



Sigma Energy Viewer

Bedford Borough Council has adopted TEAM's Sigma Energy Viewer in an attempt to get all schools and corporate buildings to pay less for their energy usage.



Background

Bedford Borough Council's energy team covers a large and diverse estate consisting of 218 corporate buildings including offices, day centres and libraries as well as 85 schools and academies.

Cutting carbon emissions as part of the fight against climate change is a long-term challenge for the authority. It is committed to maintaining and enhancing the local environment; ensuring that the residents of Bedford have a sustainable quality of life, for now and future generations to come.

Overview

Bedford Borough Council has used TEAM Sigma monitoring and targeting software since 2010 to manage the council's utility contracts; validating and verifying bills and managing day-to-day queries with suppliers. The energy team process more than 500 gas and electricity invoices every month, as well as manually entering water bills every quarter.

Publishing its Carbon Management Plan back in 2011, the council has adopted an aspirational target to reduce its carbon emissions by 40%. In 2015, it reported that it had reduced the emissions from council-run buildings by 35% against 2009/10 levels. It continues to implement energy saving projects to reduce further energy consumption.

Sustainable Schools

Schools in Bedford account for 43% of carbon emissions from building energy use across the local authority.

Bedford Borough Council has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place with all schools in Bedford for gas and electricity, helping schools to obtain more competitive prices, as well as supporting them to resolve billing queries, validate invoices and assist with lowering energy consumption. The council is currently looking to develop the SLA with schools for water, in preparation of markets opening in 2017.

Samantha Guy, the council's Senior Energy & Water Technical Officer uses TEAM Sigma on a daily basis to support schools.

She said: "We work closely with schools to help them reduce their energy use. Our ultimate aim is to get them to pay less for their energy usage - TEAM Sigma helps us to validate the bills on their behalf, run reports, monitor usage, collate data and query bills, as and when necessary."



Samantha Guy
Senior Energy & Water Technical Officer
Bedford Borough Council

Sigma Energy Viewer

The energy team is currently looking to introduce TEAM's Sigma Energy Viewer to schools as part of the SLA, as well as all of its corporate buildings.

Sigma Energy Viewer is an easy-to-use browser based software system which provides a quick overview of site and energy billing data. The software allows large multi-site organisations, like Bedford Borough Council, to share energy data with site contacts and enable them to enter meter readings, view bills and analyse data.

Samantha explains: "The Sigma Energy Viewer is extremely user friendly and incredibly easy to use. It will allow individual schools and sites to see their energy data, including gas, electricity and water bills as well as day+1 Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) data all in one place.

She adds: "The Sigma Energy Viewer will help build on our relationship with schools. They will be able to see simply, at a glance how much energy and water they are using and how much it costs. We hope that the viewer will provide a useful way of accessing data quickly and easily to help discuss any queries and concerns the school might have, as well as ideas for energy saving."

The Sigma Energy Viewer not only allows for data input and analysis, but manipulation of data to report on trends in consumption. This should help managers to easily feedback to staff, governors and students alike on the progress being made on a daily, weekly, monthly or yearly basis.

The Sigma Energy Viewer is easy to install and requires no programming or training. The system can be accessed from anywhere via a secure log-in.



TEAM Sigma Cloud

TEAM Sigma Cloud is the new home for TEAM Hosted Services and Bedford Borough has adapted well to this new technology.

Samantha said: "It works really well, it's a lot easier to use, and it's faster - enabling users to open multiple tabs at any one time for example. It's great that TEAM is moving with the times and embracing new technology."

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Bedford Borough Council recognises the importance of providing a flexible working environment, which maintains high quality services whilst enabling staff to improve their work life balance.

Samantha added: "As part of the council's move to agile working, the authority is encouraging employees to work more flexibly. By utilising TEAM Sigma Cloud, we are now able to access TEAM Sigma from any location, which makes it very easy to work away from the office if necessary. Not only will it assist with agile working, but it has also meant the council has become more resilient- should an occurrence mean we cannot access a specific location, TEAM Sigma Cloud will ensure that data and important information pertaining to the council's sites can still be accessed in an emergency".

The Future

Rolling out the Sigma Energy Viewer is high on Bedford Borough Council's agenda, along with a mix of other key projects.

As well as proving useful for building and finance managers, Samantha believes that the Energy Viewer could also be used by schools as an educational resource.

She said: "It would be great to see schools in Bedford using the Energy Viewer and the data contained within it as part of their curriculum. Not only would it provide 'real' data that could be used in subjects like Maths and Science, but it would also help to raise energy and water awareness."

With changes to the water market next year, the council is using TEAM Sigma to prepare- by ensuring that all supplies, accounts, meter serial numbers and bills are captured in the software. When discussing with Samantha what Bedford will be looking for in a supplier, one of the key things noted was that the council will be looking for a supplier capable of providing TRADACOMS EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) billing files.

Samantha said: "At the moment we have to manually enter all of the council's water bills into the Sigma database, and with an energy team of just two we just haven't got the resource or time to continue do this. We will be interested in suppliers that can provide TRADACOMS industry standard billing, helping us to streamline our validation processes further."

TEAM's e-billing Software is designed to accommodate the commonly used UK TRADACOMS 26 v3 standard EDI billing.

To increase efficiencies, the council is also hoping to implement an Accounts Link where utility billing data held in the Sigma Software can be transferred to the council's own accounts system. This will remove the need for manual data entry, eliminate keying errors and ensure that billing data has been checked thoroughly before invoices are added to the Accounts Payable System.

TEAM's Accounts Link can interface with all commonly used Accounting Software including SAGE and Agresso.