PEEL PORTS GROUP

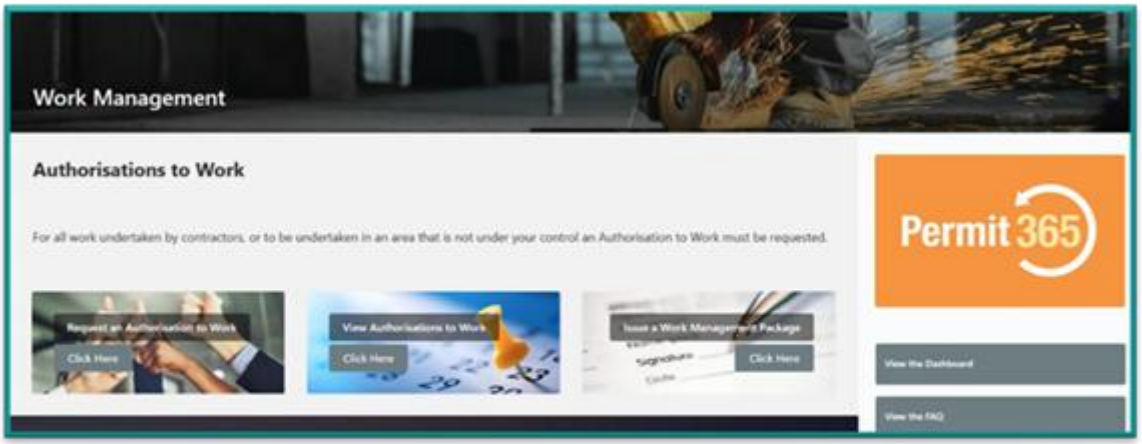
fully digitalised bespoke in house designed permit system to manage authorisation to work, permit to work and marine consents

the challenge

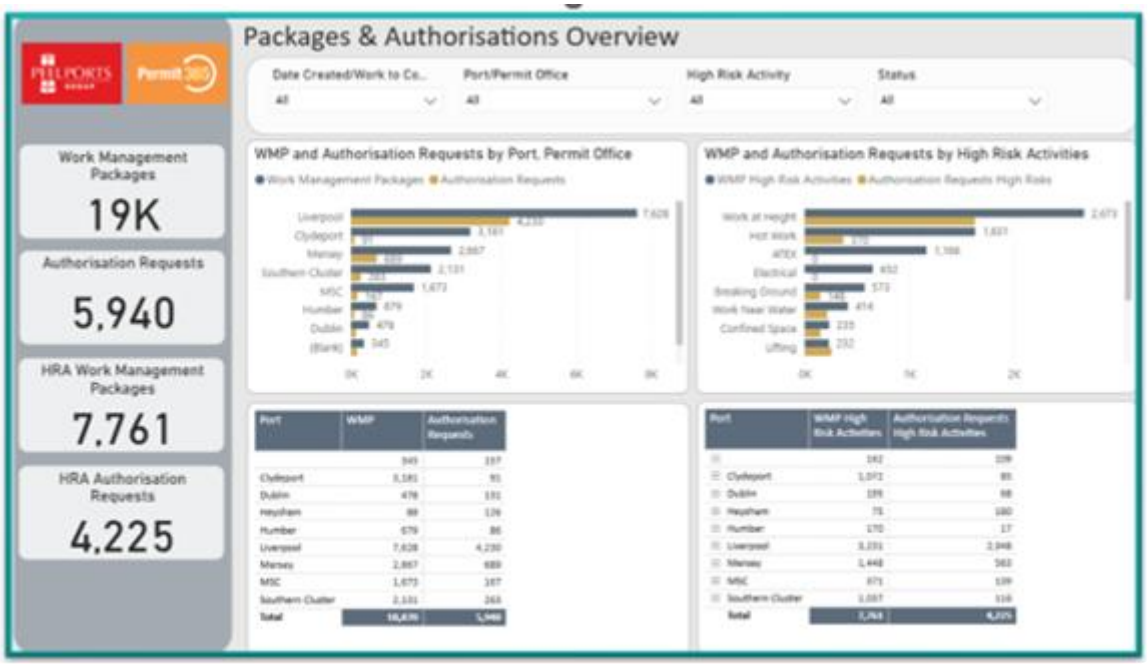
Recognising a business need to update our approach to permitting work on our Ports, we embarked on a cross-business collaborative project to design a new authorisation and permit to work system to enable us to manage high-risk activities across our ports. The historical approach to permitting had been paper-based, variable in quality and content with no digital interface. A workshop was established to understand the business needs incorporating engineering, operational, EHS, marine and safety rep colleagues with the primary focus on designing a process for permitting which would prioritise safety and streamline the process and documentation.

