

Wolverhampton Homes – Buzzsaw



Best use of IT



Wolverhampton Homes

“ Providing people focused excellent services and good quality housing according to individual needs and choices wherever possible ”

NHMF BEST PRACTICE AWARDS 2011



Buzzsaw and best managed external contract

SUMMARY

Wolverhampton Homes has introduced Autodesk Buzzsaw – an online project collaboration service for design and construction teams, to enable our project related information to be easily shared between our construction partners.

The pioneering way we use this system allows Wolverhampton Homes to manage the access to this secure system so all of our partners have access to the current data relating to programme management and monitoring. This has significantly enhanced the partnership's productivity and reduced our document handling and retrieval costs.

We have used this system in an innovative way to enhance partnership working and to cut down on extra paper work also making us more environmentally friendly.

The site is fully supported by the Autodesk Reseller, Hobs Reprographics plc, who readily assist with any issues we have maintaining and developing the system to support business efficacy.

Wolverhampton Homes is working in partnership with three construction companies (Bullock, Frank Haslam Milan and Thomas Vale) to deliver a five year, £400million social housing refurbishment

programme. Each partner has their own managed area within Buzzsaw, where programme information is held, including property surveys, variations, warranties, gas/electrical certificates and documents evidencing completed work (kitchen designs and colour choice etc).

Around 23,600 homes are set to be transformed through a mix of internal and external refurbishment work. Most properties will receive new kitchens and bathrooms, gas central heating and rewiring. Supporting data for all works completed under the Decent Homes programme is held in Buzzsaw. The scheme will bring all properties up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2012 and is one of the biggest improvement programmes of its kind in the country.

MAIN SUBMISSION

One of the main critical elements for our Decent Homes programme is enabling an efficient exchange of documents between all members of the partnership.

But by working together and using the same system we can proactively prevent the use of incorrect versions of agreed processes, specifications and work plans. The system automatically updates you if a recipient has not read the instruction update. It can also remove colleagues who are not regular users.



Philip Toni, director of finance at Wolverhampton Homes, said: "To start a programme of this size and magnitude and make a contribution to the triple bottom line in the first year needs a consistent systematic project management system. Our Property Team have not only introduced this but have proved that through the management of information you can achieve real added value".

In 2007 we achieved a two star rating from the Audit Commission allowing the organisation to begin drawing down funds to deliver the Decent Homes programme for the city.

This will be easily the largest single investment in its social housing stock ever made. Being awarded two stars and receiving approval to draw down Decent Homes funding led the organisation to explore improved ways of communicating and collaborating of information.

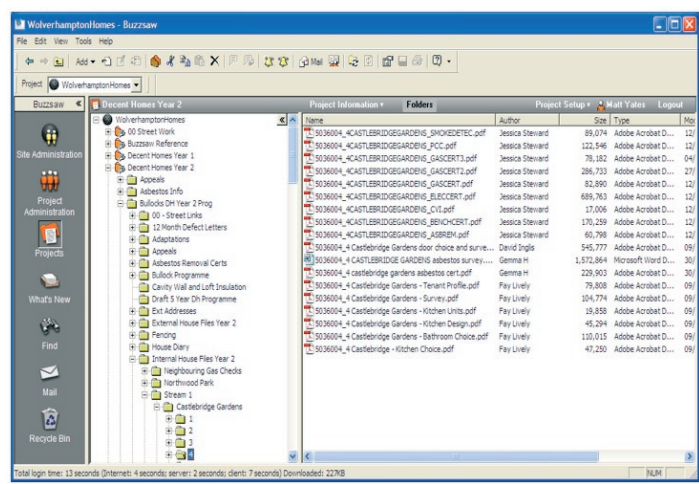
We knew we would need to exchange a large amount of data on an almost instantaneous basis across a range of external contractors (and their sub-contractors). It was obvious from the start we would need to store and circulate thousands of documents and concerns were raised about lots of people emailing huge documents to lots more people and the impact this would have on our infrastructure.

There were also concerns about document control, without a system that could cope it would be easy for a sub-contractor, for example to pick

up the wrong document which could result in costly errors on site. We looked at systems that would provide a solution and after extensive research we were particularly impressed by Autodesk Buzzsaw.

TRAINING

Autodesk Buzzsaw was selected on the basis of the software's functionality, ease of use and minimal costs compared to the size of contract to be delivered.

