ASTA POWERPROJECT VERSION 11

The rationale for choosing Asta Powerproject, rather than other single user desktop project management software, for planning and managing construction projects

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WE ARE OFTEN ASKED:

WHY CHOOSE ASTA POWERPROJECT
FOR MANAGING CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS?

We are often asked, what is the difference between Asta Powerproject and other construction project management software? It's a fair enough question. So what we've done is create this document which highlights some of the key reasons why so many construction companies – not just in the UK, but worldwide – have chosen Asta Powerproject.

INDEX

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE KEY ADVANTAGES OF ASTA POWERPROJECT 11 COMPARED TO OTHER SINGLE USE DESKTOP CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE CAN BE SUMMARISED AS:

1. MULTIPLE LINKS BETWEEN TWO TASKS
- This sounds like a technical feature but it is extremely important, in certain situations, in order to show the project end date accurately.

2. INTERRUPTIBLE TASKS
- Another feature that is often required in order to show the project end date accurately.

3. MULTIPLE TASKS PER ROW
- Makes printouts smaller and more compact and models the processes of construction more elegantly and efficiently.

4. RESOURCE GRAPHS AND HISTOGRAMS
- Communicate plans and resourcing requirements more easily by showing multiple graphs and histograms of people, materials or finances underneath the bar chart – and print out on one piece of paper.

5. DETAILED PROGRESS FEATURES
- Show a task's Planned % Complete. This lets you compare what *should* have been done with what has *actually* been done.
- More than one Progress Period can be created and data entered against each. This creates the most accurate 'As Built' plan which is often required to demonstrate how and why a project has arrived at its current position.
- Unlimited number of baselines. This is necessary if you need to record the status of a project each week.

6. CODE LIBRARIES
- Enables you to filter out and group tasks based on their colour. Ideal for filtering out the work of a single contractor or various contractors/resources.

7. EASE OF USE
- Create links by drawing them – more intuitive and efficient, particularly for less experienced users.
- Pick up a group of tasks and move them.
- No hidden imposed dates – you have to explicitly set an imposed date.

8. SUPERB QUALITY OUTPUT
- Surround the output with a four-sided graphical border.
- Annotate the body of a plan with text including data derived from a task. Link the annotation to a task.
- Complete control over printed output.

9. MULTIPLE UNDOS
- Even after a reschedule. This is useful for testing out different scenarios.

10. FLEXIBLE LICENSING
- Named licence for standalone users.
- Concurrent licence for teams. Allows users to share licences.
- Enterprise licence for multi-user, real-time access to projects.

11. A FREE VIEWER
- Enables anyone to read, navigate and print out project plans created in Asta Powerproject version 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11, Asta Easyplan version 2, 3 & 4, Microsoft Project XML and Oracle Primavera XER and P3 file formats.
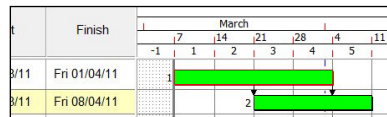
12. DATA IMPORT/EXPORT
- With Oracle Primavera, Microsoft Project and Asta software.

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MULTIPLE LINKS BETWEEN TWO TASKS

## ASTA POWERPROJECT ALLOWS MORE THAN ONE LINK BETWEEN THE SAME TWO TASKS.

- This simple, albeit rather technical, statement is *extremely* important in demonstrating cause and effect of changes on a project and projecting the end date accurately. This requirement is important on all projects, but particularly where there is a contract between both parties and the result of changes can have a significant financial effect.

- Consider the situation where two tasks can partially happen at the same time. If there is only one link between these tasks then a change of duration can have no effect on the end date, but if there are two links it should.

Asta Powerproject / Start

Asta Powerproject / End

- Similarly where a task is only restrained by one link and is partially progressed, the remaining unprogressed section can apparently have no effect on the end date, but if there are two links it should.
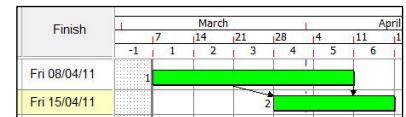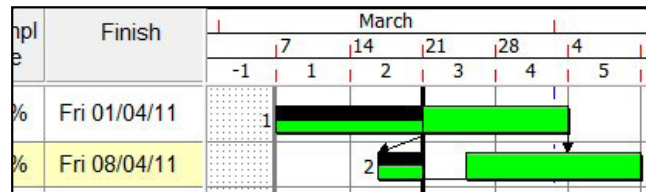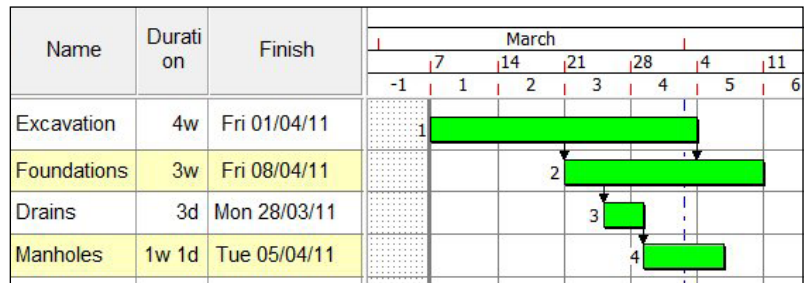

