussion did not take place. Instead, the focus was on "Establishments" – the iteration of the Captain's Quarters.

Establishments will be coupled with an iterative feature on contraband. Torfi was concerned that, currently, smuggling contraband & boosters doesn't feel like the shady business practice it is. Additionally, the fact that NPCs play a large role in policing boosters does limit gameplay. Putting that policing into the hands of players, as well as making Establishments the venue for booster sales, would be a successful iterative feature.

After establishments, Torfi displayed the new artwork to be delivered in the Winter. The Nebulae were the center of attention – 13 distinct features that the player can relate to when in different geographic locations. The effect this has on the player is that different areas of space actually feel different, and movement through regions seems like movement instead of just random backgrounds. Torfi revealed that the artwork was worked on by a specialized team outside of CCP whose focus is only working on nebulae design and space-artwork.

New turret effects, to go along with the new turret models, are slated to come out in the winter expansions. No talk on effects can be complete without engine trails and the cyno effect – which the CSM promptly brought up. Arnar and Torfi both lamented the discontinuation of engine trails, but admitted they were removed from game-play because, at the time, they were too hardware intensive. Confirmation was given that engine trails are going to make a triumphant return, and along with all new effects the end-user will be able to toggle them on and off. The cyno effect was politely skirted around by CCP with a vague "yea we'll work on that, too" statement.

Sovereignty mechanics were discussed, albeit briefly since another presentation about sovereignty was scheduled, but CCP admitted that they believe the current system could be better. The goal is to not completely redesign Sov from the ground up, but instead to make changes so that Sov is more

rewarding than its current state. Incursions were brought up by the CSM as a positive, group-oriented activity that is both more enjoyable than simply ratting and a good transitory phase from PvE to PvP.

Conversation then took a bit of a tangent, and Arnar mentioned that local as we know it is going to change in a Winter expansion. The CSM was taken aback by this and let fly a torrent of questions about this new "no local". Local, as it was explained, had to change because of changes to EVE's infrastructure needed for future Incarna development. However, it would be replaced by a new, yet-to-be-designed intelligence gathering tool. Local would not simply just "turn off" and turn into delayed mode, such as in wormhole space. It is worth a repeat – *__local will NOT be simply turned off and/or turned into delayed mode.__* Arnar and Torfi both emphasized the importance of not feeling alone in space; they reasoned that the game has fifty thousand players and that it shouldn't feel as though you're alone. The CSM will be kept in the loop regarding this design when more is known.

Changes to the New Player Experience were briefly touched on, as a deeper presentation on the NPE and player retention was scheduled. Still, Arnar wanted to emphasize how important NPE is to CCP and that resourced are being devoted into making the learning curve less suicidal.

Next, the Incarna store (now called the Noble Exchange) and Aurum were presented to the CSM. Aurum is a new form of currency, related to the PLEX, but not directly convertible back to PLEX. Aurum would not be limited to Incarna clothes, but it would serve as the framework for future EVE Virtual Goods features. Arnar also mentioned that Noble Store items (Incarna clothes and other vanity items) would be destructible. The CSM asked if clothes would appear on killmails, which Arnar seemed to think was a good idea but Torfi was unsure of because of technical limitations. The consensus appeared to be that it would be a welcomed addition. [Editor's note; this has now been changed so clothes and other vanity items are NOT destroyed.]

CCP then introduced the Unified Service Layer (USL), a new construct building upon the API to allow a web-interface with Eve; effectively the API on steroids. The USL would be capable of allowing end users to buy items from the Eve market without logging in, and a variety of other similar things. If all goes well, CCP hopes to be able deploy the USL soon. This fed into a very brief discussion on third party monetization.

Torfi then started talking about Eve on a very abstract level. He concluded that that EVE is not as balanced as it could be, his rationale being that players tend to gravitate to the same professions, same ship types, et cetera. Of course they do this because they're rewarded to do so, so tweaks could be made to allow for diversity without affecting rewards. His overall vision of the game incorporates much more balance, though he was adamant about this being a very high level issue such that there is not a single patch that will fix everything. To further understand balance, Arnar and Torfi both agreed that more information was required and said they have already implemented tools to study player behavior and will continue to do so before changes are made.

The CSM then moved the conversation to CCPs inability to properly communicate with the player-base. The example used was infamous "Anomaly Nerf" Devblog which made an acceptable change but used the wrong arguments for it. The CSM explained that the perception that CCP doesn't play the game

added unnecessary fuel to the fire. Arnar was acutely aware of this and was vehement in CCP's commitment to bettering communication to the players.

With the immediate future out of the way, Torfi went on to discuss some things that would be coming up in the not-too-distant future, such as a progressive downloading client to aid in the New Player Experience. The CSM then smugly delivered several WoW-digs at Arnar, who was rather bitter that WoW beat CCP to this idea.

Continuing with the "distant future" theme, the limitations of Eve's overview were discussed. Torfi and Arnar both agreed that they found the overview to be clunky. CarbonUI, the tool developed for Incarna, gives the framework to build on the overview. Unfortunately, due to resource limitations this change was still so early in the development process that there was little detailed information on exactly how the new overview would look. Still, the CSM was cautiously optimistic. A change to POSes was then discussed, with the CSM reinforcing the importance of a POS remake in the future. Torfi agreed, in principle, but at the same time prioritized a Sovereignty and 0.0 revamp over a strict POS overhaul.

Torfi then tossed around some high-level concerns, such as content being too homogeneous. The overlying goal, established by Incarna and Aurum, is to add new various content items to differentiate the races. Furthermore, using Aurum as a tool for player customization and player identity was presented with a yet-to-be-developed scaled pricing structure.

Another tangent took place with some back-and-forth between the CSM and Torfi. The CPU-cost of missiles was brought up, and from a CPU-load perspective CCP is rather happy with recent Gridlock changes. From an effect view, however, Torfi would like to see missiles changed to utilize their new V3 infrastructure. One idea that was discussed was that missiles would no longer have a linear flight path. Again, this was a high-level idea with no time-frame.

The presentation ended with an even more distant vision, sort of a "things we can do one day" concept. Some ideas that were bounced around included: group mining new asteroid fields that encircle planets, a complete revamp of the map to be more of a planning tool, comets (and comet mining), utilizing the sun as an energy source, high-level alliance assets in the form of death stars (complete with a "That's no moon" reference), and an iteration on drone-control. Torfi and Arnar both emphasized that these plans are incredibly abstract, far-reaching, and not scheduled in the immediate future.

The EVE/DUST Link

Present: CCP TomB, CCP Fendahl, CCP Mindstar, CCP Soundwave

[CCP Xhagen's note to all readers: Any and all things related to DUST 514 are subject to change during the development process]

The meeting began with an oral presentation about the EVE/DUST Link.

The linkage between EVE and DUST could end up being stronger than most people anticipate; DUST players will be members of EVE corporations, and there will be new planetary surface command centers (distinct from PI) that players can build and destroy. These installations will produce some as-yet-undetermined materials that will feed into the EVE economy.

DUST will have multiple game-modes, so that DUST players do not have to depend on EVE players in order to fight, gather resources, build their weapons, etc.

CSM asked questions about the proposed design, and how EVE players would be able to interact with DUST. The design of the link is still in the initial stages.

It was disclosed that: EVE players will not be able to get out of their pods, turn on a console, and play DUST. They will need to create new DUST characters.

Concerns were raised by the CSM about merged EVE/Dust corporations and the issues of differentiating mercenaries from pilots. These details have not been worked out.

CSM expressed concern regarding the apparently unformed nature of the EVE/DUST link. A rough sketch was drawn on the spot, and CSM asked many questions to attempt to clarify matters. The design of the EVE/DUST link is in the earliest planning stages, with only the broadest outlines sketched out.

CSM requested a design document to provide an overview. This was agreed upon and will be done as soon as matters become clearer.

EVE Marketing

Present: CCP Zinfandel, Greg from CCP North America, CCP Darth Beta

The meeting opened with a videoconference with Greg that presented CCP's new marketing approach aimed at better communicating that makes EVE special. This new campaign will be rolled out with Incarna, and CSM was asked for feedback on it and on a new trailer that is under development – now released as the "I was there" trailer.

