

CASE STUDY

SSE Group

Managed WAN solution drives productivity across SSE Group

Introduction

When SSE Group needed to upgrade their network estate to support both their new sites and the move to more flexible working practices, they turned to Neos Networks for support.

For businesses that operate mission-critical infrastructure, the right connectivity is essential. This requirement is amplified significantly for large teams working from disparate locations. With over 20,000 employees spread across 300 offices and depots nationwide, this is something energy giant SSE Group knows only too well.

Accordingly, when SSE Group established their new UK headquarters in Reading, it was keen to build modern connectivity at the greenfield site. With a growing reliance on data-hungry collaboration tools and a desire to support employees with enhanced

home working, SSE Group knew this project would be the driving force in modernising its entire network estate. This included its Wide Area Network (WAN), Local Area Network (LANs) and managed WiFi services with full 24/7 monitoring, support and proactive upgrades.

With so many sites to consider, this was to be a big undertaking. Fortunately, SSE Group didn't have to look far to locate the necessary expertise for such a complex, large-scale development: they have worked alongside Neos Networks – one of the UK's major enterprise connectivity players – for many years.



The challenge

SSE Group's connectivity requirements were complex and varied and needed to take into consideration secure business separation rules and regularity conformity. From helpdesk workers who heavily rely on telephony services, to staff working on-site at operational critical control centres, windfarms and substations, each employee has a different requirement for the network – and each site posed its own particular challenge. In light of this, SSE Group needed a managed network that could enable a number of applications to carry either corporate or operational data, with differing levels of traffic prioritisation.

Another crucial requirement was that SSE Group's new connectivity infrastructure could provide a high quality of service to a range of collaboration tools, including video conferencing, instant messaging, and screen sharing. Employees needed full and reliable access to these tools regardless of where they typically access the applications from.

The launch project of the new headquarters at Forbury Place presented a logical opportunity to make these connectivity upgrades. But with so many sites to consider, it required comprehensive planning. At Forbury Place for example, the infrastructure needed to be built from the ground up. This included enabling an internal 4G network, since upgraded to 5G, which was necessary due to 4G not being able to penetrate the extensive glass and metal used in the construction of the building's exterior at street level.

SSE Group was also keen to ensure it could support remote working. As the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted, having the right collaboration tools and the ability to support home working is non-negotiable for modern businesses. Even before the crisis, SSE Group wanted to strengthen its capabilities in this area – both to support employees' agile, flexible working requirements and to stimulate increased productivity while reducing travel costs.

“Neos Networks has been our Managed Network Provider for many years. Thanks to the partnership our teams are now better equipped to do their jobs and collaborate with their peers, from anywhere in the country.”

Chris Barnicott, Chief Technology Officer, SSE Group



About SSE Group

SSE is a UK-listed energy company with operations and investments across the UK and Ireland. It is primarily a developer (which includes being a builder), an operator and an owner of low-carbon energy assets and businesses, with a strategic focus on regulated electricity networks and renewable energy. More broadly, SSE is involved in the generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity, the production, storage, distribution and supply of gas and in the provision of energy-related services.

The outcome

The first stage of this two-phased project successfully connected over 15,000 staff to collaboration tools while the next phase, which is already well underway, will better enable the network for access to collaboration tools for the remaining SSE employees. Despite the additional work to come, this upgrade has already accelerated SSE Group's journey to meet its ambitious cost saving and staff efficiency goals on many different fronts.

Neos Networks provided a cross-company overhaul, updating the managed WAN, LAN and WiFi services for SSE Group's corporate data network. Using its significant experience in building, managing and troubleshooting connectivity solutions for UK enterprises, Neos Networks has now ensured SSE Group has access to a robust, fast and highly available national network.

The managed network services provided by Neos Networks have empowered SSE Group to

invest in and fully embrace valuable collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business – now widely used across the company. This has resulted in increased staff productivity, with the added benefits of streamlining traditional telephony usage and travel expenditure. Staff travel, for instance, has been significantly reduced – an excellent outcome for both the business and its employees.

Conclusion

Any major connectivity upgrade is a significant investment, but as SSE Group has discovered, it is well worth it for the boost in efficiency, agility and staff productivity that can be enjoyed as a result. Now, with a network it can rely on and the reassurance of well-managed services, SSE Group has the connectivity infrastructure in place to support both its priorities in the present and its ambitious plans for the future.

Neos Networks is measured quarterly on network availability, exceeding 99.999%, and is proud to surpass its monthly service levels on incident management.



About Neos Networks

Neos Networks provides class-leading connectivity and data centre services that deliver very high performance, cost efficiency and a competitive edge.

The company operates a private telecoms network and an estate of 90 commercial data centres that span the UK. With its extensive telecoms and data centre operational expertise it offers commercial security with unrivalled in-house engineering resource.

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