

Meridian Industrial Group plc

An independent, evidence-based assessment of what a modern finance platform is worth to the group — the value, the cost of standing still, the risks, and the opportunities — across the close-to-disclose and plan-and-forecast cycle.

£148k

Annual hard-£ efficiency identified

224

Person-days / year reclaimed for analysis

8.6 → 6.2

Monthly close, days (today → target)

01 Executive summary

The group's finance function is capable but carries a heavy manual load. Modernising the close, consolidation, reporting and planning cycle on a single platform would release **£148,115 a year** of hard-£ efficiency, compress the monthly close from **8.6 to 6.2 days** (best-in-class is 4.8), and the board pack from **10.5 to 6.9 days**, and hand **224 person-days a year** back from re-keying and reconciliation to analysis and decision support.

£148k

Annual hard-£ efficiency (workings shown later)

224d

Person-days/yr reclaimed for analysis

8.6 → 6.2d

Monthly close compression

2.9 → 1.9%

Finance budget on manual work

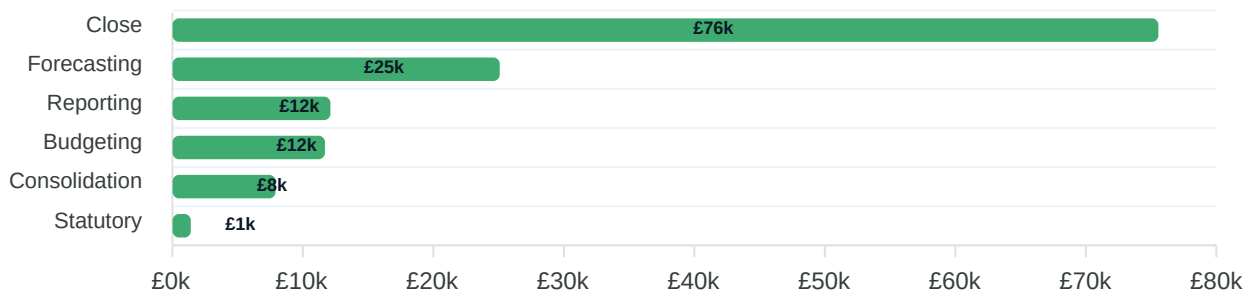
Why act — the opportunity

Manual processing falls from **2.9% to 1.9%** of the finance budget, freeing capacity that already exists inside the team. A faster, more reliable close means earlier, more trusted numbers for the Board — and a finance function positioned to adopt AI on a clean, standardised base rather than bolting it onto manual process.

The cost of standing still

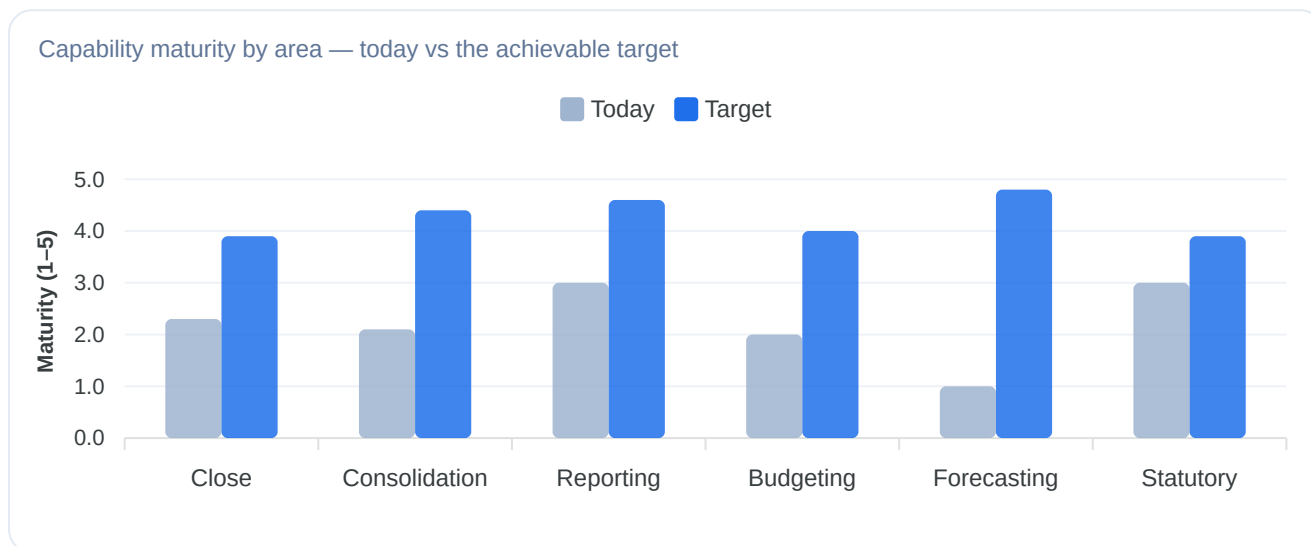
Every close consumes 19 person-days that could be spent on analysis; the late board pack delays decisions; and key-person and control risk sit in spreadsheets that don't scale with the group. None of this improves on its own.