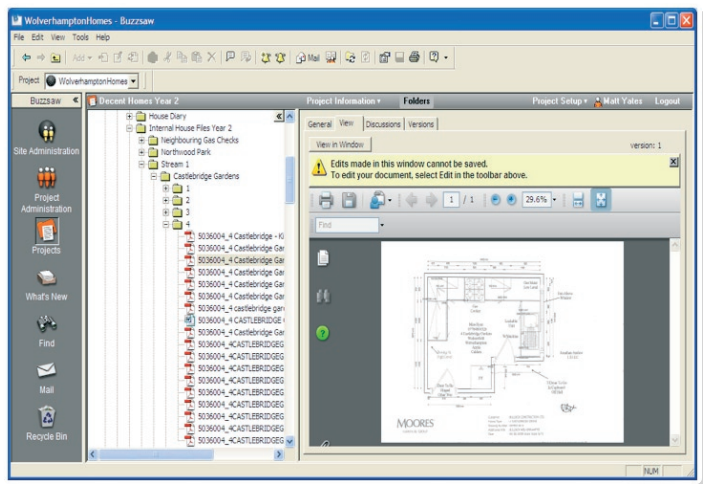


The system was introduced in 2007 and there are currently 256 members on the site, including Wolverhampton Homes' staff and board members; external contractor and sub-contractor staff and Wolverhampton City council officers.



Members of the site have received training on how it works and how Wolverhampton Homes wants each contractor to use the site to download and upload documents.

Autodesk Buzzsaw is incredibly easy to install and set up and there was no need for a long implementation period. Within four weeks of the Decent Homes programme launching Wolverhampton Homes and our partners were up and running with the system.

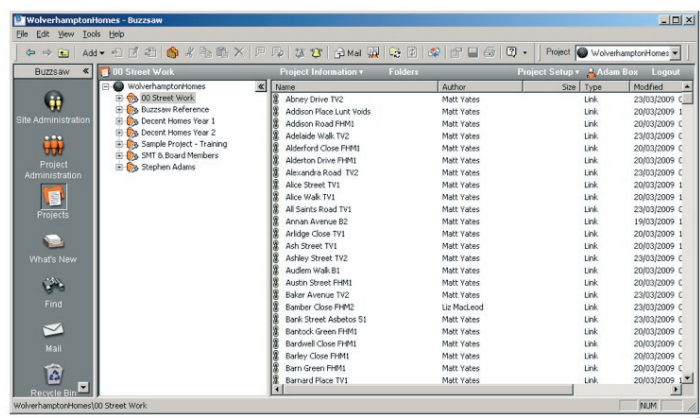


Now, using Buzzsaw, authorised team members can access project documentation at any time. It ensures everyone is working to the latest versions and by turning the project into an almost paperless operation, it offers a greener and far more cost-effective alternative to the usual paper, printing and postage delivery requirements.

It is the simplicity of the solution that makes it work. Buzzsaw has become a part of the organisation and needs very little administration.

Team members and clients are comfortable using Buzzsaw and anyone who can 'drag and drop' will find it easy.

Within Buzzsaw we created quick links to take the Wolverhampton Staff immediately to the data on every street under our remit.



This has proved invaluable in simplifying the data held on the system for all of the users, many of whom are not highly technical in nature.

Our documents are also safe and secure – if you need to delve into the history of a document, you can see any previous versions and also who has accessed it, saving the dilemma of someone saying they haven't received or seen something.



The safekeeping of sensitive documents, communications and intellectual property is crucial. The security of customer data is the strongest concern of Autodesk's security team, and this data is defined by the CIA model, wherein data remains **C**onfidential, retains its **I**ntegrity and remains **A**vailable to the customer. Data centers are geographically separated by more than 1,800 miles, and an exact replica of all data is kept to enable this data to be retrieved if required.

Autodesk Buzzsaw allows us to:

SIMPLIFY

- Automate business processes for efficient collaboration
- Speed adoption with an easy-to-use solution
- Work intuitively with a configurable interface

CENTRALISE

- Create a central repository for all project information
- Provide secure, on-demand access to specifications, designs, documents and information
- Notify project team members of changes and updates – automatically

