

PUBLIC SECTOR CASE STUDY

Medway Council

“THANKS TO CONFIRM, THERE’S NOT A TIME WHEN I DON’T KNOW WHERE WE ARE FINANCIALLY WITH OUR CONTRACTOR.”

Phil Moore, Head of Highways & Parking Services, Medway Council.

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Challenge

Medway Council needed a highways asset management system that could tightly integrate with both its customer service centre and contractor systems. It also wanted real-time financial control over contractor maintenance jobs in order to run its highways budget more efficiently.

Solution

Medway selected Confirm, the asset and infrastructure management system from Pitney Bowes Business Insight. Initially used for the management of highways and street lighting, the solution has evolved over time to cover areas including domestic waste and environmental enforcement, creating a single register of assets and enabling a joined up approach across multiple departments.

SUMMARY

Situated on the North Kent coast at the heart of the Thames Estuary, Medway is a thriving community of over 250,000 people. Medway Council is a unitary authority, providing all local government services for the people of Medway. The highways network consists of 860km of roads, including the 725m Medway Tunnel, one of only two immersed tube tunnels in the UK. Up to 10,000 maintenance-related tasks occur on the network every year.

Following a review of services and efficiencies, Medway Council selected Confirm on the basis that it would deliver on the key objectives outlined in the business case. These included:

- To support Medway Council's e-government strategic aims by providing a single electronic system capable of linking the Council with contractors.
- To provide a source of information available both internally and for public access to support the requirements of Customer First, the Council's centralised call centre.
- To provide a core back-office system capable of servicing Front Line Services asset management requirements and enquiry activities as well as other services.
- To deliver a system that would support both best value and Medway Council's core values while making best use of limited resources.

One of the key challenges that the Council faced was how to effectively manage the financial and quality performance of its main highways contractor, VolkerHighways. Historically, all jobs were raised manually and tracked by spreadsheet, which meant that

transactions were often up to two months in arrears. This made it difficult to understand how the highways department's budget was being spent at any one time.

Tightly integrating Confirm with the Council's financial system has led to a huge improvement in the visibility of job orders and transactions, according to Phil Moore, Head of Highways & Parking Services at Medway Council:

“Every time a job is raised with our contractor via Confirm, it shows as a commitment on our financial system - once a month, this data is integrated automatically with the corporate finance system. This means I can now see in real-time which orders are paid and which are outstanding, which helps enormously with budgeting and ensures we're getting value for money. There's not a time when I don't know where we are financially.”

Confirm will also enable VolkerHighways to work more efficiently by empowering its maintenance workers to issue job orders and completion reports directly from the location of repairs via handheld mobile computers. This means that more time can be spent on maintaining roads rather than paperwork, which again has a direct financial impact on the highways budget.

“We don't want to over-burden our contractor with time-consuming data entry, because not only does this pull them away from the core task of highways maintenance, but it also gets factored into the contract,” says Phil Moore. “We want to minimise the contractor payments we make relating to administration and

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Phil Moore, Head of Highways & Parking Services, Medway Council.

UNITED STATES

One Global View
Troy, NY 12180
1.800.327.8627
pbbi.sales@pb.com
www.pbinsight.com

CANADA

26 Wellington Street East
Suite 500
Toronto, ON M5E 1S2
1.800.268.3282
pbbi.canada.sales@pb.com
www.pbinsight.ca

EUROPE/UNITED KINGDOM

Minton Place
Victoria Street
Windsor, Berkshire SL4 1EG
+44.800.840.0001
pbbi.europe@pb.com
www.pbinsight.co.uk

ASIA PACIFIC/AUSTRALIA

Level 7, 1 Elizabeth Plaza
North Sydney NSW 2060
+61.2.9437.6255
pbbi.australia@pb.com
pbbi.singapore@pb.com
pbbi.china@pb.com
www.pbinsight.com.au

reporting. By enabling the maintenance crews to work mostly from the field on mobile devices, Confirm will generate huge efficiency savings.”

Confirm’s integration across departments within Medway Council has also driven cost and efficiency savings. Originally deployed to manage highways and street lighting maintenance, Confirm is now used in a variety of different areas, including street works notification, highways cleansing, green spaces, domestic waste management and environmental enforcement. By using the same integrated system to manage these activities, rather than systems from multiple suppliers, significant economies of scale have been achieved and work across departments is actively and efficiently co-ordinated.

Because Confirm works as a single asset management system and register, with information input in real-time rather than retrospectively, there has also been a massive reduction in data duplication across departments. This creation of a ‘single version of the truth’ is particularly important for Medway Council’s Customer First department, its first point of contact for the public.

“Confirm has helped us to refocus on what really matters – providing the best possible service to the people of Medway,” says Phil Moore. “By constantly updating the information available to the Customer First interface, we’re able to say with accuracy what’s happening when, for instance, somebody calls to find out when the light in their street is going to be repaired. We’re also able to provide more up to date information through the Council’s website, for instance, the condition of individual roads during periods of extreme weather.”

RESULT

Confirm has provided the Council with a single, user-friendly system to link data with services and applications.

Key savings to date include:

- Provision of electronic transactions has brought about savings for both contractor and Council, with savings in staff costs of approximately 10%.
- Having a robust centralised highway inspection system means that the Council can defend against insurance claims with great accuracy, with claims paid out reduced by over 50% in financial terms. The Council has also been able to deal with increased claims with the same sized team, avoiding staff increases of 20-30%.
- 85% of contact is now made through Customer First.
- Elimination of data entry duplication and paper storage is leading to a much cleaner and tidier operation, which will deliver ongoing efficiency savings.

“Our experience has shown that Confirm is only limited by your imagination as to where you want to take it,” concludes Phil Moore. “It’s an off-the-shelf product that we’ve been able to tailor successfully across multiple departments, and for multiple uses. This flexibility has ultimately enabled us to save money while improving the quality of our services, ensuring that restricted resources are always invested wisely.”