Where the annual value sits, by finance process (hard-£ efficiency)



02 Where the group stands today

Each finance area is assessed against the AIS capability-maturity ladder (Basic → Optimised) at activity grain. The group is strongest in areas that are already standardised and weakest where work is still spreadsheet-driven — the same areas carrying the most avoidable cost and risk.



Against best-in-class (APQC)

How the group's cycle times compare with the published benchmark — today, the achievable target, and the best-in-class quartile.

METRIC	TODAY	TARGET	BEST-IN-CLASS	SOURCE
Monthly close	8.6 days	6.2 days	4.8	APQC Open Standards Benchmarking via CFO.com M...
Account reconciliation	8.4 hrs	6.4 hrs	5	APQC Open Standards Benchmarking via CFO.com M...
Board / management pack	10.5 days	6.9 days	6	APQC Open Standards Benchmarking via CFO.com M...
Annual budget cycle	43.8 days	31.2 days	25	APQC Open Standards Benchmarking via CFO.com M...
Budget iterations	7 versions	5 versions	4	APQC Open Standards Benchmarking via CFO.com M...

03 The value — benefits & cost

The business case is built bottom-up: the effort in each finance activity today, the reduction a modern platform delivers, costed at a loaded rate — not a top-down benchmark. The largest pools sit in **Close, Forecasting, Reporting**.

£387,649

Cost of the assessed processes today (AS-IS)

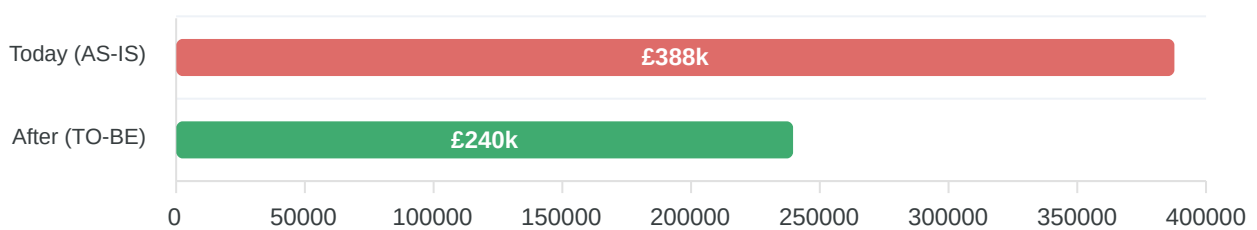
-£148,115

Annual efficiency released

£239,534

Cost after modernisation (TO-BE)

Cost of running the assessed finance processes — today vs after modernisation



How to read the number

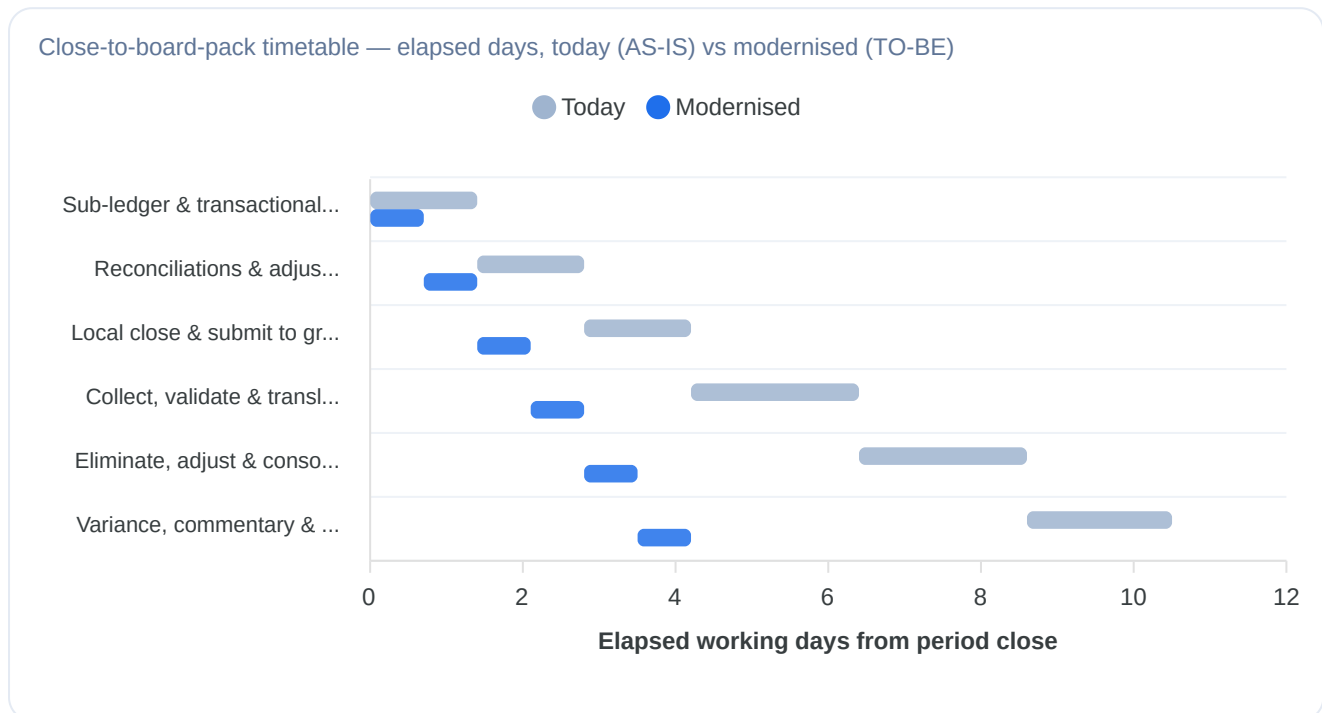
This is **hard-£ efficiency** — time taken out of defined activities, costed at a loaded rate. It is deliberately conservative: it excludes the larger, harder-to-quantify gains in decision quality, control and growth enablement, which are summarised as opportunities rather than counted in the headline.

