

Horsham District Council

Trail blazing document collaboration



**Horsham
District
Council**

A two-way software partnership meeting industry standards and best practice methodology

Limehouse Software's proven collaboration, publishing and consultation system was chosen by Horsham District Council to streamline communications to stakeholders. Resource savings were immediate, cutting document publishing time from several weeks to minutes, and delivering instant results from online consultations.

When legislation changed in the local government planning process, each council was instructed to put together a series of core documents and consult with the public more frequently. The increased production of reports and heightened level of consultations with community and stakeholders on the content, threatened to be a far more time consuming and involved than previously.

Horsham District Council embraced this change with vigour, opting to automate its document collaboration process and deliver consultation information direct to the public via the Internet. Limehouse Software's collaboration, publishing and consultation solution was selected to produce documents and rapidly publish them online to reduce time, resources and costs.

Horsham District Council is a 'trail blazer' in this area. Once published, the web-based documents reach wider audiences, and enable the Council to run swifter and more effective consultations with the public.

The immediate benefits

"The Local Planning Framework was a new initiative for all local authorities," said Barbara Childs, LDF Project Manager at Horsham District Council. "To adapt quickly and work smoothly, we needed to be responsive to any challenge – it was essentially an evolving process of change. We therefore needed a trusted software solution that could meet our specific departmental needs, industry standards and best practice."

The traditional process of many authors working on various versions of documentation has been eliminated by the specialist software. The most recent version of a work-in-progress document is always made available, wherever and whenever. Furthermore, the integration of pictures, charts and maps into the documents are fully automated and easy to achieve.

When it comes to publication, the need for manual conversion from Microsoft Word to web has been removed, plus all design elements remain in-house with the District Council, without the need for outsourced

Trail blazing document collaboration

OBJECTIVE

Adapt swiftly to new legislation requiring the council to produce a new series of documents and to consult with the public more frequently.

CHALLENGE

To respond quickly and evolve efficiently the internal processes to effectively increase report production and heighten the level of consultation with the community and stakeholders.

SOLUTION

The Council implemented Limehouse Software's unique web-based collaboration, publication and consultation solution in order to run swifter, more effective consultations with the public and improve its document creation process.

RESULTS

- Considerable reduction in staff resource time and design costs
- Dramatic increase in the speed of production and publication of web-based documents
- The ability to collaborate and publish to multiple formats at the touch of a button
- Improved methods of consultation lead to greater engagement with a wider variety of respondents
- The facility to link to the Council's geographic information system and easily insert maps into planning documents



Collaborate

Create

Engage



“The software provided a significant reduction in the time taken to publish documents.”

graphic design resources. Collaboration and publication to multiple formats is done by the simple click of a button, saving time and reducing graphic design costs.

Once produced and made available via the Internet, the web-based documents communicate information and engage stakeholders in the decision-making process. Public feedback on plans and policies can be contributed electronically via forms on the website. These consultation comments are then gathered into a central database for report making, profiling and for generating responses, saving yet more of the Council’s administrative time.

“We’ve been pleasantly surprised with the number of people that have chosen to respond online. We’ve had over 50% online representations from a wider variety of respondents than we’ve received on previous consultation exercises.”

Responsive to the challenges

Barbara Childs states, “Not only were we able to get into a new way of doing things very quickly, but also the software provided a significant reduction in the time taken to publish documents. Previously, it took a week to convert a hard copy document for use on the web. Now, we do things the other way around and produce web documents that can be converted to a hard copy in a matter of minutes. The resource savings were immediate.

“We’ve been pleasantly surprised with the number of people that have chosen to respond online. We’ve had over 50% online representations from a wider variety of respondents than we’ve received on previous consultation exercises.”

Chris Bradley, GIS Analyst at Horsham District Council adds: “The software enables us to link our geographic information system to the documents under production and easily insert maps into the planning documents. This is a great advantage over the traditional way of porting URL links manually. This was a highly technical integration, and working with Limehouse Software developed into a two-way process that successfully met all our needs.”

A two-way software partnership

A partnership with Limehouse Software is not simply the delivery of a core software solution, but a two-way partnership meeting industry standards and best practice methodology.

The software partnership adopted between Horsham District Council and Limehouse Software ensured that the solution was uniquely developed to fit the industry environment and integrate seamlessly with the Council’s geographic information system.

The document collaboration and publishing options not only assist with the swift and wider delivery of information to the public, but also deliver significant time and resource savings within the department. Conversion to web is speeded up and external design costs are removed.

The consultation process with stakeholders is now faster via the web with all responses stored in a central repository that can be recalled, analysed and responded to at any time.

“Limehouse Software has successfully provided Horsham District Council with a technology solution to streamline the document production, publication and consulting process,” said Barbara Childs. “This has enabled us to swiftly lead the industry field and spearhead the communication of visions to stakeholders via the web without the traditional barriers.”