Asta Powerproject with partial progress

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INTERRUPTIBLE TASKS

MODELLING INTERRUPTIBLE TASKS CORRECTLY IS IMPORTANT AS IT CAN AFFECT THE PROJECT FINISH DATES.

- Where a task restrained by two links exists, it is possible to consider 'stretching' the task to allow it to start earlier while still having the same overall duration. This can result in the project taking place in a shorter time period. The 'Foundations' task is made 'interruptible' in Asta Powerproject and this results in an earlier project finish date.

| Name	Duration	Finish
Excavation	4w	Fri 01/04/11
Foundations	3w	Fri 08/04/11
Drains	3d	Mon 28/03/11
Manholes	1w 1d	Tue 05/04/11

Asta Powerproject with 'Foundations' stretched and earlier project finish date

- Asta Powerproject can model this important situation, either by splitting a task into smaller parts and demonstrating the discontinuity effects of working this way, or it can keep the single task and show the overall result.
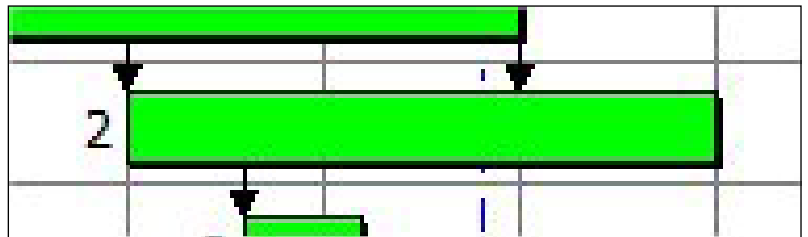
Asta Powerproject stretching task
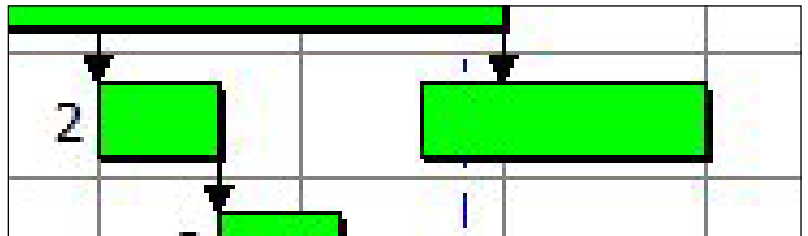
Asta Powerproject splitting task

