

## Case study: GRAHAM Construction

### Powerproject Helps GRAHAM Construction to Win Tenders



#### About GRAHAM Construction

GRAHAM is a privately owned company operating in the construction, asset management, property investment and development sectors. With a proud heritage where traditional skills and values are fused with professional management, the company has grown to have a turnover in excess of £260 million and employs over 1240 people.

GRAHAM is a leading player in all areas of construction and civil engineering, operating from regional offices throughout the UK and Ireland.

The company prides itself on the positive, personal relationships it fosters with all of its clients and sub-contractors.

#### Background

GRAHAM Construction is the largest subsidiary in the GRAHAM Group (operating in the construction, asset management and project investment markets) and delivers building and civil engineering projects for both public and private sector clients. It has a long track record in providing a comprehensive service through design and build, Public Private Partnership, framework partnering and traditional contracts



throughout the UK and Ireland. Since its beginning the company has been successfully completing landmark projects and has become a leading player in all areas of building, civil engineering and facilities management.

It believes strongly in combining local understanding with a high standard of service that repeatedly delivers quality construction projects in a safe, professional and sustainable manner. What makes GRAHAM Construction stand out from the crowd is the added value it brings to ensure its clients receive what they have been promised, nurturing positive personal relationships

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along the way which keeps customers coming back and ensures long-term sustainable growth. To uphold its reputation as “best in class” for delivery on time, to budget and to quality, GRAHAM Construction is supported by the leading tool in planning and programme management, Powerproject suite.

Some of the company’s most recently completed projects have included many large education and leisure facilities, like Maplefields SEN School, Corby, Northamptonshire; Barnsley Town Hall, Refurbishment; Oswestry Leisure Centre, Shropshire; Glasgow University, Small Animal Hospital. All were helped to be brought to successful fruition with the use of the expert management tool Powerproject. Most notable was the Royal Commonwealth Pool in Edinburgh, whose complex refurbishment comprised the internal demolition of the existing pool facilities, bringing new facilities up to world-class standard while retaining the existing Grade A listed façade.

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### Powerproject scales the depths of state-of-the-art aquatic centre

The company's most recent large project win, the £18.2 million Aberdeen Aquatic Centre, will also call on management software. The project is the next phase of the Aberdeen Sports the high-level functionality of Elecosoft's sophisticated planning and programme Village development and will include a 10-lane 50m Olympic standard pool with a diving boom and part-floating floor, a 25 m x 16.5 m Diving Pool with the latest technology in-water cushioning systems and an adjustable floor, spectator seating for 600, full timing/video analysis lab along with a land-conditioning area, health suite and a bridge connection to Aberdeen Sports Village. It is an ambitious project not without complexities, requiring the right skills to bring together the installation and co-ordination of specialist equipment and extensive subcontractor design and co-ordination. Powerproject will be used to programme manage the whole project as well as for accurate, timely reporting throughout.

Ray Ferguson is Planning Manager with GRAHAM Construction and is responsible for all aspects of this

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project. Ray, who can be running up to 8 large projects at a time, has been using Powerproject for 10 years, and the company has been employing the software for even longer.

“We use Powerproject on all of our projects because it has superior functionality while being easy to use. It is intuitive and produces an end product that is second to none. The end product is much more professional and polished compared with other tools and it presents our data clearly and well laid out. Its use of colour coding not only makes it more attractive, it makes it easier to understand” said Ray.

The Aberdeen Aquatics Centre has proven to be a highly complex project. Built adjacent to the existing Sports Village, which is high-end and used by top-class athletes, it needed an Olympic-sized swimming pool and Olympic diving pool (as well as its 100m

running track and a full indoor football field!). Right from the outset the project presented a number of challenges for Powerproject. The existing site housed a high school that had been empty for some time. It had to be demolished and in the process asbestos was uncovered which had to be removed. This required some careful planning.

