

In-Form Consult helps Scottish Council save over £2m through streamlined Information Management processes

“We had some very old-fashioned processes relating to how information was handled and stored. I knew we needed expert help to introduce some good practices around the creation, storage, retrieval and disposal of information. IFC took us to a point where we finally had some formality around how people were going to work and how information was going to be managed, used and stored.”

John Robertson, The Highland Council



About The Highland Council

The Highland Council governs the northern-western regions of Scotland, covering a vast and diverse landscape including some of the most remote and sparsely populated areas in the UK. With more than 14,000 employees, it is one of the largest authorities in the UK, serving over 230,000 citizens across 22 wards.

The region stretches from Landward Caithness in the North, down to Fort William & Ardnamurchan in the South, spanning 26,000 square kilometres - one third of Scotland's complete land area and 11% of the UK as a whole. The Council's geographic remit is 20% larger than Wales (almost the size of Belgium) and includes over 4,000 kilometres of coastline.

Business Challenge

Covering such a large geographic area, and with a high number of employees, the Council was struggling with out-dated working practices relating to how information was created, managed, used and stored.

In a climate where the Council was under pressure to deliver greater efficiency and

demonstrate transparency, all whilst cutting costs, it was critical to implement new strategies and systems for the management.

John Robertson, Information Management Programme Manager, at Highlands Council comments, “We had some very old-fashioned practices relating to how information was handled and stored. We often weren't tagging information sufficiently to make it easily retrievable and there was little commonality in how it was managed and stored. We wanted to improve that so we could save money on projects and ultimately on staff.”

The Council initiated a series of projects to help them streamline their information flow. Having recently purchased SharePoint, they had a basic platform but it hadn't been fully configured and wasn't being fully used in the way the Council had envisaged. When the in-house Information Manager decided to leave the Council, John was tasked with taking the information management challenge into his remit. The Council issued a tender to a number of specialist Information Management consultants, including In-Form Consult (IFC).

IFC Solution

Having successfully won the tender, the IFC consultants began a series of integrated engagements with the Council's Corporate Improvement and Archives teams.

“To start with we wanted to know exactly what SharePoint could do, and how we could use it to

manage information. IFC ran a series of workshops to help us shape our ideas and challenge our perceptions; this really helped us steer through to arrive at a set of common agreements” says John.

IFC's engagement with the Council extended further to include a series of key development projects which would ultimately lead the Council to a complete information management strategy and working practice, encompassing:

- ↳ Creation of new Information Management controls including definition of corporate vocabulary and metadata policy, defined file naming conventions and file structures, and Information Management security policy
- ↳ Redefinition of the Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) principles associated with SharePoint
- ↳ Development of an Information Asset Register to support the delivery of a new Business Support Information Management Plan
- ↳ A detailed information architecture for the new Business Support SharePoint system
- ↳ Development of Business Support controls and governance
- ↳ Consultancy and support around integrating business processes into the Business Support SharePoint site
- ↳ Development of a Classification Scheme and Retention Guidance

“I knew we needed expert help to introduce some good practices around the creation, storage, retrieval and disposal of information, but it was crucial they fully aligned to our existing SharePoint investment. We were looking for a partner who not only understood that environment, but who also had first-rate specialist knowledge of Information Management best-practices.”

John Robertson, Information Management Programme Manager

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IFC provided the Council with a suite of detailed documentation covering the new information management controls, principles, systems architecture and processes. This was further supported by internal training for management and users around information management best practice and SharePoint usage. This ensured that the new information management strategy could be effectively realised on a day-to-day level.

The Results

The Highland Council are seeing a number of early benefits from the complete solution IFC helped them to develop and implement. Now that information is labelled correctly and unnecessary documents are no longer retained, information storage has been dramatically reduced by hundreds of Gigabytes of data. This is helping the Council stay operationally agile and responsive to information requests.

Why IFC?

The Highland Council selected IFC for their unrivalled information and records management expertise, SharePoint experience, industry credibility and straight-forward, honest approach.

John enthuses "IFC were really focused on what we needed to do and achieve. Being such a large Council, we have a number of different stakeholders which can be challenging when agreements need to be reached but IFC steered their way through that complexity and gave us strong guidance with the right amounts of clarity and direction".

"IFC took us to a point where we finally had some formality around how people were going to work and how information was going to be managed, used and stored. They gave us invaluable guidance and operational blueprints on how we could take our present environment and make it work more efficiently with all teams across the business."

John Robertson, Information Management Programme Manager



John is happy to see this in action, "Now SharePoint is being used across the Council and we have a defined focus on Information Lifecycle management with a dedicated project manager responsible for governing it and supporting teams to

deliver against the agreed strategy."

Cost savings have also been made across multiple areas. Improved processes have increased efficiency which in turn has resulted in a £2m headcount saving. Data storage costs have also been reduced as a result of more efficient information labelling. Furthermore, the Council can clearly see real cost avoidance through better working practices. John is already seeing the benefits, "Much of the quantitative benefit is yet to come but just making processes more efficient is saving us £2m in headcount budget alone, and that doesn't include the reduction in storage costs!" he says.

"We've found it a really good experience...and I've had lots of bad ones! I already have, and will continue to, recommend IFC not only because of their expertise and focus but because they have a pragmatic, honest approach that really helped us get the results we needed."

About In-Form Consult (IFC)

We are an independent information management consultancy that helps businesses transform enterprise wide information into a more powerful business asset. We take a refreshingly pragmatic approach to helping companies uncover, manage and exploit information, transforming the value of both unstructured and structured content. Our complete solutions - encompassing consultancy, technology, training and resourcing - help to solve your holistic information management needs, help to drive innovation and create new business realities. Our consulting team are industry-leading experts in the areas of Information Management, Information Governance and Records Management; and specialists within Public, Private and Not-for-Profit sectors.