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MULTI-TASKS PER ROW

ASTA POWERPROJECT CAN ACCOMMODATE MORE THAN ONE ACTIVITY ON THE SAME ROW OF THE BAR CHART.
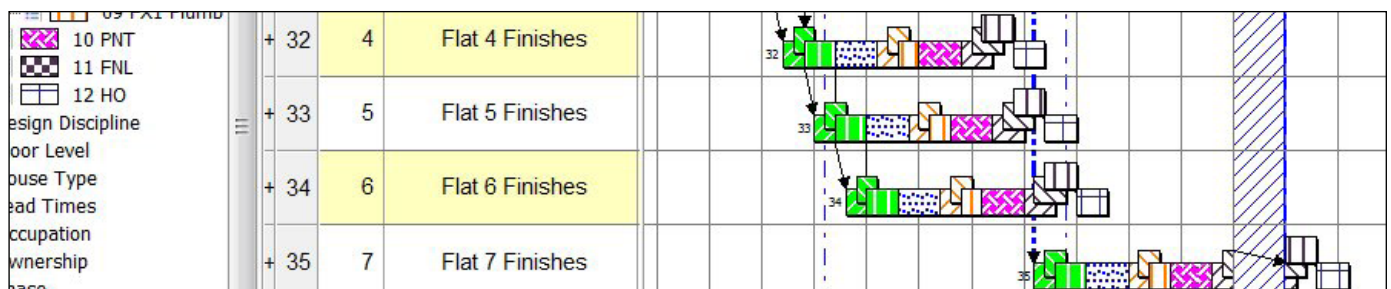
- This is particularly valued as it makes printouts significantly smaller and more compact. Also it is a familiar way of planning housing, procurement and finishing plans.
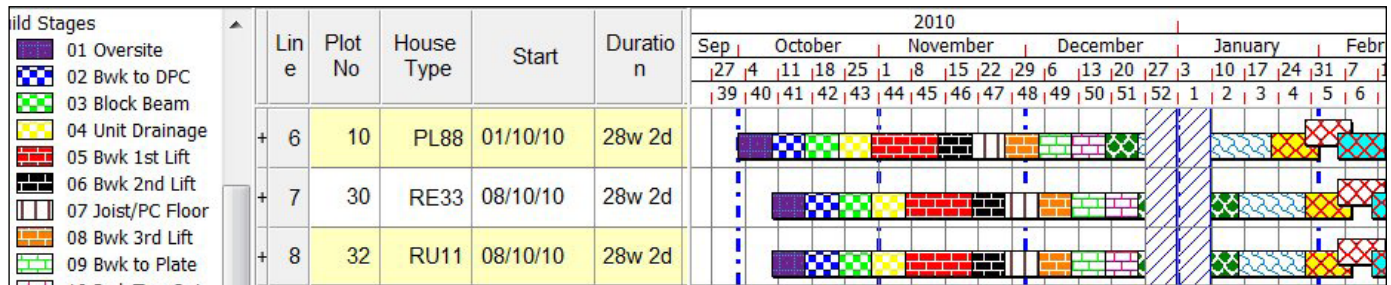
Asta Powerproject multi-task effect on a Housing project
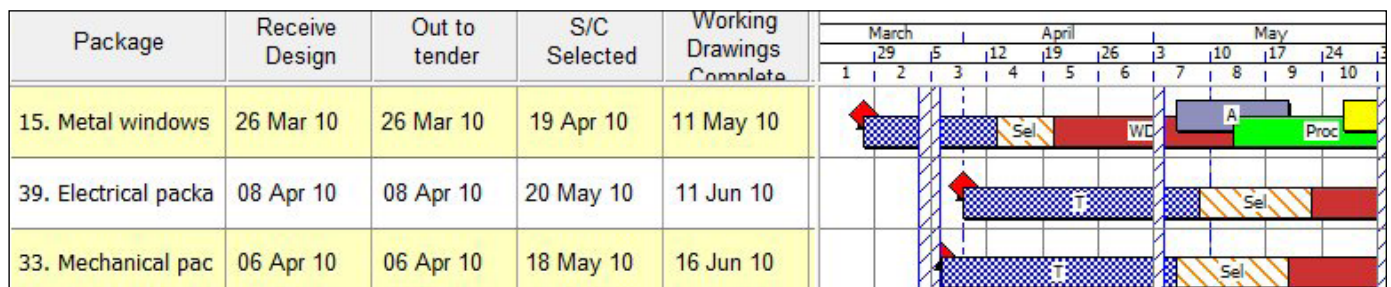
Asta Powerproject multi-task effect on a Procurement stage of a project

Asta Powerproject multi-task effect on a Finishing stage of a project

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RESOURCE GRAPHS & PLAN ON SAME SCREEN/PAGE

WITH ASTA POWERPROJECT YOU CAN PRINT OUT THE BAR CHART AND HISTOGRAM ON ONE PIECE OF PAPER.

■ Asta Powerproject allows you to have multiple graphs and histograms – of people requirements, materials or finances. This means that you can make edits to the plan and immediately see the impact on resources levels. Where you are trying to balance work for a limited resource it is essential to work in this way.
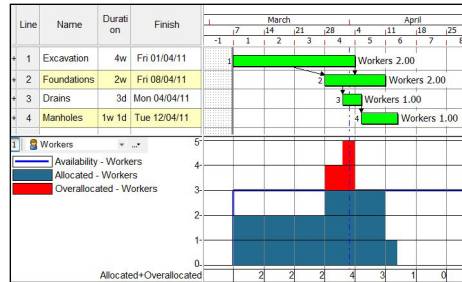
Asta Powerproject multiple Graphs and Histograms

