

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Local government unitary authority

BACKUP APPLICATION

Symantec™ NetBackup™

KEY BENEFITS

- Scalability and flexibility to cope with 20 percent annual data growth
- Full and incremental backups of more than twice the data in less than half the time
- Data deduplication ratios ranging from 16:1 to 50:1



“The SEPATON hardware was impressive from day one. . . and we’re now undergoing an assessment to tailor our backups further and ensure that we get the most from our setup.”

Geoff Evans
Technical Services Manager
Luton Borough Council

Luton Borough Council Reaps Benefits from SEPATON Data Protection Platform

Five years ago, when the Luton Borough Council’s Information Management team needed a more efficient solution for data backup and recovery, it became one of the very earliest public sector adopters of SEPATON data protection platform and data deduplication technology. Since then, Luton BC has scaled and evolved its backup environment, and today, with a SEPATON S2100 platform, it has achieved the speed, efficiency, and security that it requires.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Luton Borough Council (BC) is the unitary authority that provides all local government functions and services for the 230,000 residents of the Bedfordshire town of Luton and its immediate surrounding area. The council administration is spread across half a dozen sites within this small geographical area, with a data centre facility split across two town centre locations.

The council manages highly confidential data, including a wide spectrum of in-depth citizen information, from detailed benefits data to road maintenance records. All of it must be kept secure for long-term storage.

Geoff Evans, technical services manager for Luton Borough Council, oversees a team of 15 people responsible for the back-end server infrastructure.

“We first deployed SEPATON technology in 2005, to complement an EMC SAN we had been running since 2002,” said Evans. “Since then, we have completely refreshed the SAN and continually scaled and updated our SEPATON data protection platform. The decision to become an

early adopter of virtual tape library, data deduplication, and virtualisation entirely transformed our ability to conduct full and incremental data backups

Luton BC decided to adopt a disk based solution when the sheer volume of data being managed began making physical tape backups impractical. Full backup times started to exceed the full weekend window. Late-week incremental backups were running overnight and into the following day.

“I had initially ruled out disk because I thought the cost of storage would be prohibitive. However, data deduplication proved the perfect enabling technology, justified by the additional expense we would save by not needing to purchase more tape hardware. Today we have 200 servers. Can you imagine the task of lining up those backup jobs without concurrency?”

Approximately 90 of their servers are physical and the rest are VMware virtual servers. Apart from six Sun Solaris servers, the environment is predominantly Microsoft based with a mixed Windows Server 2003/2008 back end. Standard

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document file formats account for about 50 percent of all backup data; the rest is structured, largely in the form of SQL databases. Luton Borough Council has also met the ISO 9001 security standard, as well as compliance with the government's secure extranet GCSX Code of Connection (CoCo) controls.

THE EVALUATION

Once Luton BC decided on disk-based technology, dedupe and virtualisation, two options were available. The first option included special software, but would require Evans and his team to source appropriate hardware. The other option was SEPATON's data protection appliance, which included hardware, software, and vendor support.

"I very much like the idea of one dedicated organisation supporting the whole lot," explained Evans. "I enjoy dealing directly with technology providers, and SEPATON's method for backup coupled with data deduplication was very quick.

The SEPATON platform effectively gave us the power of dozens of tape drives, because suddenly we could think about backing up 10 or 20 servers concurrently, and that had an enormous impact on our backup windows."

Following rapid backup, data deduplication also enabled Evans to retain backups online locally for much longer periods, facilitating the instant restore of recently deleted data if required. In addition, data pertaining to social services, for example, could just as easily be securely stored for the mandatory 99 years.

Luton BC now operates an S2100-ES2 with DeltaStor data deduplication software and Symantec NetBackup with 20 terabytes of total capacity. Local data copies are retained for up to one month for immediate restores, while physical tapes are stored off-site periodically by Iron Mountain as part of the council's overall disaster recovery and business continuity plan.

"We were very early adopters of both SEPATON disk and data deduplication, and now that these technologies really seem to be taking off, we really want to see SEPATON at the forefront of their continued evolution."

Geoff Evans
Technical Services Manager
Luton Borough Council

THE RESULTS

Luton BC's pioneering use of the SEPATON platform with data deduplication was instrumental in containing an estimated 20 percent year-over-year data expansion compounded over the past five years.

Command line administration and manual script handling has been replaced by a single intuitive management console. Total backups that even at pre-2006 volumes were running all weekend and into the business week are now being completed within 24 hours. Nightly backups in danger of impinging on the following day have been reduced to just four hours. Deduplication ratios range from 16:1 on documents to 30:1 on structured databases and 50:1 on MS Exchange data – sometimes much higher.

Future possibilities include Luton BC moving one of its data centres to a remote location for disaster protection, and Evans is already considering the role of SEPATON in the replication and migration.

"We're still very happy with our choice of SEPATON products and services," concluded Evans. "I'm also proud of my team for implementing the new technology and we are continuing to use what works best for them while adopting new features as and when we find a need for them."