



A PRIVATE CLOUD FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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Moving to Vantage Data Centers' CWL1 data centre campus in the UK offers SRS an affordable and future-proofed private cloud hosting environment for delivering shared digital services to the South Wales public sector

Established in 2010, the Shared Resource Service (SRS) is a collaborative public sector organization that provides technology services to the public sector in South Wales.

With a single management structure aligned to the Welsh Public Sector Technology Strategy, SRS delivers two types of service provision: a Shared Resource Centre, which is a physical presence in Blaenavon in Torfaen County Borough that houses an on-premise data center used by the wider Welsh public sector; and the Shared Resource Service, which provides an integrated technology team offering a range of standardised IT and network services.

This is currently delivered to five public sector partners, four of which are local authority organizations: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council and Torfaen County Borough Council. In total, these encompass approximately 350 sites, including 120 schools.

Earlier this year, following the completion of a comprehensive business case, the SRS partners took the decision to consolidate its ageing on-premises data centers at Newport, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen under one roof at Vantage's CWL1 data center campus near Cardiff.

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- Matt Lewis, SRS

Objectives

The key objectives behind this decision were to:

- Transform the SRS into an organization that delivers the best digital services to its partners;
- Significantly reduce costs and complexity from owning and operating in-house data centers;
- Increase agility by moving from being a predominantly on-premise technology provider to being a cloud delivery partner;
- Build a standard service catalogue of commoditised services based on a single infrastructure;
- Support other public sector organizations to access world-class data center services in the future;
- Increase the value for money proposition that the SRS delivers; and,
- Ensure the investment in technology is focused on delivery of the corporate priorities of the partner organizations.

The challenge

The drivers behind SRS's move to Vantage's CWL1 campus resulted from a growing dilemma of how best to efficiently and cost-effectively future proof the various digital services it provides to many thousands of users across the four local authorities. It was recognised that the capital expenditure required to overhaul the critical infrastructure at the existing in-house facilities would be cost-prohibitive.

However, at the same time, a major technology refresh was seen as essential for keeping pace with the growing and longer-term digital demand and expectations of local authority partners.

Moreover, with the ongoing shift towards virtualisation, fewer physical server racks – and, therefore, data center space – were required, compared to housing the 80 or so previously fully utilised racks. By the same token, increased virtualisation required denser IT environments and, therefore, more power draw per rack.

The solution

From early 2022, SRS's range of shared standardised digital service offerings will be delivered to users from a single, highly secure and resilient private cloud platform. This will be hosted at Vantage's CWL1 data center near Cardiff in a secure caged area located within one of its secure colocation halls.

The shared services provided by the SRS will include compute and storage resources, firewalls, IT support/helpdesk and access to WAN services via connection to the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA), a service that connects Welsh public sector organizations to a private, secure, wide-area network (WAN).

The migration will commence with the installation of an initial 12 server racks drawing a total of 60kW. By Easter 2022, an additional six racks (30kW) will follow for supporting the data processing and storage requirements of the councils' education departments. At this point, the legacy data centers will be decommissioned.

Business benefits

Vantage CWL1 provides SRS with a world-class data center solution, offering state-of-the-art critical infrastructure and cooling, abundant space and 100 percent renewable power, and multiple connectivity solutions. These criteria were key reasons for SRS's decision to select Vantage CWL1, along with its convenient

location close to the M4 motorway and the high caliber of the on-site engineering and project management personnel available.

Matt Lewis, chief operating officer at SRS, says: "We now have a much more cost-effective data center solution and one that is fit for purpose for hosting a modern private cloud to seamlessly deliver a common set of services to all our stakeholders – and without any of the burden of capital expenditure just to remain up to date with the latest infrastructure technologies. Furthermore, Vantage's commitment to using 100 percent renewable power is of key importance to our council partners."

He added: "Previously, we only had one network connectivity option available to us with BT. Now we can choose from multiple carriers with direct points of presence at Vantage CWL1, as well as leveraging further potential cost savings, including access to the LINX Wales Internet Exchange and peering service."

Future potential

Looking to the future, SRS foresees the need for housing up to a total of 30 racks in support of its growing private cloud solution.

"The scalable power and space available at CWL1 will give us plenty of room to expand and for others to join if they so wish, which brings great peace of mind," says Lewis.

"With the growing reliance on cloud and continuing virtualization, having a highly competent engineering team available to support us inside a well-connected, carrier-neutral data center will help us to always respond quickly to changing requirements and ensure maximum choice and competitiveness.

"In CWL1, we have found a safe harbor for securing the future of SRS and the shared services we are responsible for providing on a continuous basis."

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