

LET'S TALK BUSINESS

The Executive Suite

The end of uncertainty

Article by Nick Chapallaz, ESRI UK's Director of Business Strategy

After those long months of uncertainty, at last we now know the scale of public sector funding cuts. Though the cuts were inevitable, the numbers still take some swallowing. Of the billions being slashed from public spending, local government will have to account for some £1.165 billion, with regional authorities facing further reductions too.

The potential silver lining in this, of course, is the decision to free up over £1.7bn of local authority grants. Local areas will now have greater discretion to allocate their resources to their priorities.

Together, these announcements mean a renewed emphasis on those common themes of recent years – efficiency, partnership working and self-service.

Over the last decade, the public sector has found GIS a powerful ally in delivering the efficiency agenda. The ability GIS offers to map services to established needs, to identify opportunities for joint working and to cut duplication has seen it move from the fringes to the centre of operations. For example, by locating a benefits service centre to where the majority of users are predominantly based this will lead to the facility being used efficiently and effectively.

From e-government to Transformational Government, Lyons to Gershon, local authorities are becoming increasingly reliant on geographical information. This was acknowledged in recent initiatives such as Total Place and Smarter Government. These explicitly positioned 'place' as the unifying factor that enables partnerships to flourish, that facilitates data sharing and that can accelerate efficiencies.

But despite this greater use of geographic information to support service planning and management, the full potential of GIS is not always exploited. While in many organisations GIS has grown to become a vital enterprise application, it

has not always transitioned from the back office to the front office. In government, GIS should be used for strategic service delivery, not just at a tactical level. For organisations to derive maximum value from their geographic information – and so help achieve the savings they need to make – this needs to change. The power of GIS must become freely available, easily accessible and transparent to all users: decision-makers in local partners, service managers and citizens.

To help enable this vision, the next generation of GIS is putting geographic information in the hands of the many. LocalView Fusion (www.localviewfusion.co.uk) is a new application developed by ESRI UK that enables local authorities to deliver web based applications and services based around their geographic information – and crucially that of their partners as well.

LocalView Fusion provides ready-scripted 'geotemplates' that automate the common GIS applications, speeding, simplifying and reducing the cost of deployment. Windows of Geographic Information (GeoWindows) can be more readily published, and more easily consumed wherever they are needed. Context sensitive GeoWindows can play an important role, not just in improving decision making but in, for example, helping citizens to self serve. The potential benefit of this is immense – and not only for decision-makers. Smarter Government indicated that every time a citizen can find an answer to a query online, rather than on the phone, the local authority saves £3.30, a great example of the web and GIS complimenting each other for a more engaged service for the customer. LocalView Fusion enables that to happen – providing a means of analysing geographical information from multiple sources, for a minimal cost. In meeting the challenges ahead, that capability will quite simply be vital.

So while the Chancellor's announcement has given us certainty over the scale of the challenge

ahead, there is another certainty for every local authority: when it comes to delivering the efficiency savings now required GIS, and tools like LocalView Fusion, have to be at the centre. www.esriuk.com

Opportunities in a changing world

Article by Simon Doyle, from PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC)

The geographic information "community" will be acutely aware of the current global and domestic economic climate. Threats of a double dip and the unveiling of Autumn's Comprehensive Spending Review have very real consequences for the users and consumers of geo-data, as those organisations, albeit it private or public, for which it underpins strategic decision making look to cut operating costs while delivering service improvements. Doing more with less is the mantra for 2010. All this leans against a backdrop of more rigorous information security and tighter controls. Geographic information practitioners need to therefore be able to articulate how data, software, technology and services provide cost-effective benefits.

One of the challenges when trying to "sell" geographic information and allied services and technologies to the Chief Executive is making the message compelling yet simple enough to understand. There is no doubt that systems implementations can improve work-flows and deliver new capabilities, but the real success stories over the next couple of years will be in the convergence and fusion of data sets to deliver better insight at low cost. **Continued on pg. 30**

Smart cities and the smart grid roll out

Amy Cooke, Strategic Business Development Director at Cable&Wireless Worldwide discusses the importance the smart grid roll out has for building successful smart cities of the future.

Ken Livingstone recently announced that one of his objectives if re-elected as Mayor in 2012 will be to make London the world's first fully-fledged "Smart City". The idea behind this is to develop and improve cities by using Information Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance urban efficiency, an essential part of which will be effective smart grid roll out and the introduction of smart metering into households and businesses across the UK.

