

## Case Study: Dorset County Council



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## Corporate Electronic Documentation and Records Management System for Dorset County Council

### Electronic Document and Record Management Systems (EDRMS) for recording and archiving electronic documents

Over the past ten years Local Authorities and commercial organisations have faced genuine challenges in how they store, manage, retain and utilise the many forms of electronic data they accumulate. One of the strategies public sector organisations are adopting is corporate Electronic Document and Record Management Systems (EDRMS) for recording and archiving electronic documents such as plans and forms, in addition to electronic mail and scanned letters– this is the route Dorset County Council has adopted.

Dorset have understood the complexities of compliance and corporate governance surrounding EDRMS and have proactively integrated their system into existing management technologies across five directorates to not only solve the authority's document and records management issues, but improve business efficiency, mitigate corporate risk and meet regulatory compliance.

### Approach

What is distinct about Dorset's approach is the way they have taken a corporate view of the EDRMS project rather than focusing on it as a pure IT project. This has resulted in many benefits for all directorates involved in the corporate role out.

The EDRMS pilot, which already contains over 36,000 electronic documents will ultimately replace the 2.5 miles of paper records currently stored by the Authority, was funded in part by a ODPM grant (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) in 2004. The ODPM gave innovation grants to public bodies who could demonstrate improvements in services with the use of emerging technologies to improve practices in Local Government. The initial pilot ended in March 2006 and the corporate rollout is now in progress.

The UK's National Archives, whose origins date back to the Norman Conquest, has been so impressed with the work undertaken they have identified Dorset as a centre of excellence for records and information management within local government and cite the authority as an exemplar in this sector – one of only a few UK authorities to achieve this.

**Richard Blake, Head of the Records  
Management Advisory Service at the National  
Archives**

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### Focus on Businesses Need

Richard Blake, Head of the Records Management Advisory Service at the National Archives, comments, "Dorset had to set up an EDRMS from scratch and, as with all public sector organizations, had to comply with demanding legislation coupled with a need to retain accurate audit trails. With the volumes of electronic documents going through these systems this can prove very difficult.

"By focusing on the business needs of the users Dorset has produced an effective and professional system to support each directorate's unique requirements," adds Blake. "With the publication of the Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities in 2006, central government is looking to determine new measures to assess effective information governance and the adoption, use and management of such document management systems. This is to facilitate corporate governance and provide key performance indicators for the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process which is to replace the existing CPA process [Comprehensive Performance Assessments].

### Scrutiny by Central Government

"The use of systems like these by local authorities is being closely monitored and scrutinized by local authorities and centrally within government. It's because of the excellent work undertaken by Dorset to implement effective records management to support sound information governance that we have recognized as an exemplar".

**Of the 36,000 documents currently stored 8,500 belong to the Highways team, accumulated in less than 6 months – once fully deployed around 30 percent of all documents in EDRMS will belong to the Highways directorate alone.**

### Improved work practices

Three years on from the initial funding of the Corporate EDRMS scheme and the positive stance taken by Dorset on implementing best practice in each directorate, the scheme has expanded beyond its initial remit. This has been achieved by integrating specialist business functions in each directorate where justified, and capitalizing on existing technologies and demonstrating clear improvements to work practices.

The Authority has achieved improved work practices in a number of ways; an example is in the Highways division, which is set to become the largest user of the EDRMS in Dorset. Of the 36,000 documents currently stored 8,500 belong to the Highways team, accumulated in less than 6 months – once fully deployed around 30 percent of all documents in EDRMS will belong to the Highways directorate alone.

### Successful integration into Exor's highways maintenance solution

Dorset has successfully integrated a specialist management tool for highways maintenance, from Exor Corporation, to record, collate and send electronic information into what was once a highly paper based maintenance process.

Exor's Enquiry Manager allows the organisation to efficiently manage and respond to queries from the general public to incidents on the road network, such as potholes, damage to road signs and the like. This is highly visible customer interaction for the Authority, one in which there is a potential for accident claims if faults are not quickly restored. Speed to record, repair and reinstate is of importance.

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### Deploying information to remote offices

With an open architecture and a commitment to support sustainable integration Exor provides a supported interface to pass information to and from the EDRMS. This ensures that all the electronic documents and scanned information is accessible in one integrated system for the Highways team. The reports of incidents on the highway network can be sent to field based highways maintenance teams to be rectified.

Paul Moon, Dorset's Highways System Manager explains; "as a result of the new system's centralised repository of scanned data, we are able to classify and group documents together. This means that links are created to all electronic data so when investigating an enquiry or incident, all the relevant data is instantly available.

