



GEO Business: going from strength to strength

Billed as the largest geospatial show in the UK, this year's event pulled out all the stops to exceed expectations

Held over two fine days in late May, the GEO Business Show welcomed a record-breaking 2,600 visitors to the Business Design Centre in Islington, London. The event also reinforced its international appeal by attracting attendees from 53 countries. The figures equate to a 9% rise in visitor numbers over last year's event and a 61% increase since the show was launched in 2014. A highly creditable achievement, and one that reflects the boom enjoyed by the UK events sector over the past decade despite competition from roadshows, webinars, webcasts and social media.

Enticed by a new website, a new show guide app, a cutting-edge seminar programme, and a strategic conference (see page 56), those arriving found a much-enlarged exhibition, with 200 public and private sector organisations presenting goods and services from across the geospatial

spectrum. Indeed, space was so tight that a number of exhibitors were elevated to the upper gallery, not that they were complaining, being able to take advantage of footfall from the main conference and commercial workshop sessions.

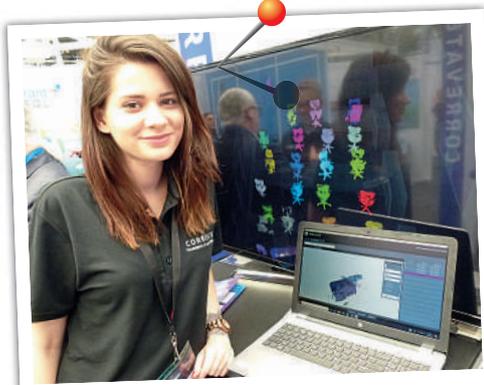
This year, two showfloor theatres were located towards the back of the exhibition hall, with headsets provided to keep noise to a minimum. With more than 60 free-to-attend presentations from which to choose, and with topics ranging from Smart Cities to survey equipment theft, from UAVs to railways and tunnelling, and from GIS and Big Data to BIM, VR and AI, there was something for everyone. And for those staying the course, the Ale Trail on the closing afternoon proved as popular as ever.

All credit to organisers, Diversified Communications UK, and collaborators, the

AGI, TSA, ICES RICS and ICE for, once again, hosting what has become an unmissable event in the geospatial calendar. Commenting on the show, Event Director Caroline Hobden said, "We are absolutely delighted with this year's event. This is the fifth year of growth for GEO Business and the greatest yet in attracting more visitors from a diverse range of industries, professional disciplines and specialists. While there was plenty for the tech geeks and those wanting to know from the researchers and academics what the next disruptive technologies will be, the event showcased very solid opportunities for end users of practical geospatial technologies where they could see for themselves the current 'state of the art'."

GEO Business 2019 will return to the Business Design Centre in London from 21-22 May 2019

GEO Business 2018 exhibition photo gallery

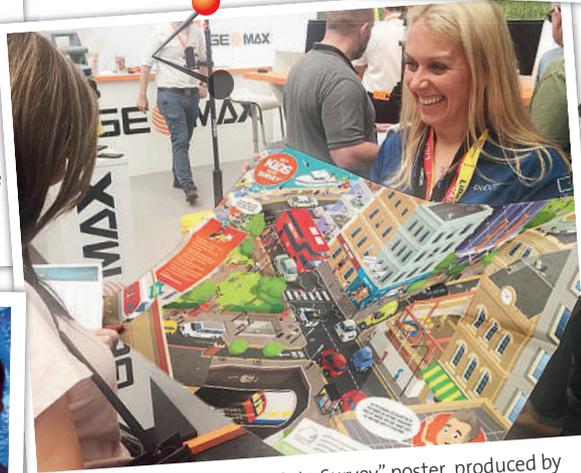


London-based Correvate, a3D technology spin-out from UCL, was showcasing its first software product, Vercator. Demonstrated here by Correvate's Kristina Vladova, the Vercator software platform facilitates the automatic registration and analysis of 3D point cloud data derived from any conventional terrestrial laser scanner. A first application for Vercator is in Building Information Modelling (BIM) where use of the toolkit will, it is claimed, speed and simplify both on-site and back office processes

Photos: GeoConnexion



Brisk business was conducted in the outdoor display area where mobile mapping solutions from KOREC Group (Trimble MX9) , FARO/Siteco Informatica (Road-Scanner C) and Leica Geosystems (Pegasus:Two) attracted much attention.



This eye-catching "Get Kids into Survey" poster, produced by Elaine Ball Marketing and sponsored by 10 leading businesses in the survey equipment and services sector, was in high demand at the show. It is part of an effort to redress the chronic shortage of youngsters entering the profession and showcases some of the amazing jobs surveyors do.



A glimpse of the future was on offer from Topcon and Glasgow-based Sublime, specialists in building VR/AR solutions for the world of work. Here, visitors share an immersive experience in Sublime's AR portal. Using gesture-controlled point cloud data from Topcon's Collage 3D data processing platform, it demonstrated how many tasks and activities will be transformed, not least in construction design and engineering.