The final segment of the session concerned the new Virtual Goods Store and the introduction of Aurum, the new currency. CSM received a briefing similar to, but more detailed than, the recent "Give Me Monocles Or Give Me Death!" devblog (http://www.eveonline.com/devblog.asp?a=blog&bid=913).

CCP is introducing Aurum and vanity virtual goods to reduce EVE's reliance on the subscription business model. The intent is to expand the business model, not replace subscription income with virtual goods income; the objective is primarily risk mitigation as opposed to increasing income.

The games industry is currently moving heavily towards microtransaction models, and the risk that the subscription model that EVE depends on will become obsolete is of great concern. Thus, having experience with microtransactions and having the infrastructure in place to move to them should that become necessary is important. That said, CCP does not have any immediate plans to move away from subscriptions as their primary source of income.

Regarding the power of virtual goods, CCP Zinfandel revealed that he not only plays World of Warcraft (shock!) but that he paid a substantial amount of money on eBay for a Spectral Tiger mount (horror!). He was immediately mocked by the entire CSM.

However, Zinfandel made the point that some people treat MMO's like a videogame, and some people treat them like a hobby. Hobbyists both desire and look for ways to invest in their hobby, and virtual goods are a way to satisfy this desire.

"I get a great deal of pleasure every time I pull it out," said Zinfandel about his large sparkling pussycat. He pointed out that buying it increased his identification with the game.

Editor's note: for the entire rest of the summit, no discussion of virtual goods was complete without multiple references to "sparkle ponies".

The next topic was the new currency, Aurum. Aurum are a wallet entry, similar to ISK; see the devblog linked above for more details.

CSM raised concerns about PLEX inflation caused by the increased PLEX demand created by the Virtual Goods Store. After some discussion, it was agreed to address this topic in more detail with CCP Dr.EyjoG (EVE's Chief Economist) in a later session.

An additional concern was that Aurum could not be converted directly back to PLEX. The stated reason for doing this is to provide a clear separation between RL money and Aurum, which will encourage consumption.

The rollout of Virtual Goods will begin in June with relatively few items, with regular infusions of new items thereafter. Prices have not yet been decided upon.

Most items will be usable only by one sex; this is not because CCP has philosophical objections to cross-dressing, but rather that it is technically difficult to create models that work on both sexes. Monocles, however, will be unisex.

The CSM noted that many players would like the game to provide support for their own particular fetishes, most of which are too controversial to mention here.

As all items with have their own typeIDs, they will be visible in the market (in some cases, before release), and can be put on the market for sale. Variants (e.g. different colors) are different items, and thus cannot be stacked.

Items being worn are – for technical intents and purposes – considered to be similar to implants, and will be destroyed when a player is podded. [Editor's note, this has now been changed, they are in fact not destroyed.]

When using the character creator to change clothes, the options will include the clothes that were chosen during original character creation plus all the virtual goods that are in a location immediately accessible to your character (personal hangar, current ship cargo bay, etc.).

The first ship-related virtual good will be the Ishukone Watch Scorpion. As with other virtual goods, this will be a unique item; the cost will be some amount of Aurum plus a regular Scorpion. However, this will not be available in the immediate future.

Quality Assurance

Present: CCP Heimdall, CCP Dren

The goal of this meeting was to focus more on Q&A about QA than the previous time QA met with CSM. For details on the general structure of QA and how it works, see the CSM 5 December Summit minutes, Part II [http://cdn1.eveonline.com/community/csm/CSM_CCP_Meetings-part-2_15-17_12_2010.pdf]

Since December, there has been some turnover in the QA division. In addition, QA now has a new outsourced testing partner. The outside partner does regression testing and special projects. 8 people are occupied full-time doing regression testing on each sprint build, and about 15 in total, 5 on-site in Iceland.

Heimdall inquired as to what defects in the game CSM would rank highest on the list of things that needed to be fixed. CSM explained the spotlighting concept (currently, Time Dilation) and inquired as to how QA could help getting proper resources for the spotlight projects.

CSM asked about QA involvement in ship-balancing. Balancing in general is handled by GD, with QA verifying that the changes are as specified by GD. There is some play testing as well.

CSM stated that QA is obviously a critical function, and asked how CSM can help improve QA? Heimdall responded that other than providing backlog prioritization, the most important thing that CSM can do is encourage players to participate in testing on SiSi and Duality, in particular during mass tests.

There was a short discussion of some minor issues with the incentives given for participating on SiSi and ways to improve them.

QA was invited to join the CSM&CCP Skype channel. Heimdall agreed this was a good idea [and is now a member].

Heimdall has managed to avoid playing a certain computer game featuring vehicles with guns fixed on them, demonstrating more willpower than most of CCP and the CSM. He was urged to continue abstaining.

QA is working on modifying its organizational structure to make it more scalable. This is in reaction to a doubling of the size of QA last year to about 30 people (not counting external partners).

At this point, for the benefit of the new CSMs, Heimdall gave a short lecture about how QA is structured. CSM asked what CSM could do to get more resources for QA, given that they appeared to be a bottleneck.

Heimdall then gave CSM an overview of some of the complexities of EVE development (the "time-features-quality" triangle) and how issues with parallel development often arises that cause bottlenecks and delays.

Managing and merging many code branches is a significant challenge for QA.

Most feature teams have 2 QA people assigned, but Team Gridlock only has one. This is because Gridlock tends to sort through a lot of data and then make small changes, whereas a traditional feature team like BFF makes a lot of visible changes to the game that need testing. CSM noted that the work on Time Dilation may require more QA resources for Gridlock. QA was already aware of this issue, and will be reshuffling QA resources after the Incarna release; it is likely that Gridlock will get more QA resources.

CSM emphasized the importance of the Time Dilation initiative to the players, to make sure QA appreciated the need for QA resources to support it.

CSM inquired about staffing problems and turnover at QA. Heimdall replied that turnover was an understood problem in QA, and that "there are very few people out there that dream of a career in QA". The entire room exploded in laughter. Heimdall continued by noting that QA is often a step along the path to other jobs in the company, and that very few people quit due to job dissatisfaction. CCP Zulu and CCP Soundwave were then outed as QA alumni, and are apparently part of Heimdall's cunning master plan to infect the company with his evil QA philosophy. He admitted, however, that this may be just the way he rationalizes his Sisyphean task.

The question was posed as to how much input QA has in release planning. The answer was that this process is not clearly defined, it happens as a result of numerous conversations and is an organic thing. QA, like any stakeholder (including CSM) can lobby for resources to address perceived problems.

CSM raised the issue of a public bug-tracking tool (as had CSM5). Players are extremely frustrated by the lack of transparency and the inability to cooperate to produce better bug reports. Furthermore, the uncertainty as to whether a bug has been reported leads to both under-reporting ("someone else will do it") or multiple reports (extra work for Bughunters). While CSM agrees that some bugs (such as exploits) should not be public, QA was urged to make bugs public after screening for appropriateness. It was also pointed out that just knowing that QA knows about a bug is reassuring to the players.

Heimdall made the point that the entire defect list could not be exposed, and that resources would have to be diverted from bug-fixing to filtering the list for publication. CSM pointed out that internal defects need not be published, only player-reported ones. It could be as easy as a simple "flag this as public" option.

A CSM recounted an anecdote about a UI bug he reported 10 months ago that has been repeatedly filtered as not reproducible even after a video was uploaded showing the bug. This kind of frustration -- and the inability to collaborate with other players to improve bug reports -- breeds apathy, exactly the opposite of what QA needs.

He would have demonstrated the bug on the spot, but it was patch day and the server was down.

Heimdall admitted there would be value in this to QA, but that there were many factors to consider. This topic has been discussed in the past and will be in the future, and if this was important to CSM, it would

be factored into any future decisions. He noted however that this is not just a QA decision; marketing and legal would be involved, just to name two departments. And even after a decision was made to proceed, prioritization would raise its ugly head.

In response to a related question, Heimdall explained how defect lists are assembled, prioritized and addressed. All scrum teams spend some of their time addressing older defects, aka "technical debt".

CSM closed by requesting that some QA resources be allocated to fixing the public WiFi access at CCP, which is horrible. Heimdall replied that this complaint should be referred to the Operations department.

