North Lanarkshire Council: Rebuilding Community

North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) is the fourth-largest council in Scotland. With approximately 15,000 employees, any loss of productivity would cost them considerable time and money they can't afford to lose. North Lanarkshire includes the towns of Airdrie, Motherwell, and Coatbridge, containing many of Glasgow's outlying, suburban areas and commuter villages.

The council oversees functions as diverse as public education, job training, recycling, taxes, road maintenance, and housing updates on any given day.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

Challenge

The most recent Scottish parliamentary activity relating to building safety comes in the form of recommendations and guidance provided by the Building and Fire Safety: Ministerial Working Group, Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 Recommendation; Scottish Government Response; and Practical Fire Safety - Existing High Rise Domestic Buildings (updated March 2021).

To put these recommendations and guidance into perspective, the council had a total of 48 Tower blocks. A number of these blocks have already been demolished, and work continues through phase 1 of the demolition programme. All NLC residential properties, including tower blocks, have had smoke detection systems checked and upgraded to ensure compliance with the updated Tolerable Standard legislation. Those tower blocks not on the current demolition programme are retrofitted with sprinkler systems. They have had associated fire safety works undertaken to ensure future compliance and improve fire safety for all high-rise residents.

In June 2019, NLC bought their first licence of **Powerproject by Elecosoft** to plan and manage all their major housing investment works, cyclical maintenance, new builds, and regeneration schemes projects. This was part of the council's plan to become a leading digital local authority in Scotland, improving productivity and public funding transparency—having previously managed projects separately within Excel spreadsheets. They use Powerproject right across the entire construction lifecycle to create supply chain transparency within the council, with all projects ranging from several weeks to 2 plus years included.

As NLC's digital transformation continued, they quickly identified a need for a more enterprise-level configuration of Powerproject that would facilitate real-time collaboration in the cloud through managed service infrastructure, requiring additional partnership. That's where LoadSpring entered the equation. NLC needed a partner to migrate their software and data stored on-premise to the cloud while maintaining business continuity.

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Challenge *Continued*

"If there is any unscheduled downtime," Brian Lafferty, Head of Housing Property and Projects with North Lanarkshire Council, explained, "it makes life difficult for the Programme Planning Team to carry out the full functions of their role." LoadSpring's standard Service Level Agreement contracts include an SLA guarantee of at least 99.9% uptime, which puts NLC at ease—especially considering the unique remote work circumstances they were working with.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has played a persistent role in keeping employees at home. The continued mandate to work remotely has, until very recently, served as a hindrance to real-time communication and facilitating different contractor schedules. All the projects were held in separate programmes within Powerproject (since they were using stand-alone licences). They needed to keep track of updates and organize schedules while juggling multiple contractors and projects simultaneously, as well as monitoring workforce and workload planning.

NLC is also undergoing massive reprovisioning projects, including demolitions of towers. Because of this, they have a gigantic 25-year plan. Their job is to ensure no clashes or schedule crossovers between contractors and to avoid conflicts of interest and logistical problems. For example, real-time updating is essential to communicate effectively with residents and contractors.

