CIVICA

A strong start for the Environment Agency's modernisation journey

Migrating a strategically important Document Management Service to SharePoint Online.

Protecting the environment

The Environment Agency (EA) — a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) — was set up to protect and improve the environment and support sustainability. A lot of its work focuses on environmental regulation and the issuing of permits to organisations whose industrial, waste or water-related activities affect the environment.

All of the documentation associated with each permit, along with its attributed audit trail, is stored in the agency's Document Management Service. Documentation includes the original application; a record of the EA's decision-making process; reports on permit compliance inspection and enforcement uploaded by staff across the organisation.

Upgrading a strategic service

The system currently holds around 9 million documents — equating to some 7TB of data — relating to live and historical permits, accessible by up to 4,000 EA staff.

"This is a strategically important service — without it, we would find it extremely challenging to carry out our statutory duties as a regulator," says Andrea Purdy, Data & Intelligence Manager — Environment & Business at EA.

The software supporting the system was ageing and ready for modernisation As part of a broader Defra-wide infrastructure transformation strategy, the EA decided to transition its Document Management Service to SharePoint Online.

The Agency worked with Civica to customise the SharePoint deployment to meet its needs. "In particular, we needed to restrict the collaboration and editing functionality to preserve the integrity of historical and newly stored documents" says Andrea.

9m
documents stored

7TB
of data

4,000
staff accessing data

"Working with Civica has been great: they have excellent people good at what they do. Collaborating with an external supplier isn't always simple, but we found it easy to be a blended team with Civica."

Andrea Purdy
Data & Intelligence Manager —
Environment & Business
Environment Agency

Learn more:
civica.com/central-government

Contact us:
digital@civica.co.uk

Outcomes

- A secure solution to protect the integrity of secured documents and support compliance

- Combines UK and Indian Civica resources in a project team that delivers consistent quality with budgetary benefits

- Successful first steps on the Environment Agency's infrastructure transformation journey.

Migrating the Document Management Service to SharePoint Online is a critical first step for the Environment Agency as it transitions from ageing infrastructure to modern, future-proof technology platforms.

Envision, design, deliver

Civica has provided a full lifecycle of the application design and development stages, including:

- Envision: Advice on MS 365 and Azure best practice

- Design: Design of a customised SharePoint solution to meet the EA's stated needs

- Deliver: Solution build through structured development and testing phases using SharePoint templates and Azure-based MS 365 scripts.

EA hosts the SharePoint-based Document Management Service in its own Azure cloud tenancy.

While the Agency manages the cloud environment, Civica is responsible for supporting, managing and protecting the bespoke SharePoint deployment.

A professional collaboration

"Working with Civica has been great: they have excellent people who're good at what they do," says Andrea. "Collaborating with an external supplier isn't always simple, but we found it easy to be a blended team with Civica."

Civica created a nimble team comprising UK-based personnel with India-based technical specialists — an approach known as right-shoring.

"Having some members of the Civica team in India didn't cause any disruption to the project. In fact, there were some advantages, as the time difference meant they could get ahead on certain tasks before handing them over for the next stage," says Andrea. "Most importantly, this approach delivered consistent quality with budgetary benefits."

First steps for modernisation

As well as aligning with Defra's ongoing rollout of Windows 10 and MS 365, moving the Document Management Service to SharePoint:

- Delivers an improved, more responsive user experience

- Makes it easier for users to manage metadata

- Simplifies data quality management by being easier to use.

Using SharePoint also means that the EA will be able to integrate the Document Management Service with other new digital services.

"With hundreds of applications in use at the EA, we're at an early stage of our transition to new infrastructure and technology. Migrating our Document Management Service to SharePoint is a good start, as it's a foundation that underpins all our processes."

Andrea Purdy, Data & Intelligence Manager — Environment & Business, Environment Agency

Learn more:
civica.com/central-government

Contact us:
digital@civica.co.uk