

Case Study

Victoria Square

The Project

Victoria Square will provide 75,000m² of retail and leisure opportunities, creating a new heart for Belfast city. The \$660 million development is one of Europe's largest urban regeneration projects and a milestone in the revitalisation of the city centre.

Scheduled to open to the public in spring 2008, the development includes three floors of retail space, restaurants, bars, cafes and cinemas, as well as over 100 apartments and two levels of basement parking. New public space and gardens will be topped by a 36m diameter, 45m high glass dome, a landmark in Belfast's skyline. Pedestrian links will connect the centre to nearby business, nightlife and shopping streets.

The Project Team

Construction of Victoria Square involves a multitude of design consultants, 70 contractors and subcontractors, and 2,000 onsite staff, with input from 50 major tenants. The developer is Multi Development UK Ltd – one of Europe's leaders in the fields of developing, owning and operating quality shopping centres, offices and mixed-use projects.

Key members of the project team are based across several locations. The main contractor is a joint venture between Irish construction companies Farrans and Gilbert Ash; Multi Development's head office is in Gouda, the Netherlands, and the UK & Ireland head office is in Belfast; Multi Development's in-house architects, T+T Design, are also based in Gouda; architect and consultant Building Design Partnership is based in Belfast; and other consultants are in London.

Requirements

With such a large, dispersed team, being able to communicate efficiently across the project and find and retrieve information was crucial. Initially, email was used to correspond and distribute documents; however it quickly became apparent that, as well as being difficult to track, this system was highly inflexible and could not cope with the large files that were being shared. Many of the email systems had a 10 megabyte limit on accounts meaning files would have to be split when sending several drawings.

Due to the complex flow of information and the vast volume of data being exchanged, the project required a centralised system where all team members had fast, easy access to information.



Solution: Web-Based Collaboration

Multi Development UK selected Aconex, the world's largest provider of construction collaboration technology, to manage all project documentation and correspondence. Through using Aconex, all participants were able to manage their documents and correspondence on one online platform, allowing them to view, distribute and track their files electronically at any time and from any location.

To ensure an effective implementation, Aconex supplied unlimited training to all participants, meaning that everyone – from the paying client to the subcontractors – were proficient using the system. Following training, unlimited round-the-clock phone and online support was made available.

Results

For project team members, it soon became apparent that using Aconex was more efficient than previous systems, due to it streamlining time-consuming manual processes.



Jon Munce, Multi Development UK's Senior Project Manager, is responsible for construction delivery. Munce said: "Before implementing Aconex, we manually scanned paper documents then stored them electronically. We also emptied our day's emails into a central storage facility," said Munce. "Because Aconex automates these processes and manages all our documents and correspondence, organisations involved in the project easily save hours each week."

From when the project started using Aconex in the demolition phase in October 2004, project participants have used the system to store, share and manage more than 175,000 documents and 435,000 pieces of correspondence, which are securely archived and can be accessed at any time.

Users can search for their data using criteria such as date ranges, sender and recipient details, document types, status and keywords. Files can then be distributed between project team members via the system. Munce said, "Aconex has contributed substantially to the efficiency of information flow. The system makes it easy to retrieve and distribute information and locate our files, which saves time on the project."

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A key feature of Aconex is its audit trail that keeps a record of document revisions and 'who did what and when' on a project. The trail provides a secure archive of every transaction since the beginning of the project including every document revision, effectively eliminating the risk of losing important data.

"The audit trail is invaluable. It reduces our risk of working from outdated drawings and reduces the potential for human error," said Munce. "We have experienced the time and cost of losing information in the past as, even when using email, important information can be deleted. Using Aconex to control our information is of enormous benefit to the project."