Report from the *first ever*

Scottish Gathering of Enterprise Architect Users

Held in Livingston on Wednesday 8th June 2016

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In June Hippo Software hosted a local gathering of EA users in Scotland. Forty-five delegates from twenty different organisations signed up to attend this event. This included some delegates travelling from as far afield as London, Nottingham and Northern Ireland as well as lots of delegates travelling the length and breadth of Scotland, coming from Livingston, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hamilton, Perth, Glenrothes and Inverness. For the vast majority of these delegates, this was their first ever EA user group experience and an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, share challenges and propose solutions.

A Journey to a More Collaborative Future?

Our first speaker was Darren Campbell, Senior Solution Designer at ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants). Darren provided an honest and open account of ACCA's journey so far. He explained the starting position with the company using a wide range of disparate tools for architecture, business process, data and design models. ACCA identified EA as an environment supporting ArchiMate, BPMN and UML in a single repository. The aim was to bring together all these various disciplines and allow traceability between high level architecture and detailed BPMN and UML models.

With a little training and strong support from a newly formed Enterprise Architecture team, this aim has been largely achieved. Darren spoke candidly about some of the challenges encountered and others that still face their team. The setup of a cloud repository was a substantial challenge at the time and the focus now is on developing some templates to facilitate automatic document generation and encourage the use of EA. In addition the team wish to establish more governance to ensure the consistency and quality of models in EA.

Transforming Scottish Local Government Services

Our second speakers presented a very entertaining and lively double-act – Gordon Hunter, Digital Business Architect at Fife Council and Lee Brown, Business Analyst for Improvement Service. Gordon and Lee provided some background on the challenges facing Scottish councils, eloquently describing the complexity, diversity and scale of services supported by councils.

They have been instrumental in the development of a common framework and creation of a local government reference architecture using ArchiMate within EA. Gordon talked about the mapping that they did between TOGAF and ArchiMate terminology and shared their meta model. Example EA diagrams were used to demonstrate the motivation for the reference model and the advantages and benefits it offers to the thirty-two Scottish councils in terms of reusable model artifacts.

Interactive 'Grumbles' Session

Hippo Software than facilitated a 'grumbles' session, organising the delegates into small groups and giving them an opportunity to discuss those aspects of EA that irritate, annoy or challenge them. The delegates were tasked with choosing their top two or three grumbles and presenting these to the rest of the delegates. The main grumbles were fed back to Sparx Systems for their assessment and will hopefully influence future EA development plans. On a positive note some of the new features in EA V13 should address some of these grumbles and delegates were also able to share their own 'work-arounds'.
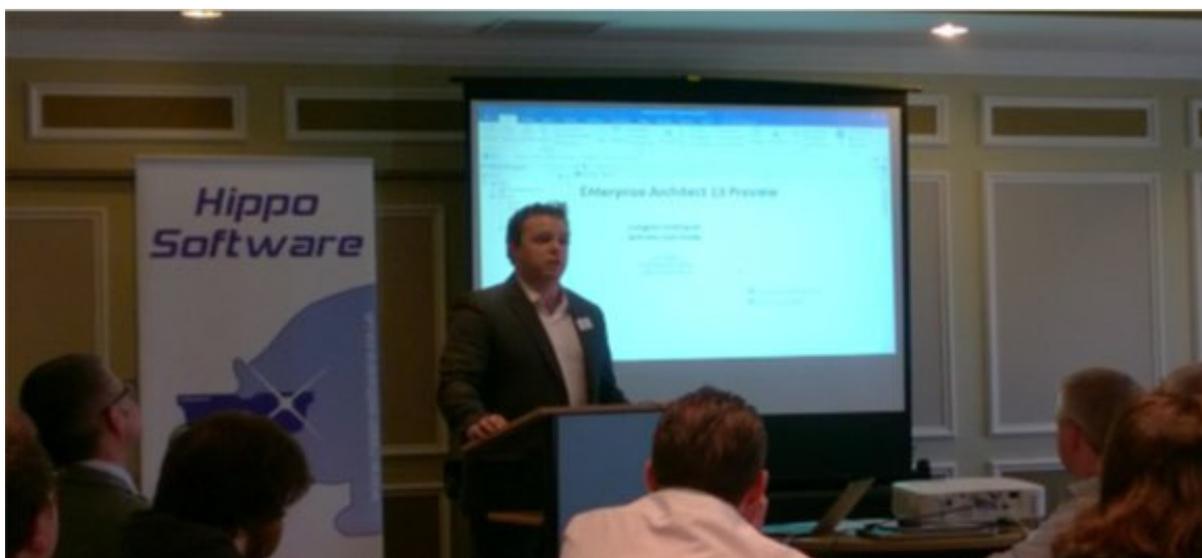
Effective Collaboration with Use Cases and BPMN

After lunch we introduced Ian Freeman, Business Systems Architect at Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution. Ian gave a fascinating presentation covering some of the projects he has worked on at SSE and others where collaboration has taken place at the Energy Networks Association.

Ian explained how much the power industry has changed over that last couple of decades with a focus on renewable energy sources and how the introduction of smart metering requires the industry to collaborate and adapt to new business processes. He explained how EA was used to create BPMN and Use Case models to provide a common narrative and allow exchange of information and ideas. Ian showed some examples of good architecture models and roadmaps to assist strategic planning.

New Features of EA V13

We were delighted to welcome Ken Harkin, Global Business Development Manager and Tom O'Reilly, Chief Operations Officer from Sparx Systems who joined us at our EA Gathering. The audience was enthusiastic and pleased to have the opportunity to meet with representatives from Sparx Systems and provide face to face feedback on their experiences with EA.

Tom O'Reilly showed us some of the new features in EA V13 including the new ribbon interface, improved diagram filters and time aware models. Everyone seemed keen to try out the new beta version of EA V13.

Interactive 'Highlights' Sessions

The day concluded with another interactive session facilitated by Hippo Software. This time we asked delegates to share their highlights – things they have discovered in EA that delight and greatly assist them. To get things started, our consultant Gareth Tuckwell shared some of our favourite keyboard and mouse shortcuts. Delegates then discussed their own highlights including the use of the diagram context filer and using scripts to automate repetitive tasks.