

Keeping Payroll on Track During Major HR Change

How SATEBA UK partnered with Tugela People to deliver a seamless payroll transition during a global HRIS rollout.

The Business Behind the Project

SATEBA UK is part of the wider SATEBA Group: An established European leader in precast concrete solutions designed to support sustainable rail infrastructure.

With 18 production sites across 10 countries, the Group is committed to delivering innovative products developed in a safe and responsible way.

As the UK arm of the business, SATEBA UK plays a crucial role in supplying specialist components for a wide range of rail applications, including metro and tram systems, as well as high-speed and mainline railways.

Ensuring Payroll Continuity During a Global HRIS Transition

SATEBA UK had been managing their payroll in-house, including weekly payroll runs, and wanted to build greater resilience into their payroll processes.

In parallel to this project, the Sateba Group identified the need to move to a group wide HRIS. This gave the UK project team the ideal opportunity to find a payroll solution that in the future could interface with the Group solution.

The solution was clear: SATEBA UK needed a UK payroll service that could work seamlessly alongside the new global HRIS, ensuring no disruption to their payroll cycles or compliance risks. Maintaining the accuracy and timeliness of both their weekly and monthly payrolls was essential.

SATEBAUK=

A Trusted Connection Leads to the Right Partner

When it came time to find the right payroll provider, SATEBA UK was looking for a partner who understood both the technical landscape and the complexities of UK payroll.

HR Director Alison Gascoyne reached out via LinkedIn to Thomas Schilling, whom she had known in a previous professional context. Thomas is the Founder of Tugela People. While she wasn't yet familiar with Tugela People, the conversation opened the door to a deeper exploration, and ultimately, to a trusted partnership.

After undergoing a tender process and speaking with another Tugela People managed payroll client, SATEBA UK took the decision to appoint Tugela People as their new UK payroll provider in November 2024.



Tugela
PEOPLE

A Collaborative Approach to Payroll Success

The project brought together a dedicated team from both SATEBA UK and Tugela People. On the SATEBA side, Alison led the project at a strategic level, while Payroll Administrator Rebecca Ciccognani acted as the internal subject matter expert, providing detailed insights into existing processes and ensuring a smooth operational handover.

From Tugela People, Jono Charlesworth, Sales & Marketing Manager, served as the first point of contact and ongoing strategic support, with Saj Patel as Project Manager coordinating the implementation.

Corné Carter, Client Payroll Specialist, led the payroll configuration and testing, working closely with the team at Brain Payroll, the technology partner behind the system, to build a robust, fit-for-purpose solution.

Their close collaboration ensured that both the technical setup and service delivery aligned with SATEBA UK's operational needs from day one.



What Made Tugela People Stand Out

“Our strategic objective was to build more resilience into payroll and give Rebecca the chance to take more than a week off at a time. That just wasn't possible before with our weekly payroll setup.”

Alison Gascoyne

When SATEBA UK began their search for a new payroll provider, they weren't just looking for a replacement. They needed a partner who could help them futureproof their processes.

Alison identified three key reasons why Tugela People stood out during the selection process. First was their flexibility, particularly around weekly payroll - something many providers struggled to accommodate. “A lot of the bureaux we spoke to didn't give us much confidence they could handle that,” she said.

Second was the personal, solution-focused approach of the team. “When we met with Jono, it really felt like a ‘can-do’ attitude, especially considering the added complexity of migrating to Workday.”

And third? Cost. “I'd be lying if cost wasn't a factor too,” Alison added. “Tugela People offered a competitive price without compromising on service.”

She also praised the transparency brought by the new payroll portal, which replaced a frustrating legacy system. “It was clunky, inflexible, and unreliable,” Alison and Rebecca Ciccognani agreed. “Reporting was a nightmare, so having clear visibility over where we were at any point in the payroll cycle was a big win.”

Inside the Transition

While Alison spearheaded the project from a strategic level, it was Payroll Administrator Rebecca Ciccognani who played the hands-on role of subject matter expert throughout the transition.

“My role was really about providing the technical details – how things worked day-to-day,” explained Rebecca. As the person who processed both the weekly and monthly payroll under the previous system, she was key in ensuring the new solution aligned with their operational needs.

Rebecca worked closely with the Tugela People team to share essential data, validate processes, and ensure nothing was lost in translation. She described the experience as “brilliant,” particularly highlighting the open and consistent communication as a major improvement from previous providers.

“There was always a line of communication,” she said. “That flexibility, being able to work together and find solutions when we hit a roadblock, made all the difference.”

Gone were the days of waiting for support tickets to be picked up. Rebecca appreciated having direct contact with a responsive team and praised the new system for its transparency. “Now, we can see everything through the portal, and if we need something, we just call. No waiting on hold for hours or chasing updates.”

Although the team is still within the early stages of the service both Alison and Rebecca agree that the support has remained flexible and solution-oriented, keeping payroll on track every step of the way.



Teamwork That Delivered

The successful transition of SATEBA UK's payroll service was a true testament to the power of teamwork, with both the SATEBA UK and Tugela People teams working collaboratively to meet every challenge.

Saj Patel, the Project Manager for Tugela People said, "The SATEBA UK team has been incredibly responsive and a pleasure to work with throughout the project. They've been efficient in providing data and any necessary information, which made our job much smoother. They have a strong understanding of the process and have been fully engaged. At the start, they requested over-communication, as they were used to having full control of the process, rather than waiting for reports to come through. They quickly adapted to the new process, and their flexibility and collaboration were key to our success".

