



# Conwy County Borough Council

IT's Storage

## Viglen Helps Welsh Local Authority Support Essential Local Services

**Serving 111,300 residents in North Wales, Conwy County Borough Council's disparate storage environment needed consolidating to support new internal systems and a developing disaster recovery plan. Viglen deployed a storage solution providing sufficient capacity to meet future needs as well as a platform for disaster recovery, consolidating remote and local servers and reducing deployment costs.**

**"Providing secure data storage to support essential services to the public is no easy task, but with Hitachi Data Systems technology and support we've been able to streamline our storage environment and focus on other concerns."**

Will Valentine  
Principal Technical Support Analyst  
Conwy County Borough Council

Providing local authority services in towns such as Abergele, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno, Conwy County Borough Council covers 113,000 hectares in North Wales. With around 38% of the County Borough lying within Snowdonia National Park and 37 miles of coastline, Conwy also caters for over 8 million tourists visiting the area every year.

Due to the broad nature of the services it provides to the public, Conwy's data storage needs are vast and varied. Conwy's IT department was faced with three challenges in continuously improving its services to the public: centralising backup, supporting a new generation of internal systems and providing an IT platform for its developing disaster recovery plan.

### The Challenge

As a legacy of its creation from the merging of 4 different local authorities in 1996, data was generated and stored by 6 main and 100 satellite Council sites across the County. Islands of storage existed at many Conwy sites with different management and backup techniques employed at each. The disparate nature of this IT environment had led to a general proliferation of unmanaged

storage. The challenge of backing up and securing data at each site using tape drives was proving to be an administrative nightmare, and effective information sharing across the enterprise was unable to take place due to the geographic dispersal of the data and the mix of hosting operating systems and associated clients.

**"Managing remote servers has always been something of a headache for us. Users had to take responsibility for managing the backup media, and in most cases we had no offsite copies of data to fall back on in the event of a real disaster,"** says Principal Technical Support Analyst at Conwy, Will Valentine.

A number of new systems brought in by Conwy to facilitate its operations were another focus area for the IT department. A centralised e-mail programme and replacement payroll system had particularly heavy data storage requirements and needed to back onto a single storage platform in order to facilitate employee access to critical data.

### The Solution

IT staff at Conwy had been so impressed by the performance of its previous storage system, a Hitachi Thunder modular storage system, that they asked long-term technology partner Viglen to propose a suitable Hitachi Data Systems (HDS) solution.

Viglen recommended 2 Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage (AMS) 500 systems in different locations, with Hitachi TrueCopy® Extended Distance software's asynchronous capabilities to enable replication between two sites.

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## CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CASE STUDY

An AMS500 was installed at the primary site, Bodlondeb in Conwy, with a second installed at the remote site in Colwyn Bay. TrueCopy Extended Distance enables Conwy to store data and support critical applications at the primary site and replicate to its remote site, ensuring copies of all data are available in the event of an incident at the main offices. The Hi-Track® Monitor (a “call home” service/remote maintenance tool) watches the status of the storage environment, reporting any problems directly to the HDS support centre.

Viglen provided four storage administrators at Conwy with full training on the new system and a mixture of onsite and offsite support was provided 24/7 by HDS. **“The Hi-Track Monitor has been invaluable to us,” says Valintine. “The tool contacts the HDS support centre as soon as it sees a problem and the support centre immediately addresses it remotely. This removes the need for our department to spend time monitoring the system manually and allows us to focus on our strategic IT projects instead.”**

### The Result

The primary site AMS500 has consolidated the Council's existing storage, providing a file server platform, which has enabled Conwy to reduce its 15 remote file servers across various sites to just 2 primary file servers. This in turn has led to a significant reduction in management and backup issues, as well as easing connectivity and power issues for the 13 servers the Council has been able to decommission.

The data storage consolidation at the council's primary site means that Conwy's mission critical applications and data are now together on a reliable system. This has allowed Conwy to be more flexible in the provision of applications and information to client departments. This helps to prevent their storage architecture from becoming a barrier to effective data sharing and has improved information processing across the enterprise.

The additional capacity of the solution, currently 12TB at each site, expandable to 64TB, has provided Conwy with the storage space it needs to consolidate all its previously disparate file servers and support the aggressive storage demands of many new systems, including e-mail, payroll, Social Care and Revenues and Benefits systems. The scalability of the system also means that Conwy can easily add capacity to the as and when required.

The second AMS 500 and TrueCopy Extended Distance software at the remote site have enabled point-in-time recovery of mission critical systems and data should anything affect the data held at the primary site. In this capacity, the new solution forms a core component of Conwy's disaster recovery plan. The asynchronous nature of the replication has also ensured high performance and increased response times on the primary system. By fulfilling this element of their hosting strategy Viglen

has helped Conwy to meet various Key Performance Indicators and has prepared the council for any future data retention and retrieval directives.

By taking backup copies off the replicated data sets at the secondary site, Conwy has been able to further improve its consolidated backup strategy – increasing availability, extending backup windows and reducing the need to continually move backup media between primary and secondary sites.

In addition, Conwy has been able to use the system as a platform for deploying new technologies. Valintine elected to use VMware® to take advantage of server virtualisation and higher utilisation of existing servers. This is supported by primary site to pool disparate items of storage across the organisation into a single system. This has empowered Conwy to free up server capacity and reduce the environmental burden of running multiple servers across its sites.

By combining these technologies they have been able reduce the cost of hosting applications.

Whereas the cost of hosting a typical application on the previous system was around £6000, the new infrastructure has reduced this to £2800. The IT department at Conwy has been able to pass these savings on to its client departments, giving them extra budget to further improve the services they provide to the public.

**“Without our Viglen Storage Group solution in place, we would not have been able to utilise technologies such as single u and blade server systems and server virtualisation. These are technologies that have enabled us to meet the growing demand for applications without having to dramatically increase capacity in our primary data centre.”** Having migrated internal e-mail archives and payroll data, as well as data critical to services Conwy residents rely on, such as revenue, benefits and leisure centre records to the new system, Conwy is now looking to the future.

**“The scalability of the Storage systems means we don't have to worry about running out of capacity. The team and I can focus on strategic concerns to protect Conwy's data and guarantee that public services are available for the future.”**

Will Valintine  
Principal Technical Support Analyst  
Conwy County Borough Council