



Customer Testimony

porterbrook 



Customer Testimony: Porterbrook – Rail Leasing Company

In August 2018, Elastacloud Ltd began a project with Porterbrook to create a scalable Cloud Infrastructure to allow them more insight from rolling stock data. Andrew Swingewood, Porterbrook's Head of IT, told us all about his experience with the Elastacloud team.



Andrew Swingewood,
Head of IT at Porterbrook

Summary

- Porterbrook wanted to harness the data they receive from sensors installed on their trains in order to improve the performance of their fleet,
- Elastacloud delivered an industry changing solution breaking down information silos and hugely improving the use of data in rail,
- Elastacloud's innovative rail industry data platform provides operational insight in real-time.

Tell us a bit about Porterbrook

Porterbrook is the UK's leading rolling stock asset management business. We have been at the heart of Britain's rail network for 25 years and own almost a third of the national passenger rail fleet. Every day, our trains chalk up around 1.5m passenger journeys and travel over a million miles.

What challenges have you faced?

Data is key to the operational future of the UK rail industry. Every day, sensors are collecting vast amounts of data about our rolling stock, however the potential benefits of harnessing this information are not yet fully realised within the rail sector. Our two requirements were to overcome the problem of data silos within the rail industry and provide a scalable infrastructure to support our customers' operational requirements. It was essential that whatever platform we chose had sufficient power to quickly analyse large, disparate datasets from rail assets, combined with open rail data and public data such as weather feeds, providing a detailed picture of the operational behaviour of our assets through clear visualisations, within a simple customer web portal.

“Thanks to Elastacloud, we now have an infinitely scalable data platform and a strong partnership with leading Data Scientists, allowing us to work to solve key issues within UK rail with the application of data analytics and powerful predictive AI models.”

Have any questions? Want to learn more?

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What were your requirements?

Historically we have always deployed systems and services on-premise to support our technology requirements, however we knew that to fully unlock the potential of data for our customers, we would need a completely new, scalable, reliable and highly secure platform. With customers all over the country and assets running the length and breadth of the UK daily, the cloud was the obvious choice. Given our internal understanding of Microsoft technologies and the significant investment that Microsoft has made in Azure data science capabilities over the last 10 years, the Azure platform was the perfect fit for our requirements.

What were your next steps?

We decided that we needed to engage with a key partner with a strong interest in both UK rail and data science to help us to design and build a platform that would be capable of supporting all future data analytics requirements. We needed somebody that was willing to come on a journey with us in partnership, working to solve key problems in the rail industry through the combined skill of our internal rail engineers and their data science experts. Elastacloud were already prominent within several rail groups including the Midlands Rail Forum and were a great fit to support our changing business needs and operational challenges. We were impressed by the level of engagement demonstrated by Elastacloud and their understanding of the rail sector, combined with their wide customer base and proven track record in the field of remote condition monitoring and predictive maintenance.

How did the development go?

Incredibly smoothly. The Elastacloud team made the process very straightforward with a clear plan, split into manageable sprints and regular communication throughout the project. They were always available to discuss any queries and supply guidance to the project to ensure that the platform was not just fit for today, but also fit for the future. They have been on hand throughout the build and continue to work with us as a key partner to aid in the integration of 3rd party systems within our platform and map out future data analytics projects with us and our customers.

What were the outcomes for your business?

Thanks to Elastacloud, we now use a Data Lake and powerful data analytics platform, with data presented back to our customers through a custom web portal, all hosted within Azure. Knowing that the platform and data science skills are readily available has helped us to focus on the engineering challenges of obtaining data within the rail industry and analysing the next steps to realising the potential of data within the sector including delay reduction and maintenance cost savings. Traditionally Porterbrook has operated a heavy maintenance model for our assets based on mileage or time, but with the assistance of Elastacloud and our engineers, we are now in a position where we can start to collect component level data from our vehicles and process this information to significantly extend the life of components with the ultimate aim of moving to predictive maintenance models, underpinned by robust AI and data analytics, differentiating ourselves from our competitors and cementing our position as the leading supplier of rail leasing and asset management support within the UK rail sector.

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