

## Case Study: Welsh Assembly Government



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### Welsh Assembly Government: One for the Road...

#### Wales' roads have never been easier to manage, thanks to a Shared Services highways management approach provided by the Welsh Assembly Government

Since deploying a centralised highways asset management system in 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government has transformed the nation's road management activities, thanks to what is now a clean, rapid flow of information across local authority and organisational borders.

Like all Governments, the Assembly is on a mission to move its services and information management activities online, in accordance with a series of strict targets. Goals include reducing process repetition and redundancy, and driving up performance and service quality. Consolidated electronic information availability, greater project visibility, and enhanced collaboration are all prominent features of that plan.

Some £60 million each year is spent on maintaining Wales' 133 kilometres of motorways and 1,600 kilometres of trunk roads. Five years ago, this job was the responsibility of eight, disparate local authority Agents.

#### All roads lead to one service

Keen to adopt a 'Shared Services' approach to these operations (whereby support functions are consolidated to serve a broader target user base), the Welsh Assembly Government decided to reduce the number of agents to three. This would enable it to reduce costs and inefficiencies, while simultaneously delivering a much more efficient highways management service to Wales as a whole.

Yet this would not have been possible without the ability to reliably and easily share information electronically across and beyond the organisation.

Previously, fragmented, localised systems, manual processes and reams of paperwork were the norm. Now, all of that information is centralised electronically, making it widely accessible to authorised users across and beyond Wales' Highways Agencies, via the web.

"Devolved system management was impeding progress towards our goal of holistic highways management," recalls project manager Louis Mahendra. "We needed a single, centrally managed repository holding all trunk road data that could be accessed both by us and the Agents via the web."

#### Louis Mahendra Project Manager, Welsh Assembly Government

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### Hosting lightens the load

After an extensive market evaluation the Welsh Assembly Government appointed Exor Corporation, a global leader in infrastructure asset management solutions, to provide a centralised, modular highways management solution which would serve all of the Agents and provide critical real-time information to other Assembly departments.

Exor specialises in highways management solutions and had already provided systems to several of the existing Agents.

Mahendra adds. “Exor provided a hosted and managed solution, which would free both the Assembly Government and our Agents from the burden of complex software management for the highway network.”

The centralised, hosted solution is Exor’s comprehensive Highways system, based on Oracle technology and associated business intelligence tools. Initially, a pilot solution was rolled out to the Agents, coinciding with the consolidation of the trunk road agents.

Following the successful trial, Exor’s suite of integrated modules went live in just six weeks, including the merger of the eight disparate data sets from the Agents’ local systems.

Agents now log on to a central Network Manager to gain role-based access to their own information using a secure sign-on from any web-enabled PC. Dates and details of all road inspections are captured and logged on to the system, together with the faults found, recommended remedial action and estimated cost.

### Broadening the benefits

Inspired by the potential of the centralised solution, and the value-added information-based activities this could now support, Mahendra worked with Exor to add additional interfaces, extending the electronic collection and flow of information into other areas.

Photos of damaged road sections or letters of complaint from members of the public can be attached to Agents’ reports using the Document Manager application to provide a fuller picture of the defect, for example. Following online approval for repairs, the Exor solution allows the Agent to create a works order which is despatched to a contractor. When work is completed, an invoice is generated and automatically presented to the Assembly for payment, together with the supporting documentation. All Agents use the same report templates and set of procedures.

Managing all of this electronically has led to all sorts of productivity gains, Mahendra notes. “Before, much of this would have been documented on paper, making it much harder to trace back case histories or spot duplication. Also, managing all of this electronically means that we can ensure protocol is adhered to – for example, the system warns you two or three days in advance that you need to take action on something.”

Exor’s flexibility in being able to develop the additional interfaces has proved immensely valuable to the Welsh Assembly. “We had an original planning meeting where we came up with all of the ideas, and then Exor developed them to meet our specific requirements,” he says.

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### Crossing departmental boundaries

Ease and speed of access to information is crucial to the way the Welsh Assembly Government now operate and able to share information between multiple parties. This includes internal departments at the Assembly or any of Wales' 22 Local Authorities and various Public Utilities.

For example, now, when new applications are submitted to the local authorities, the highways Agents are notified electronically if the plans affect any roads, Mahendra explains. "We can then download the details. This is done on a map basis too, so we can see the area being affected and track the history."

The next stage will be to let the software talk to other internal systems, for example, to extract information from the electronic document management system, so that drawings can be looked up for maintenance purposes," he says.

**Exor saves The Assembly an estimated 10% on their IT overheads. Further substantial cost savings have been derived from eliminating physical storage of paper, and the removal of redundant administration functions.**

"It's all about saving time and staffing costs, by reducing manual processes and duplication," Mahendra says, summarising the considerable benefits that have come from consolidating and streamlining Wales' highways management activities across organisational and geographical borders.

"What's more, staff can be anywhere to gain access, as everything is available over the web." This means engineers no longer need to return to the office to submit reports, for example.

### Tangible savings

Meanwhile, Agents no longer need database administrators to support and update the road maintenance software, as this is hosted by Exor, which saves them an estimated 10% on their IT overheads. Further substantial cost savings have been derived from eliminating physical storage of paper, and the removal of redundant administration functions. A full audit is currently underway to put hard numbers to all of these savings and performance benefits.

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