

# Case Study Bron Afon

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Lee Walsh, ICT Manager, Bron Afon



## The customer

Bron Afon is a social enterprise that covers construction, community regeneration, support and much more. It was established in March 2008 when Torfaen Council tenants voted for Bron Afon to be their new landlord. Since then it has been bringing their homes up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. Its membership has grown to over 1,800 people who have a say in how things are done, making it one of the largest community mutuals and co-operatives in the United Kingdom.

## The challenge

Since its inception, Bron Afon has undergone sustained growth and more than doubled its number of employees – from 250 to 550 – in the past six years. It needed its back office functions to scale more effectively to meet the evolving demands of the business. The original hardware it had purchased when it was founded was in dire need of a refresh so the company turned to partner CNT for advice on how best to move forward.

*“Our original hardware – a mix of virtual and physical servers – was limiting so, although the infrastructure was fit for purpose, it couldn’t cope with our growth. We wanted a new platform that would be future proof for the long term,”* explains Lee Walsh, ICT Manager, Bron Afon. *“CNT had installed the existing solution so we invited the company back in to discuss what we needed.”*

Bron Afon wanted to ensure that the new solution would be cost-effective, scalable and stable while delivering more speed and flexibility. It was also critical that the deployment of the new system caused minimal disruption to the day to day running of the business.

*“We are a small charity looking after 10,000 units so we had to be realistic in terms of what we could afford,”* adds Walsh. *“We decided that migrating to an entirely virtual environment would provide better continuity and disaster recovery capability as well as keeping costs low.”*

### THE CUSTOMER

Country: United Kingdom  
 Industry: Public Sector  
 Founded: 2008  
 Number of employees: 550  
 Website: [www.bronafon.org.uk](http://www.bronafon.org.uk)



### CHALLENGE

Bron Afon wanted to replace its ageing server infrastructure with a higher performing and more cost effective environment.

### APPROACH

Over the course of one week, the organisation worked with Fujitsu to migrate its applications, including Oracle and VoIP, to 75 virtual machines hosted on six Fujitsu servers, combined with an ETERNUS storage area network.

#### THE BENEFIT

- The virtual environment has doubled server performance, reducing memory usage from 85 per cent to 45 per cent
- New applications and services can be rolled out quickly and painlessly
- Users are experiencing vastly reduced log-in times and faster applications, making them more productive
- Generating reports or cloning a 60GB virtual machine used to take four hours, now can be done in a matter of minutes, saving precious time and making the team more responsive
- Thin clients across the organisation are helping it reduce its energy use and carbon footprint

#### PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Six Fujitsu PRIMERGY RX300 S7 servers
- One Fujitsu ETERNUS DX80 S2 storage network with 24 x 600GB capacity
- VMware virtualisation software

#### The solution

CNT suggested that Fujitsu would be the most cost-effective, high-performing choice for the new virtual environment. Together, they planned how best to roll out the new platform without impacting on the business.

*"Fujitsu wasn't on my radar as we had traditionally used Dell servers but by reading through data sheets and case studies, I realised it would be the perfect match," continues Walsh. "The technology is front and centre for Fujitsu and what you get for your money is very attractive. Fujitsu's solution would enable us to consolidate our existing physical servers into the virtual environment while condensing the physical hosts. At the same time, the cooling technology would boost performance. Pound for pound, Fujitsu offered more than the competition."*

Bron Afon migrated its systems to six Fujitsu PRIMERGY RX300 S7 servers and a Fujitsu ETERNUS DX80 S2 storage network with 24 x 600GB capacity. The servers host 75 virtual machines running on VMware, three telephony servers for VoIP, an archived email appliance as well as enabling disaster recovery.

*"It was a seamless migration which was impressive given this was the first time we had under gone this process," comments Walsh. "We gave ourselves one week with both systems running in tandem to transition the data and services. Both CNT and Fujitsu helped us move up to 1,000GBs of live applications and data per day."*

#### The benefit

Bron Afon had taken snapshots of performance before and after the deployment to get an idea of how the new environment was working. It found that performance had doubled even though the original physical infrastructure of eight ESX and eight Terminal servers had reduced to just six Fujitsu physical machines.

*"Previously, 85 per cent of the servers was being consumed by memory; that has now reduced down to 45 per cent, delivering far better performance," says Walsh. "In addition, cloning a 60GB virtual machine used to take us four hours and can now be done in five minutes. We have ten terminal servers which would take three plus days to rebuild in the event of a fault – now we simply delete the disk image and restore it with the gold virtual image in a matter of minutes."*

The organisation still uses some legacy databases to generate mass reports which would normally take four hours to run and have to take place overnight. Now, they are available within half an hour. All these advantages save Walsh and his team valuable time, while making users more productive. Users are also noticing significant benefits to their application speed and log-on times, allowing them to work faster, despite using thin clients.

*"There are only four PCs in the whole organisation – the vast majority are using thin clients so we are using much less energy and producing less CO<sub>2</sub> as a result. It is also a much more secure approach giving me peace of mind," concludes Walsh. "And the whole solution is totally reliable. In the year since we went live, I have had one single disk failure which had no effect on overall operations and was replaced the next day. That gives us confidence in the stability of the platform."*

#### Conclusion

Fujitsu has helped Bron Afon deploy a new secure environment that performs better at lower cost and with reduced energy use, making it fit for purpose and for the future. Bron Afon is now considering upgrading the SAN to include more disk space while putting together a standardised strategy for mobile working. It is confident that Fujitsu will continue to play a key role in its ongoing evolution.

**"Fujitsu has exceeded our expectations and delivered a future proof virtual environment that has doubled performance while minimising our carbon footprint."**

#### Contact FUJITSU

Address: 22 Baker Street, London, W1U 3BW  
Phone: +44 (0) 870 242 7998  
E-mail: askfujitsu@UK.fujitsu.com  
Website: www.fujitsu.com/UK  
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