

# North London Gas Alliance

## CASE STUDY



The North London Gas Alliance (NLGA) is a joint venture between Skanska McNicholas and National Grid Transco. The partnership was formed to carry out a major programme to replace all metal gas mains with new plastic pipes across the North London and East Anglia regions – part of the national ongoing main replacement scheme developed in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive.

Improving gas supplies to millions of homes and businesses by replacing old iron mains pipes throughout North London, into Essex and across East Anglia is a lengthy process in every sense.

This 30-year programme involves replacing some 440 kilometres of pipes a year at a rate of between 8-10 kilometres a week. Planning and tracking all the materials, people, time, money and schedules to ensure the right work gets done in the right place at the right time is absolutely crucial.

Much is at stake for the NLGA if plans go off course. As well as the promise to the public of keeping disruption from digging up roads to a bare minimum, there are financial penalties to face if any stage of the work isn't completed at the stated time and a potential loss of income if it doesn't measure up to an Ofgem incentive scheme. A solution built on Microsoft technology incorporating Microsoft Project Server and SharePoint, provided by Program Framework, is helping to meet this planning and scheduling challenge.

Now in its sixth year, this complex programme had originally relied on Oracle's Primavera as the sole planning tool. While it provided a lot of detail, only a handful of people with specialist knowledge were able to access the information and it was proving too complicated for the much wider audience who needed to see and understand what was happening.

With crews and supervisors carrying out the replacement work in each of the five zones at any given time, a dedicated planner for each zone, programme officers, senior management and key stakeholders all needing to be kept up to date, a simpler real time source of information was required which could be presented in customised views to suit the different groups.

Ideally, the NLGA wanted such a solution to keep track of materials, deployment of resources, work progress and dovetail with the Primavera master planning system, which it wished to retain.

Flagging up potential financial or timing issues was also crucial. Under the Ofgem Replacement Incentive Mechanism (RIM) every mains replacement has a value depending on its size and location, which is the price NLGA is paid for that replacement. This means that every job has to be calculated to ensure it is maximising the income stream. NLGA wanted a solution that could show those calculations as an integral part of the planning process.

In the drive to improve management of all work on highways and reduce unnecessary disruption, any company wanting to carry out roadworks in areas affected by the NLGA programme has to apply for permits from the relevant local authorities for every street involved. These permits clearly state a start and end date and the councils have the power to issue penalties if they overrun.

## Client testimonial

The work that Program Framework has done for us at the North London Gas Alliance has enabled our planning meetings to contain real time planning and has probably halved the time spent in revising and analysing the plan.

The dashboards that have been designed give the management team a live picture of progress and forecast and are an invaluable tool to monitor both financial and physical progress.

The support that Program Framework has given post implementation has enabled a smooth transition to the new way of working and if and when our business needs change, I will have no hesitation in working with Program Framework again.

**Spencer Knight**

Programme Manager

**nationalgrid**



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“Because of the way we were using Primavera, there was no real continuity of planning and the crews working in the streets didn’t necessarily agree with the figures they were being given.”

“So we went to Program Framework and said ‘This is the situation, this is what we need. What can you do for us?’ They came back with the Microsoft Project solution customised for our needs.”

Program Framework also delivered training in the new processes and toolbars which Spencer then rolled out to the management team.

“Because everyone is now looking at the same thing, the programme officers and planners find it easier to plan in meetings and on screen and can clearly see the effects of any changes on the rest of the programme.”

“The five planners feed in and share their zone-specific plans created in Primavera and I have clear view of these plans as a whole.”

“Senior managers can see web-based dashboard reports giving them the headline information they require. Team supervisors come to weekly meetings and receive a print out of their week’s work and where they are supposed to be. With customised views for each of the zones, each supervisor only gets the information that they need for their crews.”

“It has given us a totally different way of working and takes half the time.”

Spencer Knight  
NLGA programme manager

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## Technology

The NLGA solution is built on the Microsoft technology platform and includes Microsoft SQL, Project Server, and SharePoint. In addition to this, Program Framework has deployed their in-house technology to support report aspects of the reporting requirement. To meet the low installation foot-print requirement, the solution has been hosted on Program Framework servers and is accessed by the users via a secure web connection. Users are able to access the solution both on and offsite, providing additional flexibility to the planning community.

Using this technology stack, and hosting the solution in this way has provided NLGA with a rapidly deployed capability, allowing them to begin to capitalise on their investment quickly, and seamlessly.



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