"As we're deploying and rolling out the system, information to our remote offices and field based teams becomes instantly available as it's scanned and stored into EDRMS. In the past getting the paper based information to the relevant section could take days, if we use this system to its potential, I can easily see our claims liability for the authority reducing and, of course, the service to the Public shall improve through improving response times". The Highway division consists of over 600 staff members and all will eventually have access to the EDRMS and Exor.

Other directorates are also seeing significant advantages working with the Corporate EDRMS system, the Authority's Social Care function, for example, is benefiting greatly with 24hour access to confidential case records – without compromising the sensitivity of the case and data protection laws.

### Authenticity of electronic records

Richard Blake explained a further key consideration is to maintain the authenticity of electronic records to ensure their fitness for purpose and where required support attestation of evidential weight in a court of law. The international records management standard BS ISO 15489 identified four key characteristics for records to exist. These are:

- ◆ Authenticity
- ◆ Reliability
- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ Usability

Dorset's approach to implementing their electronic document and records management solution will ensure that their key business records will remain authentic in that they can be attributed to a trusted source, they will be reliable as the key attributes of the records of an activity or transaction, will be maintained to ensure the records continue to be serviceable. They will also possess integrity in that unauthorised modifications will be prevented and they will remain usable over time as the authority will be able to locate and view their business information within a corporate context.

This is especially important when managing records, which comprise an individual's electronic social care record where care in the management of personal data is a priority. The requirements to facilitate data sharing whilst at the same time limiting this to those users who have a legitimate need to know are directly supported by Dorset's information management initiative and is illustrative of their commitment to excellence.

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### Dorset a forward looking Authority

Many business drivers have resulted in Dorset undertaking a corporate implementation of the EDRMS system, Anthony Lewis, Senior Project Manager, Dorset County Council explains, "here in Dorset we've always been a forward looking Authority and due to our corporate approach we've been able to see the real benefits and link them to a Corporate business case to deliver more and more services. Now we're seeing the real payback from this investment and not just financially".

Lewis adds, "as an Authority with an effective EDRMS system we're benefiting from better work practices and much quicker access to information, but also our ability to comply with an array of statutory regulations has also greatly improved, for example under the Freedom of Information Act we're able to respond quicker to questions posed to us and retrieve relevant data."

### TMA Implications

Discussing the TMA implications for Dorset Moon further adds, "as a result of following the standards set by the National Archives our electronic documents are able to stand up in a court of law as a valid alternative to paper, which means under the Traffic Management Act [TMA] digital information for non-compliance, can be collated and used in a court of law.

"The Act is introducing processes to help deal with highway reinstatements, which in turn will reduce our claim liability costs. And the most ubiquitous movement for better management and savings of resources falls under Gershon, we're seeing each directorate achieve saving efficiencies".

Dorset County Council are also realising cashable savings through innovative integration of existing technologies in the Authority, such as the Exor integration in the

### Integration into corporate wide solutions

Highways division. They are gaining from improvements in better resource management of employees' time and removal of task duplication through structured documentation and automated retrieval processes.

In other organisations Exor's open architecture solutions are being integrated into community wide projects such as SAP and ROCC financials and CRM systems. All of these projects are delivering similar time and cost saving coupled with effective legislative compliance.

### Conclusion

In conclusion Exor's Colin Stewart, Product Director, explains, "Through our experience of integrating our software into other applications our clients automatically derive greater efficiencies, not only with our solutions, but across the wider business application process. Better information is always key to informed decision making and as seen here at Dorset, a relatively simple integration project has had huge beneficial impact on its highways business. Similar technology integration in the other areas of their business is providing comparable results.

"There are a number of other integration projects I've worked on that share many of the characteristics Dorset has demonstrated on a corporate wide basis. We frequently integrate our asset management software into corporate financial systems which run live analysis of associated highways costs, be those SAP, Oracle or other leading financial systems. We've also integrated with a wide variety of CRM systems with similar success.

"But all said and done, improvements in quality of service to those who use and apply innovative applications do and will continue to deliver better services to all stakeholders, clients and users, authority wide".

### Richard Blake, Head of the Records Management Advisory Service at the National Archives

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### About Exor:

Exor Corporation was founded in 1995 and is the global leader in infrastructure asset management solutions for network centric industries. Exor established its operating base in highways management and is rapidly expanding into other strategic markets including rail, water, power distribution and oil & gas. Based on world-class Oracle technology Exor provides clients with a modular approach to their individual technology needs. Exor Corporation operates worldwide in Europe, North America and Asia/Pacific and in September 2005 was included in the Software 500 list of the world's foremost software and service providers. Exor systems manage 1,000,000 miles of roads with an asset value in excess of \$750 billion (USD).

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