the innovation

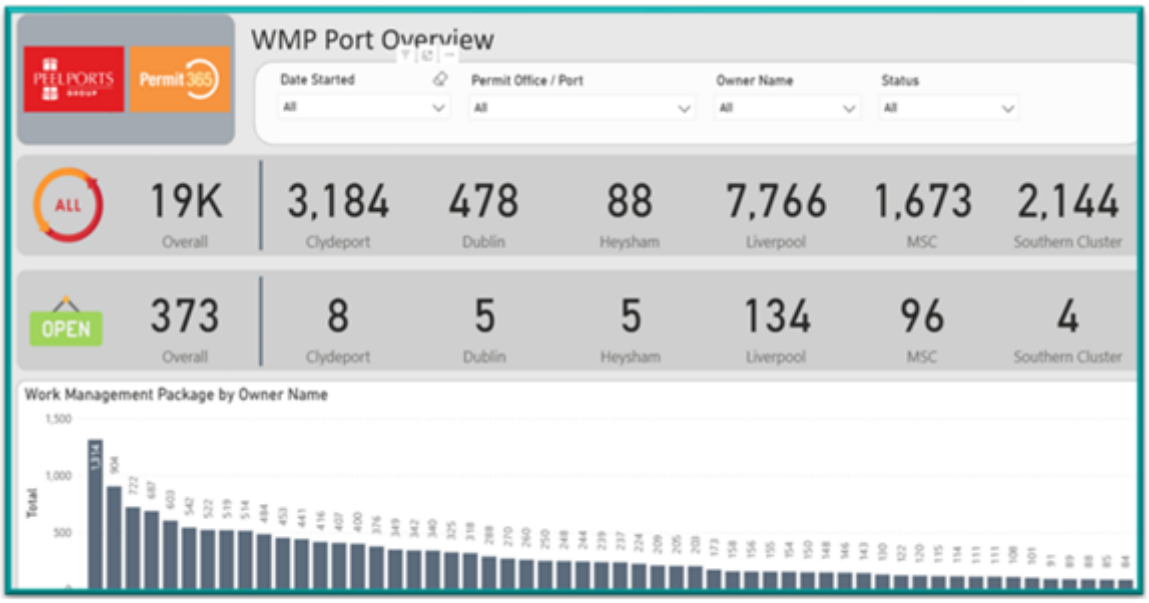
A fully digitalised bespoke in house designed permit system to manage authorisation to work, permit to work and marine consents. Utilising the knowledge within the business and an understanding of permitting requirements we designed the system on paper and then utilised 'Safety Culture' as the software to build our system on the audit platform (covering permits such as hot work, work at height, breaking lines, isolation, electrical, confined space etc). The total project time from concept to launch was in the region of 18 months. The complexity of port operations, numerous stakeholders and interface with marine consents and byelaws created challenges in finding an off the shelf solution and is why we decided to utilise the flexibility of the safety culture platform to build our own. The system is available on mobile device, tablet, laptop and desktop computer and we utilise Power BI reporting to interface with the software to provide detailed information on open and closed permits and also mapping on activities which are under permit control.



The Permit to Work System can be accessed via the company intranet homepage, providing a central entry point for employees to create, manage, and review permits



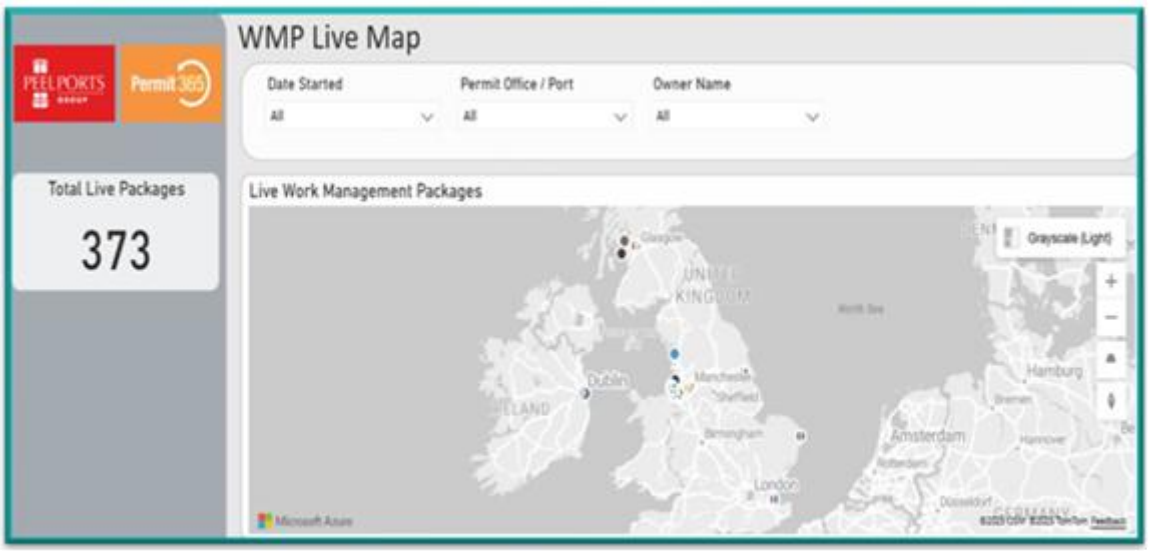
Power BI dashboard displaying permit data