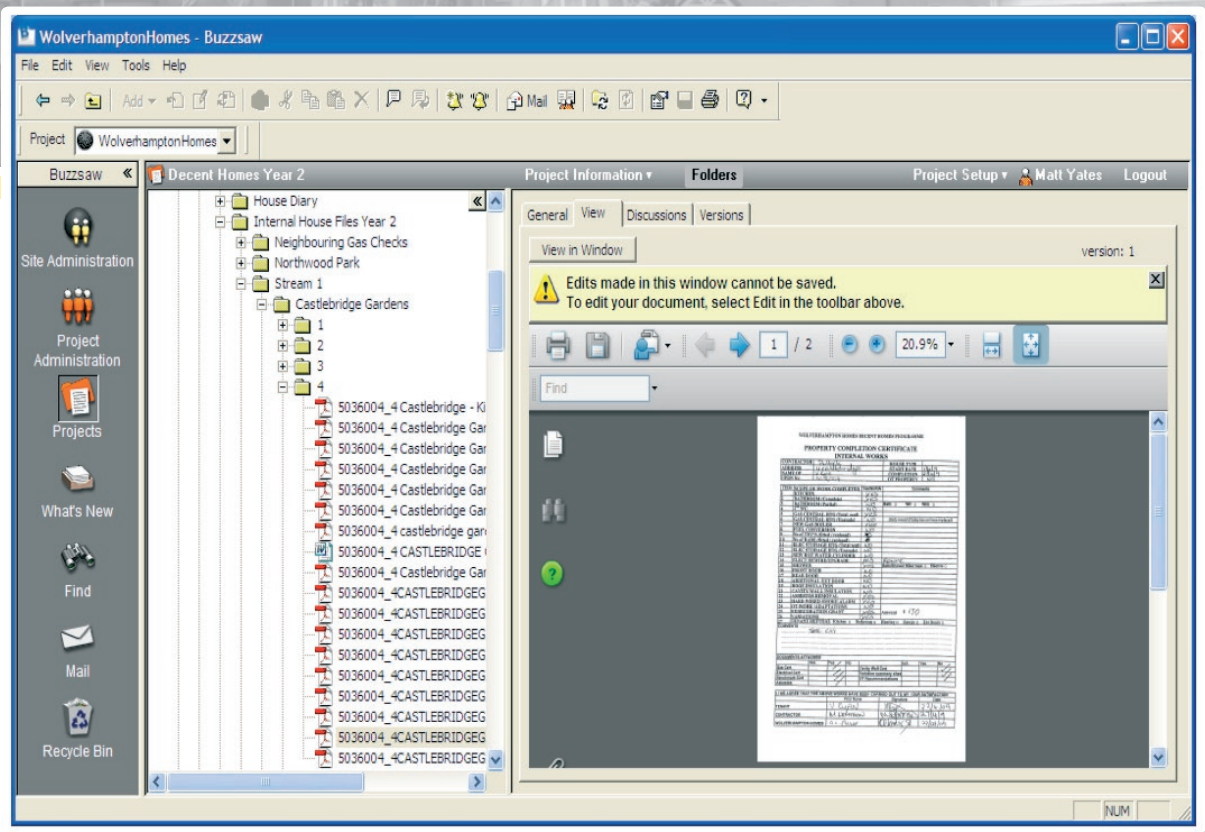
STREAMLINE

- Improve communication among project team members
- Deliver projects on time by reducing errors and improving communication
- Decrease traditional, paper-based printing and shipping business expenses

