

SUCCESS STORY

Scottish Borders Council

In April of 1996, the Scottish Borders Council was formed during a reorganization of local government. The council, a unitary authority serving much of the south of Scotland, incorporated four district and one regional council. From an IT perspective, this meant the newly formed authority inherited a number of applications on disparate systems and platforms.

The council, like many modern local authorities, is highly dependent upon robust IT systems to deliver services to the local population. Key applications include local taxes, housing benefits, social services and payroll.

Scottish Borders Council turned to Edinburgh-based IT services and systems integration company Newell & Budge, to replace its legacy UNIX infrastructure with a brand new, leading-edge solution involving the use of Sun Microsystems' revolutionary Storage Area Network (SAN). Integral to this solution were Sun StorEdge™ network Fibre Channel (FC) switches, which are produced for Sun by QLogic Corporation.

Gill Hanham, who is the council's head of IT, explains: "We decided for a number of reasons that we needed to change our systems infrastructure. Some of our hardware needed to be replaced and a number of leases were close to expiry. We also wanted to reduce our running costs, increase our disk and processor capacity and to move our applications to newer versions.

"In addition, we wanted to improve resilience, minimize downtime, boost flexibility and processor performance and increase the potential number of users. We also wanted to move to browser-based technology and to provide the correct infrastructure for E-Government developments."

Brian Robb, the Business Manager of Newell & Budge's Technical Services Group, says the idea of using SAN technology gradually evolved as discussions went on. "Sun offered everything the council needed—increased processor speed, reliability, scalability—and, of course, high availability."

The idea of deploying a SAN solution emerged, he said, because the authority was frustrated by the operational overhead resulting from having a variety of different Unix platforms. "By doing it this way, there is simply one big datastore. Everything is mirrored through fibre channel architecture and there are dual redundant power supplies. The whole configuration is geared towards uptime and if you need to add storage, you don't even need to power the system down."

Of paramount importance to the solution, noted Tim Miller, Storage Practice Manager of Sun Professional Services, were the FC switches provided by QLogic. "One of the key challenges with the authority was integrating legacy systems with this SAN solution. QLogic switches, running in TL mode, allowed the private loops from the council's legacy systems to become an integral part of the public switched SAN. Using TL mode gives us the maximum flexibility in allocating the storage to the systems. This allowed the council to maximize their storage invest-

COMPANY

Scottish Borders Council

INDUSTRY

Local Government

APPLICATIONS/SOFTWARE

Storage Area Networks

HARDWARE/SOFTWARE

Sun Enterprise 3500 Servers

Sun Enterprise 250 Servers

Sun StorEdge Network FC Switches
(by QLogic)

StorEdge L1000 Tape Library

Solaris Software

KEY BUSINESS RESULTS

Reduced running costs, increased disk and processor capacity. Improved resilience, minimized downtime, increased flexibility and processor performance and increased the number of potential users. Move to browser-based technology and the provision of the correct infrastructure for E-Government developments requirements.



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ment by providing controlled access to all data via the switches.”

The system consists of four Sun E3500 servers linked to a SAN of four FC switches. The SAN storage consists of 64 disks with a total of 576 GB of mirrored storage, with 12 spare disks (108GB) of storage. In addition, there is a Sun E250 server and an L1000 tape drive configured to provide an integrated backup solution for the SAN. Another E3500 server acts as a disaster recovery box. The system is based at a central location in the council's HQ in the town of Newtown St Boswells.

The system was purchased via the government's GCAT scheme, which avoided the need for European tendering. Newell & Budge was involved in all aspects of the project, including the migration of applications onto the SAN environment - another area in which the company has considerable experience.

“We also undertook all the project management for the SAN build,” says Robb. “The council came to us because we have strong skills in this area and in implementation as well as with Sun and Oracle technologies.

“The one thing we didn't do ourselves was the implementation of the fibre switching. We left that to Sun Professional Services, as this is still a new technology and they are the experts in that area.”

The installation and implementation of the hardware went flawlessly, and Newell & Budge is now helping with the process of data migration from the legacy systems - an area where its specialist skills in Oracle are proving to be particularly helpful.