Game Mastering – Policies, Petitions and Large Fleet Lag

Present: GM Q, GM Ender, GM Gusto, GM Panzer, GM Grimmi, CCP Guard, Ívar (Director of Customer Support)

CSM began by noting there is a perception that policies within the GM department are a bit inconsistent, and many players have difficulty finding information about them -- a point demonstrated (much to his chagrin), by a member of the CSM.

An extended discussion then ensued about reimbursements for large fleet lag situations. CCP stated that few things have been as much discussed internally than the reimbursement policy, and made the point that currently, it is impossible for them to be fair, because they have no way to determine if an individual player in a large engagement is suffering more lag than another one.

Furthermore, if the policy was to reimburse everyone when large fleet lag gets bad, then the losing side in a fight could dump extra people into the system to deliberately trigger reimbursement. And in any case, such reimbursement would render the fight meaningless.

CSM pointed out that high-lag fights are effectively meaningless anyways.

CSM inquired whether the GMs have a way of getting log dumps after a big fight so that they can try to figure out what should have happened. CCP replied that some logging does exist, but figuring out who should and should not have died is very difficult.

However, the GMs have had some conversations with Team Gridlock about implementing logging and tools that might help with this situation.

CSM expressed great concern about the problems of blackscreens (getting killed without even loading grid) and ghost spawning after downtime, which are viewed as even more unfair than garden-variety module lag. The strong view of the CSM is that in these circumstances in particular, ships should be reimbursed. CCP said that currently it is difficult to determine if these things happened.

Another concern raised was the issue of requests for ship movement out of an affected solarsystem when the node has melted, as it is impossible to do anything and a player might have a RL issue (such as: it's 2AM) that prevents them from continuing to sit on their thumbs. CCP clarified that even if there was a policy that permitted this, when the going gets bad they often can't do anything because their commands are lagged out as well.

CSM made two proposals:

1) If better tools via Team Gridlock will help the GM's, what can CSM do to assist with this? Large fleet lag is an issue with two components- the lag itself, and the consequences of it; thus trying to get Gridlock more resources to develop tools to deal with the consequences would seem to be reasonable.

2) From a player perspective, if a node is at 100% and has melted down, despite the potential for player manipulation, it would be fairer to reimburse everyone.

CSM further proposed that, in situations where the node is unresponsive, there should be a way for players to say "I'm done, start my 15 minute timer", through some out-of-band method that will not go through the node. This would set a timestamp in their account so that GM can make a reasonable reimbursement decision.

An extensive discussion of this proposal ensued. The CSM emphasized that from the player standpoint, these are not meaningful fights, and the GMs should lean towards a more generous reimbursement policy in these circumstances. CSM further pointed out that having this ability would greatly reduce the number of petitions generated by large fleet engagements, which would reduce the load on the GMs.

In response to CCP concerns that players would deliberately overload a node in a situation where they were losing, CSM proposed that while ships should be reimbursed, objectives should not.

CCP also expressed concerns about potential player reaction to more generous reimbursement; players are very happy when they get reimbursed, but angry when their enemies do. CSM replied that if the policies were changed to be more in line with CSM suggestions, CSM would publicly and strongly support these changes, as in their view they would benefit everyone.

In response to questions about the fleet fight reporting form, CCP stated that (1) usage of the form has declined since Dominion and (2) Operations usually cannot act on a report and reinforce a node until the next downtime -- doing a remap while the cluster is live requires disconnecting everyone from the node being reinforced. Additionally, live remaps are not performed on a whim as it is a very 'violent' (code wise) action and essentially it is not supported. A creation of such a tool is necessary but not a high priority at this time.

The meeting closed with some minor suggestions for the GMs, including more closely linking petitions and bug-reporting to reduce duplication of effort.

EVE Security Task Force

Present: CCP Sreegs, CCP Veritas, CCP Explorer, CCP Masterplan, GM Grimmi

The CSM received a briefing from CCP Sreegs regarding the current state and future plans for improving EVE security, including but not limited to the "War on Bots and RMT".

Some of the material presented was not just NDA, but "Double Secret" NDA because only a few people in CCP had been told about it.

CCP has set up an EVE Security Task Force (ESTF), composed of devs from Ops, QA, Game Design and Customer Support. Several devs on the team are tasked at 50-100% of their time, the rest provide input as needed and volunteer their spare time (weekends and such).

The sole responsibility of the ESTF is enforcing the EVE EULA.

Detection methodologies include (but are not limited to): behavioral (looking for activity over time that a human simply cannot perform), signatures (patterns of activity associated with particular bots) and technical detection in the client.

ESTF is also implementing internal tools to support their activities.

Enforcement strategy: "Communicate, Educate, Enforce" ESTF wants to tell everyone what they are doing, explain why certain behaviors are bad, and enforce compliance with the EULA.

Enforcement is by a "Three Strike" policy; first strike is a 14-day ban, second is a 30-day ban, and third is a perma-ban. The intent is not to punish bad behavior but to change it. However, client manipulation or hacking always results in an immediate perma-ban.

ESTF is also focusing on countering the activities of individuals who write and distribute bots. An operation targeting a particular bot and the website that supported it achieved significant results, suggesting that additional resources should be focused in that direction.

In the future, ESTF wants to implement other ways to discourage botting short of banning. One theoretical possibility would be to implement "targeted resource collection failure"; degrading or eliminating the rewards a bot receives from in-game activities.

In addition, more resources will be devoted to protecting the client. As part of this, ESTF is considering disallowing the use of virtual machines with the EVE client as metrics indicate there are very few players using virtual machines for legitimate purposes.

CSM raised the edge case of Mac users using Parallels as opposed to the Mac client; CCP agreed that there should be a way for players who have a need to do things like this to have a way to authenticate themselves with CCP.

ESTF is also starting to do a lot more data mining as part of their anti-RMT efforts. The process of following the ISK through multiple laundering transactions is referred to internally as "dataworming".

CSM asked if this tracking currently attempted to track out-of-game transactions (such as PayPal). Sreegs replied that the dataworming anti-RMT efforts are still at an early stage, but this is definitely something they want to address.

While ESTF does a lot of broadly targeted work, they will from time-to-time focus on particular bots; when a bot gets too popular, they will devote particular resources to exterminating it.

Another new program will encourage players to report botting programs, RMT, and exploits. The current name for this program is "PLEX for Snitches", and it has been running informally for a while; there are plans to make it formal. The goal of this program is to encourage responsible reporting of security issues.

CSM was shown a graph of the number of characters actively performing a "certain action" more than 20 hours a day. There were huge chasms in the graph around Chinese New Year, Hulkageddon, and a final cliff like drop after the first ESTF bannings. This graph was created to show general activity, and that the "certain action" was not a signature used to determine if someone was botting. ESTF has already done bans for ratting, mining and market bots.

CSM expressed interest in the geographical distribution of bot usage; CCP has only just started collecting this information, and CCP Sreegs pointed out the practical question: "what does that information give me?"

A question was raised concerning broad bans of all accounts associated with a particular computer or IP address -- the "my brother did a bad thing" excuse. CCP would not provide specifics as to how ESTF made these kinds of determination, but expressed the opinion that "maybe you should be mad at your brother?"

Buying ISK is handled differently from botting; bans come from Customer Service, and ESTF has no policy about it yet. However, when ESTF comes up with detection tools for ISK buying, they will not go on a fishing expedition into the deep past looking for misbehavior.

The CSM was provided with statistics showing how many accounts have received bans based on ESTF automated detection methods. The CSM was very impressed with the results and encouraged further use of these methods.

Only 8% of players who receive their first strike go on to get a second strike. CSM noted that this compares to a 1-year recidivism rate in the US of 16%, which indicates that EVE players are distressingly law-abiding.

As of the week before the summit, nearly 100 players had received a third-strike, but an additional number of players who had been caught botting were separately banned for RMT.

CSM raised the concern that the numbers being shown were being affected by character laundering (selling of characters that have received strikes and replacing them with clean characters). However, CCP tracks this activity and the numbers are not significant.

There are plans to add a "Report Bot" menu option to the game, the details of the design or the specific implementation have yet to be decided.