A packed audience at the Smart Cities seminar. Pictured here fielding questions were Miranda Sharp, Head of Ordnance Survey's Smart Cities Practice, and John Twitchen, a freelance consultant whose Env24 practice helps organisations make the transition to smart cities and circular economies



Time for a break and a catch-up

Having identified a market for a durable and robust setting-out tool, particularly on high rise structures, James Reville from Survipod Engineering Solutions in County Wexford (pictured) has developed a range Survipod pole mounts for Total Stations, dumpy levels and laser levels. The original tool, that simply dropped into a sleeve cast into a column or wall, has now been joined by the Survipod Boltfix (pictured left) that, as the name suggests, is bolted to a steel frame or concrete deck, the instrument of choice then being screwed into the top of the pole. Both fixtures provide stability for accurate, consistent setting-out, and minimise the risk to equipment and personnel of repositioning tripods on busy construction sites

GEO Business 2018

Conference keynotes

This year's Strategic GEO Business conference set out to address how the sector is evolving to meet the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution

The senior-level gathering, hosted by Ordnance Survey's Simon Navin, gave a thought-provoking insight into how geographic information is helping to shape the way we live, move, work, and communicate at a time of unprecedented change. "The growing demand for real-time, location-enabled insight and content is challenging us as an industry as never before," said Navin, who added, "We should embrace that challenge, as it brings opportunities for us to further embed geo and location in the value chain."

This was certainly reflected in the opening keynotes, whose first speaker was David Wood, appointed earlier this year as central government's Head of Geography (but who prefers his more playful Twitter handle of @GovHeadGeog).

In outlining his remit of raising the professional profile of the 250 geographers working across Whitehall, Wood conceded that making geography a core part of the Government Science & Engineering (GSE) profession is still at an early stage. However, he has been working with fellow Heads of Science and Engineering Professions (HoSEPs) to develop the government's Analytical Function Strategy ... one that supports evidence-based policy and decision-making by capitalising on the combined strengths and expertise of geographers, scientists and engineers. The call has also gone out for individuals to take on Deputy Head of Geography roles within their respective departments. Working as a team, they will seek to grow the geographer community, appoint departmental champions, establish outreach to schools and universities, set professional standards, and develop career pathways.

Next up was Mark Enzer, CTO of Mott MacDonald and proposed chair of the Digital Framework Task Group (DFTG). Created in the wake of several government reports on transforming Britain's built infrastructure, the DFTG will coordinate work across the public and private sector to push through recommendations that include development of a "national digital twin."

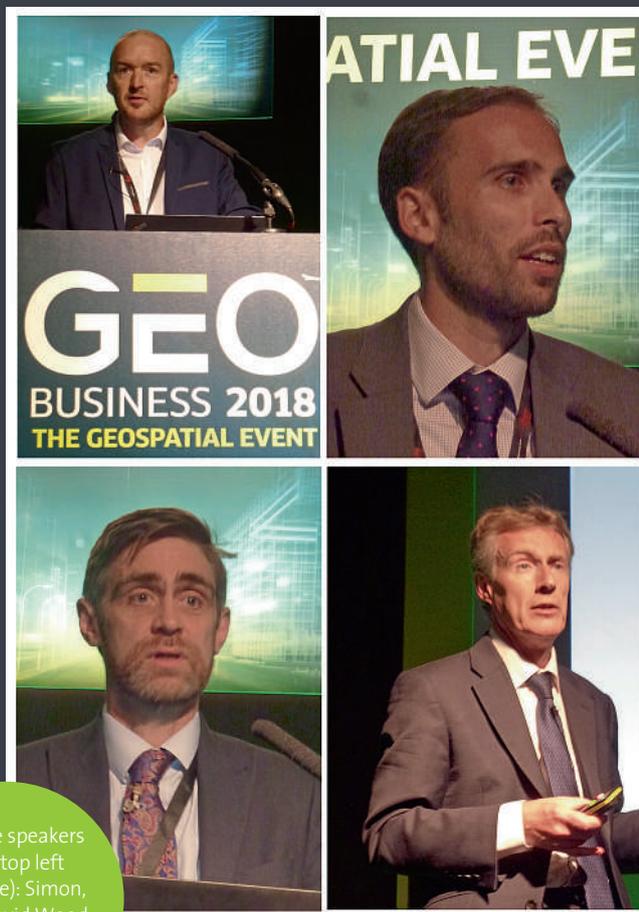
This digital model of the network will span transport, energy, water and telecommunications, and have a predictive capability that could vastly improve how it is planned and managed, and also yield information on its overall performance, both as a system and – more importantly to users

The task of unlocking the value of public sector geospatial data is particularly important in a digital economy and, here again, government has responded by setting up a Geospatial Commission with a mandate to do just this.

A much-anticipated address by its Director,

William Priest, managed to put some flesh on the bones. He was at pains to stress that the 10-person Commission was not intended as a bureaucracy to oversee the production and processing of geodata, rather to see how its potential value of £6-10 billion annually to the economy might be realised. "We've already identified 21 barriers to its commercial uptake and will be consulting with both public and private sector organisations to see how these barriers can be eased or eliminated," said Priest.

An early project will be working with Ordnance Survey to evaluate how MasterMap might be made more accessible as Open Data, particularly to small businesses. While the Commission's £40 million budget has yet to be allocated, it would, said Priest, be invested over the next two years in quick-win projects to achieve



Keynote speakers (from top left clockwise): Simon, Navin, David Wood, William Priest and Mark Enzer

Photos: GeoConnexion

– as a service. The end result, said Enzer, would be a data-rich resource that is of equal, or potentially even greater value than the physical assets it represents.

A prerequisite here is a common framework for the sharing of infrastructure data. No overnight job, said Enzer, but the DFTG nevertheless has its sights set on developing a contents list and roadmap for such a framework by the end of this year.

gains in productivity and value. This would partly involve partnerships with PE, VC and Innovation Hub bodies to stimulate innovation and inward investment, particularly post-Brexit. At the same time, the Commission would be working with every government department and the wider ecosystem to evolve a three-year, UK-wide strategy that joins the dots between the production and use of geospatial data.