



# One department's assets solves another department's challenges

Interdepartmental collaboration of Brightly Confirm Digital Asset Management Solution delivers 'click of a button' efficiencies at Nottingham City Council

## Client

Nottingham City Council

## Vitals

- Population of 330,000
- Handling nearly 200 Public Health funerals per year.

## Challenges

Over the last 18 months alone, the number of Public Health funerals has increased significantly, with the Department now handling nearly 200 a year. This, together with the ongoing rise of Freedom of Information requests was putting a considerable strain on already stretched and limited resources.

## Results

An automated system that speeds up the processing of cases from initial application, through to final case closure and significantly reduced dependence on paper-based filing. Access to real-time data at the touch of a button to respond quickly and efficiently to external customer information requests.

## Background

Nottingham City Council has looked internally to the success of its Brightly Confirm Asset Management Solution already benefiting its Highways team, to solve the challenges of its Funerals Department to increase time, resource, data management and processing efficiencies. Confirm is an innovative, cost-effective solution, developed to assist local authorities value, manage and maintain their assets by automating and streamlining processes to maximise operational efficiencies, minimise costs and facilitate informed decision-making.

By extending the use of Confirm, and adapting its functionality to suit the needs of its Funerals Department, the council can now offer a 'click of the button' response to freedom of information requests. It has also increased processing efficiencies of its Public Health funerals, with real-time tracking of its funeral applications, while storing and archiving legal assets digitally will enable the department to take one step further towards becoming a paper-free environment.

## Business Challenge

In accordance with section 46 of the Public Health Act, the City Council's Cemeteries and Crematorium team is responsible for arranging Public Health funerals as well as responding to a growing number of 'Freedom of Information' requests. This entails responding to customer enquiries, managing all documentation for each funeral application, undertaking site visits, genealogy searches to trace relatives of the deceased as well as keeping track and processing of all ongoing burial arrangements. Much of this work was handled manually and heavily dependent on paper-based filing, handwritten notes and outdated spreadsheets, making the system extremely awkward, time consuming and labour intensive.

Paula Richardson Manager of Cemeteries, Section 46 Funerals and Memorials at Nottingham City Council explains, "Over the last 18 months alone, the number of Public Health funerals has increased significantly, with the Department now handling nearly 200 a year. This, together with the ongoing rise of Freedom of Information requests was putting a considerable strain on our already stretched and limited resources."

When Paula joined the Department over 10 years ago, she inherited an outdated system based on handwritten reports and vast volumes of paper, all cross-referenced to each case via one master spreadsheet. Although Paula attempted to reform the system with some basic digital filing, the process remained very piecemeal, with data, images and legal documents stored over multiple servers. It was also still heavily focused on spreadsheets requiring constant updating and colour-coded paper files stored in bulky cabinets taking up limited office space. It also meant that when Paula wasn't in the office, it was virtually impossible for anyone else to access the information required.

Continued Paula, "I needed a simple but effective digital solution that would enable me to store and manage information in one system, that would give me instant access to real-time data so I could track each burial application and run progress reports as well as provide a 'click of a button' response to Freedom of Information requests. I knew if I could find such a solution, it would relieve the pressure on the department, streamline application processing, increase efficiencies, free up office space by eliminating our reliance on paper filing and ultimately, allow us to deliver a better all-round customer service."

Paula approached other local authorities for help but it soon became apparent, most Funeral Departments in other Councils worked in a similar manual way. It wasn't until Paula started talking to a colleague, that they realised the perfect solution was already up and running in the Council's own Highways Department.

## Solution

Nottingham City Council's Highways Department has been successfully using Confirm for many years, automating its operations by increasing workflow efficiencies to deliver time, resource and budget savings. Using Confirm Enterprise and its graphical dashboard interface, the Highways team has a fully automated, simple and effective solution for logging enquiries, capturing site inspection data, scheduling crew workloads and prioritising maintenance.

In addition, the fully functional multi-platform mobile capability of Confirm Connect facilitates remote communication with over 60 mobile crews deployed throughout the City of Nottingham, scheduling jobs and capturing remote progress updates. This ensuring its teams of gardeners, waste and inspection personnel remain out in the field working for maximum efficiency.

## Benefits

Chas Black, Systems Support and Project Officer at Nottingham City Council has been responsible for overseeing the day-to-day maintenance of Confirm since the digital asset management software was first installed back in 2003. Chas was already familiar with the potential for Confirm to deliver efficiency benefits and could see this was a viable option for Paula.

Together, they worked with Brightly's Services Team who configured the software to handle the receipt of funeral applications, digital inventory and asset storage, off site search management and processing, as well as facilitating immediate access to all reference data, case analysis, planning and reporting.

Concludes Paula, "The introduction of my bespoke Confirm Digital Asset Management solution will transform the efficiency of my department and ease pressure on resources going forward. I am now confident I have an automated system that will speed up the processing of cases from initial application, through to final case closure and significantly reduce our dependence on paper-based filing. In addition, I will have access to real-time data at the touch of a button, so not only myself, but my colleagues can also respond quickly and efficiently to external customer information requests. And, to find the solution from within our own Council was hugely satisfying and rewarding."

Chas Black has already identified other areas that can benefit from Confirm's automation, efficiency and cost savings functionality and is currently working to launch Confirm into the management of the City's Bridges and Structures assets. In addition, Paula's colleagues in the Cemeteries and Crematorium team have been so impressed with its flexibility and functionality that they are also considering using Confirm to manage its cemetery plots.

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**Paula Richardson**

Manager of Cemeteries, Section 46 Funerals and Memorials at Nottingham City Council