■ Asta Powerproject lets you print what you can see.
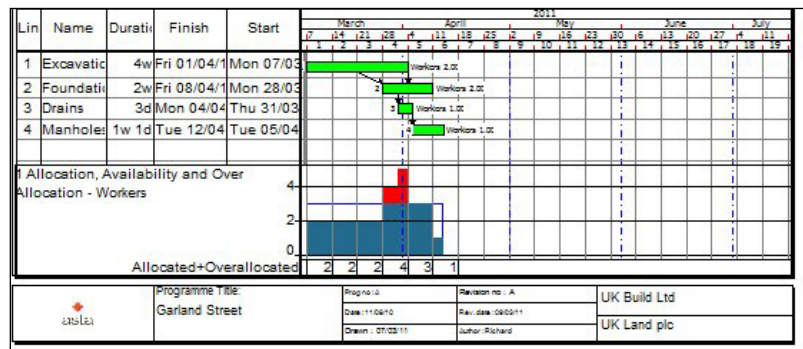
Asta Powerproject prints whatever you have on screen

■ In Asta Powerproject, graphs and histograms can also be printed out separately or their values exported directly to Microsoft Excel.

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PROGRESS

RECORDING THE PROGRESS OF A PROJECT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. DEMONSTRATING THE RATE OF PROGRESS AND ACCOMMODATING UNFORESEEN SITUATIONS WHILE KEEPING THE PROJECT ON TRACK (OR MINIMISING THE IMPACTS) IS A PRINCIPLE REQUIREMENT OF PROJECT PLANNING SOFTWARE.

ASTA POWERPROJECT PERFORMS EXTREMELY WELL IN THIS REGARD.

■ Asta Powerproject can show the value of a task's *Planned% Complete* – i.e. how much *should* have been done at a certain report date. This can of course be compared with what has been done to see where a project is ahead and behind schedule.

■ The Progress Line (and Progress Shading) in Asta Powerproject can have its thickness, line type and colour defined. This means you can always make the Progress Line visible and not lost amongst other gridlines and links.

■ More than one Progress Period can be created and data entered against each. This is important as you don't just end up with an Actual Start and Actual End date, but a record of how the task progressed during *each* Progress Period. This facilitates the most accurate 'As-Built' plan and it is often essential in demonstrating how and why a project has arrived at its current position. The actual cost, resource effort, task %-complete or EVA values *per* Progress Period can always be displayed and entered.
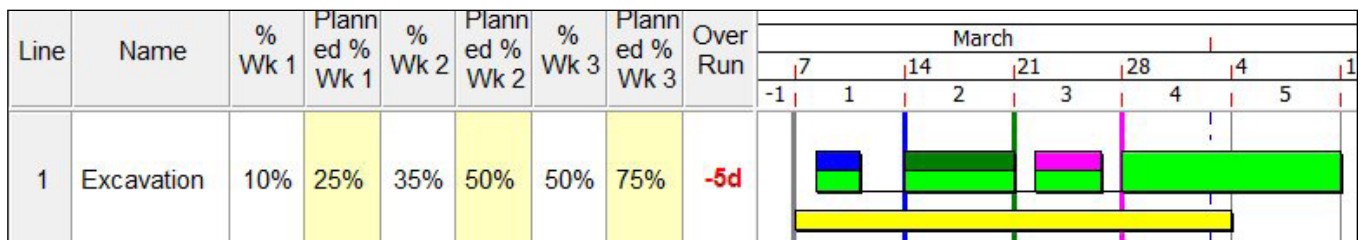
Asta Powerproject showing detailed 'As-Built' progress every week
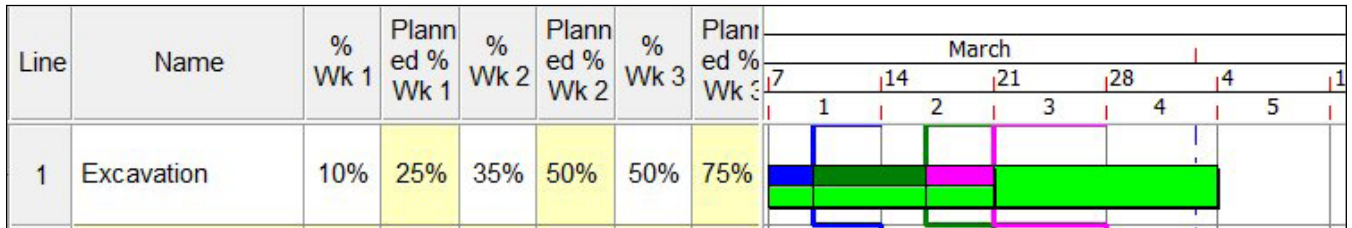
■ The detailed progress can be shown and the distinct effect during each Progress Period shown.
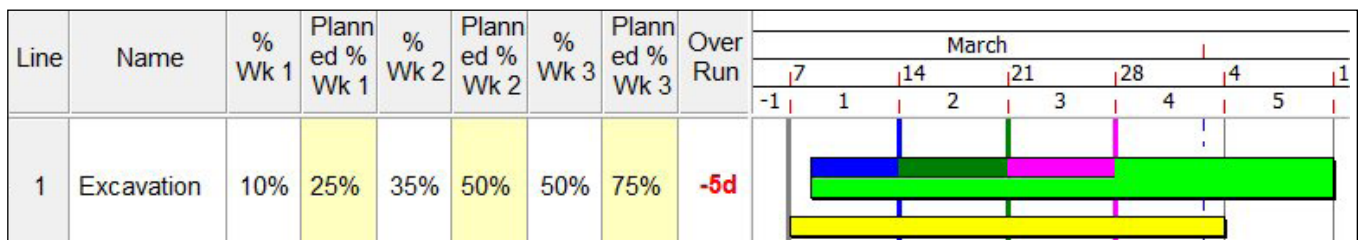
Asta Powerproject showing progress values and shading every week

