



Case study

Pentland Ferries



Pentland Ferries is a family-owned, eco-conscious ferry service operating between Gills Bay in Caithness and St Margaret's Hope in Orkney. Known for its modern catamarans – the MV Alfred and MV Pentalina – it provides vehicle and passenger transport with a strong focus on sustainability, comfort, and affordability.

The challenge



End paper-based processes, enable remote work and improve reporting

The team at Pentland Ferries knew its systems badly needed modernising. Paperwork abounded, remote work was painful and business leaders couldn't easily see key figures.

"There were just one or two people that had access to the information in Sage," says Jenni Wilson, Finance Director. "We could be waiting months for that information to come out in a report. We needed to improve the transparency of the accounts for the whole management team." The company turned to its new accountancy practice, Johnston Carmichael, for advice.

- 2 days a month saved on payment runs
- Accounts payable automation saves hours every week
- Prompt invoicing and efficient credit control

Johnston Carmichael undertook a thorough analysis of Pentland Ferries' finance system requirements and processes, which informed the development of a detailed Statement of Requirements (SoR). Ruth Whyte, Assistant Manager at Johnston Carmichael, says: "It was essential to take a step back and truly understand the team's business needs, pain points and management reporting gaps.

"The core challenge was the inefficiency of their initial setup – owing to numerous manual processes which consumed significant time and effort yet produced limited meaningful output." To guide the selection process, Johnston Carmichael applied the 'MoSCoW' framework – identifying the "Must haves", "Should haves", "Could haves" and "Won't haves", helping Pentland Ferries clearly define its essential and desirable system features. "We considered what the business might look like in five years' time and chose a system and vendor that would support long-term growth without overwhelming the team in the short-term," says Ruth.

Previous system: Sage 50



The solution



Time saved on everyday processes, releasing people for strategic work

The change in systems involved a complete review of processes. “We spent time mapping out Pentland Ferries’ existing processes in detail,” says Ruth. “This really opened everyone’s eyes to inefficiencies and duplications. A lot of tasks were being passed between people unnecessarily. Approvals were done via email, whereas iplicit simplified matters by allowing automated approval workflows.”

“People at Pentland Ferries understood the importance of moving to a digital, automated way of working and were eager to learn and adapt. The accounts clerk, for example, was reassured that she’d have more time to focus on more valuable tasks rather than manual ones. She can’t imagine going back – it’s been life-changing.”

Jenni adds: “Johnston Carmichael encouraged us to think about what our finance ‘utopia’ would look like.” She says the team was well-supported by iplicit as well as Johnston Carmichael. “We did at least two training sessions a week over the summer, which was a busy time for us, so it was intense but very good. There was a lot of support with going live,” she says.

Introducing iplicit has meant huge time savings on everyday work. “One member of staff in the department has been asking for years to reduce her hours to a four-day week. As a result of iplicit and our new processes, she’s been able to do that,” says Jenni.

“My own workload has reduced incredibly. I used to take around four hours a week to do a payment run – now it takes about 20 minutes. So that’s a couple of days a month saved straight away.”

“Automating accounts payable has saved several hours each week for the team member handling that process, and bank reconciliations are now significantly faster. Being able to click a button and watch transactions match automatically is a game-changer. The biggest benefit is that it’s freed up capacity, allowing us to reallocate people to more valuable, strategic tasks.”

“In the past, we were mostly invoicing people a month behind and sometimes six weeks. That was a bugbear of mine. Not only were you not getting the money in promptly but if there was a problem or query, people had forgotten the detail and it took time to resolve. Now, we’re invoicing the next day – and the credit control people have been able to really look at who owes us money, with accurate, real-time information.”

The outcome

Scalable system means company is equipped for growth

“iplicit has transformed our accounts department. It’s reduced the workload incredibly,” says Jenni. It has also improved the speed and quality of reporting. “That all used to be manual, but now we can click a button and see all the information,” she adds.

Johnston Carmichael’s Ruth Whyte says: “This has been quite a unique project, lasting about 14 months from start to finish. “Working with Pentland Ferries and with iplicit has been incredibly rewarding for everyone involved. This project wasn’t just about finding a solution for today’s needs; it was about future-proofing the business. With iplicit, the team now has a flexible, scalable system that will support growth without doubling the workload.”