The next challenge was ground conditions. Explained Ray: “Its location near the North Sea meant the water table was high, so ground conditions were difficult. We had a lot of temporary works at a time, and we had to create a cofferdam around the perimeter so we could work inside it to start forming the pool structure. Powerproject helped us with this, particularly because there was a high amount of risk involved.”

“Powerproject is especially useful to us for risk analysis. It has a “what-if” manager. Using that we can run various scenarios of what would happen if ...? For example, if it snowed for a month and we couldn't carry on with certain parts of the build, Powerproject will tell you all the implications of that event, allowing all rescheduling along the way and automatically fixing end dates. We can manage the baseline using that function.”

“We had to run a number of risk programmes to determine that we could complete it in the time period allocated, and it has meant that we have been able to track our progress through that. The customer demands the time frame and using Powerproject we can show that we can meet that deadline.”

### Powerproject gives the edge at tender stage

“In a recession, a lot of emphasis is placed on quality during tender stage,” said Ray. “You have to be able to present to a client in a format that they can quickly and easily understand. You have to be able to show them how the programme will work. Powerproject allows us to import JPEG images that add value to our proposal, since the customer can see with clarity where a line of the programme engages with an image, and they recognise where exactly that is on the building. This is always well received by potential



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customers, so Powerproject is a great asset to have at tender stage.”

“In terms of the Aberdeen project, Powerproject helped us to secure it because it allowed us to demonstrate that we would be able to complete in the time frame required. Right at the start we developed a substantial programme of about 500 projects (amounting to 5 A1 pages) which we were able to show the customer in print format, it explained exactly how the programme would work. It is this ‘Certainty of Delivery’ that we can offer that makes us different and gives us the edge. We are able to go into extra detail and assure the customer we can deliver on time and to budget with no compromise of quality.”

“Reporting is also regarded as an important part of the whole bidding process,” continued Ray. “As part of the tendering we were required to table the reporting mechanism we would be using. Being able to show our methodology was one of the criteria set by the customer in order to bid for the job. Using Powerproject I created a sample report, the customer was very impressed with it and it helped us win the project.”

### A good return on investment

There are other cornerstones of the software that GRAHAM Construction values enough to continue to use it year after year on project after project. Ray explained why they find it so valuable:

“The end product is much more professional and polished compared with other tools.”

“Powerproject acts as a good interface with our customers’ software – it’s compatible with MS Project and Excel so you can easily cut and paste only the data you need into other software and present the information in a PDF format that everyone can read.”

“Powerproject is also particularly good at modularising projects. The master programme can be broken down into work packages, and they can be filtered. We can filter out whichever aspects we need to, for example, concrete or cladding, which gives you more manageable projects rather than one large programme. This is obviously useful for subcontractors who do not need to see everyone else’s tasks, but can be provided with a succinct programme of their own works.”

“It also gives us the ability easily to manage client variations when a client’s requirement changes or they may ask for something to be added to the build that was not originally scheduled. Our job is to be flexible and accommodating for our clients, our reputation rests

upon it, and Powerproject helps us to do that.”

“What we find a really big advantage of Powerproject is the ability it gives us to monitor ourselves. It clearly shows us live progress on projects, completeness in terms of percentages, we can get an accurate forecast of whether they are on track or behind schedule (and I’m happy to report that 9 months into our latest project we are firmly on track) and we can set our tasks as percentages against task names. Our reports can be as detailed as we like – from status of individual job to design information – it really gives us an end-to-end management reporting function.”

When the company first realised, many years ago, that it was more efficient to use professional planning software than traditional methods, its research pointed towards the market leader. “Powerproject really did best fulfil our needs,” said Ray, “and it has certainly proved a good return on investment over the years –helping us to win many of our contracts.”

It’s not just the software that impresses:

“Their support service is excellent, they get back to you very quickly. We have seen the software be developed over the years from version to version, and with each new version previous glitches have disappeared and new functionality comes in. So it is obvious that Elecosoft is listening to its customers and taking on board their requests.”

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