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# Scotia Gas Networks Transforms Field Operations with Real-Time Scheduling and Optimization



## The Company

Scotia Gas Networks (SGN) is the second largest gas distribution company in the UK, operating across all of Scotland and central and south-east England. It distributes gas safely and efficiently to 5.7 million customers through some 74,000km of gas pipeline.

SGN was formed on 1 June, 2005, after a sea-change in the structure of the gas distribution business. Previously National Grid Transco (now National Grid) had owned and operated the UK's eight gas distribution networks. SGN acquired the Scotland and Southern gas networks from National Grid and is now one of four companies operating the UK's gas pipeline network.

## The Challenge

Although National Grid had IT systems in place to manage their front and back office operations, as part of the sale they expected SGN to implement their own infrastructure, from scratch, as quickly as possible. This was a huge undertaking as SGN planned to reduce the number of IT systems from 54 to just 8. During this switchover National Grid agreed to provide support via a Front Office Managed Services Agreement (FOMSA) and a Back Office Managed Services Agreement (BOMSA). One of SGN's key objectives is to provide a safe and reliable supply of natural gas to its customers. Additionally Ofgem, the body responsible for regulating the industry and who grant distributors their Gas Transporters License, has the legislative authority to sanction SGN should their stringent Service Level Agreement (SLA), of reaching 97% of emergency call-outs within one hour, not be met. This means the IT systems that schedule the company's field staff, are of vital importance to SGN. The right staff need to be available at the right time to deal with emergency situations.

The scheduling and dispatch system that was being used was based on an ageing North London British Gas System. Although reliable, the existing platform was highly customized, had limited scalability for potential growth and would struggle to cope with modern technologies that SGN wanted to take advantage of, such as Global Positioning System (GPS).

## Benefits

- **Regulatory Compliance:** Helped SGN meet its SLA of reaching over 97% of emergency calls within an hour;
- **Improved customer service:** ClickSchedule's optimized and automatic scheduling means SGN's engineers can react faster to call-outs and provide customers even better standards of service;
- **Increased sales:** Ability to demonstrate a robust dispatching system helped SGN win a large contract;
- **Visibility:** ClickSchedule provides dispatchers with a real-time view of field resources and incidents across the 74,000 km of pipeline it manages.

## Solution

A new solution was required by SGN to manage its 1,500 strong field teams in Scotland and central southern and south-east England and, these were split across three business streams:

1. **Emergency and Metering;**
2. **Repair;**
3. **Maintenance.**

The selection of the software used to schedule the company's staff was driven by its capability to deliver to the Emergency and Metering stream. ClickSoftware were one of two potential suppliers that were shortlisted.



Given the importance of this system SGN embarked upon a rigorous selection process using a matrix that scored against key, carefully considered operational criteria. ClickSoftware also offered very similar companies to SGN as reference sites. Canadian gas company Gaz Metropolitain for instance, used ClickSchedule to meet a 35 minute SLA to an emergency call out, well within the one hour required by Ofgem in the UK.

"ClickSchedule scored way above its competitors for dealing with emergency situations. It was also a system that we could trust and grow with the business to improve customer service, increase sales and reduce costs. An added bonus was its capability to exploit and integrate with some of the latest technologies like real-time GPS; this demonstrated to us that it was a system for the future."

**Paul Denniff, Director of Customer Service and Engineering Support.**

## The Implementation

The implementation began in May 2005 across the three business streams, at the company's two dispatching centres located in Portsmouth and Havant. One centre dispatched field staff in Scotland and the other engineers across southern England.

Nick Watson added: "Our internal team and the three people provided by ClickSoftware worked very well together; to get so much achieved given the timescales was impressive. We switched over to ClickSchedule in March 2007 for Scotland and April 2007 for southern England. The management, operators and field staff were amazed at how smoothly the transition to a completely new way of doing things went."

One of the differentiators provided by ClickSchedule for SGN's emergency and metering, was its ability to optimize schedules and automatically dispatch field staff. Traditional dispatch systems just chose the next available engineer for call-outs, SGN realized this was inefficient because there are many more variables to consider. ClickSchedule for instance takes a more holistic view, automatically optimising the assignment of field staff by processing a range of complex factors, such as engineer location, part availability and skill levels. ClickSchedule now drives the dispatch, rather than it being a manual operation that is prone to error. As a result SGN is positioned to deal with emergency situations with greater speed, consistency and efficiency.

ClickSchedule also helped SGN meet its SLA of reaching over 97% of emergency calls within an hour "In our very first year using the software we achieved 97.2 % compliance for southern England and 98.07% in Scotland, a momentous achievement and we are certain the figures are only going to get better." said Watson

"There have also been some unexpected benefits," Watson continued: "We have recently won a contract with National Grid to manage the replacement of 100,000 household meters a year in our regions. This business is worth upwards of £15 million annually and winning the contract is due in part to our ability to demonstrate a robust and efficient dispatch system. We also expect to be able to replace more meters and therefore make more money because of ClickSchedule's dispatch efficiency"



Nick Watson, a veteran of Dispatch centres and scheduling software of 17 years paid this final tribute: "In all my time working in this specific area, ClickSchedule is by far the most effective solution that I have seen. I would recommend it to any company with similar issues that has a large mobile field operation. In fact we are shortly going to demonstrate our dispatch capabilities to two other organizations who have heard of the success we've had with ClickSchedule."

- For more information on Scotia Gas Networks visit [www.scotiagasnetworks.co.uk](http://www.scotiagasnetworks.co.uk)
- For more information on ClickSoftware visit [www.clicksoftware.com](http://www.clicksoftware.com) email [sales@clicksoftware.com](mailto:sales@clicksoftware.com)

### North America

#### ClickSoftware Inc

35 Corporate Drive, Suite 140,  
Burlington, MA 01803, USA  
Tel (888) 438 3308, (781) 272 5903  
Fax (781) 272 6409

### Asia/Pacific

#### ClickSoftware Australia PTY Ltd

Level 23, HWT Tower,  
40 City Road,  
Southgate, Victoria 3006, Australia  
Tel +61 (0)3 9674 7295  
Fax +61 (0)3 9674 0400

### Europe

#### ClickSoftware Europe Ltd

The Priory, Stomp Road  
Burnham, Bucks, SL1 7LW, UK  
Tel +44 (0) 1628 607000  
Fax +44 (0) 1628 607001

#### ClickSoftware Central Europe GmbH

Hanauer Landstr. 293 B, 60314  
Frankfurt am Main, Germany  
Tel + 49 (0) 69 489813 0  
Fax + 49 (0) 69 489813 99