



# Case study

A flood of work and a lot of pieces of paper  
spelt trouble for the Environment Agency

[www.thebridger.co.uk](http://www.thebridger.co.uk)  
[information@thebridger.co.uk](mailto:information@thebridger.co.uk)  
0844 8844713

### **The background.**

After a summer of discontent as UK PLC sunk deeper in the mud and it became clear that there might be new challenges facing the custodians of our environment, the Environment Agency were galvanised into action to put in place a workforce planning and scheduling system that would put the agency in control of managing crisis and more importantly of managing budgets that had ever increasing demands placed on them.

### **The challenge.**

The Environment Agency is a fast growing organisation made up of a number of smaller, but related agencies that merged to become the key strategic partner to DEFRA with a broad range of responsibilities for the Environment. A key element of this is environmental monitoring, the part that spots problems early and enables avoiding action. Some of the Agencies responsibilities included statutory reporting to the EU and failure carried very heavy fines. The agency had recently been fined or let off on a number of occasions to the tune of tens of millions of pounds.

The agency had made two previous attempts at rationalising and unifying their environmental monitoring processes



with the aim of improving delivery while reducing costs. On each occasion the project had run out of steam before achieving a sufficient understanding of the diverse existing processes, let alone achieving a consensus on a new process robust enough for automation. .

*“This system is 15 years overdue, but the complexity keeps growing as the organisation grows.”*

—John Marshall Head of Projects Environment Agency

Ed Taaffe took control of the process engineering and business design phase in the Summer of 2007.

After building a team of business analysts comprising a mixture of senior agency staff and external consultants, Ed planned a gruelling schedule of workshops, meetings and one to one interviews throughout the country culminating in two week long sessions with his team and senior agency stakeholders when a thoroughly tested and verified blue print of the new efficient processes were signed off and presented to the chosen systems integration partner.

*“Workforce planning and scheduling is right at the heart of the operation of any organisation and as such it is both critical for performance and absolutely embedded in the culture of the organisation almost within the very DNA of the business. Any changes to these processes will naturally have a profound effect on the organisations performance as well as challenging and threatening the organisational culture right at the core of peoples security and motivation.*

*It is impossible to overstate just how important it is to understand and respect the human elements of the changes and to apply enlightened and skilful change management practices right from the outset.”*

*Ed Taaffe*

Ed’s approach to the environment agency was to act as facilitator, connecting the right people so that they designed and owned the changes themselves from the bottom right to the top of the organisation.

It is a measure of the success of this approach that key members of the change team were individuals who had already accepted redundancy as a result of the project. The time taken to achieve this outcome was five months