



South Thames Gateway Building Control Maximising operational efficiency with Idox Cloud

By implementing the Idox Cloud software, the team achieved:

- **37% increase in productivity**
- **85% saving in administration time**
- **Plan assessment turnaround times improved by 22%**

“It’s a great solution, backed by a team of experts that are willing to think and evolve.”

Janine Boughton
Managing Director
South Thames Gateway Building Control

Overview:

South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership (STG) delivers local authority building control for Canterbury City Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Medway Council, and Swale Borough Council. With a highly capable team experienced in working with building regulations and its compliance requirements, processes and procedures, STG has approved over 10,000 applications in the last five years – providing a consistently high standard of service and transparency to its customers and clients.

Challenge:

One of STG Building Control’s biggest challenges has been competing against the private sector in its determination to offer value-for-money services to its clients by being highly efficient, resourceful, and cost-effective. Therefore, to drive maximum efficiency and enhance its offering to clients, STG was looking to harness the power of digital technologies. It wanted to move away from inefficient, paper-based processes and invest in streamlined, unified software that could digitise its case management process – facilitating online applications, reviews, and approval for building control certificates. As such, it needed a solution tailored to the specific needs and intricacies of the building control sector.

Solution:

After researching other software solutions in the market, STG chose to deploy Idox Cloud for Building Control. Commenting on the software, Janine Weaver, Director at STG Building Control said, “What sets Idox Cloud apart from other solutions is that it’s not a planning system where building control components are forcibly integrated. It’s a customised solution for building control officers that is specifically designed with their needs in mind.”

As a centralised system, Idox Cloud allows building control departments to store data, application forms, inspection formats, etc. in one place. “For the most part, we don’t need to rely on hard copies anymore so we can rapidly access the files we need from any location with a few clicks, instead of searching through physical files. Use of hard copies is now limited to very few architects who prefer printed documents and clients with disability or language issues who may find it difficult to use an online system,” Janine explains.



The software has also offered invaluable services to STG during the pandemic. "By having the Idox Cloud system already in place, the lockdown didn't impact how we operate as a business; there weren't any changes in our service delivery. From plan vetting to application processing, automating emails to enabling surveyors to work remotely, we were able to maintain business as usual without missing a deadline," Janine confirms.

By enabling the building control team to access data anytime, anywhere from a laptop or smartphone, the software allowed staff to work independently and self-manage time – thereby fostering a better work-life balance. It also led to optimum space utilisation within STG's office premises. As employees could work from anywhere, the organisation could take on more people without needing extra office space for new hires.

Additionally, by helping the team improve operational efficiency and offering customers the opportunity to submit applications and book or reschedule appointments online 24/7, the Idox solution also supported user need for flexibility and convenience. "When we first started using the online application module of the software in 2017, 40% of the client applications came through online submissions but by 2020, that number increased to 61% – demonstrating how successful the solution has been with customers. Moreover, having an online module that made it easier for people to submit applications virtually proved especially important when the country went into lockdown," Janine points out.

Digitising the application submission process for building control certificates also presented the scanning team at STG with newer opportunities to develop their skills. It enabled them to transition their role to include other building control tasks such as naming, numbering, and answering phone calls to book site inspections, thereby helping them evolve within the business. Janine highlights, "By freeing up time for the scanning team, it's meant that they could progress in their roles rather than being siloed into one job and therefore really contributed towards their personal development."

Outcome:

By restructuring and simplifying STG's case management system, the Idox Cloud software delivered agile ways of working – helping the team achieve a 37% increase in productivity. According to Janine, "Implementing the Idox software offered us flexibility around remote working, accessing data from anywhere, and becoming agile which resulted in a more productive workforce and faster delivery of projects."

By helping the team stay on top of deadlines, Idox Cloud helped STG improve its plan assessment turnaround time within target timescales from 70/71% in 2019/20 to 93.5% in 2021. The solution also saved 85% of the team's administration time as officers can access real-time data when on site including viewing calendars, case notes, producing inspection reports and emailing customers directly, enabling them to easily update, search and view records.

The centralised, cloud-based system helped the team find information quickly and minimised the risk of losing business-critical data. "Instead of collecting data from physical assets, the Idox Cloud software organises information in one place – saving significant time. Screens are neatly laid out within the system – making it easier to see where information is held. For instance, if a surveyor wants to search about inspections, the software allows them to click on the relevant screen and find everything they need to know," Janine elaborates.

Speaking about STG's overall experience of working with Idox, Janine says, "Idox is a customer-focussed company that prioritises a collaborative working relationship. With such detailed experience and knowledge about building control in the UK, they understood our requirements, visualised the product, and designed the solution accordingly. They also go above and beyond when it comes to requests, they really consider the challenge and provide additional suggestions that go even further towards improving the system. And that's the reason we invested in Idox Cloud for Building Control – it's a great solution, backed by a team of experts that are willing to think and evolve."

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