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PROGRESS *CONTINUED*

- An unlimited number of baselines can be created in Asta Powerproject. This is often necessary to record the position each week during the course of a project. Should you be asked to show what the situation was like several months ago this can be an extremely useful facility.

- The progress from the live project can be imposed on the baseline to obtain a Jagged Progress view – where the end date is not changed.

Line	Name	% Wk 1	Planned % Wk 1	% Wk 2	Planned % Wk 2	% Wk 3	Planned % Wk 3
1	Excavation	10%	25%	35%	50%	50%	75%

Asta Powerproject showing progress effects applied to the baseline every week

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CODE LIBRARIES – COLOURS, FILTERING & BANDING

ASTA POWERPROJECT PROVIDES A STRUCTURED WAY TO AFFECT THE APPEARANCE OF TASKS ON THE BAR CHART.

■ Libraries of 'Codes' for different circumstances (Work Package, Floor Levels, etc.) are created and each is assigned a colour/pattern and sort-order.

■ A code (or more than one code) is assigned to a task (via drag-drop or spreadsheet entry) and so the task changes colour. The colour code Legend is shown on printouts and the Bar Chart can be Grouped and Sorted by these Code Libraries. This provides an excellent coordination mechanism – as people can see which tasks belong to whom. It also allows all the work of a single contractor to be easily filtered out, or the work of various contractors or resources to be gathered together into an alternative structure.
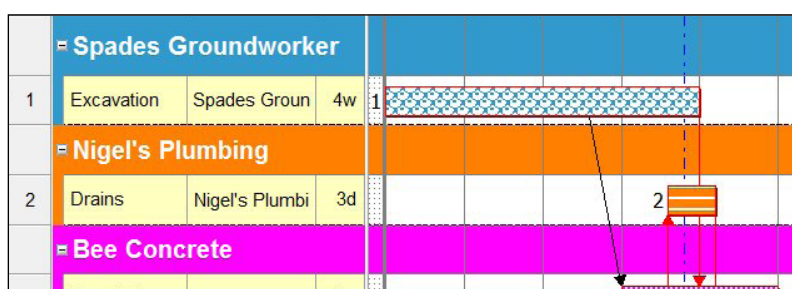

Asta Powerproject Grouping and Banding by Activity Code

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EASE OF USE

THE EASE WITH WHICH ONE PIECE OF SOFTWARE CAN BE USED COMPARED TO ANOTHER CAN BE A SUBJECTIVE JUDGEMENT, HOWEVER IN ASTA POWERPROJECT SEVERAL TAILORED FEATURES DO MAKE IT SIMPLER AND MORE ACCURATE TO USE.

- You create links by drawing them from where they start to where you want them to end. You don't have to enter the Link Type, nor the lead/lag value – all this is interpreted from where you start/end the link creation. This makes linking a project so much faster and less of a technical challenge for the less experienced planner when using Asta Powerproject.

- You can edit directly on the Bar Chart and the position of tasks will always be a whole number of time-units (of your choice).

- In Asta Powerproject any edit you do on one task can also be done to a group. So for example you can pick up a group of tasks and move them two weeks into the future.

