

Scottish Water are using ISO 55001 certification to manage physical assets efficiently and boost customer service levels



“We continually strive to develop and improve our approach to asset management. ISO 55001 sets out a framework that drives best practice, providing a natural fit with our goal to be leaders in asset management. This is a key stage on our journey to that destination, allowing for future improvements in our working practices as well as a clear alignment between the strategic direction of Scottish Water and the activities carried out during the asset lifecycle.”

Geoff Aitkenhead
Asset Management Director,
Scottish Water

Customer needs

- Demonstrate best practice
- Improve customer service delivery
- Comply with water industry regulations
- Improve value for our customers

Customer benefits

- Improved asset management controls
- Exceeded customer expectations
- Regulatory compliance
- Improved business performance
- Enhanced reputation as a well-managed business

Customer background

Scottish Water is among the five largest water utilities in the UK, providing regulated water and wastewater services to five million customers in 2.4 million homes and 124,000 businesses.

The company, with its headquarters based in Dunfermline, employs almost 3,400 people across Scotland. It operates over 29,000 miles of water mains, 31,000 miles of sewers, 280 water treatment works, and 1,800 wastewater treatment works. It is the sole provider of water and waste water services to an area of over 30,000 square miles – a third of the area of Britain – with a small and relatively dispersed population, which requires it to manage a vast array of physical assets.

The company invested £487m in quality and standards improvements in 2012-13, maintaining and upgrading treatment works, water mains, sewers and networks across Scotland.

Why certification?

A major focus of Scottish Water's strategy is investment in its infrastructure, maintaining and upgrading its physical assets to assist in the provision of clean drinking water and the efficient removal and treatment of wastewater.

The company's sites and services are operated under business management systems that adhere to the highest standards. These include Certification by BSI to ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, which shows its commitment to robust best practice business management systems, plus PAS 55 which was the first publicly available specification for optimizing management of physical assets as well as Accreditation by UKAS to: ISO/IEC 17025, which demonstrates the competence of its water testing and calibration laboratories.

Now, the company has become the first in its industry to be certified to the new international ISO 55001 standard, launched in January 2014, which represents the latest international best practice in the management of physical assets.

Quality Manager Robert Doughty, says that achieving certification has been a key aspiration for Scottish Water. "ISO 55001 enables us to demonstrate to customers and regulators that we've achieved a high degree of professionalism in the optimized management

of our assets operated to produce clean drinking water and treat wastewater safely and efficiently,"

Benefits

While it is too soon for Scottish Water to have quantified the benefits provided by ISO 55001, Simon Parsons, Director of Strategic Customer Service Planning, said he believes that certification will reap increasing rewards over time. "Certification is just the start and the main benefit is in enabling us to improve continually from here," he says. "We'll see benefits both internally at Scottish Water, and externally among customers and other stakeholders."

ISO 55001 has been built on the success of PAS 55, which has been widely adopted by utilities, transport, mining, process and manufacturing industries worldwide. "We now have a framework in place that allows us to align our continuous improvement processes to international best practice standards in asset management," said Colin Duguid, Deputy Quality Manager

Colin Duguid continued, "since we've been promoting the standard internally, it has helped to break down departmental silos, encouraging people to work together and provide an opportunity to deliver a more consistent service to our customers."

He cites the example of the standard prompting more proactive maintenance of assets such as water treatment plants and water mains, and this should ultimately lead to further improvements in the service we provide. ISO 55001 will help to give customers' confidence we are managing assets efficiently, reassuring them on issues such as certainty of supply, drinking water quality and water charges.

Scottish Water also sees ISO 55001 as a mark of assurance for its regulators, by helping the company achieve best value from its assets, releasing money for further infrastructure improvements and keeping average household bills in Scotland down, now one of the lowest in the UK. In a report on the company's performance in 2012-13 The Water Industry Commission for Scotland notes that it has outperformed projections in a number of key areas: levels of service to customers; delivering its 2010-15 investment programme; reducing leakage; and maintaining financial strength.

Implementation

ISO 55001 defines the requirements for an integrated, effective management system for assets, in much the same way as ISO 9001 specifies the essential features of a quality management system. Because of Scottish Water's experience of ISO 9001 and PAS 55, the company found implementation of the new standard relatively straightforward but, says Colin Duguid, "New requirements included: demonstrating we understand the environment in which we operate; understanding what customers and stakeholders require from us; showing how we deliver on their requirements; and showing how we report back."

He says the most challenging issue was convincing people of the need to improve to achieve best practice. "Some were apprehensive about how onerous it might be. We put a lot of effort into bringing people along, forming a working group with representatives from key parts of the business, publishing articles and making presentations to show how they could do it."

BSI's role

BSI has a longstanding relationship with Scottish Water and, having been heavily involved in developing ISO 55001, it was well placed to support the company's transition from PAS 55 to the new standard.

"We have an excellent working relationship built up over time with BSI," says Quality Manager Robert Doughty. "Their experts have been out regularly to complete a GAP analysis and Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments, and they've been on hand for guidance throughout the certification process."

Simon Parsons, Director of Strategic Customer Service Planning concludes that maintaining Scottish Water's infrastructure is crucial for satisfying customer and regulatory requirements now and in the future saying "ISO 55001 will play a pivotal role in the successful management of Scottish Water assets in the future"

Next steps

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