

**RICHMONDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
CLIENT VIEW**



INTRODUCTION

Richmondshire District Council (RDC) serves a population of just under 54,000 people spread over an area of 509 square miles in North Yorkshire – making it one of the largest districts in the UK. The council is committed to delivering digital content that is accessible for all, to support the wide range of services that it delivers.

ISSUE

RDC's key digital challenge has been to deal with an extremely large archive of material, created by dozens of contributors, much of which is either out of date or contains critical issues such as broken links. With a wide range of stakeholders, it's crucial for the council to ensure that consistently high standards are met and that all information online is accurate and current.

Caryl James, the council's Senior Business Improvement Officer explained the issue. *"We face daily challenges with our web properties as a result of how the council website has been run in the past, with there being upwards of 50 web editors who had full publishing permissions,"* she said.

"This resulted in our previous website having 2,700 content pages (1,949 of which we were able to remove during the website architecture meetings with services), and hundreds of broken and expired links," Caryl said. *"Despite the extraordinarily high volume of pages, however, the website was still highly under-used and hosted hundreds of what should have been expired pages – yet wasn't kept up to date regarding relevant changes to the council's services."*

Based on this, RDC has identified improving digital governance and providing a usable and accessible domain as being a key priority.

"We have introduced an approval system within the new site's CMS, whereby we only publish content which has a) been written in an appropriate style; b) presented in an appropriate format (i.e. as a web page instead of a PDF document or as a web-friendly PDF document instead of a printed pamphlet); c) is free of any broken links and d) has an un-publish date."





SERVICE & BENEFITS OF USING SITEMORSE

RDC has been using Sitemorse as a key tool to monitor, manage and improve its delivery of digital governance – and it is the first service provider that the council has used in this category.

“Our top priority is to ensure that we are providing the best service to our residents by ensuring our site is as accessible and functional as possible, as well as performing well,” said Caryl. “We have been able to identify various issues via our weekly reports, which gives us confidence that we are providing our residents with the best service that we can.”

The council is putting Sitemorse at the heart of its digital operations, ensuring that all service providers are fully aligned and are following best practice.

WHAT DOES RDC CONSIDER TO BE SITEMORSE’S BEST FEATURE?

For RDC, being able to precisely target issues while making major changes to the website is absolutely invaluable – and it helps to ensure that wide-ranging concerns can be resolved quickly and easily.

“The ‘Highlight on page’ feature within the report, which allows us to identify the location of an issue very easily, was the most important feature for us,” said Caryl. “This was especially useful to us when we moved from our test environment to our live environment, as many of the internal links were compromised at this milestone. Additionally, many references to the old council website (for which the URL was changed on go-live) broke as soon as the changes were made to the new site. Our functionality score dropped from 8/10 to 5/10 at this stage, but we were able to rectify the issues within four working days as a result of the full-site report we ran as soon as we switched over to the new site.”

WHAT DOES RDC WANT TO ACHIEVE GOING FORWARD?

Sitemorse has become a central element of Richmondshire District Council's digital operations – both identifying existing issues and monitoring fresh content to ensure new issues do not arise.

"We're actively working towards improving on our accessibility score with our developer as Sitemorse has highlighted an issue which duplicates across all of our pages," said Caryl. "We also want to achieve higher functionality scores and we're using Sitemorse to emphasise to our services the importance of checking any links they put onto their pages (especially within external documents) and what impact broken links or inaccessible content could have on the integrity of the council's website."

"Since go-live we haven't been able to make it the priority we wanted to, as the temporary web team have been stretched to capacity with various other projects," Caryl explained. "This has seen our score drop from 8.4 in Q1 2018. However, we are currently recruiting for a digital improvement officer to manage the website – and the management of Sitemorse holds a prominent place in the job description as it will be an essential part of their weekly schedule."

Sitemorse sees a score of 8.4 as being an indicator of strong performance – and a good benchmark to monitor and maintain digital governance delivery in future.

Caryl continued, *"We wanted to, and are still aiming to achieve a high accessibility score with Sitemorse, as we desperately want to open the new council website to as many of our residents as possible, whether they are young and fully able-bodied and minded, or of an older generation, or have physical, visual, hearing or cognitive impairments. We also wanted to achieve better control over the website's content, which we have already been able to achieve to a large extent."*

RESULT

Caroline Chan, Sitemorse VP Client Experience, said:

“Overhauling digital services can be a huge challenge, so it’s great to be part of a concerted effort to drive improvement – and that’s never more important than in government. Organisations like Richmondshire District Council are responsible for an enormous range of assets, services and personnel, and we aim to make it simple for them to identify digital governance issues and to coordinate improvement.”

“Doing away with endless reporting is at the very heart of what we do and we see providing our clients with actionable recommendations and easy-to-digest reporting as being our most important and most fundamental task. We’re proud to set digital standards and to help teams bolster their digital strengths.”

“There are a host of challenges to comprehensive monitoring but automated solutions mean that staff can quickly and easily scan entire sites for critical issues, prioritised by urgency so that major changes can be made fast. Ultimately, Sitemorse provides a digital governance benchmark that organisations like Richmondshire District Council can point to as a sign of success.”

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