



Fera

Databarracks' case study

Critical government supplier strengthens resilience with Databarracks

About Fera

Fera is an applied science leader that delivers specialist services across food, health and the environment.

A critical supplier to the UK government, Fera employs more than 500 scientists and generates annual revenues of around £60 million.

The Challenge

Following the award of a new long-term contract with its principal government customer, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Fera needed to strengthen its resilience arrangements at pace and embed a comprehensive service continuity framework.

Phil Northing is the Director of Strategic Development - Public Sector at Fera:

“While our existing business continuity plan provided a functional process for responding to incidents, it did not deliver the detailed service-level understanding required by the terms of the Specialist Science and Contingency Services (SSCS) contract with Defra. In particular, it lacked clarity on how disruption would affect the specialist services we deliver and what actions would be needed to reduce the impact.

“As a scientific organisation delivering complex and time-critical services from highly specialised laboratories, we must be able to maintain continuity even when incidents threaten our ability to operate.

“It became clear that we needed a far more detailed and operationally grounded approach to continuity that reflected the nature of the services we provide.”

The challenge was to develop a new service continuity framework, supported by comprehensive business continuity, disaster recovery and insolvency contingency plans, within a demanding 60-day timeframe.

The Solution

Recognising that specialist expertise would be essential, Fera engaged Databarracks to develop the service continuity framework. The organisations had worked together successfully a decade earlier, which meant there was valuable corporate memory on both sides.

“Databarracks rapidly mobilised specialist business continuity expertise, clearing diaries and deploying key personnel to our site within days of engagement.

“Their ability to work constructively with our scientific and operational teams enabled them to quickly understand the service-specific risks, constraints and interdependencies that needed to be addressed.”

**“Databarracks’
responsiveness
and thorough
preparation in
such a short time
window for our
needs was hugely
impressive.”**

Andrew Swift, Chief Executive, Fera



Databarracks worked with Fera to redesign the business impact analysis (BIA) process and identify service priorities, dependencies and recovery requirements.

Scenario modelling was used to assess the most significant threats, including technology failure, supplier disruption and severe operational or financial distress.

Databarracks also supported Fera through a programme of exercising, including an onsite tabletop simulation designed to test the response to the loss of a critical building.

Within the required 60-day timeframe, BIAs were completed, service continuity solutions were designed, and a resilience framework incorporating business continuity, IT disaster recovery and financial distress planning was developed and exercised.

“The service continuity framework not only met the challenging delivery deadlines but also exceeded the expectations of both the Fera executive team and Defra.”

The Benefits

Fera now has a fully embedded service continuity framework designed to evolve alongside the organisation and its risk landscape.

This represents a significant step up from high-level continuity planning to detailed, service-led resilience. It has brought business continuity, IT disaster recovery and financial distress planning into a single framework, giving Fera a more joined-up view of resilience.

“We are much better equipped to anticipate, manage and reduce the impact of disruption. Government stakeholders have greater confidence in our preparedness, and staff across the organisation have a clearer understanding of the role continuity plays in daily operations and long-term service assurance.”

The exercising programme has also given Fera confidence that the plans would work in practice during a major disruption.

“The exercises we ran with Databarracks identified key improvement opportunities, including clearer arrangements for mutual support with other government laboratories during a continuity incident.

“They also gave our executive leadership, shareholders and the UK government tangible assurance that our continuity arrangements are robust and actionable.

“The programme has already generated strong engagement across the business, including active involvement from the Board, with at least one Director attending forthcoming exercises. Resilience is now firmly established as a priority at the highest levels of the organisation.

“Databarracks has proven to be the ideal partner for this work. Their responsiveness, practical expertise and ability to collaborate effectively with our specialist scientific teams were essential to rapidly developing a comprehensive, fit-for-purpose continuity framework that aligns with best-in-class government and industry practice.”

Databarracks continues to support Fera in maintaining and developing the service continuity framework for the SSCS contract.

The next phase of the programme will see the business continuity management system (BCMS) embedded more widely across the organisation, ensuring Fera’s resilience does not stand still but continues to evolve to stay ahead of increasingly complex risks.



About Databarracks

Databarracks is the business and technology resilience expert.

In 2003, we launched one of the world’s first managed Backup services to bring indestructible resilience to mission critical data.

Today, we deliver award-winning Data Protection, Public Cloud and Business Resilience services, backed by 24/7 expert support.

The world’s most resilient organisations trust us to protect their data, optimise their clouds and keep their operations running. When the worst happens, we guarantee their business continues.

With prepared leadership, rehearsed plans and resilient technology, our customers have full confidence in their continuity.

 **Databarracks**
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