A discussion ensued about the incorporation of hard numbers into a proposed devblog, in particular the relevance of numbers like "total number of characters banned". CSM argued that although (as CCP pointed out) these numbers may not convey much actual information, they have an important psychological effect; therefore, CSM strongly recommended that the devblog provide as much information as possible.

A question was raised regarding the low recidivism rate -- "Does this indicate that RMT botters (who would be expected to re-offend) are changing their behavior in order to avoid subsequent bans?" CCP admitted this was a possibility.

CCP was also asked whether ESTF had a handle on what percentage of the botting population it had addressed so far. CCP replied that it was very difficult to determine this, and that "if we knew what the scope was, they'd all be gone". ESTF's goal is to set and refine limits of acceptable behavior, and use those to detect botting activity and develop useful signatures. The ultimate goal is to change people's behavior.

ESTF is in contact with the security teams of other MMOs facing similar issues.

Regarding the authenticator given out at FanFest, there is no hard date for implementation as yet, but it is being worked on.

Team Gridlock: The War on Lag

Present: CCP Veritas, CCP GingerDude, CCP Explorer, CCP Masterplan

Team Gridlock presented a report on their efforts so far. They are actively monitoring live fleet flights, which are providing excellent data, and also working closely with other teams to ensure that new features do not have a detrimental effect on game performance.

So far, some of the issues Gridlock has addressed include:

* General load; CPU per user is down 50%.

* Missiles (Drakes suck less). Fixing missiles involved optimizing inventory operations, which also accidentally fixed Jita. Jita has not been at 100% since this fix deployed.

* The recent fix to Monikers reduced overall CPU load by 8%.

* Telemetry! Gridlock has implemented a new node monitoring system that lets them trace the execution of everything and zoom in down to the procedure call level. This has made finding new optimization targets much easier. Steps will be taken to elaborate on this further in public.

* In response to a question about the 30 second session timer, it was explained that this is a consequence of needing to allow enough time for various nodes in the cluster to settle on a consistent state (everyone agreeing on where you are and what ship you are in). When 30 seconds is not enough time, the infamous "black screen" is likely, so it is not anticipated that this can be reduced anytime soon.

A major cause of black screens when loading a lagged out system turned out to be the fetching of character names for chat channels, which was being done in an inefficient way. This has now been fixed.

* The Drone engage command was not doing what it was supposed to be doing, and other drone commands were doing things they didn't need to be doing. The drones have been given a stern talking-to.

Gridlock's to-do list includes:

* Support for bigger and more awesome fights.

* Time Dilation. At least initially, this will be node-based, so it will affect all systems being run by an overloaded node. While everyone else at CCP buggers off in July for vacation, one lone developer, brave brave CCP Veritas, will take arms against a sea of lag, and by opposing, end it. He reports that the effort "is going so well that I can't even start up the client anymore!"

* Hot-remapping of systems to a reinforced node during a fleet fight. Currently this often causes things to break in strange ways. A new system is under development that should address this, but there is a lot of work yet to do before it can make its debut.

* Fix the actual simulation of the universe (server performance) before moving on to fix the representation of the simulation (the client) – the end goal is to show you the universe properly.

* Implement "Brain in a box", an improved skill-management system. Tracking how your skills affect your modules is not as efficient as it should be.

* Optimize current resource hogs, such as Area of Effect weapons, Drones, Ship deaths, etc.

CSM and Team Gridlock then discussed ways that CSM could help Gridlock's efforts. Players should be re-reminded to use the Fleet Fight notification form if there is sufficient time, as it not only permits allocation of a reinforced node, but fights on such nodes means it is more likely there will be sufficient CPU to deploy diagnostics without affecting the fight. This will enable Gridlock to monitor more fleet fights.

One additional suggestion that emerged was that since CSM has good real-time access to Team Gridlock, people who are anticipating a big fleet fight could contact a CSM member so a message can be passed on, as an addition to filling out the fleet fight notification form.

Another step will be to formulate, with the CSM, steps to provide CCP with post-fight reports, as player-experience of fights is important to include in the improvements being made by Team Gridlock – as reduced lag does not necessarily translate to an improved user experience. The fact of the matter is that very rarely do people (and CCP) hear about good fights, but the same does not go for bad fights. Talking about the 'lack of lag' really doesn't make any sense, but that is specifically what Gridlock is doing.

Mapping out player experience with post-fight surveys will give CCP the ability to see whether players are having a better experience. Looking into doing official surveys, CCP will also approach the CSM to get into contact with the participants in fleet fights to get a feedback.

ISD and Community Matters

Present: CCP Ginger, CCP Guard, CCP Xhagen

CCP Ginger (the volunteer manager) requested a slot with the CSM to discuss the need for an ISD/CSM liaison.

ISD has five teams: Star, which handles player help and 'meet and greets' for new players; Bughunters, who help filter the bug reports which the QA team handles; ISC, which does ingame news; the Evelopedia team, which works on the wiki; and Mercury, the Storyline team that produces EVE fiction.

The CSM pointed out that this session could have been handled by email; if CCP wished us to incorporate the ISD Star group's input on the NPE issues, a simple email liaison could have been established weeks before the summit.

The CSM expressed displeasure at the waste of a session slot, as the entire matter only took 12 minutes and could have been handled over email.

CCP Guard stepped into the breach as a newly-appointed Community Developer and the CSM began discussing Community issues. His focus is on community development, and he is working on producing more Live Devblogs and revamping the Fansite Program. He'll also be working with the Event team.

The CSM commented on how the ISC news wasn't particularly active anymore; this is apparently because one of the most active ISC reporters, Delegate Zero, was hired by CCP.

CCP Xhagen pointed out the disconnect between the functions of the CSM and the parliamentary scheme of the Assembly Hall. CCP demonstrated an example of a Web 2.0 forum with a Reddit-style upvote system used in Iceland for direct democracy. However, some CSM members expressed discomfort with the idea of direct democracy in terms of game design decisions; ideas which are popular with players are not necessarily good for the game, and 'voting' sets up an expectation of delivery from CCP.

The CSM noted that this Web 2.0 setup would be fine for a revamped 'Features and Ideas' forum, but not anything Assembly Hall or CSM-related.

The CSM also observed that CCP ignores threads which are very popular in the Assembly Hall which CCP has no intention of implementing; because no CCP rep ever says 'this cannot or will not be done', and thus the controversy - and expectation of implementation - lingers.

The CSM spoke strongly in favor of there being more 'Ask CCP Anything' threads with multiple dev replies. The CSM asked for a devblog which compiles all the answers in that thread, such that the data is in one, concise location.

EVE User Interface Issues

Present: CCP Sharq, CCP Punkturis, CCP karkur, CCP Optimal, CCP Frellicus, CCP Arrow, CCP Explorer, CCP Zulu

The meeting began with a short presentation.

The basic design principles of the UI team are that the UI be; Recognizable (UI elements and their functions should be obvious), Layered (complexity is there, but hidden), Minimal (shows you what you need to see, and no more), User-centric (focused on what user wants to do, not what the interface can do), Human (fits itself to user's mental models), Discoverable (easy to explore), Consistent, provide Feedback, be Dynamic (giving relevant information), Real (support immersion), and Visual (death to numbers).

Before the summit, CSM was asked to provide lists of their UI priorities and pet-peeves; this was sorted into the various categories described above and presented; the idea was to show CSM how their concerns fit into the conceptual framework of the UI team, and provide the basis for a free-format discussion.

The first topic raised was the overview; the concern was raised that it is the key information resource in combat and contains a huge amount of information; does this not conflict with the goal of simplifying the UI?

CCP replied that "Simplifying is not a hatchet ... we're not going to change everything into WoW". Simplifying can be layering stuff, moving it around.

Concerns were raised about UI latency, and the example of switching tabs in the overview was given. CCP responded that there is an effort underway to find and fix issues like this.

CSM asked to be shown examples of what the UI group is currently working on, but a presentation was not available.

CSM: "So we should just sit here and complain?" (much laughter)

The UI group is currently mostly focused on the Incarna UI. However, it is important to realize that the UI group is not a scrum team; like some other groups (QA, for example), they are embedded in other scrum teams as needed.

