

Tameside MBC - Case Study

Fully Integrated Asset Management System Delivers Profound Efficiency Savings

The Symology logo features the word "Symology" in a white serif font, positioned to the right of a circular graphic composed of numerous small white dots arranged in a spiral pattern.

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council has achieved far-reaching efficiency savings through the scale of their Symology infrastructure. The Insight suite of Asset Management solutions is now used across all relevant business areas at the council, enabling full operational integration between all highways functions. The result is streamlined processes, improved customer service and a huge array of everyday economies of scale.

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Tameside has been a Symology customer since 1990 and now uses Insight for Bridges and Structures, Highway Maintenance, Street Lighting, Street Works and UKPMS (Pavement Management System) purposes. In addition to the Symology web-based tracking tool, Tameside also uses Symology’s Customer Service, embedded GIS and Insight Mobile software. The infrastructure enables coordination of all highway authority works and all utility works in a single integrated solution, eliminating complex interfaces between many different systems and simplifying system administration.

*“There are multiple benefits from having an integrated system”, says **Alan Jackson, Business Manager at Tameside.** “Reports are logged in the system just once, so duplicate data entry is eliminated, and the system carries the data from module to module as required.”*

Efficiency Savings

“For the last seven years we’ve had a web-based interface where fault reports can be logged, used both by the public and our own call centre staff. We can also take lighting outages directly into the system. Everything’s pre-set and works orders go straight onto our handheld devices. If you made a report on the system today, the gang would be on-site tomorrow, making the repair.”

Tameside also uses the Mobile Device Facilities module for remote working while out in the field. Alan continues: *“We use hand-held devices to track almost everything now. The risk inspectors and work gangs download their inspections and jobs in the morning, update job details over the course of the day, and then put the device back in the cradles overnight. We could go fully mobile with remote connectivity, but it works fine the way it is.”*

Third-Party Liability Defence

The council has also made great savings through being equipped to defend third-party liability claims. *“We’re bucking the trend”, says Alan. “All the inspections are built-in to the system as per codes of practice. Then from either a planned inspection or following a public complaint, we can show that we carried out an inspection, raised a ticket for any repair work and signed it off afterwards, all in the same system. It’s enabled us to go to court and defend almost every case against us.”*

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Statutory Reporting As Standard

In addition to producing statutory National Indicators and many Local Indicators, the system integrates fully with Tameside's finance system, and offers reporting through Crystal Reports and industry standard data interfaces. Alan continues: *"The system transfers a standard Symology output file containing the financial ledger. We're pretty happy with the other reporting utilities and have vast experience of using Crystal to write reports. Also, Symology are very good. They're very knowledgeable about local government and the system is set-up with a lot of standard reports. It's all parameter-driven too so, if things change in the real world, you don't have to wait for new releases of hard-coded reports."*

Integration, Innovation & Integrity

Tameside originally adopted Symology software for public utility street works purposes and extended the use of the system to streamline inefficient separate systems – both computerised and paper-based – that generated many repeat visits to streets. They worked closely with Symology and were instrumental in developing the Integrated Activities module, which offers a street-by-street view of inspections due and works orders. Alan says: *"I've found that if you make a suggestion for an improvement they will put it in their list of priorities. If it's something that's wrong with the system they usually do it straight away and if it's a 'nice to have' they try and include it when they can."*

"On the support side, they've been really helpful. On one occasion, when we had to do an out-of-hours upgrade, the head of the support desk actually said 'if you get any problems, ring me on this number...', and gave me his home number."

"There's also a big User Group. If there's something specific in a development area, they get a special interest group to look at it. They look after the needs of their customers at all times and I find them very helpful."

Looking Forward

The software infrastructure already in place has many more potential uses and Alan has big plans for the future. *"We've already got all our assets logged on the system and are starting to look at the potential of highways inspections being able to forecast life-expectancy and make budget forecasts."*

"Mapping is a big area too. I want members of the public as well as inspectors to be able to pick a lighting column on a Web-based map, tap-in what's wrong, and for that to be displayed in the office and on the device instantaneously. We're going to put waste-management services on the system too. Also, the very next thing we're going to look at is getting our lighting columns to self-report. We already get information from the columns on components that are likely to fail. But we can automate that and feed the information back through the power supply and then into Insight via the Web."

Alan Jackson is Business Manager, Technical & Property Services, Economy & Environment, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council.



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Key Features

- Efficiency savings from centralised system with single source of data.
- End-to-end integration enables simpler deployment of complex services.
- Easier system management and reporting.
- Statutory National Indicators and many more Local Indicators can be produced.
- Full integration with Customer Services module and easy integration with finance applications.
- Integrated web-based fault reporting system.
- Comprehensive mobile data collection software with in-the-field updating capabilities.
- End-to-end audit trail enables more effective defence of third-party claims.
- Minimal investment and maximum functionality through modular approach.
- Future-Proof Solution: free regular software upgrades cater for requirements changes.
- Open technology standards for easier integration with legacy systems.
- Knowledgeable consultants understand customer business processes.
- Helpful, highly available, well-trained technical support staff.
- Symology User Group enables customers to guide software development.
- Privately-owned, financially independent company that values its customers.