



# In the fast Lane

**Thames Water is the UK's largest water and waste water services provider. It has 15 million customers, supplies 2600 million litres of drinking water a day and has 350 sewage works treating an average of more than 4.4 billion litres per day of wastewater. So when one of its main service delivery partners, Lanes Group, needed a leading edge telecommunications system they turned to Xcomm.**

To improve service to its wastewater customers Lanes Group, in partnership with Thames Water, opened a brand new state-of-the-art Customer Solutions Centre (CSC) in Slough, Berkshire. Lanes Group has been providing wastewater network services for Thames Water since 2012. The move to the new CSC building involved moving Lanes and Thames Water staff from across the Thames region to provide both call centre and service centre functions.

Xcomm has been working with Lanes Group since it won the Thames Water contract in 2012. Xcomm was appointed as unified communications provider after a rigorous tendering process because it stood out from the competition according to Andy Brierley, Lanes' Technical Director responsible for overseeing the whole Thames Water partnership. "We had years of issues with fixed line telecoms providers so I looked at cloud-based solutions and found it to be a very niche market. Xcomm stood out as market leader. They provided an incredibly flexible, low cost-based unified communications solution. Also from a business continuity perspective, essential when working with a utility company, Xcomm gave us an ideal disaster recovery platform which is crucial for managing such a complex operation."

## AT A GLANCE

### Challenges

- Create a combined call and service centre
- Moving 250 employees to new building
- Seamless transition

### Benefits

- Premise consolidation
- Business continuity built-in
- Compliant reporting



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What more can you ask for?"

**Andy Brierley**  
Lanes Group PLC





### **Flick of a switch**

The move to the new building involved transferring 250 full time equivalent employees from two separate companies without any interruption to the telephony services whilst meeting strict compliance regulations. According to Andy switching the telecoms over to the new building was straightforward despite the fact the move also meant a completely new way of handling calls. “Even though the goalposts moved when we relocated, Xcomm managed it with the flick of a switch. We changed from being a call centre where all calls are answered by all agents to calls being routed by region and then by individual specific disciplines. So it’s a complex arrangement.

“Of course, we faced a few minor issues on the move but they were incidental and easily resolved with the Xcomm team being on site for a week making sure that everyone was happy with the system.”

The Lanes Group move into the CSC, together with the arrival of many Thames Water employees, meant that pre-installation planning was critical according to John Dowbiggin, Xcomm’s MD. “With a complex set-up like this there will always be hurdles to overcome and we effectively jumped these by installing the CSC whilst the former offices were still being used. We installed all handsets (pre-provisioned via our systems), networking (via our managed routers) and the Xcomm Softphones into the CSC before the move.

“Testing was undertaken both on-site and remotely for five days and nights ensuring call quality was at a maximum and call routing failover was functioning correctly. We deployed the new Cisco 7821 handsets and had to ensure their provisioning and constant registration to our platform worked correctly. We installed numerous conference facilities using Polycom conference bridges.

“On the weekend of the move itself, when employees effectively turned up at their new place of work, we flicked the switch and all inbound call routing was

instantly delivered to the new site. Unlike the old site, call routing is now regionalised to the five Thames Water regions and skills based routing is in place. Due to the sheer complexity of the reporting, Xcomm also provides the data for submission to the Thames Water Regulatory Compliance team.

“For Business Continuity purposes we maintained the systems at the now empty former site for a period of time should the new CSC site suffer a power outage requiring staff to go back to their old building. However, as time passed and all infrastructure systems bedded in we disengaged the old system. Today the system runs very smoothly, with agents, supervisors, managers and directors all on a state of the art Unified Communications platform with several layers of security, diversity and reporting embedded within it.”

### **Delivering results**

Today the CSC continues to be fully operational and the unified communications system embedded but the operational functionality is constantly evolving. The Xcomm system has also automated the complex regulatory reporting required by Ofwat from Lanes Group and Thames Water, freeing up the management team so they can concentrate on managing performance to deliver the best customer service.

Charlotte Prom, Lanes Group’s Head of Customer Experience has welcomed Xcomm’s support and expertise and its reliable system. “The reporting was critical. Xcomm consulted with us and spent time on site getting to know our business so they could help us understand what we needed. We don’t have the in-depth call centre expertise that Xcomm does. Having that consultation, to help us understand and even refine the reports to get the results we want, is critical.

“But the biggest benefit is that it actually works all the time. The system has advanced monitoring which sends an alert if there are potential system issues so they can be actioned before they manifest into a



problem. 99.9% of the time an Xcomm person calls to tell me an issue has been resolved before we've even noticed. I really have confidence in the consistent quality of the system. It is very flexible and it can do so much more than I, and my team, are capable of using it for."

#### Matching values

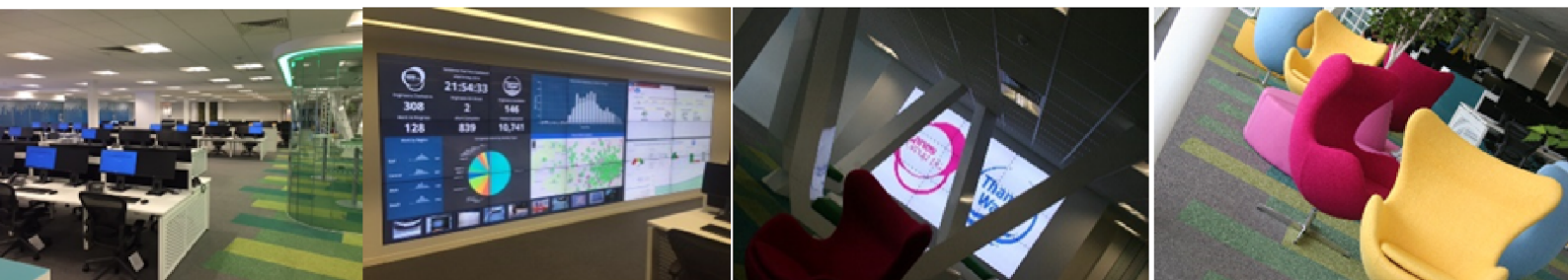
From the outset Xcomm has worked as an extension to the team at the CSC, spending time on site and working with them to ensure they receive the best customer service which, according to Andy, reflects the values held by Lanes Group. "Xcomm breathes fresh air in to the telephony arena. What they represent and what they stand for is excellent service and being the best. So they match our values. What more can you ask for?"

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**Charlotte Prom**  
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