

# THE SCIENCE OF EFFECTIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SUCCESS STORY

The Natural Environment Research Council has implemented the Compuware Changepoint professional services automation application to optimise service delivery with improved project management and enhanced fiscal accountability

## Highlights

### Customer:

Natural Environment Research Council



### Industry:

Independent Scientific Research

### Commercial Challenge:

NERC wanted to manage its resources more effectively by better understanding how its people were being deployed, improving visibility of workflow, and enabling greater financial accountability.

### Compuware answer:

A pilot implementation of the Compuware Changepoint application soon led to full-scale rollout within NERC. Since the initial deployment the solution has been enhanced through customisation and it has delivered significant business benefits. User acceptance is very high and the application has now become core to the NERC resource management process.

### Compuware solutions used:

Changepoint Professional Services Automation

Environmental issues look set to dominate the agenda in the 21st Century. Sustainability, climate change, natural hazards, and biodiversity are just some of the key themes at front of mind throughout the world. The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) has a key role to play, being the UK's main agency for funding and managing research, training, and knowledge transfer in the environmental sciences. Although it receives public money through the Department of Innovation, University and Skills, NERC remains independent of government.

Each year NERC sets out its priorities and the targets and milestones it expects to achieve in a delivery plan. For NERC, accountability to its stakeholders is key and checking how it is doing against this plan is central to running NERC efficiently and effectively. Dave Thomas, Information Systems Manager at NERC, comments: "In 2003 a review of governance within NERC revealed the potential to improve our processes for the initiation, resourcing, funding and control of projects. Traditionally work was planned on individual spreadsheets, which meant that there was no co-ordinated picture of workload and a lack of visibility as to how our people were deployed."

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Dave Thomas  
Information Systems Manager  
Natural Environment Research Council

### Highly configurable flexible solution

A technology-based solution was required and NERC began the search for an application that would help. Dave Thomas continues: "Scientists are often reluctant Project Managers and therefore we needed to find a solution that would help them – one that was relatively easy to use, would not impose an unreasonable administrative burden, and would work in harmony with our existing Oracle financial systems. Compuware Changepoint emerged as the obvious choice."

A pilot trial involving 250 users at three NERC sites quickly proved the value of Compuware's Changepoint professional services automation application and a full-scale rollout followed. Changepoint now has around 1,200 users in NERC and has become core to the organisation's workflow management process – from concept to project completion.

The application enables projects to be proposed and moved through the various stages of approval. Once authorised it helps available resources to be identified and allocated to projects, aiding effective planning and resource utilisation. Once projects are in progress Changepoint provides the means for individuals to record time spent, assuring progress is logged and financial accountability maintained.

Dave Thomas says: "Our projects are very varied in size and scope and can last anything from just a matter of weeks to perhaps ten years. As well as having a high level of functionality and being very easy to use Changepoint is very flexible and has the ability to support our many different workflows. Yet it still allows us to aggregate information to get the big picture."

### Effective resource management key to increased efficiency

Although Changepoint is a highly configurable solution there are sometimes still areas where specific

customers require bespoke modification. NERC has appreciated this possibility and has commissioned a number of bespoke developments through the Compuware customisation programme. In the three years since the Changepoint application was first rolled out NERC has implemented a number of upgrades as bespoke developments and new versions of the application have been released.

Dave Thomas says: "Compuware invests in understanding its customers and its account management is fantastic. The quality of bespoke development work undertaken for us is always extremely high and developments are invariably delivered on time. The upgrade process is always very smooth and documentation quality is absolutely tip-top – better than any I have seen from many comparable organisations."

Compuware has been grateful for the input and many of the ideas implemented through bespoke development for NERC have

## Key Facts

Natural Environment Research Council:

- Has a budget of around £370 million a year to fund research in house and with universities
- Work funded covers the full range of atmospheric, earth, terrestrial and aquatic sciences
- Around 1,500 of the 2,500 NERC people are directly involved in scientific research
- Research ranges from 'blue sky' to directed and strategic research and survey work

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subsequently been incorporated into core Changepoint software releases. User acceptance of the application has been impressive with surveys confirming a high degree of satisfaction. This is reinforced through usage statistics that show most users regularly accessing the application and accurately populating the necessary fields.

Business benefits have been significant. Dave Thomas concludes: "Changepoint provides us with the information we need to manage our resources efficiently so that the organisation as a whole operates more effectively and with greater fiscal accountability. This was a sizable investment for NERC, but one that has been a great success."

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