

# ZERO-COST BILLING ON THE HORIZON FOR UTILITY COMPANIES

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Sutton and East Surrey Water launches customer services over the Internet and plans e-billing for early 2000.

Sutton and East Surrey Water (S&ESW) is deploying Progress Software's WebSpeed? Internet transaction processing technology to become one of the first utility companies in the UK to deliver personalised customer services over the Internet. The technology will empower Internet-ready customers and provide a low-cost route for enhanced services such as e-billing.

When the service goes live in October, domestic customers will be able to use the Internet to access their account and meter reading information, change payment options and access energy planning and usage information based on personal consumption. The technology paves the way for e-billing, planned for early 2000, regarded as the 'zero-cost' billing option saving an estimated £1 per bill in postage and stationery costs for the 260,000-customer water company.

A recent Mori poll estimates the 50 per cent of Sutton and East Surrey Water's customers have access to an Internet-enabled PC. "The possibilities are endless for enhancing customer services over the Internet at an acceptable cost." Explains Ken Newman, customer accounts manager at S&ESW. "With the exponential growth of access to the Web via PCs and digital TV, the Internet will change the face of our business over the next five years."

WebSpeed provides the robust Internet transaction processing platform

for CyberCSR, the Internet Access to S&ESW's Custima customer care and billing system developed in PROGRESS by Progress Software Independent Software Vendor (ISV), Custima International. It delivers the high degree of scalability and rapid response rates required to service an unpredictably large number of customers simultaneously accessing the system at peak times.

WebSpeed's firewall validates a customer reference and PIN number before customers can access their account information. The software acts as the 'broker' between database and browser, and treats each request as a single transaction. This means the database is never held open - as is the case at the desktop - and at no point will the customer access live data over the Internet.

Sutton and East Surrey Water invested an initial £50,000 to web-enable the customer care and billing system. "This is a small sum when you consider the potential increase in customer service", says Ken Newman. "We won't know the uptake until it goes live but we have little doubt that customers will increasingly want to receive and pay bills, access data and communicate with their utility supplier over the Internet".

#### About WebSpeed

Progress WebSpeed enables developers to quickly and confidently build enterprise applications - such as supply chain management, order entry, customer service, inventory control, and others - and deploy them across corporate intranets, extranets, and the Internet.

Progress WebSpeed consists of two components: WebSpeed Workshop and WebSpeed Transaction Server. WebSpeed Workshop is an integrated suite of development tools for rapidly building ITP applications that deliver powerful database connectivity and state management. WebSpeed Transaction Server provides a robust platform for ITP applications that require high scalability and rapid response rates.

#### About Progress Software

Progress Software Corporation (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global supplier of software products and services for developing, deploying and managing business solutions across all computing and network environments. Our products, which are installed in more than 60% of Fortune 100 companies, include application servers, databases, development tools and application management products for Internet/Web, extranet and intranet applications.

Our customers operate in 100 countries, are supported by more than 1200 employees worldwide, and deploy annually over \$1.5 billion in Progress Software-based applications built by 2000+ independent software vendors (ISVs). For more information, visit [www.progress.com](http://www.progress.com)

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