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Manchester United Case Study

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When Wayne Rooney and his Manchester United team mates play under the floodlights at Old Trafford in front of 68,000 fans, the stadium's electricity usage tops the 4.3 megawatt mark. But as the goal tally mounts up, the electricity use comes down as the club seeks to minimise its energy consumption all round. Yet reducing energy and water use is a tough challenge at a football ground where the facilities are in great demand almost 365 days a year for everything from wedding receptions to product launches.

Manchester United's success in marketing its extensive facilities reflects its position as a leading global brand. The Theatre of Dreams has now become a must-have venue for organisers of exhibitions, conferences, dinners and myriad other events. With the stadium's catering facilities busy seven days a week, more than 100 fridges and freezers are running round the clock and contributing to Manchester United's annual spend of more than £500,000 on energy and utilities.

The club has a firmly-established environmental policy that seeks to minimise its environmental impacts. "We aim to minimise significant environmental impacts and ensure legal compliance. We will aim to conserve natural resources by minimising the use of non-renewable materials, by recycling materials, by minimising energy use, by using recycled products and packaging."

Allan Bird, the club's Facilities Manager, says: "We want to achieve as large a saving as we can on energy and water usage, and we have identified savings of £10,000 in our spending. "We are doing this not only because we want a good return on our investment but also because we want to achieve our goal of being a green company, which is very important to us," he added. One key way of reducing energy consumption has been the installation of SavaControls – electronic motor controllers manufactured and installed by SavaWatt – on nearly all of Old Trafford's fridges and freezers.

SavaWatt is a well-established British company dedicated to the more efficient use of electricity in commercial and domestic refrigeration and air conditioning. SavaControls on fridge freezers reduce the flow of electricity to match the actual requirements. When the appliance's thermostat switches on the motor to pump refrigerant around the system, full power is needed to start the motor. But once the motor is running, full power is no longer needed and the SavaControls senses this and cuts the electricity flow.

Manchester United is working with the Carbon Trust, the Government-funded energy adviser, on a programme of further energy reductions. An audit of energy use has been carried out that will enable the club to quantify the savings achieved by installing SavaControls and using other measures. "I'm delighted with the successful installation of SavaControls on our refrigeration equipment and with what they appear to be saving us in electricity consumption," Mr Bird said.

SavaControls offer substantial power savings averaging 20% and reliability exceeding 99.5%. Over 1 million have been installed – for example in 2003 they reduced carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 125,000 tonnes. Across the UK, SavaControls' total savings in electricity consumption was estimated at over £10 million in that year alone. Users include health and local authorities, food retailers and manufacturers, and restaurants and hotels.

Other users are supermarket chains, ice cream manufacturers, NatWest Bank, GlaxoSmithKline, Pharmaceuticals, the Prison Service, more than 450 hospitals and the Houses of Parliament.

