

WHY YOU'LL LEARN TO LOVE COBIE

Ben Wallbank (BIM Strategy Manager) and John Adams (BIM Product Manager) at Viewpoint Construction Software explain the merits of COBie and how BIM solution Viewpoint For Projects™ can secure your route to Level 2 compliance.



Ben Wallbank



John Adams

WHY YOU'LL LEARN TO LOVE COBIE

These are exciting times for construction as we take our first faltering steps to provide non-proprietary sharable structured digital data for our projects. Government leaders understand the UK construction industry must acquire data management skills to compete on a global scale. If we fail, it's inevitable that competition from other parts of the world that successfully move to digital process will see our industry shrink.

Our industry's "trainer wheels" for sharable structured data is COBie¹. COBie is a sub-set of ISO 16739, known to most as IFC². Eighty percent of the cost of a building lies beyond construction and COBie seeks to minimise these costs.

There is already a vocal COBie backlash, but don't judge COBie yet. Early adopter projects have struggled to provide COBie data. There is a learning curve for the required skill sets adding to project costs. There are demands to go straight from proprietary BIM system to proprietary CAFM system. Clients are requiring COBie without defining what they require in an EIR³ or knowing how they wish to utilise the data. Don't lose sight of the objective: an industry capable of utilising sharable structured data.

Viewpoint employs great people from the construction industry who understand the needs and realities of our customers businesses

Viewpoint employs great people from the construction industry who understand the needs and realities of our customers businesses, so that our company can deliver tools to help. For this very reason, we get it ... most of you don't love COBie (yet!) - and that's okay, because we do.

As a software company that develops and supports only software for the construction industry, Viewpoint is

delighted having UK construction clients turning their focus to data. The mandating of an "open standard" in COBie has allowed us to focus our efforts on developing the tools construction businesses need to deliver on this crucial data element, rather than needing to balance the approach of Contractor A and Contractor B, as well as contractors X,Y, and Z. We provide software to many of the UK's biggest and best contractors. If there had been no attempt to standardise the Level 2 BIM deliverable, 2016 would have been a ridiculously unachievable target. We love COBie as it is a bold step forward for the construction industry, but best of all, it is going to work.

We have invested heavily in our BIM initiative for over four years, winning government funding to accelerate our work, and employing the best people; and the last year has largely been focused on making the delivery of COBie viable.

At the very core of our approach to COBie are four concepts: Define, Monitor, Validate, and Record. Only if these processes are followed will a client be able to use the COBie data produced with confidence.

At the very core of our approach to COBie are four concepts: Define, Monitor, Validate, and Record. Only if these processes are followed will a client be able to use the COBie data produced with confidence. We see our common data environment as a place where everybody can see which data is expected of them and when it is due, how to create and validate the data, and how much is left to do to get through the next information exchange.

Viewpoint's COBie Planner (part of our Information Planner tool) lets the user define what elements of COBie

¹ Construction Operations Building Information Exchange
² Industry Foundation Classes

³ An EIR (Employers Information Requirement) is required by PAS BS 1192/2

are required, from whom, and when. This COBie plan can be used by the Employer to populate the Employer's Information Requirements (EIR) COBie deliverables, and by the construction team to populate the COBie portion of the BIM Execution Plan (BEP) – both key requirements for a Level 2 BIM project.⁴

At each work stage, our Red, Amber, Green (RAG) Reporting system keeps the team abreast of progress using the familiar Viewpoint For Projects notification tools, as well as our validation tools that ensure data entry is in the format expected. We have also partnered with Solibri to provide round-tripping using the BIM Collaboration Format (BCF). Through this method, each contributor is taken directly to the appropriate place within their model to make any necessary adjustments.

Supply chain members can enter their data into Viewpoint For Projects via any Internet connection either directly into the COBie Database, or by uploading their portions as an Excel spread sheet. Our database can federate COBie inputs into a single COBie output. The COBie database is separate from the Model, ensuring that models keep data lean and usable. Each COBie data exchange is recorded and data can be carried forward from exchange to exchange.

Nobody sees endless spreadsheet editing as the future of our industry; it certainly has no place in Viewpoint's understanding of Level

2 BIM. Over the coming year, we will start to bury COBie so that data (in particular, that data coming from a site using our mobile platform Viewpoint Field View) can be entered and our systems input the data into COBie "under the hood."

By adopting COBie, Government will be able to compare the data on a project in John O'Groats and a similar project in Lands End developed by different teams using different software, for example. This would not be the case if varying proprietary tools were used from project to project. Our new non-sequel database allows such comparisons and searches to be carried out. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) are currently beta testing this new tool, which is due for general release in Autumn 2015.

start. Full IFC will be at the heart of sharable structured data for the construction industry⁵. Cross sector "big" data will be used not just on a single building but on whole neighbourhoods and cities. The potential benefits in the long term are enormous for construction and for society as a whole.

We hear from our customers that COBie is one of the biggest challenges they are facing. We won't rest until COBie is simple to deliver and becomes a valuable comparable data set for those who produce data, not just those who buy it.

If you would like to know more about how Viewpoint can help you define and deliver COBie, please contact us:

0845 330 9007
productinfo@viewpoint.com

If our industry can master sharable structured data on an individual project, beyond 2016 is when the really exciting use of data will start.

If our industry can master sharable structured data on an individual project, beyond 2016 is when the really exciting use of data will

⁴ See PAS 1192:2
⁵ Digital Built Britain Page 17