CSM: You've read our (personal) top-10 lists. Are they getting tweaked?

CCP: (cautiously) As time and resources allow, yes.

The UI team is not directly responsible for prioritization of UI-related fixes; that depends on the scrum teams (like Team BFF) and senior managers (such as CCP Zulu).

CCP Zulu: A lot of the smaller fixes have been put on the back-burner because it does not make sense to implement them using our old UI technology. When the new tech (Carbon UI) comes online, it will be possible to address them more easily and faster.

CSM: And when will this happen?

CCP Zulu: In about 3 weeks (it was released on the 31st of May 2011)

CSM pressed to be shown visual targets and mockups; they were not immediately available. However, CCP explained that Carbon UI lets them change all the elements of the UI; it's just a matter of prioritizing what they want to work on. However, that prioritization has not yet been made.

Carbon UI will first be seen (in terms of visible changes and new UI features) in the Incarna CQ, which the CSM was shows during an Incarna demo.

CSM: What changes are you thinking of, in general terms? Can you give us some information we can use to hopefully provide feedback? For example, the displays we see in EVE videos are very different from the current UI.

CCP: We would like to move some of the information from the overview into 3D space and targets, and connect these elements together in a more unified system, with visual representations of the situation instead of just numbers. For example, a UI cue that gives you transversal vs. tracking.

The CSM provided many examples of ways this kind of display could make life easier for pilots; it is silly that the pilot of a huge starship has to memorize things like tracking and optimal ranges.

The UI team is currently discussing changes to merge windows; for example, instead of multiple windows related to a ship (drones, cargo bay, etc.), there would be a single window with a tabbed layout. This discussion is in the early stages.

CSM: The changes you are proposing (to displays useful in combat) are interesting, and would be wonderful for 1v1 or 5v5, but how are they going to scale to battles with 1500 players. Already the lag is so bad that we have to turn off everything, zoom out, or even go into the star map.

CCP: We have to keep this in mind, because the current client has its limitations. This is a big reason behind the push to Carbon UI.

CSM noted that things are so bad that in large fleet battles, all most players are doing is locking targets from the broadcast window and firing guns; the rest of the UI is not used. However, it was also mentioned that a big recent improvement was the improved key-binding, and the ability to move even more away from clicking to key-pressing would be appreciated.

CCP Explorer: In many cases, client lag is caused by the client needing information from the server. At some point, Team Gridlock will start addressing these kinds of issues both in the server and the client. Also, the module-cycling problem was fixed after CSM gave CCP a video that clearly demonstrated the problem; videos showing similar client issues would be helpful.

CSM raised the issue of bracket performance; they are very useful in some fights, but turning them on kills client performance. CCP knows this, and has made some improvements, but there is more they want to do.

CCP Explorer warned however that this problem cannot be fixed in the same way lag can never be fixed; each performance improvement gets swallowed up when fleet sizes increase.

A CSM inquired about a possible quick fix - increasing the size of the watchlist to help out logistics pilots. This issue had been raised in previous summits, and the answer was unchanged: watchlists put a big strain on the server because each pilot has his own unique watchlist that must be updated. This means that for each pilot using a watchlist, the server must gather the information needed and send it to the pilot.

CCP pointed out that the watchlist was a way to perform certain tasks, and if a different way to do these tasks could be found that had less impact on the server, then that might give the players what they want.

An extended discussion followed, in which CSM and CCP discussed the kinds of information both logistics and regular fleet pilots need, and how they might be presented, perhaps as an expansion (with multiple windows or tabs) of the current broadcast tools. Broadcasts are particularly attractive because they can be collected, packaged up, and sent to everyone in a fleet very efficiently. This discussion is continuing in the CSM internal forums; what CCP needs most is descriptions of what information is needed when a player is performing a particular role.

CSM committed to delivering user-stories for various types of fleet roles to illustrate the information these roles both generate and require.

The next topic was the Hell of Contextual Menus. CCP agrees that as a primary way of interacting with the client, they are bad, and they want to move to something better; the 3D menus in Incarna are one example of this. In some cases, CCP just knows "this is wrong", and in others, they have proposed solutions. However, prioritization always raises its ugly head.

CSM encouraged the UI team to consult with them regarding their proposed improvements, so that CSM could provide feedback from a player utility perspective. It was emphasized that CSM understood that preliminary ideas and sketches were just that.

CSM requested access to the UI backlog. While this backlog is somewhat messy and unpopulated (due to UI providing services to many teams, and because UI itself is not a scrum team), CSM believes that they can provide some useful feedback. A discussion of how UI items get slotted into scrum team backlogs gave CSM a better appreciation of the resource constraints UI faces, and why small changes often have trouble getting resources.

CSM-related UI issues often get front-loaded into early sprint cycles when UI is not heavily tasked, so prioritization exercises are useful at the start of a release cycle.

CSM inquired about the status of the new brackets (different shapes) that were present on Singularity for a while. CCP responded that these have been shelved until after Carbon UI is released.

Next up were brief discussions about the interaction of CSM UI-related priorities and CCP's efforts to use Carbon UI more broadly in the client, as well as interaction issues that might make it more difficult to revamp particular areas of the UI (such as the overview) in isolation.

Based on this, CSM recommended that UI develop a roadmap for the future of the UI (in particular, the in-space tactical aspects), so that it would be easier to plan and implement incremental improvements that would end up achieving the desired results.

CCP requested that CSM provide their vision of how the UI should be, and what features it should provide to pilots – focusing on the functionality, rather than looks and layout.

The meeting ended with a brief discussion of the interaction between the UI team and Team Gridlock.

POS Misery

Present: CCP Soundwave, CCP Greyscale, CCP Tallest

CCP received a CSM document on POS issues as a starting point for the meeting. After some discussion, CCP Greyscale expressed interest in a modular POS system in the long term, including docking modules and factory modules. The major bottleneck is art – the Art department is very busy, at least until next year.

CSM agreed that this would be wonderful, but asked for small near-term changes as well, such as changes to the POS assembly arrays; managing many separate arrays is a huge pain. Both CCP and CSM agreed that fewer specialized silos and assembly arrays would be better.

Fuel pellets were discussed again, including issues related to the mechanics of how to switch.

CSM pointed out that POS misery hurts people throughout EVE, including wormhole residents, highsec residents, as well as lowsec/0.0 folks.

CCP and CSM discussed increasing the range at which players could interact with POS structures.

CSM asked for personal hangers, especially for wormhole residents. CSM asked CCP to allow passwording of individual POS modules.

CSM pointed out that jump bridge passwords were stupid and a CSM with espionage experience showed CCP his list of every alliance's jump bridge passwords. Removing the need for these passwords was discussed, but no promises were made.

CSM asked that anyone be allowed to deposit fuel in a jump bridge. CCP agreed that this would be reasonable.

A side discussion ensued about exploration and datacores; CCP expressed interest in increasing the drop rates of datacores at exploration sites.

CCP talked about removing ABC (Arkonor, Bistot and Crokite) mining sites from wormhole space at some point in the future. This may be from all wormholes, or possibly from lower class wormholes only. It was claimed by some members of the CSM that a large fraction of the high end ore supply is produced through these sites, however the CSMs who were active in wormholes would not accept this claim without hard data to back it up.

Feature Abandonment

Present: CCP Zulu, CCP t0rfifrans

New members of the CSM opened by expressing the opinion that, after seeing first-hand some of the resource constraints CCP operates under, it would be unfair to simply shake fists and complain about feature abandonment; regarding issues like the infamous "18 months" incident (Zulu: "I pissed a lot of people off with that"), a lot of the concern was created by bad messaging, something CSM could perhaps help with.

CCP Zulu recounted an anecdote about the preparation of an upcoming devblog on the iteration of a current EVE feature to illustrate communications difficulties at CCP. Workloads are such that there is a lot of noise in the system, and getting people to sit down and communicate -- both internally and externally -- is often difficult. It is "ridiculously hard" to get people to set aside the significant amount of time needed to write a good devblog.

One CSM suggested that perhaps the pace of development could be slowed down a bit in order to permit more transparency.

The "Devs answer all your questions" thread was discussed as an example of positive CCP messaging.