- When you move a task in Asta Powerproject to another date this doesn't set a hidden imposed date. In Asta Powerproject you have to explicitly set an imposed date.
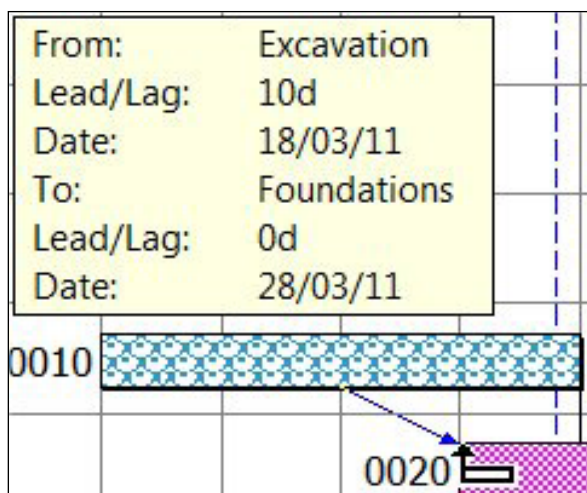
Asta Powerproject context sensitive linking

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APPEARANCE ON SCREEN & OUTPUT

THE QUALITY OF OUTPUT FROM ANY SOFTWARE SYSTEM IS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION. THIS IS BECAUSE WHAT YOU PRESENT TO COLLEAGUES, CLIENTS AND SUPPLY-CHAIN PARTNERS IS KEY TO DISSEMINATING AND COMMUNICATING A PLAN.

- Surround the output with a standard Border – which is a four sided graphical header and footer standard that can be edited with a graphical drawing tool called PowerDraw. This places an attractive and standard frame around any output.

Asta Powerproject output

- The body of a plan can be annotated with text of any mixed font and include any data value derived from a task. Pictures and any other embeddable object, e.g. spreadsheets and movies, can be included.
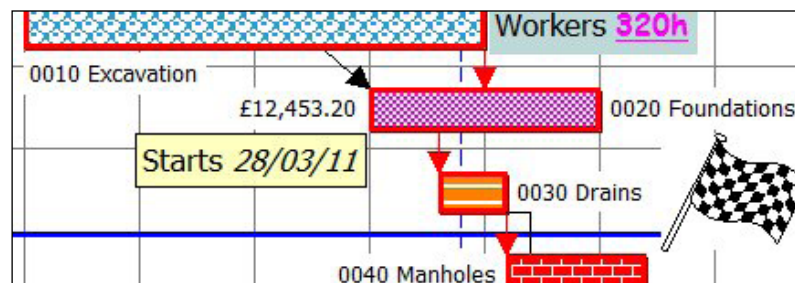
Asta Powerproject annotated text

- Control the printing with a variety of features: fit to any number of pages – both horizontally and vertically; guaranteed to fill the whole page and not leave large white spaces depending on the aspect ratio of the output; set the number of rows to include on each page; switch On/Off various Legends as required and establish page breaks at regular and irregular intervals.

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APPEARANCE ON SCREEN & OUTPUT *CONTINUED*

- The appearance of the plan can be controlled by turning any display feature On/Off – e.g. critical path marking, total and free float display, links, driving/non-driving links, etc.
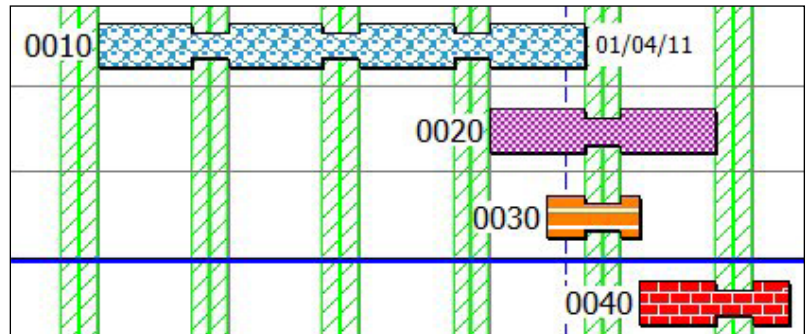
Asta Powerproject controllable appearance

- Vertical and horizontal grid lines and coloured bands of various line types, colours and thicknesses can be created.
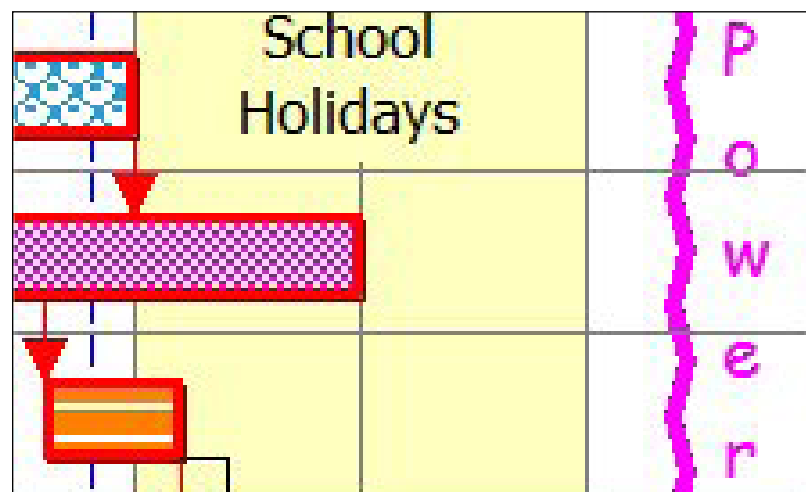

