



## UK renewable energy centre simplifies facilities and health & safety management thanks to BlackBerry solution

Based near Newcastle, Narec (New and Renewable Energy Centre) is a UK centre of excellence dedicated to accelerating the deployment and grid integration of renewable energy and low-carbon generation technologies. It provides consultancy, test and demonstration facilities for the renewable and electric power sector, enabling SMEs, start-ups and university spin-offs to take their ideas from the drawing board to commercial deployment. Narec works with customers across the country and around the world, from the UK to North America, Europe and Australia.

### Benefits

Improved risk assessment and response

More efficient business processes

Less road travel

Cost effective

### The Challenge

Because of Narec's international scope, the company was an early adopter of a BlackBerry® solution. "We were looking for a mobile email solution that was stable, secure and easy to manage centrally," explains John Hartshorn, ICT and Facilities Manager at Narec. "Seven or eight years ago, the rest of the offerings out there were not as stable and BlackBerry had proven security." Narec began by deploying BlackBerry® smartphones coupled with BlackBerry® Enterprise Server to a dozen or so senior managers before expanding to around 30 devices, about a quarter of all Narec staff. "We work with national and international partners, so our executives are on the move all the time. The BlackBerry solution was the ideal way to provide mobile email." They also use the BlackBerry smartphones for calendar, contacts and navigation with BlackBerry® Maps.

Fast forward to 2009. Hartshorn was convinced that Narec had only just scratched the surface of what the BlackBerry solution could provide. It tasked its IT partner, Cellular Solutions, a BlackBerry VAR (reseller), with taking a closer look at Narec's operations and coming up with innovative solutions. One of the business processes Cellular Solutions identified was facilities and health & safety (H&S) management. "I currently manage about seven or eight sites, and the number continues to grow. The H&S manager's remit covers these sites as well other Narec locations," explains Hartshorn. Consequently, Hartshorn and his colleague spend a lot of time visiting facilities in response to queries and incidents. Quite often, however, Hartshorn would discover that the incident could have been handled remotely, if he'd been able to see the situation before leaving his office. Likewise, much of the H&S manager's time is spent on follow-up visits, making sure that corrective actions have been taken.



## The Solution

Cellular Solutions proposed adding hand-e-pix from Handheld PCs, a member of the BlackBerry® Alliance Program, to Narec's BlackBerry solution. Hand-e-pix consists of a BlackBerry application, web-based desktop client for managers and a SQL server. BlackBerry users can take a picture, add a comment, open an incident and then send it to the hand-e-pix system, which assigns it to the appropriate person.

Now building managers can file a request or report along with pictures using their BlackBerry smartphones and upload them to the hand-e-pix system. "I can then indicate the appropriate action to be taken," says Hartshorn. "And because hand-e-pix time and date stamps the photos, we can track exactly how long it takes to fix the situation." For example, if a machine has a leak in one of Narec's engineering facilities, the building manager can report the incident to Hartshorn and the H&S manager using their BlackBerry smartphone. When the clean-up is completed, another picture is sent, and Hartshorn can close the incident. "We're able to track an incident from the moment it is reported through to completion; I no longer visit sites for minor or routine incidents."

After a quick trial of the hand-e-pix application on BlackBerry smartphones, Narec could see that it had potential beyond facilities and H&S management. Whether scouting locations for a new wind turbine, inspecting test sites or visiting exhibitions, Narec staff can now record and share what they see with their colleagues. For example, if an engineer spots a faulty weld on a prototype turbine in Shetland, he can report it to engineering right away, enabling corrections to be made on any other prototypes still in production. Today, 10 BlackBerry smartphones have been equipped with hand-e-pix.

## The Benefits

The BlackBerry solution with hand-e-pix has become an invaluable business tool for Narec. First, as Hartshorn says, "It's allowed our most mobile staff to keep in touch with our main office from wherever they are in the world, pretty much without the need for laptops with 3G cards." Second, the BlackBerry solution is cost effective. Not only does Narec no longer have to buy mobile devices such as sat-navs or 3G cards, but also Cellular Solutions adjusts voice and data plans, depending on where the BlackBerry users are travelling, to keep roaming costs under control. "We used to have lots of issues with roaming and mobile data access in the days before BlackBerry, but not anymore," he adds.

As for business processes, the BlackBerry solution with hand-e-pix has made risk assessment and resolution more efficient and effective. "The BlackBerry solution with hand-e-pix allows us to make an informed decision on the go, as if we were physically present at the site," explains Hartshorn. "I'd say it has saved me 10% of my weekly workload," by reducing the number of trips he takes.

[www.blackberry.co.uk/casestudies](http://www.blackberry.co.uk/casestudies)

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Handheld PCs has five years' experience working in the mobile solution development market. It works across industries to provide both hosted and integrated solutions for BlackBerry smartphones. Handheld PCs hand-e-pix is a solution that captures a combination of photographs, GPS location and time & date stamp data which can be collated to improve information sharing within an organisation.