Regarding the feature that the upcoming devblog CCP Zulu mentioned addresses, CSM inquired -- in light of all the resource contention issues that have been a constant topic during summit sessions, and the previously stated intent to iterate on another major feature -- when resources would be available to actually do this. It emerged that the point of the blog was to communicate what CCP would like to do, not commit to doing it in the near future. CSM emphasized that this would have to be carefully communicated, and that regular progress updates would be required. There was concern over the tease factor; the analogy given was "Imagine if a girl came up to you and said, 'I'm not going to have sex with you now, but if I do at some time in the future, I'm going to do all these things to you, and it will be great."

The CSM emphasized that this only works if the girl has a history of keeping such promises.

CCP Zulu agreed with this concern.

CSM suggested that CCP release a regular "Abandoned Features Update" summary devblog. CSM emphasized that by "Feature" they mean large features that were the subject of significant CCP marketing, such as wormholes and factional warfare, and not things like corporation management.

With respect to iterating on these major features, it was suggested that CCP address them by making small changes, observing the results, and then quickly tweaking as needed. This would demonstrate incremental and steady progress.

CSM was asked about the recent video devblogs; the response was that they were very useful and well received.

CSM was shown a list of tweaks that Game Design is considering. An example of a tweak that is being considered is not paying out Insurance claims when a player gets Concorded (the CSM was divided on that topic).

Based on comments by CCP Greyscale in a previous session, the subject of removing "ABC" minerals from wormholes was raised by nullsec-resident CSMs, who were surprised to learn that WH space was nullsec and that ABC minerals were available in them. They favored entirely removing ABC from WH space -- or limiting them to C5 and C6 holes -- but the two wormhole-resident CSMs objected strongly, pointing out that exporting minerals from deep wormhole space was difficult, and much of it was likely consumed locally.

An argument was made by some CSMs that the prices of ABC ores and refined products were being crashed by "daytrippers" mining in easily-accessible wormhole space; other CSMs stated that no nerfing of ABC minerals should take place without first obtaining detailed statistics about the balance of trade for each mineral and class of wormhole.

CSM noted that, based on the meetings so far, they had a better understanding of the resource constraints that contributed to the perception of feature abandonment. CSM would like CCP to spend more time communicating this kind of information to players. In addition, CSM stated that QA and Art had been repeatedly cited to them as bottlenecks.

The CSM repeated the concern, raised at previous summits, that too many resources were devoted to "new and shiny". The question of whether, after the initial development of Incarna and Establishments, some of those resources could be redirected towards fixing existing features was raised.

CCP replied that a significant portion of the resources used to develop Incarna have been borrowed from other projects, or are being used to develop infrastructure that has broader application than just Incarna.

Currently, there are three main teams working on EVE Flying-in-Space content (as opposed to Incarna, infrastructure development [Carbon], performance [Gridlock], and so on). These are Team BFF (Little Things), Team TriLambda (Art), and Team Commie Pinkos (Content, such as missions).

New content and mechanics, such as contraband, are intended to bridge Incarna content with traditional EVE FiS. While this is fine, CSM urged that after the initial deployment of Incarna, and before any new big shiny feature is implemented, existing issues should receive attention, such as nullsec industrialization, a sov revamp, and (importantly) the POS Dead Horse concept.

A short digression gave CSM a better appreciation of just how much of a blocker Art is. Of the three items listed above, a POS revamp is the only one that requires a major art investment.

CSM pointed out that iterating on an existing feature and at the same time adding some new functionality and art will provide the new "shiny" that Marketing & Sales can use to promote an expansion. CCP observed that doing the Dead Horse revamp would require 2 tech teams plus an art team for one or two releases. It was also pointed out that if the subscriber base grows (via Incarna and microtransactions), it would be possible to hire more people to work on EVE.

It was noted that there was a possible link between Dead Horse, Modular Stations, and Incarna, in that players could have actual housing in a POS.

The subject of T3 ships and the lack of iteration/balancing on them was raised. Currently there are basically 2 common fits for each T3. This evolved into a discussion of ship balancing, and CCP Zulu agreed that dedicating a game-designer to ship-tweaking was a good idea. The CSM wholeheartedly approved of this, and urged that ship-balancing be regular, public, and incremental -- every patch should have some balance tweaks in it.

Team PI, which spent 2 cycles on Planetary Interaction, is now working on the EVE/Dust link. They will be re-using some of the design ideas of PI on this, but PI itself will not be significantly changing. CSM repeated its request for an EVE/Dust link design document (first made in the specific EVE/Dust link session).

Nullsec iteration is beginning now with work on industrialization, and at present there are no big features planned going into 2012, which makes it likely that continued FiS iteration will be possible. But as with other plans, that can change.

In response to a question about how incremental virtual goods store income might be used to benefit EVE, Zulu replied that he is currently arguing for the addition of a full feature team, and that extra virtual goods income will give CCP more options; some of it will go to EVE, but other projects will benefit as well.

It was also noted (again) that each CCP game provides elements that can be re-used in other games; examples given included:

* the WoD combat system being reused in Incarna.

* WoD has higher requirements in terms of number of Avatars in scene that EVE, so substantial work is being done by WoD teams to improve performance, all of which will help Incarna.

* Seamless transition between world-spaces (scenes in Incarna).

* The basic body models for Incarna came from WoD, with "certain features" edited out.

When asked if there would be a Council of Vampire Management, the answer given was "no comment".

Nullsec Industrialization and Risk/Reward

Present: CCP Soundwave, CCP Greyscale, CCP Tallest, CCP Dr.EyjoG

CCP Soundwave and Greyscale led the CSM in a two-hour brainstorming session on the topic of Nullsec Industrialization and Risk/Reward Balancing for Hisec/Lowsec/Nullsec. This involved a lot of sticking post-it notes on a board, and the organizing the blizzard of post-its into logical zones of interest. After blocking out various areas on the board, the group proceeded to discuss the results for each subtopic.

CCP Tallest showed the CSM database info comparing regional values in terms of moon resources and truesec. Greyscale pointed out that the Drone Regions are significantly more powerful in terms of their truesec availability compared to the older regions.

CCP Greyscale emphasized the importance of having 'bad' regions which allow newer entities to learn the ropes in nullsec without being annihilated, and inspire them to try to move up and advance.

CCP and the CSM agreed about the need for more small gang activities and targets to disable ('Farms and Fields') - not necessarily more structure shooting, which is boring. Stealing moon goo from harvesters was one idea.

It was suggested by CCP that NPCing could be made more interesting by reducing the number of NPCs in a given encounter, but increasing their power, thus making fighting a NPC closer to the PvP experience. The CSM spoke approvingly of the revamp of the Officer NPCs as an example of this principle in action.

CSM brought up the issue of moon product bottlenecks distorting the economy, referencing tech and neodymium. Adding alchemy for Technetium was suggested as a possible solution. Greyscale offered the idea of having PI add moon goo as an output. The CSM was somewhat favorable about this, as long as a conflict driver such as a tower was still put at risk to acquire PI-output moon products. This was a very sketchy draft idea and nothing is presently in design.

There was a discussion of adding a formal coalition structure through treaties; the CSM was of mixed opinions about this. CCP Soundwave said "I like big alliances, but not big coalitions."

The CSM expressed a desire to have exploration expanded to be more interesting, with archaeology particularly awful, hacking a little bit better. CCP noted that boosting archaeology is a high priority for the content department. The CSM suggested adding an I-hub upgrade to add more archaeology/hacking sites. The CSM emphasized the entertainment value of the 'seeking' process - search, find, risk and profit - as long as the scanning interface continues to be improved.

The CSM, with the exception of two members, is irked at the idea of high value ores being mined in low-end wormholes distorting the market. CCP Zulu mentioned that he considers this 'retarded' and that this will be looked into. In Class 5 or 6 wormholes the position is more nuanced, and the CSM acknowledged that these minerals could be used for local production, and that they are too far from the market to distort it.

The CSM brought up Superveld and the need for high-yield low-end asteroids in nullsec to remove the need to compress and import everything from hisec. CCP Greyscale was cautiously in favor of this, depending upon what the statistics might show.