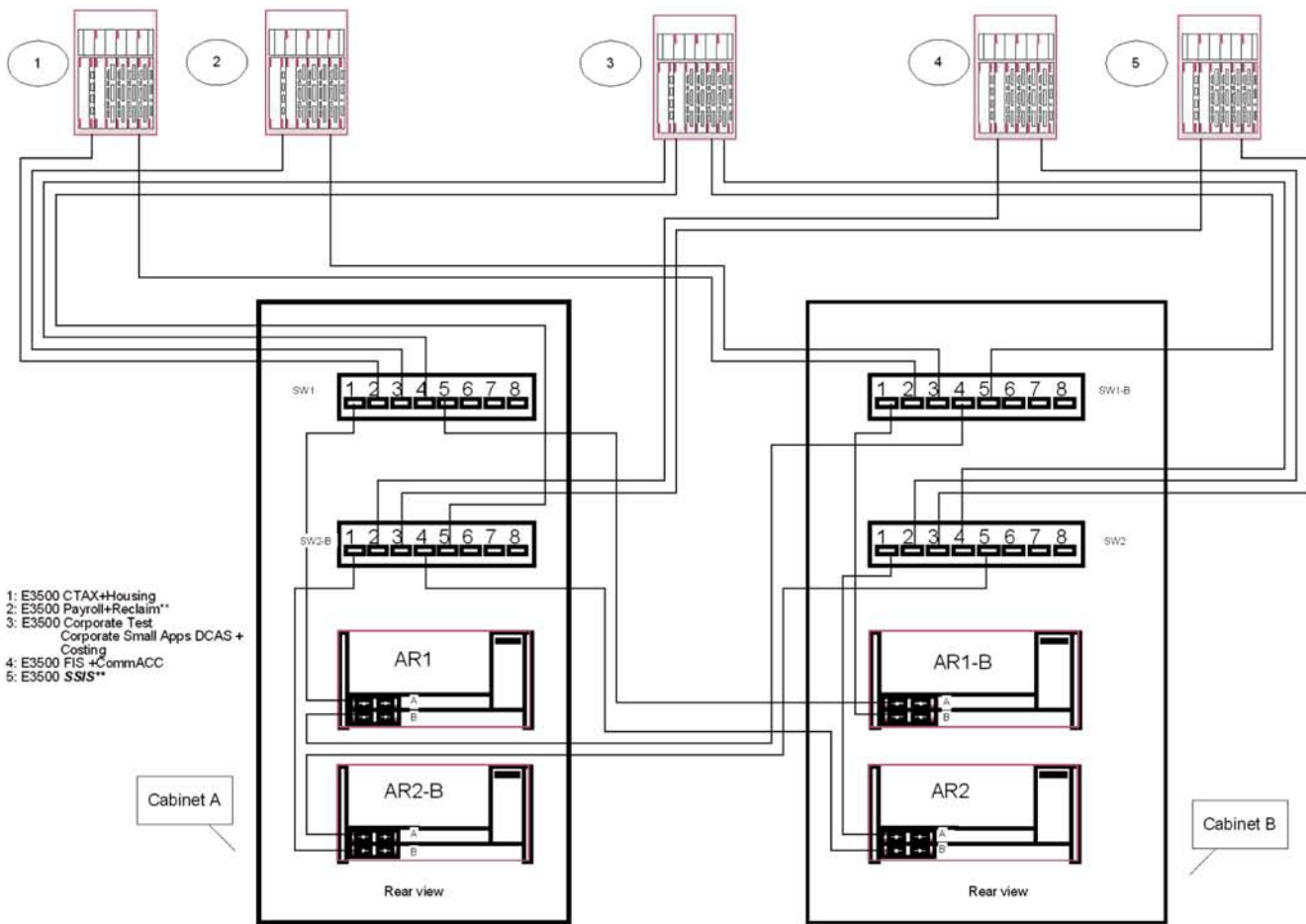
“The whole thing has been a fabulous team effort”, says Robb. “We all had a very good working relationship and everyone trusted everyone else. We have gained extra knowledge of implementing effective SAN technology solutions as a result of this and we have the benefit of now really being able to explain its benefits in detail as a result of our own experiences.

“This is a critically important project in which quality really matters and to which the Sun platform and SAN environment is strongly suited. We're very happy with the relationship and the way everything has gone.”

“It was a good, strong partnership between the council's own IT staff, led by Stewart Meldrum, our Systems Support Manager, Newell & Budge and Sun. As usual, we found Newell & Budge to be extremely professional. The building of the SAN went very well - although it was new technology, the implementation turned out to be very straightforward. I'm confident we made the right decision.”

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 **ENTERPRISE**
Storage Solutions

3835R East Thousand Oaks BLVD. #315
 Westlake Village, CA 91365
 Tel 877.230.2837 / Fax 805.435.2500 / www.ess-direct.com

