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Landmark Virtualises (Storage) Environment

Landmark Solutions, the geospatial services division of Landmark Information Group, now has greater management of its information lifecycle and can more efficiently and effectively support the increasing storage needs of in-house staff and external partner companies developing new managed services, following the implementation of a new 'virtualized', scalable, flexible and reliable, storage environment.

With customers that include Sport England, South West Water and Scottish Natural Heritage, Landmark Solutions supplies a wide range of services such as analysis and management of geospatial data, GIS application and software development, web mapping solutions and geocoding, data capture and digitisation of paper maps.

"We receive tens of business plans each month from in-house staff and external companies with ideas for new managed services," says Vic Cornell, UNIX Systems Administrator, Landmark Solutions. "Some of the services put forward in business plans will have no impact on storage, but some are extreme and demand up to 2 PB of additional storage space.

In the past we have installed disparate storage systems for each new service, but we really needed a storage environment which pools storage hardware – irrespective of which vendor manufacturers it - to better cope with current storage demands. We also needed an agile environment which can scale to cope with future storage needs and an environment which reduces admin overheads and enables us to grow our business without requiring additional staff and resources."

The bespoke design, rapid three-month implementation and configuration of the storage environment was undertaken by high performance computing and storage integrator, OCF plc (www.ocf.co.uk) and value-add distributor, Interface (ISI).





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The new storage environment includes a single, hardware vendor-independent, management and virtualisation platform, the IBM System Storage SAN Volume Controller (IBM SVC). IBM SVC enables Landmark to combine existing EMC disk-based storage and new IBM disk-based storage (and storage from any other vendor in the future) to create a virtual pool of storage – split between a prime office site and disaster recovery site. This makes previously disparate storage easier to manage reducing the admin burden on staff and enabling Landmark to grow its business and launch new services without requiring additional IT staff.

IBM SVC also enables Landmark to add or remove storage hardware without disruption to the business and deliver incremental upgrades on the fly with no downtime and without affecting services to customers.

The new storage environment also uses a second management system, IBM General Parallel File System (GPFS), which enables more effective Information Lifecycle Management and a single, unified store for files and documents for all systems and users. GPFS ensures documents can easily be moved or shared between storage hardware - high use documents are stored in high-availability Fibre-channel storage and documents that are not in frequent use are easily moved to less expensive SATA storage. According to policies set, GPFS can also automatically archive files irrespective of hardware location and automatically copy crucial documents and data to Landmark Solutions' disaster recovery storage site.

IBM's Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM) enables more effective and intelligent protection and archival of data. TSM also enables Landmark to optimise storage by searching out data that is not being used frequently and freeing-up space.

The combination and tight integration between SVC and GPFS the TSM provides a secure agile and scalable storage infrastructure supporting Landmark's business.

"OCF designed a vendor-independent, scalable, flexible, reliable, virtualized storage environment and, by working in partnership with ISI, ensured the entire environment was up and operational in just three months," says Cornell. "Additional face-to-face training from OCF, ISI and IBM on one of the products, at IBM's Hursley development centre, made a real difference to our storage knowledge and ensured we were fully competent using the storage components."





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