Asta Powerproject shading, specific drop lines and text

- The Date Zone at the head (and foot) of the plan can have up to ten rows. This can include project or annual week numbers. Changing the scale of the plan does not affect the type of information displayed in the Date Zone. The Date Zone is also used to graphically change the horizontal scale and various non-working periods (e.g. weekends) can be omitted from the plan so that unwanted 'dead' space can be removed.

- The output can be sent to any Windows printer or PDF writer and various other graphic formats are supported that allow the whole plan to be pasted into other programs such as MS PowerPoint or MS Word.

- The logic link display shows the importance of each link at a glance and the logic of the plan can be navigated on screen so that you can easily understand the sequence of events.

Asta Powerproject Date Zone

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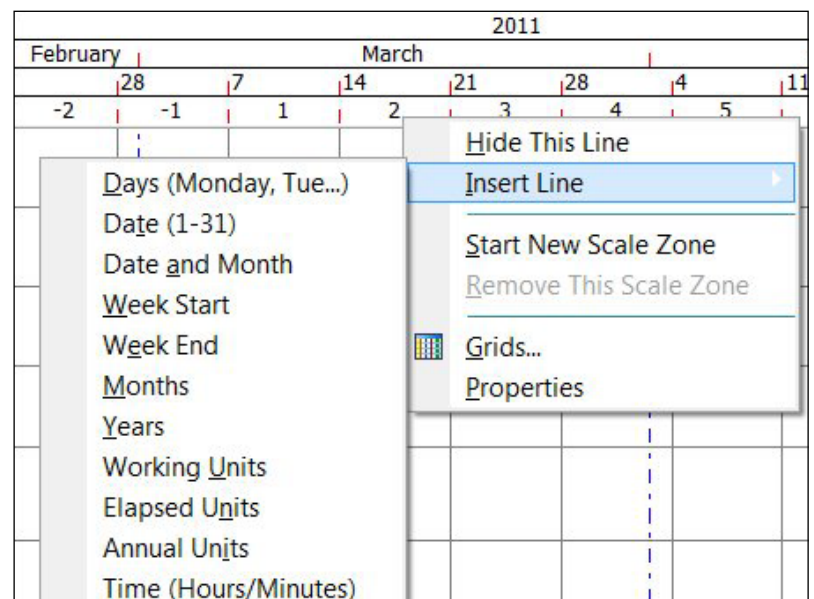
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UNDO EVEN THROUGH A RESCHEDULE

ASTA POWERPROJECT HAS UNLIMITED UNDO OF ANY ACTION – EVEN OF A RESCHEDULE OR RESOURCE-LEVEL.

STANDALONE AND CONCURRENT LICENSING – PLUS THE FREE VIEWER

ASTA POWERPROJECT HAS A VERY FLEXIBLE LICENSING POLICY WHICH CAN SAVE YOU MONEY.

- A free Viewer (known as Asta Project Viewer) is available for download from www.astadev.com/projectviewer so if anyone wants to examine, navigate or print out the plan they do not have to spend any money at all.

- A Named licence is available for an individual computer and can only be used on that computer. The licence can be transferred to any other computer (e.g. when you get a new laptop).

- A Concurrent licence is available where a counter (say a 2-user) is placed on a computer that all others can see. Asta Powerproject is installed on any number of computers (say 10) where the user may at some time want to edit a plan. Each installation points back to the computer containing the counter. When Asta Powerproject starts on a computer it checks that a spare licence exists at the counter and when you exit Asta Powerproject the counter is released. This arrangement makes the effective sharing of a licence amount a group of occasional editors and makes the cost of Asta Powerproject very cost effective.

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IMPORT/EXPORT

ASTA POWERPROJECT HAS AN EXCELLENT RANGE OF DATA FORMATS THAT IT CAN READ/WRITE TO/FROM AND ALLOWS DATA TO BE EXCHANGED WITH VARIOUS OTHER PROJECT PLANNING SYSTEMS.

- Asta Powerproject has an excellent range of data formats that it can read/write to/from and allows data to be exchanged with various other Project Planning systems. All calendars, resources, costs, tasks, links and activity codes are exchanged (where the other system can support these features). This is sometimes needed as you might be interfacing with a client organisation that has another Project Planning system and they have a requirement to examine the basic data.