"We can't allow multiple contractors to undertake works in houses or tower blocks simultaneously," they noted. "It's crucial that we do all these retrofitting building updates, according to the Scottish government. We must record how many properties meet those new building standards."
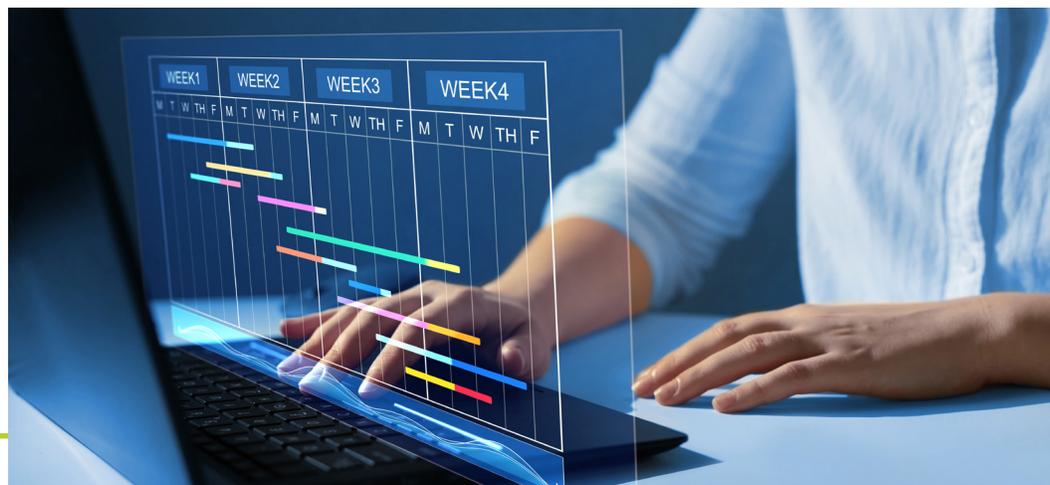
Why LoadSpring?

Public funding dictated budget constraints for licensing software updates and compliance. LoadSpring's positive track record with government contracts and infrastructure provided the ideal candidate for a project management IT business partner.

