



Customer: Midlothian Council
Web Site: www.midlothian.gov.uk
Customer Size: 100–5,000
Country or Region: Scotland
Industry: Government–Local
Partner: Sapphire

Customer Profile

Midlothian Council is one of 32 unitary authorities in Scotland providing local government services to 80,000 people south of the capital Edinburgh.

Software and Services

- Technologies
 - Microsoft Intelligent Application Gateway 3.6

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Scottish Council Improves Business Continuity Planning with Remote Access Solution

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Douglas Kinnaird, Head of IT, Midlothian Council

Midlothian Council is a Scottish unitary authority delivering universal services to citizens, often involving third parties such as City of Edinburgh Council. The authority wanted to simplify its remote access infrastructure for its staff and business partners, while maintaining security and enhancing business continuity planning. After evaluating market-leading solutions, the council chose the Microsoft® Intelligent Application Gateway (IAG) 3.6 with maintenance and support.

Business Needs

Midlothian Council provides local government services to 80,000 people in a mixed rural/urban area of Scotland, south of Edinburgh. The council is at the forefront of the Scottish Government’s modernisation agenda for local government—both in terms of helping staff to work more productively and flexibly, while deriving added value from business partners.

The council had previously deployed a range of remote access tools, including ISDN and analogue services—Microsoft Office Outlook®

Web Access and Citrix NFuse—to provide remote access to employees, third-party service suppliers, and other statutory authorities. The initial goals of the project were to standardise on a single toolset, greatly improve the level of security offered to service users, and expand the range of facilities offered remotely. More recently the remote access service has also been identified as a critical component of the council’s business continuity plans, and is likely to be upgraded to reflect this additional need.

Douglas Kinnaird, Head of IT, Midlothian Council, says: "We also wanted the ability to apply end-point policies to remote clients so that we could set access rights to facilities using pre-defined security baselines. Equally, we had to ensure that staff were confident working remotely from virtually any machine, at any time, confident that their data was safe. In turn, this would encourage closer collaboration between colleagues and help the council work more flexibly."

In making its choice of technology, Midlothian wanted a single solution that was fully customisable, and therefore easy for users to grasp and for the IT department to support. "We needed an easily useable and manageable solution," says Kinnaird. "We evaluated total cost of ownership, but the decision was based on a balanced assessment of cost and functionality—not simply price."

Solution

An evaluation of tenders in 2005 narrowed the choice to Juniper Networks or Microsoft. Midlothian worked with Sapphire, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner with Security Competencies and a specialist in information assurance, to implement the Microsoft Intelligent Application Gateway 3.6 (formerly owned by Whale Communications). Sapphire is the Microsoft Security Partner of the Year 2007 in the U.K.

The council originally bought a licence for 50 concurrent users, which was subsequently converted into a 750-seat licence. Used to access Citrix-hosted applications, the tool currently uses around 200–300 seats, with an expectation of increasing to around 600.

The migration from previous tools took place in the first quarter of 2006, bringing an immediate improvement in security

compliance and a promise of efficiency gains. John Morrison, Managing Director, Sapphire, says: "The Microsoft Intelligent Application Gateway is certified to the Cabinet Office's Central Sponsor for Information Assurance (CSIA) Claims Tested Mark, which guarantees that the integrity and functionality of the product has already been tested."

The council now sees IAG 3.6 as a vital tool for ensuring business continuity in the event of the loss of a key building due to an emergency or power outage. The council will soon acquire a second box to consolidate the improvement in business continuity planning by implementing resilience in its remote access service.

Kinnaird says: "In the unlikely event of our losing a key building for whatever reason, staff can work from home or at another location, and services to the public can be maintained more easily. This is a useful addition to our disaster recovery planning."

Benefits

By implementing IAG 3.6, Midlothian Council is experiencing enhanced security that is compliant with U.K. government standards, while also encouraging more flexible ways of working. Kinnaird says: "It is hard to precisely quantify the financial gains, but the process of change across the organisation has been made easier. We started by using the Microsoft Intelligent Application Gateway in two or three areas of service, but now we are using it in most council departments."

Other benefits include:

- Third-party providers gain secure access to council data and systems resulting in faster and better service to citizens.

- Members of the IT team respond more quickly to new requests for remote access services using a standardised toolset.
- Council employees and casual staff work more efficiently from home or in remote locations, ensuring a better work/life balance.
- Company has secure business continuity plan in place, in the event of an emergency.
- Employees have better access to tools for collaborative working and document management.
- Users and partners operate at optimal level with fully customisable solution.
- Company spreads payment over five years, and has overall low total cost of ownership.