



PROJECT SUMMARY:



CLIENT

Southern Housing Group

PROJECT

Bow River Village

TIMESCALE:

April 2016 - 2018

CONTRACT VALUE:

£92,061 supply and install, and £26,113 for an 18 month metering and billing service

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Southern Housing Group is one of the largest housing associations in the South of England, providing homes for more than 72,000 people.

Bow River Village is a new build site which is being implemented in three phases, eventually providing over 700 homes and 100,000 sq ft. of commercial space. Located on a former industrial site in Bromley-by-Bow, the area is undergoing a large amount of regeneration. Phase 1 of the project saw the construction of 219 apartments

of social housing, private lettings, and privately owned properties.

Having worked with us on previous projects at Kidbrooke, where we supplied and installed the earlier version of the vPro:ems Smart Metering System, Southern Housing Group contracted us to supply and install the new vPro2 system and provide metering and billing services for phase 1 of the development.

VITAL SOLUTION

Southern Housing Group wanted the same system to be installed in all the properties, and was the first project to benefit from the updated vPro2 system. The key features for the client of this new system is that it is more user friendly than the previous system with enhanced reporting capabilities.

Enhanced metering and billing technology to suit client's needs

The client had specific requirements and objectives to fulfil through the implementation of a metering and billing system to benefit both themselves and the residents. They wanted to encourage residents to manage their energy consumption efficiently, and to only pay for the

heating and hot water that they actually used rather than a pre-established monthly charge based on the size of their apartment. Additionally, Southern Housing Group wanted a system that benefitted from a Pay As You Go pre-payment scheme that had flexible topping up options to prevent issues concerning fuel debt.

The vPro2 system was an ideal choice for this project due to the feature-rich in-home display that shows simple and real-time information regarding the residents' consumption, and can help identify savings on their bills, allowing the residents to have a clearer understanding of their usage costs.

The ability to set targets to try to reduce usage enhances the residents' understanding

THE BENEFITS:

- > User friendly interface with clear information on consumption and charges
- > Flexible pre-payment Pay As You Go and Direct Debit top-up methods
- > Engaging and educating client and residents in a variety of ways to ensure confidence in using the system
- > Adapting existing metering and billing contract to suit client

▶ Our vPro2 Smart Metering System was installed into 219 apartments within Phase 1 of the Bow River Village development, seeing us provide metering and billing services for 18 months.



“ The installation of the vPro2 system by Vital Energi at Bow River Village went very smoothly, as did getting our customers moved in and set up with the system. Vital Energi worked very closely with our on-site team to ensure every customer had heat and hot water when they moved into their flat, understood how the metering system worked and were able to set up their account. The Vital team were friendly and responsive to our needs, and the system is working well for both our customers and Southern Housing Group. ”

WILL ROUTH, HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY, SOUTHERN HOUSING GROUP

of their consumption levels further, and helps them make informed decisions on their usage.

The system displays the remaining credit value along with an estimate of the duration remaining before a top-up is required. There are various quick and easy methods to top-up the credit, using either Payzone or PayPoint, via the internet, telephone or Direct Debit.

Each meter comes equipped with its own SIM card to create a separate network over which it can transmit secure and regular data, with readings taken automatically to avoid the necessity to enter residents' apartments, allowing for the system to be used on any size communal heating scheme with little risk of network-wide issues. This would also allow for the system to be used seamlessly in future phases.

Organising all aspects of installation and communications

We supplied and installed the technology into each property, liaising with contractors and on-site workers to ensure a seamless installation from the moment the units arrived. We installed the system straight from delivery to maximise the timescale and avoid disruption to current works.

Identifying network performance irregularities

The vPro2 technology was successful in detecting issues with a third party HIU within

the property, allowing the client to take necessary actions. A resident was suspecting that they were being overcharged for their energy consumption which would have usually gone undetected. Due to the monitoring capability of our technology, excess and unusual consumption was detected which allowed the housing association to raise a repair and resolve the issue.

Prioritising educating and engaging with residents to ensure they are well informed

In alliance with the client and the manufacturer, a bespoke YouTube video was created which provided information on what the vPro2 system is, the benefits of this kind of metering and billing technology, and a tutorial on how to use it. A link to this video was sent to all residents to assist in using the system, as well as being uploaded onto Southern Housing Group's website to provide future easy access to the information.

Our Home Manager provided one-to-one tuition to Southern Housing Group's Home Energy Advisor on utilising the system, ensuring that they were confident with the technology and would be able to provide residents with future assistance if they require it.

We designed and supplied custom-made welcome packs for all residents that included help guides on using the system, contact numbers to offer telephone support,

troubleshooting advice, and information on how to credit the meter. This ensured that residents were confident on the technology, and help was provided in all different means to suit their learning styles.

Flexible maintenance contract to assist client

As Southern Housing Group were already in the midst of a 3 year metering and billing contract with Vital at other developments, we adapted this existing agreement to incorporate Bow River Village. This was to the benefit of the client as it resulted in one simple contract with one end date to keep the management as clear as possible.

We manage the metering and billing of the developments with the system wirelessly and automatically transmitting the data to us to be monitored. We are also responsible for crediting the vPro2 system once a resident has made payment, with friendly credit available when our offices are closed in the evenings, at weekends and over bank holidays when the energy supply will not be cut off if credit runs out. Our agents work hard to manage payments with a total of 1,205 transactions being made over a three month winter period via card payments, direct debits and PayZone/PayPoint, equating to £26,960. These payments are processed and monitored internally by our dedicated departments to ensure smooth operation of the system credit and management of the revenue.