

Customer success story

Biogen

Industry

Life Sciences



Construction & Engineering



Location

United Kingdom

Greentree product suite

Financial Management

Supply Chain & Distribution

Job Cost Management

Workflow

eBusiness

A GREENER FUTURE, WITH ERP'S HELP

Greentree assists Biogen to provide a major stream of renewable energy.

“At the moment our two plants generate enough renewable electricity to power about 5,000 houses. When we get up to full bore, with 10 plants, we'll be providing power to something like 20,000 households.”

So says Julian O'Neill, Finance Director of Biogen, a fast-growing British company that's an industry leader in sustainable management of food waste. They currently process tens of thousands of tonnes of the stuff annually, producing biogas, which is converted into green energy and sold into Britain's national grid.

The process is known as anaerobic digestion (AD), and it's a green industry with major economic potential. The UK produces millions of tonnes of food waste every year. Renewable energy is expected to provide billions of pounds worth of investment opportunities and up to half a million jobs by 2020.

Biogen will be a major player in the AD space, but to manage its organic growth it needed modern, integrated business systems. Enter Greentree, and partner Prerogative.

Award-winning technology

Biogen started out in 2006, processing food waste and pig slurry from sister company, Bedfordia Farms

Ltd. In 2008 Biogen merged with Greenfinch Ltd to build and operate a series of industry-leading food waste AD plants. The company has won a raft of awards including three in the Oscars of the environmental world, the Rushlight Awards, and also the National Recycling Awards for two years running.

“There's an increasing political and regulatory drive across Europe to divert food waste from landfills, because that's the worst place it can go,” Julian says. “We've secured a £24m investment from Kier Group, which we are investing in building more plants across the UK.”

Biogen is collaborating with a wide range of local authorities and commercial organisations to take and process food waste and is upgrading to a fully integrated Greentree system in order to remain a market leader.

“Our previous system was a very basic nuts-and-bolts, farm-based accounting package and wasn't fit for more complex business,” says Julian. “We need to be able to control expenditure, report better and embed more structured processes.”

Purchase orders are a case in point. Entries were made on paper and on average about 1,000 invoices a month are processed. With new plants being built



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Julian O'Neill
Finance Director
Biogen



a couple of hundred kilometres away from head office, remote communication becomes vital. An AD plant costs around £10m to build, so labour costs, timesheets and direct costs have to be tightly controlled.

“We knew we couldn’t go on like we were,” Julian says. eRequisitions and eTimesheets were another must-have, with integrated financial management, to avoid errors that are bound to occur with re-typing data into spreadsheets.

Rigorous selection process

Biogen drew up a list of suitable suppliers, which included Iris, SAP, Microsoft Dynamics, Access, Sage and Greentree.

Biogen then went through a rigorous selection process starting with a detailed ITT, each supplier was then asked to present their solution to the entire team based on the strict criteria that Biogen were looking for in a new system which would increase efficiency, reduce duplication of data, allow for greater and speedier reporting capabilities and control costs across the business. A robust scoring mechanism was applied to all so that Biogen could make a fair comparison of all the systems they looked at.

The final reckoning came down to Iris and Greentree, which is where partner Prerogative showed its class.

“Prerogative were outstanding in terms of their desire to understand our needs,” Julian says. “I think that connection and that level of effort really worked in their favour. Greentree is also a very logical, tidy and well-structured system. With Iris I wasn’t quite sure – they seemed to present us with a box of tricks and say it was up to us to implement as it was so intuitive. I felt more confident about Prerogative as a supplier and I felt comfortable with the structured nature of Greentree as an application.”

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Out of the medieval

By happy coincidence, Biogen was also already a user of QlikView, which powers Greentree’s IQ analytical tool. This will enable Julian and his financial team to obtain seamless core financial reporting and KPI-based information.

“With our rapid expansion, Greentree will provide us the mechanism to ensure we have a good level of control and a much better understanding of the financial implications of a growing business,” Julian concludes.

“Greentree is taking us from the Middle Ages to the 21st century.”

BIOGEN[®]

Biogen designs, builds, owns and operates commercial-scale anaerobic digestion (AD) plants which process food waste to create renewable energy and a biofertiliser for farmland.

www.biogen.co.uk

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