

Greater Anglia Accelerates Public Service Readiness with AvePoint: De Risking Microsoft 365 and Cutting Storage Costs

Company Overview

Greater Anglia manages around 134 stations, operates approximately 1,300 daily services, and supports 80 million passenger journeys annually with a 3,000-person workforce and a lean 11-person IT team. Following the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act, the organization transitioned into public ownership in October 2025, introducing Freedom of Information (FOI) requirements and increased regulatory scrutiny. This shift made data governance, transparency, and control business-critical at scale.

Location

United Kingdom

Industry

Transportation Logistics

Platform

Microsoft 365

Key Highlights

- Reduced Microsoft 365 storage pressure by archiving or deleting 1.7TB of older media and recovering 1.1TB through version cleanup
- Cut OneDrive files from 6.2 million to 3.8 million and SharePoint and Teams files from 6.4 million to 3.9 million
- Eliminated the need for additional storage purchases, saving approximately \$30,000 annually
- Strengthened governance by giving business teams ownership of retention and classification decisions while IT maintained oversight and policy enforcement

Critical Needs

- Rapidly prepare the Microsoft 365 estate for renationalization within six months without disrupting services, while preparing for heightened Freedom of Information under the public sector.
- Gain clear, organization-wide visibility into Microsoft 365 data, assign accountable ownership, and confidently determine what should be transferred, retained, or defensibly deleted, as the business moved into public ownership.
- Eliminate escalating Microsoft 365 storage overage costs while upholding a strict retention schedule.
- Strengthen governance for sensitivity labeling, external sharing, and guest access — reducing risk and safeguarding sensitive information across the rail network.
- Establish a clean, well-classified data foundation to safely accelerate Microsoft 365 Copilot and AI initiatives and unlock long-term innovation for the newly publicly-owned rail network.

The Challenge

Britain's rail industry is consolidating into a publicly owned network under DfT Operator Limited (DFTO), creating immediate data governance challenges for Greater Anglia. In April 2025, the organization was given just six months to prepare for renationalisation, forcing rapid decisions about which data could transition from private to public ownership, and which could introduce new risks under the FOI requirements it would now be subject to.

"Going from private to public, the fear was how much data could transfer across and how much would stay with the franchise owner," Himesh Patel, head of IT service delivery, Greater Anglia, explains. "Once we're in the public domain, we're more open to the Freedom of Information Act."

Furthermore, Greater Anglia's Microsoft 365 environment was approaching storage limits, with approximately 1TB of data added each month from rolling stock initiatives, on-train CCTV, and forward-facing camera footage. To keep pace, the IT team was forced to continually purchase additional storage. At the same time, legacy lift-and-shift migrations had left permissions unstructured, sensitivity labels inconsistent, and ownership unclear, reducing visibility and increasing risk exposure across the Microsoft 365 estate. To meet this urgent timeline without disrupting operations, Greater Anglia needed a structured, scalable approach to gain visibility, enforce governance, and take control of its Microsoft 365 data estate.

The AvePoint Solution

Greater Anglia partnered with Intuitive Infrastructure Solutions and AvePoint to gain control and visibility across its Microsoft 365 environment using the AvePoint Confidence Platform, supported by a managed service.

A top-down mandate from leadership gave business teams six months to assess content and classify it as retain, review, or delete. To enable this without disrupting operations, a "GA Data Transfer" metadata column was applied across SharePoint and Teams, allowing users to tag content in place while preserving paths, permissions, and internal and external sharing links.

"We don't own the data. It's a business activity. All we've given you is a mechanism to store it. Ultimately, the business owns it," explains Himesh.

The IT team enabled adoption through structured rollout sessions, reporting, and targeted support. With the [AvePoint Confidence Platform](#), three storage optimization cycles reduced redundant and outdated content, particularly across legacy media and heavily versioned files. In addition, high-risk areas were identified across SharePoint and OneDrive, providing clear visibility into external access, oversharing, and inactive accounts, enabling faster, risk-informed governance decisions.

Outcomes

Using the AvePoint Confidence Platform, Greater Anglia delivered measurable improvements in both cost control and risk reduction. OneDrive files decreased from 6.2 million to 3.8 million, while SharePoint and Teams files dropped from 6.4 million to 3.9 million. The organization retired 185 unused SharePoint sites and reduced storage consumption by archiving or deleting 1.7TB of older media and recovering 1.1TB through version cleanup, eliminating the need for additional storage purchases and saving approximately \$30,000 annually.

At the same time, the organization established a scalable governance model. Business teams now own retention and classification decisions, while IT provides oversight and policy enforcement. Permissions and sharing practices continue to improve, creating a more secure, well-governed Microsoft 365 environment.

The Road Ahead

Greater Anglia expects to reach a steady-state operating model within six to nine months, followed by a structured 12-month roadmap with AvePoint. With an internal AI policy already approved, the organization is now advancing its Microsoft 365 Copilot readiness alongside priorities to strengthen external sharing controls across the GBR Anglia rail network, align data classification with regulatory requirements, and continue reducing technical debt.

"All of this is moving us closer to being truly ready for Copilot. The AvePoint Confidence Platform has given us clear visibility into our data, how it moves, where it lives – and from a governance standpoint – exactly who has access to it," Himesh says.



AvePoint isn't just a tool for us, it's a strategic partnership. We see this as a long-term journey, and it's a key solution driving our data and security governance."

- HIMESH PATEL, HEAD OF IT SERVICE DELIVERY, GREATER ANGLIA

