

south east water

Remote Reliability South East Water Implements PortWise Secure Application Access For Managing Remote Information Access

South East Water adopts PortWise as its corporate standard for remote, application access to comply with industry regulations, providing employees and contract staff with full access to corporate systems using mobile phones and BlackBerrys.

South East Water Ltd provides 400 million litres of quality water every day to approximately 1.5 million homes and businesses across Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey, Berkshire and Kent in the UK. The utilities industry is highly regulated and frequently audited - not just for the quality of water supply, but also against the complete delivery mechanism, operations and systems that support it. This ensures consumers receive the highest quality of water, at the best possible value for money.

Auditors Recommendations

At the tail end of 2004, the company's auditors recommended that South East Water look for a better way to manage the remote access of information by its workforce. The required remote access solution had to ensure secure, reliable and timely access to core systems and critical applications.

Software Over Hardware Tokens

Hamish McDermid, Head of Projects within South East Water's IS team set about the search for a solution to tackle dual authentication of users accessing such data. Some years previously the company had purchased 50 tokens from RSA.

"The system proved too complex to even take off the shelf - we realised it would mean that additional time and resource would be spent by the team to support the extra hardware required to run the system in this

way. We heard about PortWise and its ability to manage two-factor authentication using a text message to deliver a one time password to the user's mobile phone. It was the logical choice for us to investigate further," continues McDermid. "Most of the staff who require remote access to our systems have a mobile phone, so we went through rigorous testing of the PortWise platform and discovered it was the perfect solution for our needs with little support required from an IS perspective."

The PortWise Solution

PortWise is the industry's first fully integrated and completely extensible software platform for Secure Application-Centric Access. It provides a holistic approach to secure internal and external access to applications. Going beyond a traditional point security product deployment, the PortWise software platform offers a rich, integrated suite addressing all aspects of secure application access, including user device assessment, strong user authentication, policy-based user authorisation, secure clientless access, access auditing and compliance, and session clean-up.

Using the PortWise software platform, it is possible to provide completely secure access to critical information and applications for internal users, the mobile workforce and integrated distributed partner networks from any device in any location, and enables organisations to securely mobilise their workforce and boost productivity of employees and partners while completely protecting the integrity of their organisation.

Ease of Deployment

South East Water installed the system in April 2005. Deployment took just one day to set up and get their 150 users up and running.

"We have a regular batch of users and a few personnel who need to access the systems remotely on an ad-hoc basis. PortWise gave us the confidence we need to address the critical elements to ensure secure application access: Assess, Authenticate, Authorise, Audit and Abolish," added McDermid.

Added Benefits

"PortWise provides full security assessment of a user's device before it is allowed to connect to the corporate network, ensuring they comply with our corporate security policy, which is defined centrally. The solution is also able to determine that a user is who they claim to be with its unique two-factor authentication functionality. It also integrates fully with our existing infrastructure which includes email, bespoke systems like our GIS and our Citrix published applications including works management and Citrix desktop. As well as providing the secure access we need, there are added benefits such as the user viewing all information as if they were sitting at their office-based workstation. This kind of familiarity is absolutely paramount when engineers are dealing with situations that need urgent attention. Because the PortWise solution is clientless, access is available through a user-friendly portal via any Internet browser."

Audit Trails

PortWise's scalable, modular architecture means that multiple access points can be implemented at no extra cost providing scalable Mainframe, Client/Server, Web, Terminal Server and File Server application support from any device. The platform also audits who accessed which application, when and what they downloaded. This central capture of all remote access activity provides a permanent record of all application access. This type of audit trail is increasingly important to demonstrate compliance to industry, government or corporate regulations. The solution also abolishes all traces of access to the corporate network on completion of the user's session, providing added levels of security.

Future Developments

"We are working towards removing the dial-up access that some parts of the company rely on so that PortWise will be our sole secure application access platform. This means reduction in costs, a massive improvement in reliability, and the availability of specialist systems like our telemetry software. In practical terms, this means all our engineers will be able to work remotely, securely and reliably."

Since the rollout, South East Water has not needed to use the support offered by PortWise and the company's use of the solution is going from strength to strength.

"PortWise has made smart use of current technology and has really taken into consideration human nature and how people actually work," concluded McDermid. "Furthermore, the pricing

structure is very sensible. Not only is it easy to use, but the removed burden from the IS support team combined with its scalability has made it a fundamental part of our business."

Where to go for more information:

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