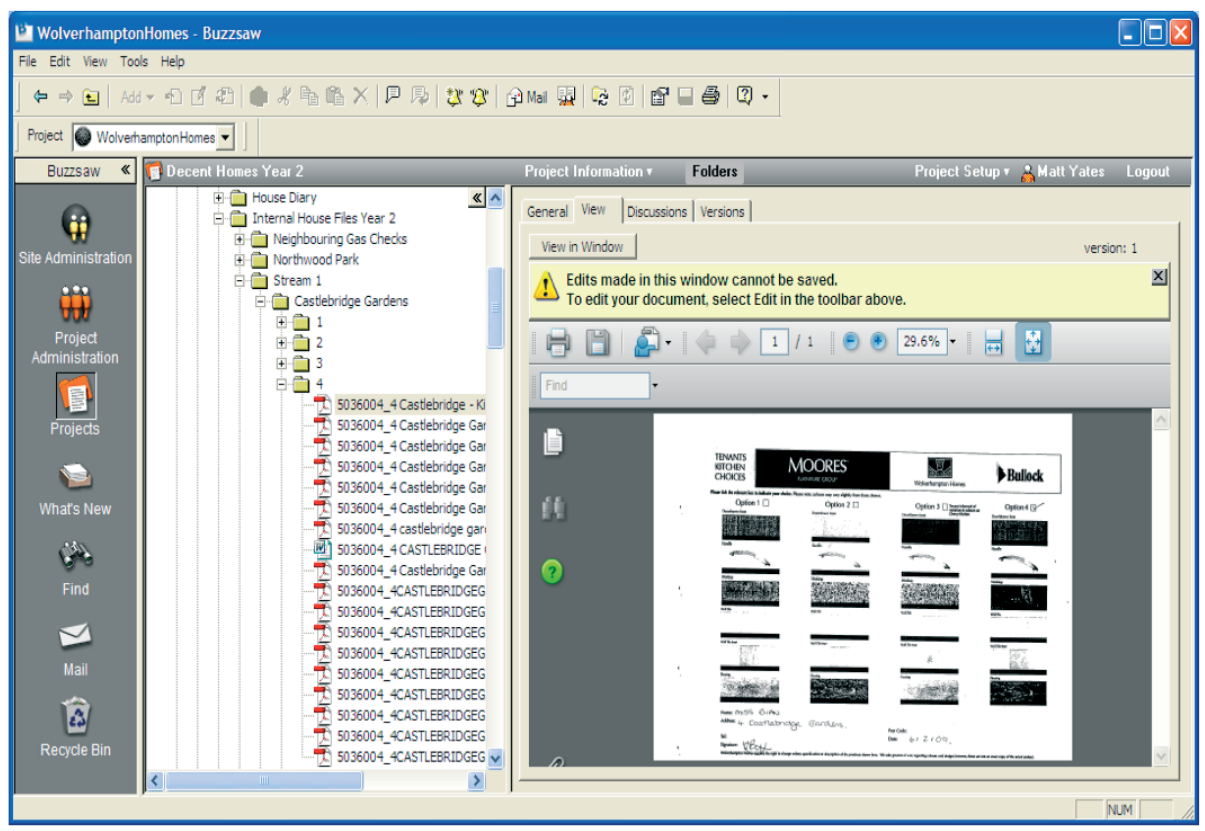
The Buzzsaw folder structure for Wolverhampton Homes has been created to allow each main partner contractor their own set of folders so they can download latest copies of the specifications and work programme details. It allows each contractor to upload completed work details in an agreed format.

Documents uploaded by contractors on completion of decent homes works are stored by a unique property reference number. This will enable an interface to be developed to record this work on the organisations asset management database.

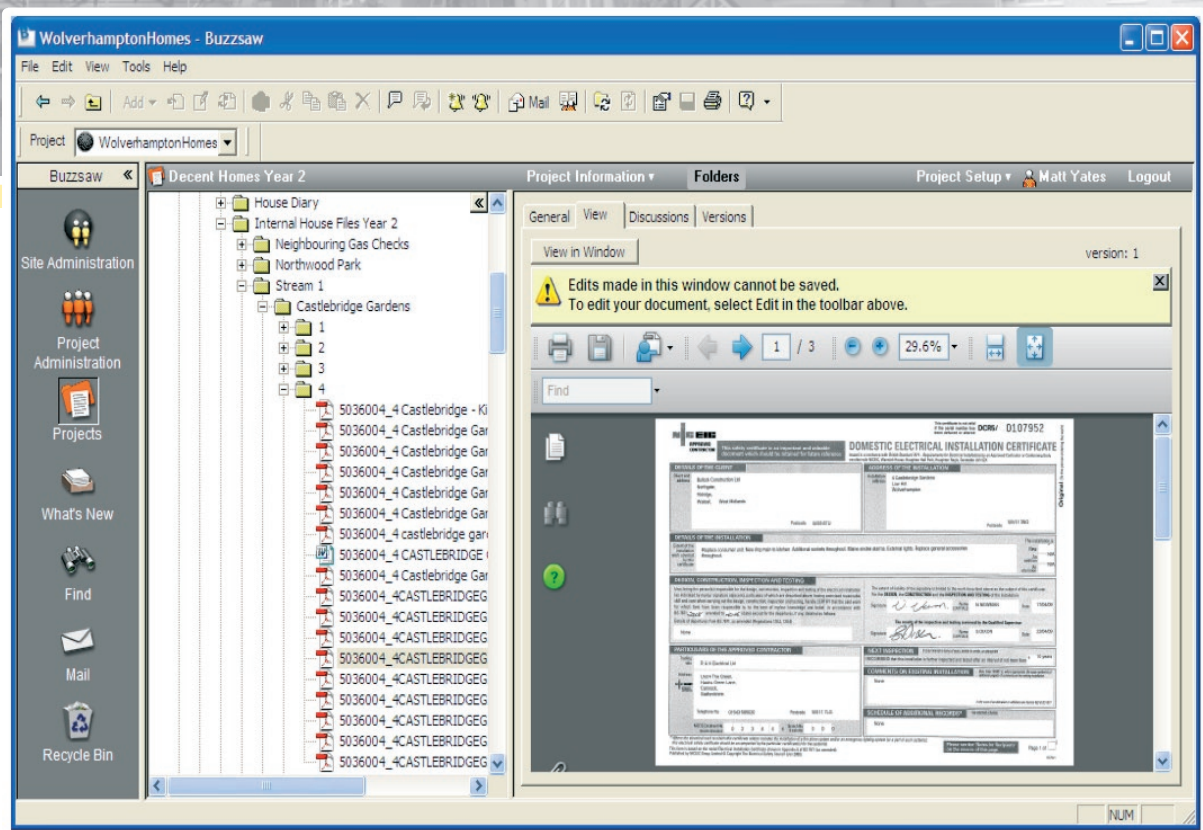
The easiest way to understand Buzzsaw is to show it; on the following pages are examples of how Buzzsaw looks and some of the documents uploaded by contractors to inform the client of works carried out in each property.