Beyond the hard £

A faster close brings earlier insight; automated controls cut error and audit friction; and freed capacity lets the team shift from processing to business partnering. These compound over time and are where finance leadership is ultimately judged.

04 Operating impact — the close

The clearest proof of value is the close-to-report timetable. Automating each stage compresses the critical path — the group reaches a consolidated trial balance and an issued board pack days earlier, with less weekend and overtime effort.



What earlier numbers unlock

Decisions move from being made on month-old data to near-real-time. Forecasts can be refreshed as actuals land. The Board sees a cleaner, faster story, and finance spends the reclaimed window on analysis rather than assembly.

What the long close costs

A close that runs to 8.6 days ties up the team at exactly the point insight is most valuable, pushes the board pack late, and concentrates risk in a few people and many spreadsheets.

05 Risks & opportunities

A modernisation decision is as much about risk as return. The status quo carries quiet, compounding risk; the investment opens opportunities well beyond the hard-£ headline.

Risks of inaction

- **Control & error risk** — manual journals, reconciliations and re-keying across 14 entities are where misstatements and audit findings originate.
- **Key-person risk** — critical close knowledge sits with individuals and in undocumented spreadsheets, not in the system.
- **Decision latency** — a slow close means the Board acts on stale numbers; forecasts lag reality.
- **Talent** — skilled finance people spend their time processing, not partnering — a retention and engagement risk.
- **AI left on the table** — none of the AI gains are reachable while the underlying process is manual and unstandardised.

Opportunities unlocked

- **£148,115/yr** of hard-£ efficiency, redeployable to analysis or to the bottom line.
- **224 person-days/yr** returned to business partnering and decision support.
- **A faster, more trusted close** — earlier board packs and earlier decisions.
- **Embedded controls** — assurance by design, less audit friction.
- **An AI-ready foundation** — a standardised, automated base is the precondition for the AI opportunities set out in the companion AI Opportunity Map.

Recommendation

Proceed in sequence — fix and automate the group month-end first (the largest pool and the foundation everything else builds on), then planning and forecasting. The roadmap overleaf sets out the horizons; the value is realised progressively, not all at the end.

06 The roadmap

A sequenced path, value-first. Each horizon stands on its own business case and lays the foundation for the next — so benefit is realised progressively and risk is staged.

HORIZON	FOCUS	CAPABILITY TARGET	ANNUAL VALUE
0–6 months	Foundation — Group month-end Automate the close, consolidation and management reporting on one platform.	Close, consolidation & reporting → L4	£92.4k
6–12 months	Planning — Budgeting Driver-based budgeting — a faster cycle with fewer iterations.	Budgeting → L4 (driver-based, integrated)	£9.8k
12–18 months	Agility — Forecasting Rolling forecast and scenario planning; better accuracy releases working capital.	Forecasting → L4.8 (rolling, predictive)	£21.1k
18–24 months	Decision support — Operational reporting & driver-based analysis Integrate operational data; profitability analysis, daily margin and driver-based analysis turn data into prioritised actions on revenue, profit and cash.	Reporting → L5 (insight-driven)	—

Then: the AI layer

Once each process is standardised and automated, the AIS AI Opportunity Map identifies where artificial intelligence pays off next — anomaly detection, intelligent matching, predictive forecasting and generated narrative — each mapped to a CCH Tagetik Expert AI capability. See the companion report.

Illustrative example for a representative manufacturing group — not a real organisation. Hard-£ is a conservative, bottom-up efficiency estimate built from house-standard activity effort and a loaded rate, replaced by the client's measured hours and assumptions in a consultant-led review. Benchmarks are sourced (APQC) and directional. Prepared by AIS.