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James Clough, Commercial and Finance Director, Blackpool Transport

Blackpool Transport On-Track

Engineers at Blackpool Transport are being equipped with rugged mobile devices to replace traditional hand-written job cards and inspection sheets. It's part of a complete digital asset management solution that gives real-time visibility to shop-floor staff and managers on the status of the fleet, through any internet-connected device.

Blackpool Transport operate a fleet of 103 buses and 18 trams and managing the fleet's maintenance and compliance has long been reliant on paper records. The new system from Freeway will see a switch to paperless working. The operator undertakes over 100 first-use checks a day and buses are booked into the workshop for inspection every 42 days. Freeway will also be used to manage other assets such as the permanent way – the tram tracks – as well as auxiliary vehicles and materials.

“We generate a lot of paper and being hand-written records these are time-consuming and difficult to analyse,” says James Clough, Commercial and Finance Director, Blackpool Transport. “We knew we needed to improve the quality of our records and with digitisation, it is estimated Freeway will eventually replace 11,000 pieces of paper and 62 hours each month of laborious data entry. More importantly everything will be live and visible which will allow us to manage things much better.”

Blackpool Transport is also introducing the electronic capture of first-use safety checks. Bus drivers will be able to enter their checks directly into screens on their

Ticket machines. Ticketer is integrated with Freeway with data sent wirelessly to Freeway's central system giving the workshop an immediate insight into any defects reported by drivers. Tram drivers meanwhile will report digitally using mobile devices. The system will allow speedier rectifications and minimise disruption to morning run-outs.

Freeway will provide organisation-wide visibility to stock levels, enable auto-replenishment, purchasing management and track the performance of everything from individual parts to whole vehicles. In addition, engineers will be able to issue parts and view maintenance histories of every asset on their tablets.

“We've long had problems with parts not being available when we need them. This has meant that vehicles have been off road longer than necessary,” says Clough. “Freeway will revolutionise the management of stores and purchasing and through better information and processes we expect to reduce vehicle downtime and improve the management of warranty claims.”

Freeway will also be useful for management by providing data on the performance of assets and data for improved workforce planning. “Freeway will, for the first time, give Blackpool Transport real visibility into the actual costs of running the fleet. We'll be able to drill down to identify inefficiencies including the true operating costs of individual vehicles.” Clough explains.

Blackpool Transport plans to join the DVSA's Earned Recognition scheme and according to Clough this was an important consideration when choosing a system; “We selected Freeway because of their experience; their software was tried and tested and widely recommended. It was also the most comprehensive system. And we needed something that was ready to go. It was also considerably better when it came to handling Earned Recognition; that was important for us.”