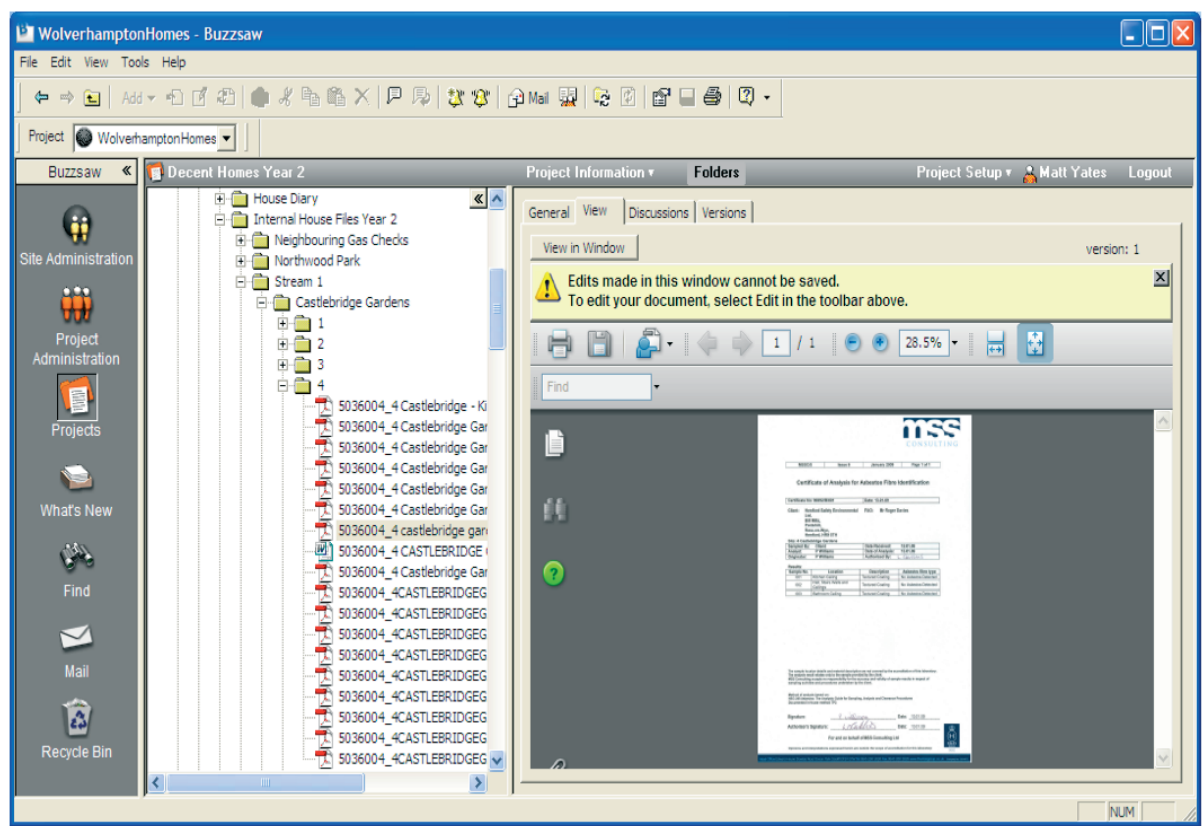
Property completion certificate



Kitchen choice



Electrical safety certificate



Asbestos certificate



Buzzsaw has many features which help Wolverhampton Homes manage the Decent Homes programme including:-

- Setting individual and project group permissions, including 'read-only', 'edit' access
- Tracking documents that have been read by members
- Viewing previous versions of documents and identifying changes in the earlier versions
- Setting notifications allows members to know instantly when documents have been changed/updated

Buzzsaw is purchased on an annual basis and Wolverhampton Homes has increased its size from 50 users initially to now a 300 user site with nearly 60Gb of data held on it. For a cost of around £25,000 Wolverhampton Homes feels it is getting a tremendous return on its investment in the system.