The CSM believes that nullsec needs to be more self-sufficient from hisec, at the industrial level. The CSM suggested that nullsec should be able to produce T2 goods at higher margins than in hisec. Many ideas were thrown around, such as making T2 production superior in nullsec compared to hisec as well as adding many more factory and research slots in nullsec outposts. The CSM suggested that high technology products come from nullsec - they can be done in hisec, but with better margins in null. The CSM was intrigued by the idea of allowing meta-level item production in lowsec, creating a continuum of t1 - meta - t2 across hi/low/null. Most of the CSM favored the idea of increasing invention chances in 0.0 compared to hisec.

The CSM was shown a design draft of new intel tools and wanted clarification on a number of things, such as if standings would be visible. The CSM emphasized the need for players to see individual standings. The CSM's view is that if a player wants no local at all (because currently local acts as an intel tool, showing numbers of pilots and standings), they can go to a wormhole; for everyone else, there needs to be a method to determine if a hostile is in a system, not merely to avoid ganks but such that roaming gangs can find each other and engage in combat. CCP acknowledged CSM's concerns in this matter and will provide further updates as they become available.

The CSM suggested a continuum of intelligence information, such as an I-hub upgrade that provides superior scouting information, like a satellite network. In this way, in un-upgraded space, there might be no information at all, allowing recon ships to fulfill their role; in highly upgraded space, sensor nets provide much more accurate information for those who have built them.

CCP agreed with CSM that lowsec is fundamentally broken as an area of gameplay.

Dr. Eyjo pointed out that presently the EVE economy is designed intentionally to keep nullsec and hisec interdependent in terms of their markets. The CSM reiterated that they wanted markets to be spread out more, rather than everything being exported from Jita into Nullsec. Dr. Eyjo suggested a concept of hisec 'market islands' in 0.0, such as a teleport or Interbus link to Jita – where the aim would be to temporarily 'plant seeds' of markets in nullsec. The CSM was curious about this idea, but had no unified opinion.

Incarna and the new NPE

Present: CCP Flying Scotsman, CCP Zulu.

CCP Flying Scotsman presented a dizzying array of statistics showing where the current NPE was lacking and where its strengths are. CCP analyzed the tutorial at each step to see at which points trial players would abandon the trial, and this was used to identify flaws. CCP considers a 10% boost to the current conversion rate, from trial accounts to paying accounts, will be the success threshold for the improved NPE.

CCP emphasized that refactoring of the NPE won't be a one-time thing, but a continual process to improve retention of new players.

It was noted that players who get to the Career Agents in the tutorial have vastly increased conversion rates. CSM was very positive about Career Agents and wants the NPE to do a better job of guiding players to them; presently they are hidden away in the Neocom. In the future, Career Agents might be physically met by players in Establishments in Incarna, to allow new players to bump into each other and make friends at the location. The CSM thought this was cool.

Additionally, players who join corporations and develop social links are much more likely to keep playing the game, so it's a priority for CCP to make it easier for players to find and join corporations. CCP sees corporations as the best ambassadors to the game for new players. CCP demonstrated the new corp recruitment window, which is searchable based on types of corporation. The CSM was very impressed with this functionality.

Aura will return, and images will be added to the tutorial so that it's not just a wall of text.

More controversially, CCP wants to force the tutorial window to remain open, rather than allowing it to be closed by players in the trial, so that critical information (such as skill training) is not lost. CCP knows that this might be annoying for people with alts, but that it is hypercritical for true newbies. The CSM suggested that there should be an option for experienced players to still skip the tutorial entirely, but that the option should be 'hidden' so that new players don't skip the tutorial.

One idea that is being discussed is Newbie Incursions, which might be a new way to teach players how to make friends. The CSM mentioned other games with public quests for newbies, such as Rift, and was in favor of the idea.

Flying Scotsman acknowledged that the EVE UI was 'not great' and the backend for it is 'kind of troublesome', but that the Carbon architecture will be improving things substantially.

He then demonstrated a build of the new CQ (later deployed on Duality), to general approval. CCP wants to do video tutorials on the main screen in the CQ, and generally expand the main screen functionality.

The CSM emphasized the importance of having better rookie ship models, as the mystery of 'your first spaceship' in the NPE is rendered underwhelming by having an ugly rookie ship.

Lastly, running animations for characters are being worked on, but there is no release date for it at this time.

EVE Art

Present: CCP Salvo, CCP BasementBen, Ásgeir – EVE Art Director

CSM requested a meeting with the Art group to discuss aesthetics and get a better understanding of why Art is frequently mentioned by other CCP groups as a bottleneck for getting features implemented. The CSM asked for a broad overview of how Art at CCP works.

The Department has ~30 people, split into teams - one for characters, one for space and one for station interiors. The Space team is currently working on the turrets, an effort of many months. Art teams use Scrum and Kanban methodologies.

The CSM inquired about the 'V3' process, which is required to upgrade each ship to the new graphics system. It would take an entire release to do all of the ships; each individual ship takes 2-3 weeks of work to bring up to V3. The conversion process allows CCP to improve the aesthetics. It will take years to update each ship not merely to V3, but to modern aesthetic standards, like those on the new Scorpion and Maller. This requires further clarification: Moving a single ship over to the V3 shaders, with minimal texture work takes 2-3 days per ship. V3 with extensive fixing and texture rework takes 2-3 weeks per ship. Full renovation, which is to say brand new model and textures takes 5-7 weeks. The current V3 project would be the first option. Reason: 185 unique models, with their associated textures, which are then used to produce the over 300 ship variations in game.

The CSM brought up the need for revamped Rookie Ship models, because they are ugly and the first ship you own as a player, and thus leaves you with a bad first impression. The Art Department agreed with these points!

The CSM asked how long it takes to make a new ship: Concept Art takes 1-2 week, Modeling takes 1-2 weeks. "Baking", i.e. preparing textures, takes 1 week. Texture painting takes 2 weeks. This is for 'any new asset', including tower modules, as long as it's not capital class. The Art department suggested that for large-scale assets it probably takes double the normal time to create the asset. Internally, they can manage four ships/assets simultaneously, about 12 ships every six months, assuming Art is solely focused on that project - which they are usually not.

When massive assets are created, such as capitals and stations, the Art department needs different tools (which requires some research) as the current techniques are just not adequate to create the detail required.

The CSM brought up the 'Dead Horse' POS proposal and the need for a massive art revamp to get that actually implemented. The Art department also wants to make modular stations

The CSM inquired about the need for wreckable station art for a possible sov revamp, and if the Art Department would be willing to compromise on aesthetic quality to get design-necessary features implemented. Art noted that they often compromise with design and do not block features.

The CSM inquired about certain corporations with manifestly ugly color schemes, such as Lai Dai's brown and orange. While the Art Director agrees that it while they could be said to be less than appealing by modern time's standards, it was designed by the original art director at the dawn of EVE; it has become a legacy (like having a Mercedes from the 80' with a terrible beige color – it is ugly on today's standard but is coherent with the history of the car) so the Art Department doesn't want to meddle with those years of history.

The CSM inquired about scale problems among ships; the Art Department acknowledged this issue. Until recently there was no fixed scale for ships; the Punisher and Maller have recently been confirmed as being "to scale". This is a legacy result that the Art department is rectifying as they fix the ships.

The Scorpion and Maller were side projects of one Art dev. He recently did a new Raven, but the model didn't pass muster. The CSM asked what Art would like to do next ship-wise; the Raven is a top candidate.

The CSM asked about cynos, engine trails, and sensor booster effects. The Art Department is working on a new effects engine, and once the engine is working they can fix these effects. This will also include new gun effects, such as shell casings flying out of artillery.

Missile Turrets have not been done yet because turrets for guns are simple - they are two points in space and the effects are simply applied on the guns. A missile on the other hand is an actual object that spawns (and can be intercepted by another such object), and not just an effect between two points. Therefore it is a much more complicated system involving many disciplines, not just Art, and is much harder to implement.

Turrets have taken about as long as it would take to make a new ship; a turret is an 'asset', same as anything sub-capital size. The Turrets were re-done to refactor the turret design engine; there was no system to revamp them because they were legacy code (which is why sleepers have no turrets, until the revamp CCP had no system to adjust the turret art/behavior or even make new turrets). Turrets - or the inability to create new ones - became a bottleneck for future features. It was a relatively small job, 'only' 65 models.

