

Case Study: Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

InterestMap and MarkerMap REGIONS - Benefiting from spatial data under the Pan Government Agreement: a case study from the Countryside Council for Wales

Background

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is the Government's statutory advisor on wildlife, countryside and marine conservation matters in Wales.

A key role is to protect and promote the countryside following new access opportunities enshrined in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

CCW has provided interactive mapping resources on its public facing website www.ccw.gov.uk since the Welsh countryside access opportunities came into operation in 2005.

The site helps to ensure that everyone understands their rights and obligations in respect of the landscape - both landowners and visitors.

At the same time, CCW has given its 500 staff online access to mapping datasets through an intranet browser called Gofod. This resource enables users to view and print mapping extracts to support their work.

An enhanced tier of access is available to around 300 MapInfo Professional users including countryside protection officers who require access to manipulate and digitise information from the field.

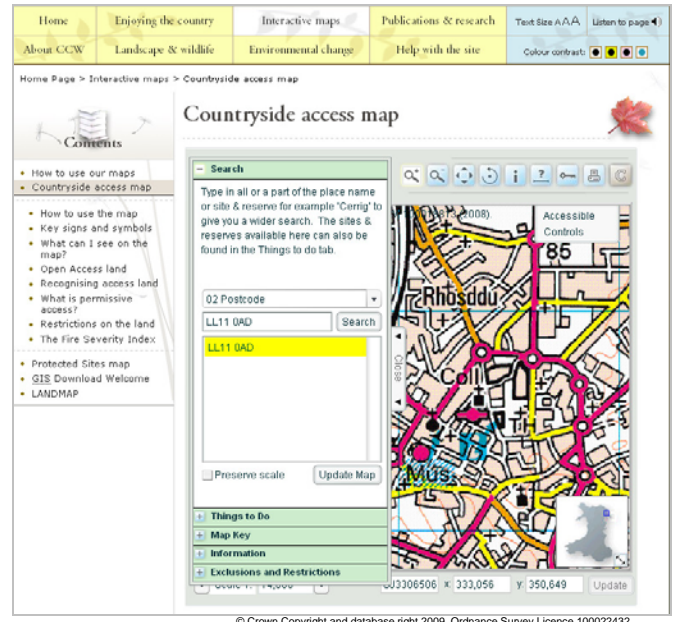
Challenge

CCW wanted to enhance the functionality of its external website while ensuring staff could gain maximum benefit from investment in internal GIS resources.

Since the launch of the public web maps in 2005, new information has been added online. The service now includes specially protected areas, more mapping datasets and daily updates from the Met Office's fire severity index localised to anywhere on the Welsh landscape.

'Promoted walks' have also been included. These are high standard routes which local authorities and bodies such as the National Trust and the RSPB advocate for walkers. They may include special sites, nature reserves and other places of interest and will generally be well maintained with gates, stiles and waymarks.

On the intranet side, the key aims were to develop a gazetteer search facility and enable users to work with any dataset held in a MapInfo environment rather than merely pre-set map layers.



Keith Jones, GIS Manager, says: "We wanted everyone at CCW to have access to GIS data including departments that never even considered looking at GIS before".

"The kinds of information you can hold in GIS can support many cross-management functions. Postcode search, for example, can help the finance department manage supply contracts and conservation teams log details of access restrictions".

Points of Interest

Jill Meyer, CCW's Access Information Development Officer, says: "We've been looking out for ways to complement the walks, countryside features and access opportunities we already show.

"The most beneficial points of interest would be features such as refreshment facilities, public conveniences, camping and other types of accommodation."

InterestMap, now in final evaluation to support the public website, is a points of interest product consisting of a vector points layer indexed on record name for use with the 'Find' command in a GIS. The product includes hundreds of classifications from different suppliers and highlights the locations and functions of millions of points on the landscape.

By having points of interest data on the website, CCW will give walkers and other outdoor enthusiasts a ready means of drilling down through regional maps to source information on local amenities and services.

Jill Meyer says: "Our aim is to provide all the information you need in one place, a free one-stop shop for everyone."

Postcodes

MarkerMap REGIONS, which will support the Gofod intranet gazetteer search, is a vector product containing points, representing each postcode in the UK, and polygons which can be used to aggregate postcode boundaries to create neighbourhoods around the points. Wider, regional boundaries can also be built up.

CCW is using **MarkerMap REGIONS** to locate and aggregate postcodes for a number of purposes including statistical analysis and resource allocation.

Keith Jones says: "We were used to working with Ordnance Survey Code-Point data on which **MarkerMap REGIONS** is based. Now MarkerMap will give us a further cost-effective way of finding and geocoding addresses using the full postcode and aggregating as required."

As well as supporting the view and print facilities for all employees, **MarkerMap REGIONS** will also help the 300 MapInfo Professional 'power users'. They will use the enhanced gazetteer when they record and share information on subjects such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), farmland, vegetation and geology.

MarkerMap REGIONS has been added to the browser which was built by Dotted Eyes using its ResponseMX web mapping development platform. Now Dotted Eyes and CCW are working to extend the range of data that can be used from pre-set map layers.

Mr Jones says: "The new browser will let you open any of the map layers such as Ordnance Survey base maps, vegetation, protected sites and geology. Our conservation officers especially will be able to manipulate and digitise a much wider range of information in MapInfo Professional including GPS downloads.

"So many people within the organisation can benefit from simple access to geographic information that we are running a training programme to encourage more widespread use. With the PGA, it is so much easier to source data now for any area you want."

Benefits summary

- easier data sharing, both within the PGA community and with other licensed users, to carry out government business
- wider range of value-for-money geographic data is more easily available
- robust, affordable GIS solution to support cross-management functions including web and intranet use
- help to fulfil statutory remits and give customers on-demand access to essential information
- help to put more electronic information on services, amenities and locations into the public domain
- better internet-based services can help attract government funding for reinvestment

Both **MarkerMap REGIONS** and **InterestMap** are available through the PGA, which is designed to extend the use of geographic information in public services over the next four years. Landmark / Dotted Eyes is a supplier to the PGA.

Contracts for the PGA came into operation in April 2009 following a competitive tender process managed centrally by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The new PGA follows an initial agreement with Ordnance Survey going back to 2003 and includes a broader range of products, enhanced support packages and easier licensing.

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