

Speeding site processes with Field View



Contractor Willmott Dixon deployed Viewpoint Construction Software's Field View, formally Priority1 mobile reporting solution on Bath and North East Somerset Council's new £34m headquarters at Keynsham part way through construction. After deploying, they rapidly identified significant

time savings from configuring a tablet-based application to support company-specific on-site processes and to complement its other project management solutions.

Background

Willmott Dixon is the main contractor for a new headquarters complex in central Keynsham for Bath and North East Somerset Council. Part of a wider regeneration strategy which includes replacing a 1960s building, the scheme has been designed to high environmental standards by architect Aedas (with building services from Max Fordham Associates and civil and structural engineering services from Hydroc), and is also intended to centralise various council services in a single location, along with some retail accommodation. The complex will be the UK's first public building to achieve a DEC 'A' rating for energy efficiency; its structures combine cross-laminated timber, steel frame and pre-cast concrete planks, with high levels of building insulation.

Willmott Dixon has been developing its use of information and communications technology to support design, construction and handover of its projects. It normally deploys the Viewpoint For Projects™ Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) project collaboration platform to support exchange of design and construction information via the web, and has been using the Field View solution, from Viewpoint Construction Software to support on-site processes on mobile devices. In both cases, the intention has been to streamline communications between Willmott Dixon and its key project supply chain members, but the Field View application is also used by corporate staff – for example, visiting health and safety inspectors – to ensure compliance with industry and company-wide standards and processes.

Implementation of tablet solution

In January 2013, Viewpoint launched a new version of Field View accessible via standard Android tablet devices. With construction defects management, health and safety and quality assurance processes ramping up in mid-2013, construction manager David Morris introduced the devices to the project, with five Samsung Galaxy 7" tablets being used by Willmott Dixon employees (excluding those brought by visiting colleagues responsible for group-wide occupational health and safety and environmental compliance) and a further four used by key subcontractors. Even in protective covers, the 7" tablets fit easily into pockets but have a screen large enough to view drawings, making them ideal for construction site use.

As Willmott Dixon had been previously working with Viewpoint, the application came configured to suit the company's standard processes and reporting structures. With data input and presentation immediately in familiar and logical formats, the system was quickly adopted by Willmott Dixon staff, Morris says.

Users will normally synchronise their tablets to get a 'snapshot' of the project before they leave the site office. As they tour the site, site-based staff can capture information and either immediately report it or wait until they got back into the office to synchronise data. As the project has site-wide wi-fi, users could synchronise key information immediately – useful when issuing clean-up notices and other items requiring immediate subcontractor action. Key items could be instantly emailed and, in the process, also be captured in the Viewpoint For Projects system. Staff also has office access to wireless keyboards and printers.

An experienced building manager in his mid-40s, Morris was initially skeptical about using Field View, but has moved on from being a 'technophobe' to now one of the system's keenest advocates. Another user, an assistant building manager fresh out of the Willmott Dixon training scheme, had never used a tablet before, and is also now proficient and enthusiastic about the system. Morris said: "My team found they can find stuff quicker on tablets than they can on their PCs; one user almost never uses his laptop now; another has almost worn his tablet out, he's used it that much to capture, store and share photographs and other information."

Process support at Keynsham

Since August 2013, the Field View application has helped the project maintain adherence to Willmott Dixon's ISO14001 occupational health and safety and ISO18001 environmental management procedures. The supported processes also include:

- Snagging (in nine months to April 2014, Morris estimates some 600 snags have been reported "and we haven't even hit the busiest period for snagging yet")
- Health and safety documentation, eg: permits and registers (Morris estimates the system will manage 500-600 permits during the project)
- Quality assurance processes, eg: checksheets, progress reports, site diaries, and daily reports

Where issues are identified, photographs can be taken and annotated with additional information explaining the issue, with every submission securely time- and date-stamped so that there is a permanent audit trail record. This means records such as site diaries are also more accurate, being collated contemporaneously, with no transcription of handwritten notes or insertion of progress photographs; Morris highlighted the photo mark-up and commenting tools as a powerful example of pinpointing issues for time-saving and record-keeping.

Benefits achieved at Keynsham

- Morris estimated that the Field View mobile system saved on average five minutes every time notices were issued from site, excluding the time previously required to return to the site offices to complete the paperwork
- Less paperwork and so less printing; both Willmott Dixon and subcontractor staff spent more time productively out managing activities directly on site.
- Faster reporting – electronic reports could be collated automatically, streamlining communications

- More consistent data capture and reporting aligned with Willmott Dixon's corporate systems
- Better audit trails – once digitised, 'paperwork' could not be lost; Field View also avoided reliance on emails shared across different company email systems, and ensured site-issued notices were additionally quickly communicated and shared via the Viewpoint For Projects system.