

North Ayrshire Council's Pure Storage deployment plays a key role in supporting the organization's digital transformation strategy by delivering increased efficiencies, consolidated SANs, and significantly reduced storage-related operating costs. In addition, the speed, simplicity and reliability of its Pure Storage arrays have enabled the server, internet and mobile team to innovate further by giving them back time previously spent maintaining legacy infrastructure.



BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Pure Storage has significantly increased the speed, performance and longevity of North Ayrshire Council's storage environment. This has empowered its IT team to deliver a comprehensive digital transformation strategy that will accelerate the services it provides to council residents.

GEO

Scotland, United Kingdom

INDUSTRY

Public Sector

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Carolann McGill, *Technical Analyst*

DELIVERING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION WITH PURE STORAGE

North Ayrshire is home to 136,000 people, covering an area of 340 square miles. North Ayrshire Council provides services to all of the area's residents, including options to pay bills, access forms and find important information via the Council's website.

The Council believes in providing the best possible service its residents. Its IT team has been executing a digital transformation strategy designed to improve application workloads and help employees deliver key services. The strategy includes streamlining across departments, delivering efficiencies to all teams, and consolidating environments to drive cost-savings and to accelerate service levels.

The server, internet and mobile team is responsible for the organisation's virtual infrastructure, data storage, web filtering and some of its mobility. As North Ayrshire Council looks to digitally transform itself, the performance of its underlying IT infrastructure is critical.

LEGACY STORAGE NEARS MAXIMUM CAPACITY

As part of its digital strategy, the Council wanted to implement a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) to give its staff the ability to be more mobile and efficient.

However, its legacy storage wasn't able to deliver the required performance consistently. Latency issues meant the team couldn't benefit from the full flexibility of a VDI environment. The IT team tiered legacy storage to solve this issue, adding faster drives alongside slower ones; however, they knew this would not be a long-term solution.

At the same time, North Ayrshire Council's data set was growing exponentially. Its entire data footprint had changed, as had employees' expectations. Users wanted a quick response from applications, no matter where they were.

“When I started at the Council we only had a few Word documents, so the storage was fit for the purpose. Now the data we store has completely changed, so we need a solution that can meet the requirements of an evolving data footprint,” highlighted Carolann McGill, Technical Analyst, North Ayrshire Council.

McGill and her colleagues realized that the Council's legacy equipment was nearing its end of life. The warranty costs were increasing, and the team knew it would be more cost-effective to replace than upgrade.

COMPANY:

North Ayrshire Council
www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk

USE CASE:

- Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI)
- File storage

CHALLENGES:

- Legacy storage had become expensive to maintain and was reaching its end of life.
- Digital transformation strategy needed better speed and performance from storage.
- Growing data sets meant storage was nearing capacity.
- High latency made applications slow to use, wasting time for users and the IT team.

IT TRANSFORMATION:

- Pure Storage delivered improved speed, performance and data reduction in a consolidated environment.
- Five legacy storage arrays consolidated into two Pure Storage FlashArrays.
- Through data reduction, North Ayrshire Council has reduced 125TB into 45TB on its primary Pure Storage FlashArray.
- The Pure Evergreen™ Storage model provides the council with a 10+ year storage lifecycle, compared to three years from the Council's legacy vendor.

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Conscious of the benefits an all-flash array could provide, the team initially evaluated Pure Storage and several other vendors as part of a competitive tender for the Council's VDI environment. They were blown away by the performance of the Pure Storage array, as well as the simplicity of its user interface.

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North Ayrshire Council's VDI is now run on Pure Storage. It is set up for 400 users and the Council plans to extend this to cover all of its 2,600 users.

THE PURE EVERGREEN™ STORAGE MODEL REDUCES LONG-TERM COSTS

The Council has since required an upgrade for its entire storage network in response to its growing data footprint. McGill explained that this again required a procurement process, where she and her team could examine various solutions against the Council's needs.

The team was already impressed with the way Pure Storage supported its VDI, making the company an obvious contender for the Council's broader storage requirements. The Evergreen model is unmatched in the industry and a key reason in choosing Pure Storage.

“We already knew working with Pure Storage would be a positive experience. We really liked the array's user interface, but Pure was also the only supplier that could maintain an Evergreen lifecycle. With all other vendors, the arrays basically had a three-year lifespan,” explained McGill.

With Pure Storage North Ayrshire Council has continuous access to the latest technology, allowing the Council to keep its storage arrays modern. It's Pure Storage FlashArray™ arrays are kept up to date with non-disruptive software updates and new features. This has eliminated the need to re-buy storage every three years, as was required with their previous vendor.

SEAMLESS UPGRADES WITH PURE STORAGE

While the Council had initially purchased a FlashArray//M10 from Pure Storage to support its VDI, it upgraded this to an //M20 when it deployed Pure Storage across its wider environment. With its Evergreen Gold subscription, the Council benefited from UpgradeFlex, which meant only paying the difference between the old controller and the new, thus fully protecting the original investment.

Having experienced problematic and time-consuming legacy controller updates in the past, the team was amazed by how seamless the upgrade process was.

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North Ayrshire Council now has two Pure Storage FlashArrays: one at its primary data center site and one for business continuity at its back up data center. All 2,600 users within the Council now access applications, documents, video files and more from the Council's primary array.

EMPOWERING INTERNAL TEAMS WITH SIMPLE USER INTERFACE

As a team with detailed technical knowledge, McGill's colleagues prefer to manage technology themselves. If upgrades are required, they want to be able to deliver these in-house rather than bring in an external consultant.

As North Ayrshire Council began to migrate over to Pure Storage, it quickly became clear just how easy it was to use. If the team buys new bundles they are able to install them, while knowing that the Pure Storage team will be on-hand to support if needed.

"Pure Storage managed the initial set-up but now the team is handling its own reconfigurations and additional data packs, which is very empowering for them," confirmed McGill.

In addition, the team now has more time to innovate as it no longer has to maintain aging legacy infrastructure. The team can now proactively look for new technologies that will help the Council to deliver a first-class service to the residents of North Ayrshire.

ENHANCED USER EXPERIENCE FOR COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

The move to Pure Storage has had a significant impact for the Council's 220 users. Users have been given mobility; they can connect anywhere, even securely over public Wi-Fi and tether to phones as needed. Due to PSN regulations and how the legacy equipment was set up, this was something the Council was previously unable to do.

The Pure Storage arrays also deliver economically (and operationally) beneficial data reduction. In the legacy environment it had 125TB of data, but the Council has been able to consolidate this to 45TB on the primary FlashArray and 25TB on the secondary FlashArray. The arrays are also a third of the physical size of the legacy storage equipment, saving physical space and power consumption in the datacenter.

"With Pure Storage, we have faster applications and vastly improved performance all with a smaller footprint, which saves the Council money. However, we're really happy we've been able to improve that end-user experience," said McGill.

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