

## North Devon Homes

Housing

### Use Case

Growing amounts of data and a robust infrastructure are required to store long term data for auditing

### Requirement

Improved data access, data recovery, an infrastructure upgrade for better performance, increased scalability at lower cost

### Solution

Clustered High Availability Solution

## COMPANY OVERVIEW

Formed in 1998, North Devon Homes has been the Registered Social Landlord (RSL) for North Devon Council's housing stock of 3,281 homes since February 2000. The company is in the top 1% of housing associations for rent arrears, employs 130 people, and is one of only 20 businesses in the southwest of England to have achieved the Gold Investors in People accreditation.

North Devon Homes is a not-for-profit organization (it is listed in the Times Top 100 Non-Profit Organizations) and, as such, has no shareholders. The company is governed by its Board of Management, who work in a voluntary capacity and receive no payment for their services. As an RSL, the company has to ensure it meets all of the high standards set by the Tenant Services Authority. Any money received in rents is ploughed straight back into the improvement of homes and the services provided.

## CHALLENGES

In its role of providing support and care for residents, North Devon Homes realized that housing data is an integral part of the process. The housing association's systems were almost completely virtualized but its direct attached storage had no resilience and was affecting uptime. The amount of data North Devon Homes needed to store was growing at a steady pace and there was a requirement to keep it for longer periods for auditing and regulatory purposes.

The system's lack of resiliency was thrown into sharp relief by an outage that lasted a day and a half, highlighting the need for high availability and redundancy when it became apparent certain parts of the business could not continue without access to data. The direct attached storage was not flexible enough to handle the fast turnaround required for the data and it could not provide access to specific data within the data storage environment. And, once a data loss issue had occurred, it was unable to quickly restore data.

### NexentaStor™

- 16TB file system
- Nexenta MetroHA™ cluster
- 2 x iSCSI SANS, one at the Barnstaple headquarters data hub and the other at a remote disaster recovery site
- Microsoft's clustered Hyper-V solution

*"NexentaStor provides flexibility and value for money, it's easy to use, is based on real storage standards, and give us endless snapshots that are not limited by licenses with great pricing models."*

**Mark Robson**  
Network Services Administrator  
North Devon Homes



## SOLUTION

In seeking out a data storage solution, North Devon Homes worked with high performance computing specialists VA Technologies to help it research and assess different storage options. After analyzing the market, the housing association chose NexentaStor for its primary storage and disaster recovery requirements.

North Devon Homes needed a replacement virtualization platform that could provide high availability, opting for Microsoft's clustered Hyper-V solution, which also gave it more flexibility for its storage requirements. To achieve high availability and redundancy, the housing association opted to have two iSCSI SANS, one at its data hub in the Barnstaple headquarters and the other at a remote disaster recovery site.

With the help of VA Technologies, a Nexenta MetroHA high availability 16TB solution was installed at the primary site with a single NexentaStor solution at the disaster recovery site. In this case, it allowed North Devon Homes to install the NexentaStor Software-Defined Storage solution on the company's existing Dell servers. This provided the company significant cost savings in the process.

The capability of thousands of snapshots in NexentaStor was especially attractive for the housing association. The initial outage which led to the change in its storage strategy had made the need for reduced downtime all too clear. With NexentaStor, North Devon Homes has implemented a process of hourly snapshots, thereby reducing recovery time to an hour. This has been achieved at a cost of around 75% less than other solutions proposed by rival suppliers.

## BUSINESS BENEFITS

The migration process was easy and quick. And, since it went live, the system has run smoothly, which has lessened IT oversight and helped the company save significant management time.

NexentaStor features, such as deduplication, thousands of snapshots, thin provisioning and hybrid storage pools are designed to help North Devon Homes implement cost-effective, high performance storage. In addition, NexentaStor supports a wide range of protocols for unified storage, including CIFS, NFS, rsync, iSCSI and Fibre Channel making the solution much more flexible.

With NexentaStor, users are not locked in to buying more expensive products from a particular vendor or paying unnecessary mark-ups for standard features. In addition, ZFS offers massively scalable storage environments with thousands of snapshots, free versioning and a high degree of data protection.

Open source software enabled North Devon Homes to reuse its existing Dell servers to house NexentaStor solutions at its HQ and disaster recovery sites. This dramatically improved recovery and access times to critical business data.

North Devon Homes needed to upgrade its infrastructure, improve performance, reduce costs, have a scalable solution and lessen IT management times.