A representative from Elecosoft introduced NLC to LoadSpring. After the team signed on, one of their first meetings was with Jim Smith, one of the founders, who chatted with them, sat down for a video call, and introduced the platform—explaining how to use it.

There were a lot of technical queries, but Smith took the time to answer all their questions and unpack the ins and outs of the LoadSpring platform in depth. The fact that one of the founders took the time to understand the ins and outs of LoadSpring features impressed them. Beyond that was the always-prompt, courteous, and friendly customer service they would utilise upon occasion.
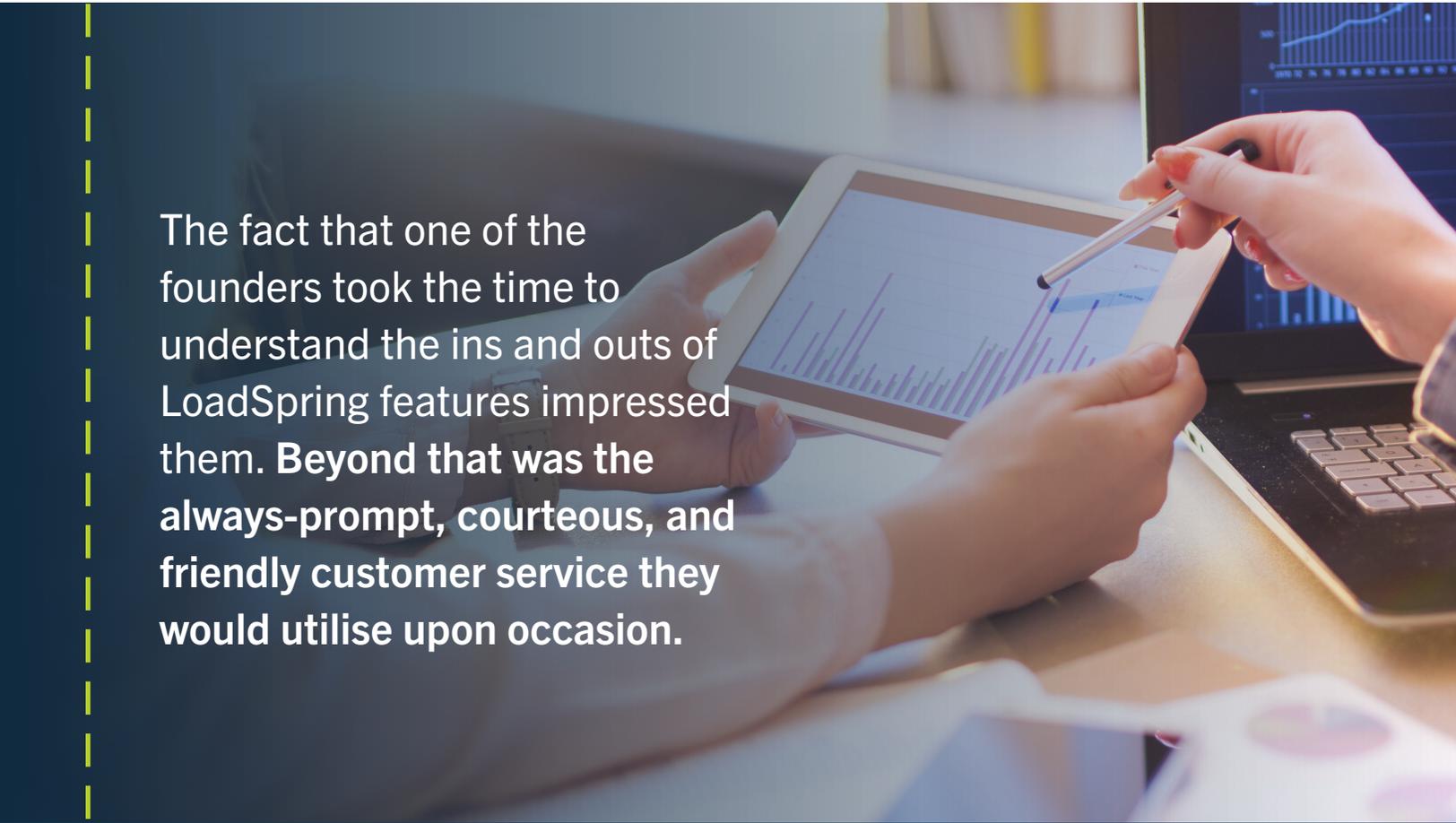
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Solution