The CSM asked how the new fancy turrets will work on the old, non-V3 ship models. To begin with, they'll look odd, because the turrets will adopt the color of the ship they're fit to - which is prep for eventual skinning of ships.

The Art Department wants to add the ability to go down the stairs to your pod in the CQ. The CSM suggested an optional cut scene showing the pod from the CQ going out to your ship in your hangar, instead of a black session change screen + progress bar on undocking. The Art Dept asked what the CSM would have them do if there was only one task that could be done; the CSM vehemently advocated for new ship models, like the new Scorpion or Maller. The second priority would be improved effects such as cynos and engine trails.

The Art Dept was curious about what the CSM thinks about the priority of logos going on ships; the CSM was ambivalent, stating it as a not particularly high priority, especially compared to new ship models entirely. The Art Dept noted that it is much harder to put an alliance logo on a ship compared to a corp logo, as the corp logos use existing ingame assets.

Meeting with Hilmar

Towards the end of the Summit, the CSM had a very positive meeting with CCP CEO Hilmar.

After a relatively extensive introduction, the CSM took the initiative and professed their admiration for Team Gridlock. Since Team Gridlock doesn't deliver a quantifiable service per se, the CSM felt it was vital for the highest level of management to understand the importance of Gridlock to the community. A discussion about the importance of perception followed, with the CSM hammering home the notion that clear communication paths will ease many tensions.

Hilmar was very supportive of Team Gridlock, assuaging the concerns of the CSM. Hilmar also professed his concerns about the perceptions of Eve Online in the gaming community as a laggy game and asked for the support of CSM to clear up some misconceptions by referring to lag in fleet battles as "fleet lag".

The CSM then presented their new organized, open structure which has very open channels of communication both between the CSM members and to CCP developers. This open communication, thanks in large part to CCP Zulu and CCP Xhagen, resulted in what everyone seems to believe to be the most productive CSM summit to date.

Hilmar discussed the history of the CSM and the importance of being able to communicate to the players on a candid level without having to hold back organizational details and without having to decipherer forum rage. Hilmar came across as genuinely committed to the CSM and was very satisfied with the impact of the CSM on CCP. When questioned about the CCP business model, Hilmar presented a view of Eve not only as a game but also a hobby – a hobby that doesn't necessitate further investment but allows that means to exist.

The jovial camaraderie between the CSM and the CCP staff seemed to relieve Hilmar, resulting in a roundtable discussion about spaceships. The primary focus was Incarna and micro- transactions, where Hilmar reassured the CSM that their continued feedback was valuable.

While Hilmar did say he valued many types of CSM feedback, he felt that the most valuable role the CSM could provide, in terms of development, was in more of a refining role than a high-level design role.

EVE Economics

Present: CCP Dr.EyjoG, CCP Zulu (and child :))

Dr. Eyjo presented a chart of the player populations in high/low/nullsec. Lowsec population has remained consistently low, while nullsec has doubled in the past 18 months. There was a discussion about the reasons for this, including the increased ISK making possibilities in nullsec (especially before the anomaly nerf). It was also noted that the population in nullsec dropped quite a bit when Incursion was released, then slowly recovered. This was likely because people left nullsec to go try incursions.

Dr. Eyjo said that about 30 trillion ISK per month enters the game through bounties. This is about 80% of all the ISK entering the game. The good doctor has been, and still is, concerned about the imbalance between ISK entering and being removed from the game, and has been asking the game designers to either reduce the flow in or add increased ISK sinks.

The CSM was then shown statistics related to the anomaly nerf. CCP did not expect the numbers to drop as much as they did. There was quite a bit of discussion about how the nerf disproportionally hurt alliance grunts.

There was also some discussion about botting anomalies, with some CSM members saying that most bots were belt ratting, not running anomalies. It was pointed out that some bots are able to run anomalies right now, and certainly if belt ratting was nerfed, the bots would be able to switch.

CSM and Dr. Eyjo also discussed the effect on the PLEX market, which at the time was not seriously affected by the nerf. Dr. Eyjo wanted to point out that, much like the US Federal Reserve, what he says about CCP's potential intervention in the PLEX market will be very limited, because any comments he makes have the potential to affect the market.

With that being said, he did say: "I want to emphasize that CCP does not have a specific target price for PLEX, but is only concerned about the efficiency of the market and ensuring that there are no collapses due to mechanical failures". They will only intervene if they feel it is "really, really necessary". Dr. Eyjo was asked if CCP has intervened in the past in the PLEX market and declined to answer. He noted that people are continuing to stockpile PLEXes, and the volume of PLEXes traded on the market has been increasing as well. CCP monitors the PLEX market very closely, looking at numbers daily, weekly and every month. The monthly review includes subscription numbers in general, as well as the health of the PLEX market.

The number of players using PLEX to fund their accounts has been gradually increasing, keeping pace with the increase in overall subscribers. There was some discussion about the tools available to CCP to influence the PLEX market. The CSM requested that CCP share the data about the PLEX market on an ongoing basis in the future, which was acceptable to Dr. Eyjo.

There was a lot of discussion about Aurum's influence on the PLEX market as well as how previous programs that used PLEXes (such as PLEX for character transfer) influenced the PLEX market. CSM pointed out that those programs were much more limited consumers of PLEX than Aurum.

CSM was shown many graphs, including subscriber counts. It was noted that Tyrannis was, in CCP's eyes, a failed expansion in terms of expansion of the player base. There was a small bump in accounts which quickly leveled off. The pattern more recently has been steady growth, and the usually post-expansion "hangover" has been greatly delayed. They are also seeing the start of the expected jump in subscribers because of the upcoming Incarna expansion. The CSM felt that CCP's subscription forecast was achievable. CCP Zulu believes that there is a lot of pent up demand for Incarna which will result in higher than normal post-expansion subscriber growth.

The average EVE player is 31 years old, and it has been increasing as EVE itself gets older. It was also revealed that there are approximately 14,000 female account holders – or more precisely, 14,000 account holders who claim that they are women.

Dr. Eyjo also discussed at length about how detailed data on what new players did was used to redesign the tutorial and find weaknesses in it.

Ship Balancing

Present: CCP Soundwave, CCP Tallest

CSM began by requesting that there be smaller/smarter iteration of ships on a regular basis to maintain balance.

Soundwave replied that when he started the flying in space part of his job, there was not a designated dev for ship balancing. They were going to bring in somebody to specifically crunch numbers on ships to help balance, but then they found they already had someone who wanted the job: CCP Tallest.

When CCP Tallest was asked if he played the game, he responded "Yes".

Supercarriers will not be the first ships they tackle, instead they will start with something smaller first. This is not because CCP feels that balancing supercarriers isn't important, but because they want to get it right.

It was revealed that electronic attack ships have the least number of pilots out of all the different hull types, followed by Black Ops and Titans.

Team BFF will be looking at both individual ships and classes of ships when reviewing for balance. There is a goal to have at least one ship for rebalance once per release (roughly 4 times a year).

According to CCP there aren't a lot of situations where the fix is a quick easy thing. Most of the actual changes are "monster spreadsheets matched up against all other monster spreadsheets" so real changes are complex even if they seem simple.

CSM/CCP both generally agree that people having to change fits due to changing ship stats is a good thing.

CSM emphasized that there needed to be a role for every ship type in a fleet fight.

There was an extensive discussion about issues related to Supercarriers and Titans. The consensus of both CCP and CSM is that Supercaps need a lot of work rebalancing.

Capital ship suicide (self-destructing when you're tackled to deny the enemy of loot/killmail) was raised as a concern. Repeatedly. Various ideas related to this were thrown around.

Some time was spent discussing why all black ops ships suck, but some are more sucky than others.

Opinions were exchanged about the roles of different ship types and how they all interact.

CSM noted that the ship being worked on isn't as important as seeing progress on ship balance. CSM would prefer to see a steady stream of minor tweaks as opposed to once-in-a-blue-moon overhauls. In CSM's opinion, the single most important CCP can do to show progress is to remain engaged on the subject and steadily release tweaks.

CSM Summit Minutes Credits

Initial Session Drafts