

Vehicle location brings productivity improvements

Created in 1996 from the former Regional and District Councils, Fife Council is now a unitary authority that provides all government services for the kingdom. Fife Council is structured into three main service areas: Children and Adult Services, Environment and Development Services and Support Services.

With more than 350,000 residents, Fife Council is one of the busiest in Scotland and has a team of over 22,000 people delivering services to the people of Fife every year.

The Business Issues

All Scottish Local Authorities have a responsibility to monitor and report performance against over 70 Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs). These indicators include monitoring many areas from cost reductions to speed of service delivery to the public. Fife Council is taking the Government's view of Best Value performance indicators to heart, and decided to take measures to increase efficiency.

Several issues were discovered when the Council's management reviewed the working practices for its fleet of vehicles. The problems related to inefficiency due to congestion at depot, loss of productive time and the lack of management information, in particular for verifying time spent at jobs.

“Refuse vehicles can now make four skip trips to the tip rather than three in a day”

David McIvor, Communications Team Leader



The Solution

Vehicle location and tracking was seen as the technology that would best enable Fife Council to manage effectively its fleet of gritters, transits and community buses used to deliver services related to Homecare, Building Operations, Environmental Services, Cleansing and Waste Management. After tender, Fife Council chose APD's INCA™ vehicle tracking unit and Co-ordinator fleet management software to monitor and co-ordinate vehicles on the move.

Supervisors across the six depots can now locate and manage their fleet automatically rather than relying on voice communications to find out where an operative is or has been. For example, the Winter Maintenance team can monitor the speed of its 40 gritters (too fast means complaints and ineffective spreading) and tell residents what roads have been cleared. The Transportation Service identifies the best routes when transporting elderly residents and tells callers the exact location of their lift.

For the Homecare team, checking on a resident after a community alarm has been triggered can also be done speedily by the closest vehicle. “We live in a dispersed area up here especially in North East Fife, so seeing which is the nearest vehicle for the job can definitely make for a speedier service,” says David.

APD's solution is very scalable and it is now recording and communicating information from 900 vehicles to the six depots.



The Benefits

Increased performance

APD solutions have brought a major change to working practices. Eighty vehicles used to arrive each morning at the depot to pick up job tickets from their supervisor. Now, with APD's vehicle location in place, Fife Council can be a lot more flexible. For Jack Bowers, Former Head of the Glenrothes depot, one of the main efficiency gains is to have the vans go straight to a job rather than stop by the depot. "This is very useful when you have a fleet of 80 vehicles but parking space for only half that number!"

Transparent and efficient service

If a member of the public queries whether a vehicle is where it should have been, the Council can now give them the exact information, in a timely fashion.

Greater productivity

Knowing fleet location means greater productivity. "Refuse vehicles can now make four skip trips to the tip rather than three in a day. Diesel is saved by routes being planned effectively," notes David McIvor, Communications Team Leader. "We have seen many benefits in using APD's technology, including providing a better working environment for our mobile workforce and seeing significant increase in efficiencies as now between 30 minutes to an hour are saved by each operative."

Accountability

INCA also raises the workers' awareness that they are now more accountable for their own time and the Council can stand by them if any queries are raised: "If a customer feels that the six hour job they're being charged for was nowhere near that long, we can investigate and verify the situation," says Jack.

Increased safety

The Council takes its employees' safety as seriously as service improvement. APD provided panic buttons for the Council's lone workers. An alarm is triggered at the depot if an operative pressed the button to signal a danger. The system has already saved one employee's life as help was sent immediately to the location of the operator who was having a heart attack.

The Future

Building Operations was one of the first departments to see the benefits of APD's flexible solution. It was quickly extended to the entire Council fleet and Fife is now looking into expanding the system to allow for job tickets to be received by workers on the move.



"If 40 operatives out of our 60 fleet finish on site each day rather than return to the depot, this gives us at least 20 hours additional production that can be achieved each day. Multiply this by your charge per productive hour and the saving is there for all to see!"

Jack Bowers, Former Head of the Glenrothes depot

Technology

APD Solution

INCA Vehicle Location and Tracking
Co-Ordinator Fleet Management
Lone Worker Protection

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APD Communications Ltd

Head Office Newlands Centre, Inglemire Lane, Hull, HU6 7TQ, United Kingdom

Sales and Marketing 16 Shenley Pavilions, Chalkdell Drive, Milton Keynes, MK5 6LB, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1482 808300 Fax: +44 (0) 1482 803901 Email: info@apdcomms.com www.apdcomms.com