



FIRELINK PROJECT, DCLG

Client Interview with Terry Mason, Business Support Team Leader, Project Office

The UK Government's Firelink project is seen as a vital investment in radio communications for the Fire & Rescue Service (FRS), replacing regional main scheme radio technologies with a single wide area communications capability in England, Scotland and Wales.

The purpose of Firelink is to provide the FRS with the communication facilities necessary to mobilise resources in response to any 999 call and maintain communications between the control room and incident commander.

A MAJOR COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGE

“The Firelink project team manages the delivery of the project”, says Business Support Team Leader Terry Mason. “We have to communicate with a large number of internal and external stakeholders, including the project contractor, which use a variety of IT platforms.

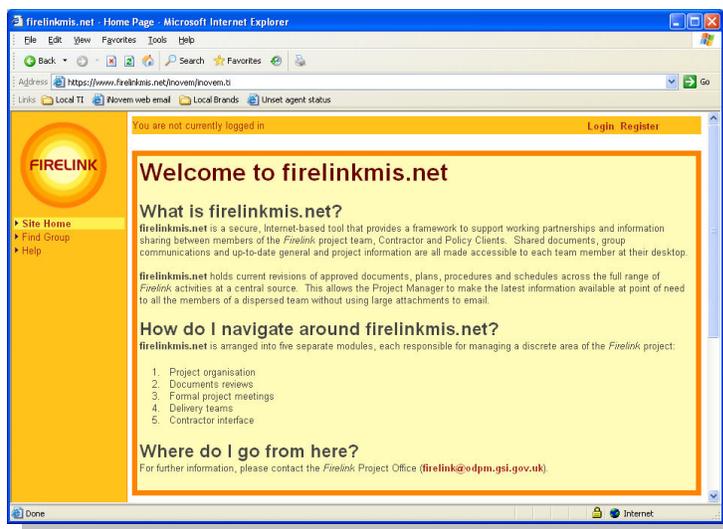
“We have contract and project documents that must be taken through a formal review cycle, including the maintenance of version histories and updates. Project status, milestones and information has to be communicated to the project team and other stakeholders efficiently and in a consistent manner.

“Sending documents by email without any proper secure framework would be difficult to manage, could result in data duplication and confusion and overload people's inboxes. We need a secure central repository for everyone who is permitted access, which can be easily maintained.”

Given the nature of the project and its growth, the Firelink team wanted to consider how they could best manage the flow of information.

“We looked for a service that was quick to set up, flexible, user friendly and easy for our project team to manage”, says Terry Mason.

“A collaborative extranet that would enable sufficient sharing of information between key stakeholders was the only option, given the disparate IT



infrastructures and networks used by the parties involved.

“The solution needed to be an internet-based Management Information System (MIS).”

WHY DID FIRELINK CHOOSE INOVEM?

“It was essential that the service we selected was secure, flexible, easy-to-manage – and preferably had a proven track record of working with other government departments.

“The solution had to be quick and easy to deploy, because of the tight project timescales. It was also essential that the supplier would work with us to ensure the most effective use of the solution.

“We required a solution that could be used and further developed to meet evolving needs throughout the duration of the Firelink project. It was also important that the system we chose could provide an auditable interface with our key stakeholders, to ensure there was a record of all exchanges and actions.

“During the formal evaluation process it was clear from INOVEM’s delivery record on previous Government projects that they could meet our requirements, on time and within budget.”

CREATING THE FIRELINK MIS

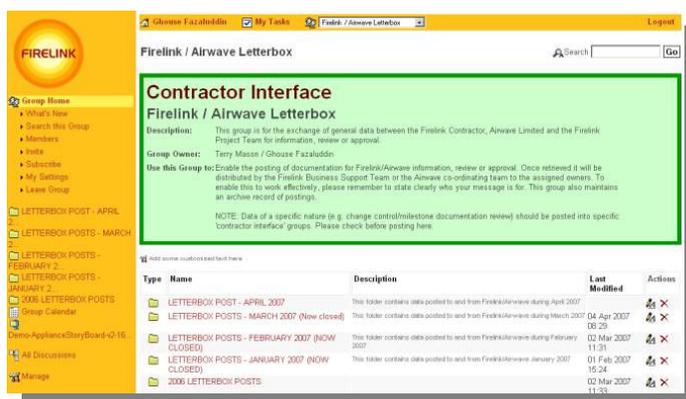
Firelink have now used the INOVEM Team Collaboration system to deploy and run over 100 online communities and collaborative working groups via a secure portal.

“We use groups for a range of functions, including formal review of key project documents; maintaining full version history as each document progresses through the review cycle; hosting an ‘All-Project’ group, to quickly and easily communicate with all internal project stakeholders and provide a central information point for the team; user questionnaires to collect data on a range of subjects; and discussion groups that bring a dispersed workforce together to share information and discuss project developments.”

During the group-set-up consultancy INOVEM helped Firelink to develop a simple classification and naming convention for the groups, helping members understand the purpose of each group they are subscribed to. Group templates have been set up to ensure that each group has a consistent appearance and structure, an essential part of being able to navigate through the groups and find what’s needed.

“The time to deployment was extremely quick – a matter of a couple of weeks – during which time INOVEM delivered a fully branded and secure web portal, provided training for the initial group managers and administration staff and also helped us create and deploy our initial set of groups”, says Terry Mason.

The resulting MIS solution has aptly been named FirelinkMIS.net.



“We made sure that the MIS was used from day one. Procedures are in place to ensure that the MIS is a key element in how the Project team manages the flow of information for the Firelink project.

“INOVEM has been on hand from the start, providing first-class support and assistance, and accommodating our needs to customise the MIS to meet our specific requirements.”

RESULTS ACHIEVED TO DATE

“FirelinkMIS is now a core part of the day-to-day communications for the Firelink project”, says Mason. “It’s the primary conduit for communications between our contractor, the project team and key stakeholders. We have over 40GB of data, 450 users and 100 groups covering all aspects of our project delivery operations.

“A key element in its success is keeping the information live to ensure that everyone is kept up-to-date with project milestones and progress. We believe we have consistently achieved that goal.”

WHERE NEXT?

“Over time, we expect to see a further growth in the numbers of stakeholders that we need to communicate and collaborate with.

“We are confident the INOVEM service and the support they offer will allow us to scale up involvement as the project develops.”

“During the formal evaluation process it was clear from INOVEM’s delivery record on previous Government projects that they could meet our requirements, on time and within budget.”

LET’S GET TOGETHER

To find out more about INOVEM Team Collaboration Systems or Project & Partnership Portals, call INOVEM today on +44 (0)1488 648 468 or email info@inovem.com

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