The UK's current electricity delivery system or grid was built when energy was relatively inexpensive and while minor upgrades have been made to meet increasing demand, the grid still operates the way it did almost 100 years ago. However, the electricity grid is now facing a number of challenges from increasing demand, concern over resources, environmental considerations and the move to renewable sources. Governments, regulators, utility companies and technology firms are rethinking the electricity grid and looking to create a 'Smart Grid', a grid that will need to combine, coordinate and control the myriad of systems that will be attached to it.

The smart electricity grid of the future will use digital technology to monitor all electricity supply flowing into the grid while controlling the consumer's demand right down to individual household appliances to save energy, reduce costs, and increase reliability of supply. When power is least expensive the user can allow the Smart Grid to turn on selected home appliances such as washing machines or factory processes that can run at arbitrary hours. At peak times it could turn off selected appliances to reduce demand. In addition, a Smart Grid will use

superconductive lines to increase the efficiency of transmissions and improve the capacity of the system to store electricity which is not being consumed and deliver it at periods of peak demand. Storage capacity constitutes a salient feature in the management of fluctuating supply generated by solar and wind sources.

The potential for the Smart Grid to do a host of good things is unquestioned, from cutting energy use to improving the environment, saving homeowners and businesses money, and generating revenue for a wide variety of companies in the telecommunications and IT sectors. The Smart Grid clearly is a winning initiative for society, as well as many companies.

As a new, more intelligent electric system, the Smart Grid will combine ICT with renewable energy to significantly improve how electricity is generated, delivered, and consumed. It will provide utility companies with real-time information to manage the entire electrical grid as a single integrated system, actively sensing and responding to changes in power demand, supply, costs, and emissions – from rooftop solar panels on homes, to remote, unmanned wind farms, to energy-intensive factories and other renewable sources.

Valuable lessons can be learned from the vision of "smart cities" as well as from Smart City projects already underway around the world. Those involved in the smart grid rollout will get a better understanding of the technologies and service levels that will be required to provide consumers with data-rich applications and services that will be the envy of the world.

Energy Solutions October 2010 - London Olympia

7,260 visitors attended Energy Solutions last year which represented a record 18% visitor growth from 2008. With 19% of our audience made up of public sector professionals, it is clear that Energy Solutions plays an important role in local authorities' carbon reduction targets. Since the introduction of the CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme in April this year, sustainable and efficient energy management has moved up to the top of organisations' agendas. This event provides an ideal platform to address all energy management needs.

Energy Solutions is today recognised as the UK's fastest growing energy management event. For 2010, not only will there be than 100 world-renowned exhibitors showcasing the very latest technologies in the market place, there is also an expansive visitor programme to ensure everyone walks away from the event fully up-to-date with developments.

Our free of charge educational programme is our most expansive to date. There will be a strong focus on issues facing local authorities with dedicated sessions taking place in each of the three seminar theatres: the Energy Academy, sponsored by Vanguards Power, the Renewables Seminar Theatre and The Green-Tech Theatre. Each will include targeted seminars for local authorities personnel, such as:

- The challenges facing Government - energy security and how to decarbonise.
- Our energy and sustainability future - an assessment (looking at the UK Energy Bill 2010)
- The UK Renewable Energy Strategy - making progress?
- Comparing "Ground Source" and "Geo Thermal" technology
- Assessing the UK's renewable energy options

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Opportunities in a changing world

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The ability to combine data is nothing new to any good data analyst – but the ability to describe the benefits and the “so what?” still seem to be something the technical community struggle with. In a recent



PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) and AGI survey, it was clear that the majority of the 100 respondents saw geographic data as an “efficiency enabler.” What was less encouraging was the lack of clarity around the benefits proprietary tools, new data offerings and other services actually offer. Within the survey there was strong indication that data strategies were either not in place or not communicated across organisations. “Knowing what you know” is critical when trying to maximise the return on data investments, this is especially true of geographically referenced data as there are good returns to be made on the investment if it is executed and communicated correctly.

Having a good understanding of your data holdings and what you actually do with it is essential as issues such as convergence, asset sweating and project and programme achievability become more acute. Geographic information has been cited by 75% of the survey respondents as “mission critical,” and the challenge, therefore, will be in aligning current data holdings to meet the objectives set out in various policy and commercial drivers. The potential which national coverage, publically generated data can offer was seen as the most important asset to around half of the respondents, the opening of the data.gov.uk portal and provision of data therein will no doubt be a increasingly useful platform to supplement any organisation’s current data holdings.

