



Everyone Active: reducing costs in a water intensive business

Background

Trading under the brand Everyone Active, Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) manages almost 160 leisure centres across England on behalf of 50 local authorities, delivering sports and leisure services to 2.7 million members and catering for 3.2 million visitors each month. *Consultus* expertise has been helping SLM to better manage its gas and electricity needs for over 10 years – and is now helping the company to better support operations while reducing costs and complexity for water supplies across a diverse portfolio.

Challenges

Like many organisations with a diverse portfolio of sites, SLM was working with multiple water suppliers; inconsistent invoicing was just the tip of the iceberg. The situation was exacerbated in the run-up and following deregulation of the water market, with previously accurate payment processes at SLM thrown out of sync by water companies changing their processes. “We have a diverse portfolio, most sites have swimming pools, so we have a significant water requirement,” says Jane Jebb, Group Finance Manager, SLM. “We are also growing rapidly as a business, adding more than 50 sites in the last three years. So with water, the picture was complex. One contract might cover a single leisure centre, or eight or nine. We have measured water, sewage, trade effluent licences. We are a large and diverse organisation, operating from Sunderland in the North to Plymouth in the South, so we’re dealing with at least 10 different water suppliers, all with different methods of invoicing. It was a complex situation, having to manage and process invoices from all these suppliers, and experiencing the usual difficulties with meter reads, estimated bills, and so on.”

See the solution overleaf

Following deregulation of the English water market, leading leisure management company SLM is benefiting from *Consultus* services including Onsite Consulting, Water Retail Tender, Bill Validation, Audit, AMR Tender - and chasing credits and mischarges, with £170k already identified.

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‘Consultus provides us with new ideas and suggests improvements, working alongside our people to help improve our processes.’

Why Consultus?

"We'd worked with *Consultus* for 10 years on gas and electricity," Jebb says. "With water, deregulation was coming and we wanted to understand how it could work for us. We met with *Consultus* - they know the water industry inside out - they said they could arrange a single supplier. Rates might vary but they'd be consistent, we'd have a single bill for multiple sites, and *Consultus* would also provide Bill Validation. Importantly, *Consultus* advised us not to dive in, so to speak, when the market deregulated and instead wait to see how it developed. We obviously wanted to improve our arrangements, achieving efficiencies and time savings."

Solution

Bringing unique expertise to bear, *Consultus* ran a national tender for supply to all SLM sites in England. Having assessed and negotiated with suppliers, a three-year contract was signed with a single provider, with key elements agreed including consolidated invoicing, named account manager and, importantly, a discount on the retail price. This meant a reduction on water bills from previous years. *Consultus* is also providing ongoing Bill Validation for the new contract. "In broad terms, it was clear that deregulation did not go especially well, at least initially," Jebb says. "However, *Consultus* has been here to guide and support us." This includes working with SLM's finance department to cleanse accounts and bring them up to date. "We had a single supplier but hadn't received a bill for some time, only projected balances.

So *Consultus* carried out an audit, to check on the new relationship. I wanted to make sure the handover was working and ensure all accounts were closed off. *Consultus* visited our head office, checked meters across our portfolio, and shut them off as necessary."

Outcomes

Consultus has also performed an AMR tender for all SLM sites in England. Following the successful award, 50 sites were identified and the rollout is ongoing, project managed by *Consultus*. This will provide more accurate consumption data for invoicing purposes and to meet usage reduction targets. In addition, *Consultus* has identified historic issues around water charges, tariffs and credits, providing billing expertise that extended to onsite consulting, audit and reconciliation. This has identified potential refunds of up to £170,000, with *Consultus* now appointed to help reclaim monies owed to SLM.

"*Consultus* brought expertise to the business that we simply did not have," Jebb adds. "I don't need to understand all the complexities and specifics of our water arrangements - but they do understand all that. *Consultus* understood how the industry was moving, the changes coming up, mechanisms for invoicing, and more. They also had the relationships with suppliers that could benefit SLM. The *Consultus* team has been very proactive and incredibly responsive to requests, both guiding SLM on what we should be doing and coming onsite for audit work, and delivering value in other areas such as billing."

“We are a heavy water user and, pre-deregulation, our requirements were not managed especially well. *Consultus* brought water industry expertise to the business that we simply did not have.”

Jane Jebb
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ACTIVE

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