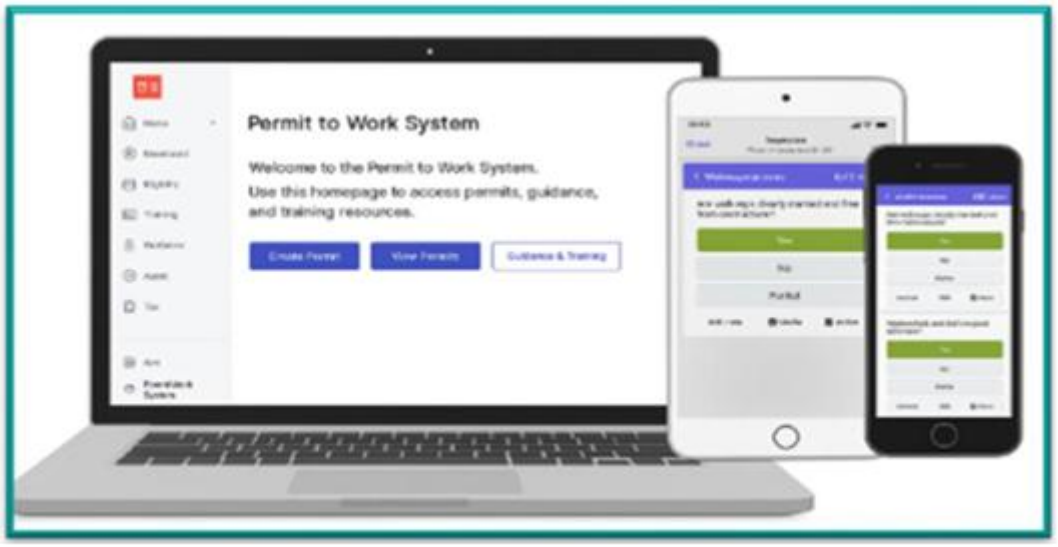
Power BI dashboard displaying permit data with 19,000 permits completed

how it was implemented

The success of this project was built on engaging a wide range of stakeholders with experience of managing the existing paper-based permit system. Recognising its limitations, including inconsistent quality and standards, was key to gaining support. Ownership of the design was led by the business, ensuring teams were invested from the outset. With sponsorship from the Group EHS Director, the project team was empowered to innovate and develop a system tailored to business needs rather than adapting an off-the-shelf product.



Power BI dashboard displaying live location map



Available on laptop, tablet, and mobile phone

Using an in-house IT design team, testing was critical to progress. The Biomass Facility, with its well-established paper system and high-risk activities involving multiple contractors, was selected as the pilot site. Over a three-month period, the team conducted extensive User Acceptance Testing, incorporating regular feedback and system enhancements. This included supporting complex activities such as Biomass Hopper cleaning, which required managing numerous contractors under a variety of high-risk permits. Following this testing phase and resolution of key improvements, the system was successfully launched across the business in early 2024.

To embed the new approach, we worked with our insurers to design an accredited IIRSM course for permit issuers, ensuring alignment with the system. Over 250 employees have now completed this training and achieved accreditation. To complement this, we developed a suite of targeted training courses covering each category of high-risk permit, all combined almost 900 courses have been completed in total. Together, these measures have driven consistency, improved safety management, and ensured the new digital permit system meets both business and regulatory requirements.

result

Since launching (early 2024) the new permitting software has been used to create over 19,000 work management packages (Authorisation to Work and Permit to Work). The business has clearer control of high risk permit activities at a local and group wider level. The interactive and intuitive 'Safety Culture' platform interface allows consistency in application and accuracy, which in turn leads to a safer business. It also has the ability to provide further configurability as the business changes, such as adding new sites, locations and permitted activities. The ability for permits to be provided through a link to contractors on the day of the works so they can have a version available at the point of work is critical to maintaining safe engineering and operational activities. Throughout the work activity contractors can take photos, can communicate with the permit issuer and can demonstrate the site has been left safe and tidy at the end of the task prior to the permit being signed off. Utilising Power BI to manage open and closed permits, locations where permitted activities may interact and identifying works which have had permit request rejected due to poor quality risk assessments and safe systems of work has created additional confidence in the benefits the new system has brought to the business.

Permit system in use

conclusion

The work management package system developed by Peel Ports has significantly strengthened the management of high-risk activities across the business. By providing greater assurance that such activities are controlled effectively, the system has enhanced confidence among the Board and stakeholders in meeting legal compliance requirements, while ultimately reducing operational risk.

LINK: https://www.peelports.com/

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