It would be almost impossible to calculate the savings made through having a simple, managed method of ensuring that information is in the right place at the right time.

Benefits we feel we are receiving from the system include:-

- Hundreds of hours saved by users who no longer have to receive, store and redistribute email attachments

- All data is held on our Buzzsaw system and accessible either directly from the Buzzsaw application or via an email link

- Document copying and hardcopy document distribution costs have been dramatically reduced, this alone has more than covered the cost of the system

Instant access to the correct information ensures minimal errors and extra work. Prior experience tells us costly errors do happen, often with no real fault other than someone inadvertently working from the wrong, or out of date version of a document. We could not begin to calculate how much we are saving through this.

One area where we do see huge savings over other implemented systems is with training. Over the three years we have had the system we have only needed six days of training from Hobs. The system is very intuitive and most of the users have 'just got on with it' once they have received their invitation to the site. Where additional telephone support and help is needed, Hobs has delivered this completely free of charge. The experience of working with an organisation with such a strong customer relationship focus has been very refreshing.



Buzzsaw has helped us dramatically improve the way we can address the needs of our tenants. Staff at all locations can have access to up to date information at their fingertips to respond to tenant enquiries. Customer services officers can check Buzzsaw and know at a glance exactly what planned work will be carried out in the tenant's home which may be different to their neighbour.

We also have an information sharing protocol and use Buzzsaw to share customer profile and vulnerability data, such as information on tenant disabilities with the contractor, sub-contractor and tenant liaison officer to enable them to understand and tailor the service they provide to our tenants.

Recently a tenant called in concerned her cooker had broken and the contractors were due to install a new kitchen. She was worried because she couldn't afford to buy a new cooker, but she had been offered a nearly new oven and hob from a close relative.

The customer services officer was able to look at the kitchen plan of the tenant's property in Buzzsaw and discuss this with the contract manager who confirmed the kitchen design could be adapted to accommodate a different cooker. The customer services officer relayed this information directly to the tenant (relieving her concerns) and afterwards updated the sub-contractor advising them to amend the kitchen installation to accommodate the new cooker.

Jon Rodway, construction project manager from Bullock, said: "To share, distribute and manage amendments of project information (drawings, programmes etc) among partners we use Autodesk Buzzsaw. This is a 'project information collaboration system'. It enables password-protected access to project information through the internet. Buzzsaw can handle all types of documents relating to the project and allows anyone with a password to comment on and/or amend them as required.

"Accurate measurements can be taken directly from drawings, removing the requirement for them to be printed after every amendment. To ensure all relevant parties have viewed and commented on changes, revisions and proposals a full audit trail is provided of all visits and changes for all to see."

"We do not feel we have taken anything other than a logical step to improve the distribution of information amongst our partners by bringing in the Buzzsaw collaboration system. The whole experience with Buzzsaw and the vendor, Hobs Reprographics plc has been a smooth and painless process. From the very first presentation we understood how the system could help us with our problems. Hobs knowledge of our sector and the construction industry ensured that it was rolled out very quickly.



“Their ongoing help has been invaluable in helping Wolverhampton Homes continue to benefit from the system. We have no hesitation in recommending the vendor and the system to other housing groups and organisations.”

The system is gathering momentum and recently been demonstrated to other neighbouring landlords.

Wolverhampton Board Members receive many reports and journals, and Buzzsaw is now being used to distribute papers and useful information without having to print multiple copies of documentation.

Sue Roberts, chair of Wolverhampton Homes board, said: “Buzzsaw allows board members to choose which information they need and allows them access to a much wider network of information. Storage of reports has always been an issue and Buzzsaw will allow this to be managed and maintained much more effectively.”

Overall our use of Buzzsaw has made a very complicated process simple. The way we are all using the system is pioneering in itself and shows excellent collaborative working.

Internally we are all reaping the benefits everyday and externally tenants are receiving a seamless service.

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