

Algorithms rule, OK?

Peter Fitzgibbon, Editor



Research conducted by the Connected Places Catapult and summarised by Nelio Matos and Sebastian Herman on page 44 casts grave doubt on central government's ambition to deliver on its target of 300,000 new homes a year by 2025. Stuart Bonthron of Esri UK has his own take on the subject on page 53

Boris Johnson agrees that reform is needed: "What we have now simply does not work. So let's do better. Let's make the system work for all of us. And let's take big, bold steps so that we in this country can finally build the homes we all need and the future we all want to see." His Forward to the Government's recently-published White Paper on tackling the housing crisis in England sets the tone for an ambitious end-to-end shake-up of the municipal planning system.'

Local Plans come under particular scrutiny, with the proposal that local authorities be

mandated to produce stripped back versions within 30 months as opposed to the current average of seven years. They should include 'an interactive web-based map of the administrative area where data and policies are easily searchable, with colour-coded maps reflecting the zoning, key and accompanying text setting out suitable development uses, as well as limitations on height and/or density as relevant'

In its top-down, digital-first approach, the White Paper proposes a new formula - an algorithm, no less - that will decide where and how much housing will be built. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has helpfully summarised it in the following expression:

$$\text{Adjustment Factor} = \left[\left(\text{Local affordability factor } t = 0 - 4.4 \right) \times 0.25 \right] + \left(\text{Local affordability ratio } t = 0 - \text{Local affordability ratio } t = 10 \right) \times 0.25 + 1$$

Where $t = 0$ is current year and $t = 10$ is 10 years back.

Clear enough?

Needless to say, the White Paper - now open to consultation - has drawn fire from the likes of Theresa May who has branded it "ill-conceived and mechanistic," and which "does not guarantee a single extra home being built." With 'mutant' algorithms fresh in our memory from this year's A Level fiasco, and with growing disquiet over the use of other algorithms - from visa streaming to Covid-19 Track and Trace to facial recognition software - how much faith would you have in this latest proposal?

1. 'Planning for the future' White Paper, August 2020. (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907647/MHCLG-Planning-Consultation.pdf)

NEWS EXTRA



European Association of Aerial Surveying Industries Gather Virtually for First AGM

On 02 September 2020, the European Association of Aerial Surveying Industries, held the First Annual General meeting. After a salutation from the President, **Simon Musaeus**, he presented the new Secretary General **Marcos Martinez Fernandez** to Members and Observers. The keynote was given by Mick Cory, Secretary General and Executive Director of EuroGeographics, who gave an overview of the European and Global geospatial data policy under the title "International Geospatial Policy Developments and EuroGeographics' strategic response." At the core of the AGM stood the election of the new Board of Directors for the period 2020 - 2021. As per the association statutes, Simon Musaeus (Hexagon), **André Jadot** (Eurosense), and **Rachel Tidmarsh** (Bluesky) will continue on the Board as President, Vice President, and Treasurer respectively for a further 12 months. The new Board of Directors will meet for the first Board meeting of the period in October 2020 to agree on the final distribution of responsibilities among all Directors. www.eaasi.eu

thinkWhere Supports GIS Innovation at Scotland's Rural College

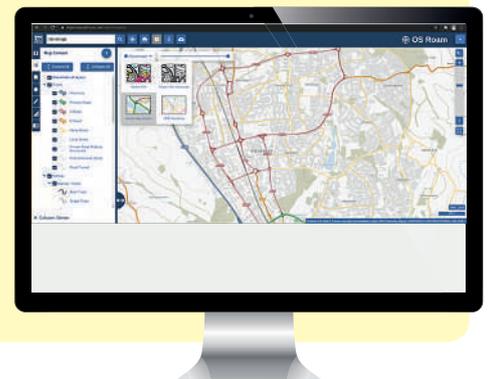
thinkWhere has delivered a field-to-desk GIS solution for Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). Working with SRUC's commercial division, SAC Consulting (SACC), thinkWhere implemented its location data portal, **groundMapper**, to provide SACC staff with the ability to produce high quality, consistent map outputs which underpin innovative client solutions. groundMapper also provides access to centralised geospatial data including **Ordnance Survey mapping**, aerial photography and SACC business datasets. The newly implemented groundMapper system enables the production of standardised maps from **predefined templates** giving a consistency of mapping output across the organisation. Maps produced using groundMapper are used in the submission of Government and other statutory applications including **Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS)**, Croft Registration and Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs), for example. In addition to groundMapper thinkWhere has introduced the leading open-source desktop mapping software **QGIS**, to address the needs of advanced users. www.thinkwhere.com



Move to Virtual Environment Ensures EDINA Digimap Meets Demand for its Map Delivery Service