- Data can be exchanged with: MPX (old MSP format), XML (newer MSP format), P3B (old Primavera P3 format), XER (newer Oracle Primavera P3e v5, 6 & 7 format), older versions of Asta Powerproject and Asta Easyplan.

Asta Powerproject Files (*.pp)
Asta Powerproject Database Files (*.mdb)
HTML Files (*.htm;*.html)
CSV Files (*.csv)
MPX Files (*.mpx)
Microsoft® Project XML Format (*.xml)
Primavera® XER (*.xer)
Primavera® P3 Batch (*.p3b)
Asta Powerproject Version 10 (*.pp)
Asta Easyplan Version 2 (*.pp)
Asta Easyplan Version 3 (*.pp)
Asta Easyplan Version 4 (*.pp)

Asta Powerproject supported data formats

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EXCELLENT SERVICE

WHILE SOFTWARE FUNCTIONALITY IS AN IMPORTANT AREA FOR COMPARISON WHEN CONSIDERING WHICH SOFTWARE MIGHT BE RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANISATION, THE TYPE OF SUPPORT YOU WILL RECEIVE ONCE YOU'VE BOUGHT THE SOFTWARE IS ALSO SOMETHING TO CONSIDER.

For example, when you have a deadline to meet (tender submission, monthly progress meeting, etc.) and you get stuck it is important to be able to pick up the phone and quickly speak to someone who can help you resolve any problem. The last thing you want is premium-rate phone calls or outsourced overseas call centres.

ASTA OPERATES:

- An accessible and knowledgeable *Help Desk* where you can reach friendly and helpful people who can resolve any issue and offer guidance.

- A number of *Training Courses* to help people quickly climb the shallow learning curve and become effective operators of the system. Various courses are available on the web, at public courses in various locations around the country or inside your company.

- A *Consultancy Service* where you can get advice before or after any implementation and commission bespoke program extensions (macros), reports and specialist data transfers.

"Our IT department has enjoyed a close working relationship with Asta for over 7 years. The excellent standard of on-site training provided by Asta Development continues to allow our users to utilise the full potential of this extremely powerful and effective management tool. Asta Powerproject is our automatic 'go to' tool for all facets of time and resource planning. It is easy to use and is backed up by a support and training division that is difficult to beat."

Mick Moorhouse, Director, Hargreaves Contracting

"Our I.T. department have enjoyed a close working relationship with Asta for over 7 years now. Their training department is a very professional operation. The bespoke training package they compiled was a real success as the new delegates to Asta Powerproject could immediately associate the application to their day-to-day role. Well done."

Paul Finch, I.T. Manager, McInerney Homes

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JUST IN CASE YOU STILL NEED MORE CONVINCING

IN ASTA POWERPROJECT...

...a milestone (a task with zero duration marking an important event like a delivery, Roof Watertight, Power-On, etc) can be designated as a *Start-Milestone* (starts on a Monday) or a *Finish-Milestone* (ends on a Friday evening).

...the logic links can be given different categories. These *Link Categories* can have a different line style, colour and thickness which helps identify links of different types. Links from a category can be omitted from a reschedule. This is very useful when new logic restraints are introduced into a plan. The new links can be identified and the effect on the plan demonstrated – with them having an effect or as if they were not there. This can help support discussions of cause and effect. It prevents the need to have different files for different scenarios and the complication of remembering which links are new.

...links which do not set a task's position but which limit the float (sloping links easily seen by inspection) can be identified as *non-driving links*. These links can be displayed differently or turned off for clarity.

...sections of the plan can be extracted to a separate file and the relevant tasks in the project are prevented from being changed until the tasks are re-integrated into the plan. This is known as *Book-In/Out*.

This is useful if you want to include a Supply-Chain plan linked to key events in the main plan, or where you want to collect progress values for a section of the plan and the person responsible cannot access the project over the LAN/WAN (e.g. in another organisation or a remote site).

...a task can be classified as a *Hammock*. Other tasks from any part of the project can be added to the hammock to provide alternative summarisations. This is often used to demonstrate the length on site of key plant items – and if that is affected by any change to the plan, or to collect all the tasks for different Work Packages in one place.

...a task can be classified as a *Buffer*. Buffers are contingency amounts of time which contribute to the critical path, but they can shrink or expand if the project is running behind or ahead of schedule. The Buffer consumption is often monitored to see if you have used 50% of the Buffer when you are half-way through the project. Buffers support the concept of Lean Construction or Critical Chain and are a recognised technique of the NEC form of contract.

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