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They also had a brand-new Programme Planning team that started in 2019 and used a **Powerproject trial version** to get up and running. Before that, the service used Excel spreadsheets to monitor programmes. Having transferred Powerproject data to LoadSpring over the past year, they're now cloud-based and cloud-enabled.

"It's all happened very quickly," they said, "which is amazing, considering that much of Scotland is still working from home and just recently began transitioning back to office work, as of April of 2022."

To have that human connection throughout the pandemic boosted team morale. NLC emphasised quick cloud performance, fast customer service request turnaround, and pleasant exchanges between their team members and LoadSpring—all lending a palpable sense of community missing over the past several years.
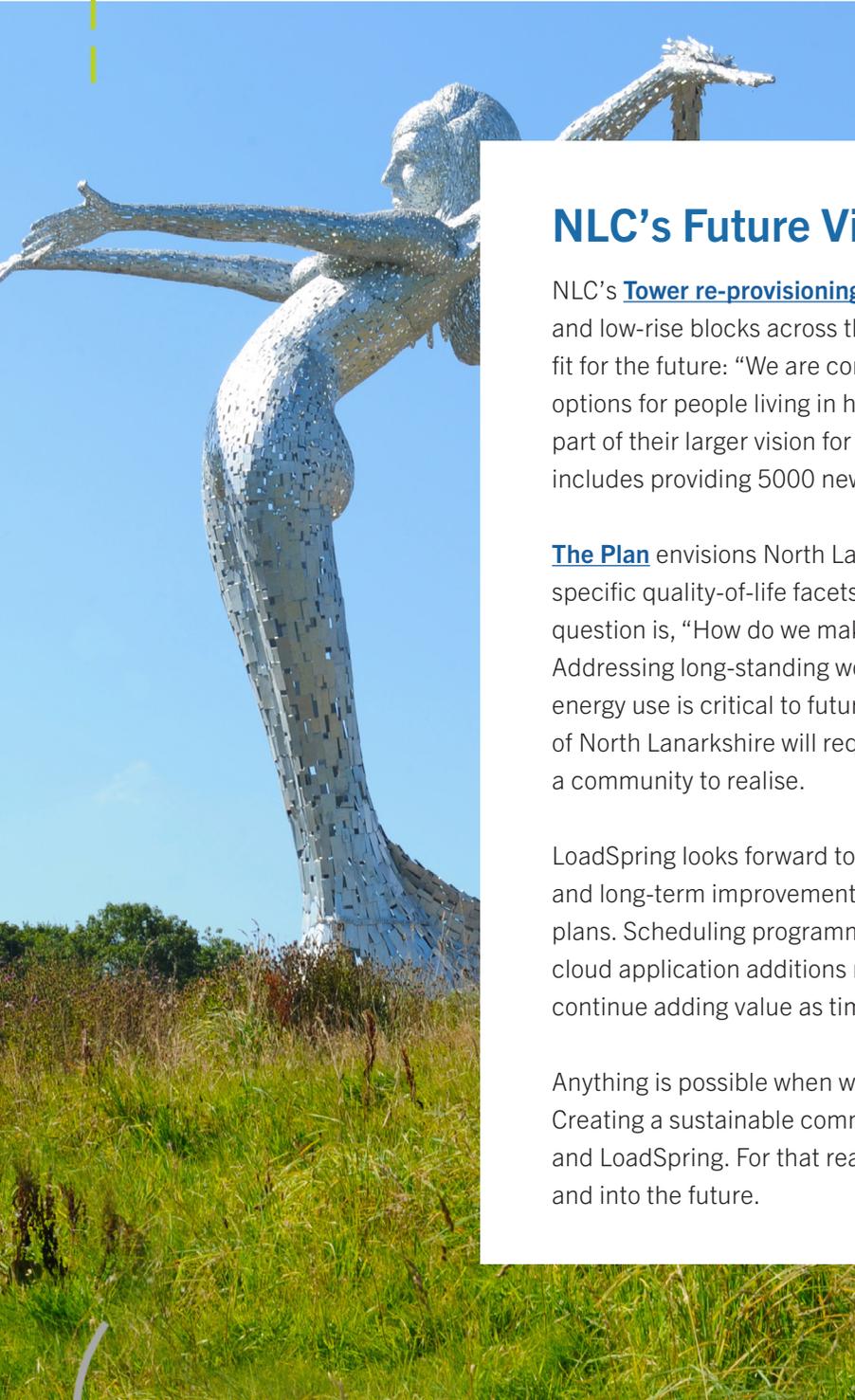
NLC's Future Vision

NLC's **Tower re-provisioning programme** allows the demolition of 48 tower blocks and low-rise blocks across the authority. It replaces them with modern homes fit for the future: "We are committed to identifying and improving future housing options for people living in high-rise homes in North Lanarkshire." Moreover, it is part of their larger vision for making North Lanarkshire an ideal place to live, which includes providing 5000 new affordable homes for rent by 2035.

The Plan envisions North Lanarkshire as becoming the best it can be, listing five specific quality-of-life facets: live, learn, work, invest, and visit. The fundamental question is, "How do we make this area a better place to live for all?" Addressing long-standing worldwide issues like affordable housing and sustainable energy use is critical to future forecasting. Including current and future residents of North Lanarkshire will require deliberate planning and ambitious goals that take a community to realise.

LoadSpring looks forward to continuing to assist NLC in reaching all their short and long-term improvement goals, forecasted projections, and further building plans. Scheduling programmes such as **Elecosoft's Powerproject** and possible cloud application additions related to forecasting, budgeting, and estimating will continue adding value as time progresses.

Anything is possible when we work together—even across oceans and continents. Creating a sustainable community is in the best interest of both North Lanarkshire and LoadSpring. For that reason, we look forward to a long, solid partnership: now and into the future.

To learn more about LoadSpring, Powerproject, and more, contact LoadSpring today.