Digimap, the online map and data delivery service provided by EDINA, based at the University of Edinburgh, has upgraded its geospatial web services engine to **Cadcorp GeognoSIS 9**. It is now operating in a virtualised environment that improves both scalability and redundancy. Digimap has been powered by Cadcorp GeognoSIS since 2008. To meet the demand of the ever-increasing number of **map requests** and benefit from a significant number of new features,

EDINA chose to upgrade to the latest version of GeognoSIS. Digimap specialises in the delivery of a number of geographical data collections over the internet. It serves nearly **150 UK higher and further education institutions** with networked access to a library of mapping data. EDINA also runs **Digimap for Schools**, an online mapping service for pupils aged 5 - 16 years old. This is currently used by almost 3,500 British secondary and primary schools. www.cadcorp.com



Bluesky Laser Maps Quantock Hills to Reveal Archaeological Past

Aerial mapping company Bluesky International is using state of the art, aircraft mounted lasers to create a 3D model of the Quantock Hills in Somerset. As England's first **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** the Quantock Hills has a distinctive character with exceptional beauty and cultural heritage. Commissioned by the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, the high precision terrain mapping project will improve the understanding how people have lived and worked in the area for thousands of years. A **5 year £2.6 million programme** the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) was created to conserve and celebrate the landscape of the area. Significantly funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund it is led by the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which is in turn hosted by Somerset County Council. www.bluesky-world.com



MGISS Scores Accreditation Hat-trick for Cloud Software and Workplace Wellbeing

Mobile GIS Services (MGISS) has been awarded a place on the UK Government's procurement platform G-Cloud. Designed to ease the procurement of cloud services by the public sector the **G-Cloud 12 framework** makes it easier for customers to find, review and contract MGISS's advanced geospatial software services through the online **Digital Marketplace**. In a parallel achievement MGISS has also been accredited as a supplier of software, hardware and support services to the utility sector by the supplier assurance company Achilles. MGISS has also attained the **Workplace Wellbeing Charter**. Recognising a commitment to improving the lives of its team members, MGISS received accreditation across a number of facets including Leadership, Health and Safety, Mental Health and Absence Management. www.mgiss.co.uk

1Spatial Have Been Named as a Supplier for G-Cloud 12 Digital Marketplace

1Spatial, a global provider of Location Master Data Management (LMDM) software and solutions have been named as a supplier on **Crown Commercial Service's (CCS) G-Cloud 12 Digital Marketplace Framework**. CCS supports the public sector to achieve maximum commercial value when procuring common goods and services. In 2019/20, CCS helped the public sector to achieve commercial benefits worth over **£1bn** – supporting world-class public services that offer best value for taxpayers. G-Cloud 12 is an agreement between government and suppliers of **cloud-based services**, designed to make it faster and easier for organisations to procure the cloud services they need at the best value. 1Spatial's cloud software and support services are designed to make it simpler and cost effective for organisations to transform, integrate, validate, improve and visualise their geospatial data. 1Spatial's G-Cloud 12 services make it easier to put location or geospatial data to work, in user-centric apps. www.1spatial.com

British Sugar adopts Rezatec's Innovative Satellite Analytics to Optimise the Supply of Sugar Beet

British Sugar, the UK's sole processor of the beet sugar crop, is working with satellite analytics company, Rezatec, to help achieve **greater efficiencies** in their supply chain and processing factories who are providing field-level crop classification of sugar beet and other crops. British Sugar set out to achieve better visibility across catchment areas where farmers are currently planting sugar beet and the acreage that is achieved, as well as visualising which fields are closest to each respective factory using a distance-travelled metric. Following the initial work, to meet British Sugar's requirements, Rezatec is deploying its **Supply Optimisation product**, part of the **Harvest SAT** solution. Using both optical and radar satellite imagery, and applying its **proprietary artificial intelligence (AI)** approach for crop classification, Rezatec can identify sugar beet and other arable crops within catchment areas and measure the acreage organised into five-mile radial bands from four factory locations around the UK. www.rezatec.com

Technology Company Yotta Announces Major Growth

Connected asset management software and services provider Yotta has achieved significant business growth over the past few months, securing **16 new contract wins** and increasing their overall headcount by **10 percent**. The projects have been secured across a range of service areas, including highways, street lighting and waste, featuring customers across the **South West, Midlands and Yorkshire**. Eleven projects also went live during the lockdown period as Yotta and its customers were able to adapt and deliver the new solution and training remotely. Three of the street works focused projects were working to a hard 1st July deadline, as a result of being required to work with the Department of Transport's newly launched **Street Manager digital data system**. All three customers went live ahead of the deadline and receiving benefits from Yotta's SaaS services being directly linked to the Street Manager API. www.weareyotta.com



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