Powerproject®

The Highway to Programme Management Efficiency at Skanska

SKANSKA

About Skanska

Skanska, established in 1887, is one of the world's leading project development and construction groups. The UK operation is one of the country's top contractors, employing over 5200 people and with revenues well over £1billion annually.

Within its diverse business, Skanska delivers infrastructure services which span civils and public realm, rail, street lighting and highways maintenance. It has a long track record of building, maintaining and operating highways, and today delivers round-the-clock maintenance for roads, tunnels, and bridges, plus a comprehensive range of exterior and street lighting services, to county councils and the Highways Agency, amongst others.

Graham Roebuck, chief planner within Skanska's infrastructure services division in the UK, talks about how he and his team use Powerproject Enterprise.

The business of highways maintenance and street lighting management requires its planners to keep a very tight handle on all the different jobs that may be running simultaneously – but it also involves a high degree of repetitive work. To support this, Graham's team utilises the multi-user and multi-project functionality of Powerproject Enterprise.

Planning high volume activity

Graham explains: "Highways maintenance involves planning, processing and managing a high volume of work. At any time we might have anywhere between 80 and 200 individual projects underway, starting and ending at different times. Projects can range from resurfacing a road to replacement of a bridge or major road improvement schemes. We use the software to manage the whole life-cycle of all these different projects."

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Because many of the projects have common elements, Skanska has developed a template approach. "All the jobs have some degree of standardisation so, using Powerproject Enterprise, we have created a series of templates and then adapt them to individual jobs. We needed the Enterprise version because, unlike a typical single project, we may have 200 different critical paths which don't interact at all, yet we need to monitor and track resources and cash-flow within the whole contract."

Templated approach

He continues: "On each type of job we'll have an Powerproject Enterprise template for work on structures, one for work on resurfacing, and so on, each one preloaded with the typical cost-loaded resources. We can then do things like track our design, estimating and project management resources across schemes, and track each one against its budget. As we move through our various

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predefined gateways (such as design, pricing, governance and mobilisation) we can see how things are changing. We can keep track of an enormous number of tasks overall – if there are 200 jobs underway, each one might have up to 100 separate tasks."

The division uses Powerproject Enterprise to enable and empower staff at different levels and with different specialisms: "We've got 20 concurrent licenses at present, but we must have over 100 potential users in all. The software is mostly used by designers and project managers, each of whom update progress on their own programmes. It has changed the culture and driven greater engagement and accountability which is helping us monitor progress – and that's why it's

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been so successful. I will visit one of our project offices and often see 5 or 6 project managers with the software open on their screens."

Maintaining a clear view

When describing how the software supports their ability to communicate and report, Graham explains: "We collect the information from the software, and then manage it visually in our project management and design meetings. In the project office we often map out the overall programme on the wall, using visual management techniques. When we hold weekly meetings to discuss progress, the attendees know exactly what is going on in their own programme – but only if they've taken the responsibility on board, and ensured that they have updated it in the software."

Bespoke solutions to specific challenges

Elecosoft has created bespoke software to support various street lighting and highways maintenance contracts. "Street lighting presents different challenges. Before instigating Powerproject Enterprise we used many different spreadsheets to juggle all the information we needed. The numbers of tasks involved can be huge, for example, we might have to replace

40,000 street lights on a single project – and each one involves 7 or 8 tasks, so that could be more than 300,000 tasks."

"We were really happy with the service we got from Elecosoft. They took the time to understand our business and helped us to develop the macros we needed. I can rely on Elecosoft to make something bespoke and know they won't ever leave you in the lurch or charge through the nose for bug-fixing."

Graham explains how Powerproject is used to better manage resourcing and reporting: "We use the software to manage our design and project management resources. Most schemes within a highway maintenance contract needs design. Business Intelligence has helped us see the peaks and troughs of design needs, and know where we can redeploy resources across the contracts. Business Intelligence also generates two other key reports; one, a traffic-light report so that we can see our key gateways status; and the other one a report to track expenditure."

Is Powerproject something that Graham values? His answer is unequivocal: "Powerproject Enterprise is my preference for project and programme management. I have been using it for over 15 years, and I find it easier to use than alternatives. Also, if I want to cascade a bit of software down to site managers I will always recommend Powerproject Enterprise, because the learning curve is quick and people find it simple to use. One big advantage with Elecosoft is the helpdesk. I know that if ever I get stuck I can just phone them, and they'll help me out. We put our guys through training with Elecosoft and the costs are much cheaper than other routes. Because of its cost effectiveness, I would be happy to send a keen site manager on an Elecosoft training course, and know that they would be able to produce a programme quickly."