The Opportunities in a changing world 2010 survey is available from www.agi.org.uk

Simon Doyle is a lead practitioner in PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) Data Assurance practice. He was Chair of the Association for Geographic Information in 2006.

Adoption of Location-Aware CRM

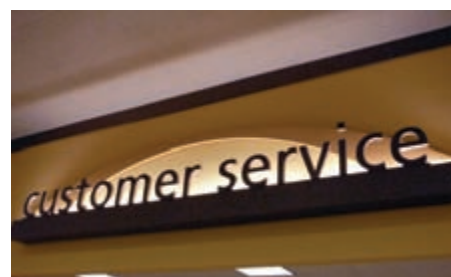
...will take low level GIS Systems from the database to the boardroom. By Scott Robinson, Global Portfolio Director for Data Products, Pitney Bowes Business Insight, www.pbinsight.co.uk

We’re witnessing an exciting time for location-centric IT as technology continues to involve far beyond the era of basic mapping tools. The increasing use of mobile devices and the growing adoption of GPS and RFID have made it easier to identify the location of people and things. Furthermore, the popularity and ease of use of consumer mapping applications such as Bing and Google maps has also created a consumer demand for, and familiarity with, the ability to manipulate spatial data to answer routine enquiries, in a manner that simply didn’t exist previously.

Location is ubiquitous and influences most, if not all, business behavior and outcomes. In fact, according to industry analysts, Ovum, more than 80 per cent of enterprise databases, 70 per cent of all documents and 25 per cent of all web content have geospatial co-ordinates that can be visualised on a map as points lines or areas. As such, it is somewhat surprising to see that this location data is not being capitalised upon by the majority of organisations and IT systems today.

GIS systems have of course been used to analyse data for years. However, they have historically required having expensive customised systems, which were time-consuming to build and need highly-trained specialist staff to run them. As a result, they operated as a niche concern and critical data intelligence with the potential to deliver real business value across the enterprise remained hidden. But as technology has evolved, we have now gone beyond the limitations of specialist GIS tools and arrived at the point where we can unlock the value of these data assets throughout the public sector and enterprise. Location-intelligent tools can empower staff across multiple departments within an organisation to solve what may previously have been challenging problems.

Incorporating location-based data with CRM systems and processes can create a particularly powerful application. The combination of these disciplines enables organisations to access spatial information (eg. flood risk or demographic data), cleanse and evaluate the underlying data, integrate and enrich it with internal systems and processes, analyse and visualise it as needed (eg. check it against selected post codes) and then communicate the results both internally and externally with specific customers or citizens. Giving the ability to locate, connect and communicate, all from within a location-aware data platform.



Location-aware technologies improve and accelerate business efficiency and performance particularly well in customer or citizen centric processes. In the commercial world, a location-aware solution integrated with an existing customer database or CRM system enables an organisation to visually identify and engage with its most valuable customers; better assess risk scenarios, see how demographics correlate with specific objectives or revenue goals, and target new customers with tailored offers based on their demographic or geographic characteristics.

In the public sector, location intelligence offers a number of possibilities for planning for population growth or decline, improving public services and sharing information with citizens. For example, through relatively simply ‘Find my nearest’ enquiries that can guide people to a wealth of relevant information such as their nearest school, recycling site or controlled parking zone with a minimum amount of fuss. Legislation such as the EU INSPIRE Directive is also changing the way public sector organisations share and manage their geospatial data and many agencies have found ways to keep costs down, serve citizens and comply with new government mandates.

As the market matures, and organisations use location as a lead component of their reports and analyses, we will see demand for geospatial ‘what if’ scenario modelling increase. Location awareness enables organisations to get closer to their customers and citizens. By extending CRM systems at the front end and adding the ‘Where Factor’ of geography, postcodes and location intelligence, organisations can unlock their data assets and produce deeper business insights that improve competitiveness and business performance. Pitney Bowes Business Insight believes location aware CRM solutions will break into mainstream business computing and become a legitimate boardroom issue over the next two to five years.



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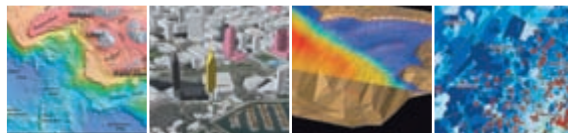


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