15. Accepting digital record submissions in near real time

Situation

We historically received record drawings for contractors via paper submissions and GIS files that were passed by email. With such a process there are many hand offs and if an issue arises it can often be a laborious job to go back up the chain to find where the hold-up is.

An absence of an audit trail can also lead to records not making it to the Corporate Asset Register, leading to issues for staff who rely on the data to respond to customer contacts, identify interrupted supply areas or make decisions about which parts of the network aren't performing properly and require further maintenance.

Action

For the C936 Water and Wastewater Network Services Contract, a fresh approach was introduced using web services. Once a record is created by the nominated contractor, NI Water have full visibility of the record until it is complete. The web service solution has been embedded for over 3 years now. All parties in the process can now see the status of a record right through from draft to final. Any issues can be passed back to the contractor quickly and full traceability is in place. A dashboard has also been developed so that operational contract managers have oversight of the returns. Operations staff responsible for signing off work by the contractor can also compare the records with the work order invoices provided to ensure that they have been charged appropriately.

Results

The web service has eliminated several manual handoffs from the workflow and there is now more traceability in terms of the lifecycle of a record, leading to a reduced return failure. Records are available to staff as soon as they are submitted by the contractor.

Future iterations of the workflow could include automatic digitisation of records into the Corporate Asset Register further eliminating manual handling. And if cost matrixes were aligned with the data, the geography could be used to estimate the cost of a job before it is submitted for delivery on the ground.

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