Jono Charlesworth, added, "Working alongside the SATEBA UK team has been a fantastic experience. Their responsiveness, flexibility, and commitment to the project were key to its success. We pride ourselves on offering tailored solutions that fit each client's unique needs, and the collaborative approach we took with SATEBA UK ensured we delivered a payroll service that's both efficient and future-proof. It's been a pleasure seeing their team embrace the transition so smoothly, and we look forward to continuing this partnership."

Together, this collaborative effort ensured the teams remained aligned and focused on delivering a smooth payroll transition with no disruption to SATEBA UK's payroll cycles. From initial design and configuration through to testing and a successful go-live on April 1st, 2025, the project was delivered on time, within scope, and fully aligned with expectations. The result was a robust solution, achieved through clear communication, shared ownership, and dedication at every level of the project team.

Reliable Payroll, Expertly Managed

SATEBA UK now benefits from Tugela People's fully managed payroll service, which simplifies operations while ensuring accuracy, compliance, and peace of mind. The end-to-end service takes care of all payroll tasks, from processing to reporting, freeing up internal resource and significantly reducing the risk of errors.

While a direct integration between the HRIS and Tugela People's payroll platform is still in development, the current setup already offers a more efficient process. Monthly payroll data is exported from the HRIS, and weekly data from the time and attendance (T&A) system. This streamlined dual-source approach eliminates manual handling and enables timely, accurate submissions.

Powered by Brain Payroll technology, the service delivers flexibility and control—from custom reports and automated pension uploads to simplified PAYE payments. With secure, real-time access to reports and pay slips, the system is transparent and user-friendly for both payroll managers and employees.

A Clearer Picture for Employees

One of the most immediate and impactful benefits of the new payroll solution has been the payslips. As Alison explained, "The number of questions and queries about payslips has dropped significantly, because they're just much easier to understand." Rebecca agreed, noting that after the first week, she hasn't received a single query from employees about how to interpret their payslip.

This change has been particularly valuable for SATEBA's workforce, many of whom aren't especially comfortable using digital portals. Instead of logging in to access their documents, payslips are now delivered securely via email. A small shift that's had a big effect. "Although it wasn't our original preference, emailing the payslips has made them far more accessible," Alison added. "Now employees are actually opening and reviewing them, which they didn't always do before."

Cleaner layouts and clearer, customisable payslip narratives have also helped improve transparency around deductions, tax codes, and overall pay. "Our employees now have a much better understanding of how their pay is made up," Alison said. "That visibility has made a real difference."

Reporting Made Simple and Flexible

Reporting was another major pain point for Rebecca and the team before switching to Tugela People. "Previously, we could only get a mass report of everything that had been paid, and beyond that, there was no flexibility," Rebecca explained. "All the reports came out as PDFs, which meant any further manipulation was tedious and time-consuming."

Since working with the Tugela People team, especially collaborating closely with Brain, Rebecca has been able to set up bespoke reports tailored to their exact needs. For example, the monthly pension upload now comes out in the correct format, ready to use. No more manual conversions or formatting! "That has honestly changed my life," Rebecca said.

Beyond saving time, the new reporting system offers much greater visibility. Rebecca noted how having the right data clearly at her fingertips means she can quickly get answers without sifting through piles of information. And when questions do arise, support is just a quick message away. "When I was preparing the first PAYE payment, I had a query and Corné responded straight away with the solution. Problem solved!"

Advice for Choosing the Right Payroll Partner

Reflecting on the selection process, Alison emphasised the importance of clarity and values when choosing a payroll provider. "The big thing is to understand what your priorities are—what really matters to you," she said. "It's easy to get bamboozled by technical jargon and flashy systems, but you need to drill down to your non-negotiables—what you absolutely need to deliver."

Alison also highlighted the significance of finding a partner whose values align with your own. "Payroll sits at the heart of both finance and HR, and it's probably the most important relationship you have with your staff. If you can't get payroll right and deliver accurate salaries on time, that relationship breaks down, and the last thing you want is payroll becoming a battleground with employees. You need someone who truly understands how critical that is."

When asked whether Tugela People ticked all those boxes, Alison and Rebecca agreed enthusiastically. "So far, after seven weeks, I'd say yes," Alison confirmed.

A Positive Experience of Working with Tugela People

When reflecting on their experience of working with Tugela People, both Alison and Rebecca described the partnership as collaborative, transparent, and genuinely positive.

"It's been a very positive experience," said Alison. "I've managed payroll before, but never led a migration like this. There's been a real effort to understand our needs." From the early planning stages through to go-live, Tugela People and Brain worked closely with Sateba to deliver a smooth transition.

Rebecca agreed: "Collaborative is a really good word that Alison used. It has felt collaborative the whole way through." Regular catch-up calls, clear communication,

and a shared willingness to adapt meant any issues were tackled quickly and constructively. "Even where things didn't work exactly as originally hoped, everyone came together to find a better solution."

The support from Brain was a crucial part of that experience. From building bespoke reports to providing fast answers to technical queries, their role helped embed the system in a way that made sense for Sateba's day-to-day needs.



“

I have a feeling that it's going to be quite a rewarding relationship going forward.

Alison concluded

Contact Us

For more information about our [Fully Managed Payroll Service](#), or to discuss your requirements, please contact us:

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