

LIGHTENING THE CONSENT COMPLIANCE BURDEN

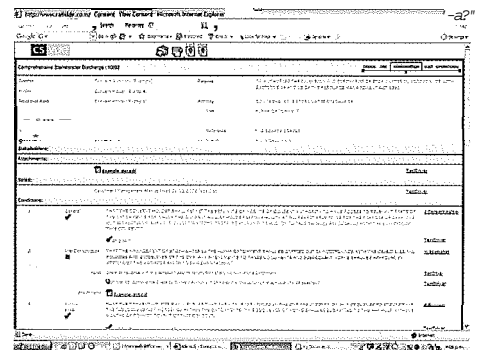
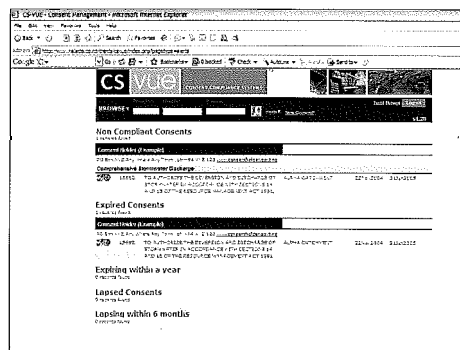
CS-VUE is an electronic management system that can reduce the mountain of paperwork attributable to current regulations.

The 1991 introduction of the Resource Management Act had far-reaching implications for those applying for or seeking renewal of a consent, both in terms of the conditions that must be met and the volume of data that must be processed. These days, the ability to effectively manage information across an ever-increasing volume of consents is a key success factor for many organisations. Laxity is not an option: abatement notices, project stoppages and prosecutions all have a direct negative impact on the bottom line. And the repercussions are not only financial: strained consent authority relationships, loss of community trust and environmental damage can all have a detrimental effect on corporate reputation.

Integrated management required

A multi-site business with several dozen consents to manage could have hundreds of related conditions to keep track of and action on a regular basis. For example, in the case of a prohibition on discharging water from a company site into a river or a tributary, project managers would have to ensure systems and recording technologies are adequate for monitoring conditions, identifying breaches and triggering remedial action.

Similarly, consent managers with responsibility for landfill operations might have to keep track of variables such as odour levels, the presence of seagulls, whether rubbish is covered and the number of actual truck movements a day compared with how many are permitted.



ABOVE: One of the features of the CS-VUE system is an on-screen alert which lists non-compliant, lapsed and expired consents, plus those due to lapse within six months or expire within a year. Each consent is linked to its conditions. A click of the mouse takes the user to a list for action or sign-off. This links in turn to details in digital files such as photographs, plans or relevant compliance reports.

Clearly, planning consent obligations have become so numerous and complex that the historical method of managing consents – a repository of knowledge residing within the heads of key executives, supplemented by a paper based filing system – is no longer tenable.

So what is required? Well, a robust, internet-driven database able to store related information, diary events, and keep track of consent monitoring requirements would be a good foundation. Also mandatory: multiple data access levels that enable consultants, contractors, clients, and staff to get the detail they need without creating the workload associated with a manual file-retrieval system. One such system is CS-VUE.

CS-VUE

CS-VUE is an integrated management tool that was developed as a joint venture between environmental and infrastructure resource management consultants Andrew Stewart Ltd and internet database developers Railside Media Architects.

It's an electronic system that stores resource consents, actions requirements relating to conditions, and produces an audit trail to demonstrate compliance. Functionality includes a diary and scheduling system, mechanisms to track and record completion of specific consent conditions, key contacts and projects.

One of CS-VUE's features is an on-screen alert

(pictured) which lists non-compliant, lapsed and expired consents, plus those due to lapse within six months or expire within a year. Each consent is linked to its related conditions. A click of the mouse takes the user to a list for action or sign-off. This, in turn, connects to documents stored digitally, such as photographs, plans or relevant compliance reports.

By comparison, a system based on hard copy or records kept in spreadsheets would need to rely either on an individual's memory or on each consent condition requirement being recorded in a personal diary or in PC-based "to-do" lists. External consultants needed access to information in hard-copy or internal systems, this would have to be retrieved, copied, and sent by fax or post. CS-VUE, by contrast, enables users to simply add an external consultant as another user, who is granted access only to the data that relates to their specific role in the project.

The system operates on the basis of "one version of truth everyone looks at the same information, with modification rights permitted only to specified users. Every interaction with the system is recorded, providing an auditable and transparent digital paper trail. A security of consent and compliance data is a fundamental

feature, CS-VUE uses the same password-encoded security as banks.

The system does not call for the installation of any special hardware or software and the only operating requirement is Internet access. As it is totally compatible with existing IT systems, installation and servicing involve only minimal downtime. Users are not responsible for data back-up, transactions are secure, and multiple users from multiple sites can log on simultaneously.

Introduced to the local government sector in April 2004 and commercially in April 2006, CS-VUE is currently managing in excess of 48,000 consent conditions for entities ranging from local bodies, and utility operators to corporate land-owners and property developers.

One company's experience with CS-VUE

Perry Group is one of the largest privately-owned enterprises in the Waikato, with interests in sand mining, quarrying, waste solutions and remediation, compost and fertilisers, metal protection, lime resource and property development. CS-VUE is already benefiting the company in a variety of ways, including more streamlined administration, more efficient



ABOVE: A Perry Group operation in the North Island.

management of legal and financial risk, lower compliance costs, greater accountability and transparency in respect of environmental standards and stronger relationships with consent authorities. This last is especially important, given that local bodies themselves are increasingly obliged to demonstrate that they're managing consent compliance cost-effectively and efficiently.

While Perry Group bought CS-VUE to manage consents, the company sees the potential for widening its use to include the monitoring of project and facilities management plans.

For more on CS-VUE's approach to consent compliance management, see www.csvue.co.nz.