

CASE STUDY:  
Infrastructure Strategic Alliance  
at Sellafield





## Infrastructure Strategic Alliance at Sellafield



Sellafield Ltd, Morgan Sindall and Arup have been working together on a joint venture to provide a range of essential infrastructure asset services to the Sellafield site.

The Infrastructure Strategic Alliance (ISA) provides a site wide consistent approach to the delivery of infrastructure projects by engaging with a wide range of infrastructure capabilities and knowledge of the latest industry techniques.

Through working in close partnership with the customer, the delivery partners provide a programme management and project delivery service for all infrastructure assets. This includes steam generation, onsite distribution, water supply to site and onsite distribution, roads, bridges and car parks.

The contract plays an important part in driving economic growth across West Cumbria.

### Context and Requirements

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Acorn Coaching was brought in to bring together the Alliance Management Group (senior lead team) from Sellafield, Morgan Sindall and Arup. We have been working with them on a number of major challenges to enable them to deliver projects on time, reduce costs and keep within budget.

- Collaboration between all three partners at the top level was vital throughout the project. There was a notional appearance of teamwork but it was not sufficiently effective at senior level.
- On-site delivery of work was taking a long time to complete and another of the key aims of Acorn's work was to help the teams identify ways to reduce procedural hindrances and increase proportionate and considered responses.
- Performance within the teams needed improving. Everyone was dependent on each other's ability to work in a highly efficient and thoughtful way. There was a tendency for companies to mainly use their own people in projects or not appreciate the input from others outside their team. The teams needed to find ways to achieve more effective interdependence, awareness of the challenges and operational procedures faced by each section and to work together more collaboratively.

## Delivery

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Acorn's work started in 2016, and since then we have worked with over 150 people. Initially we worked with 8-10 key leaders from the Alliance Management Group to establish best practice from the top down. Areas covered include:

- Clarifying the purpose of the AMG team
- Reinforcing strategic roles, ensuring they deploy projects effectively
- Explore what collaboration looks like and their interdependence
- Clarifying leadership expectations and functions for themselves and each other
- Identifying ISA roles and responsibilities, accountabilities and authorities
- Exploring behaviours, issues and social interactions
- Sustaining team culture, developing resilience and responding to change

Once this work was completed, Acorn went on to deliver team and 1-1 coaching for the Customer Management Team, helping them to identify their roles and deal with the need for collaboration on projects from the outset.

At time of writing, Acorn are working with the four Programme Leads responsible for the main projects, to create greater collaboration and interdependence and eliminate the tendency to operate in 'silos'.

Additionally, Acorn have also been called in to assist with teamwork issues that have arisen unexpectedly, including adapting and changing procedures.

Team delivery usually takes place over a one-two day course and 1-1 coaching sessions are 2 hours. We use team coaching, 1-1 coaching, powerful conversation, challenging behaviours and online questionnaires to support professional development.

Acorn's Keith Longney says: "I have enjoyed helping the ISA teams deal with the many challenges they face, holding them to account and also observing the great respect they now have for each other. A team which was initially not working collaboratively, only considering issues from their own perspective, now works really well together."

"They take into account each others' views and are able to have tough conversations related to what is best for the project rather than individual interests."

To find out more about Acorn's approach to raising project performance, improving project performance through collaboration and leadership development, visit:

**[www.acorncoaching.com](http://www.acorncoaching.com)**

## Outcomes

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Significant improvements as they have become high performing teams include:

- More resilient, maintaining rigour whilst accommodating new team members
- Capable of having difficult conversations with individuals and other teams
- Teamwork enhanced with much more collaboration and awareness of strengths
- Able to handle tough situations and big challenges whilst maintaining output
- Less fire-fighting and more proactive, strategic thinking
- More autonomous, reduced stress and greater feeling of inclusion



COACHING & DEVELOPMENT

If you would like to find out more about Acorn, our people and how we can help develop and improve the performance of individuals and teams in your organisation, then we'd love to hear from you.

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