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# SCOTLAND GI STRATEGY

CAMERON EASTON REVEALS THE UNIQUE PLACES AND FACES OF SCOTLAND AS A NEW GI STRATEGY MOVES FROM IDEA TO REALITY AND NEW EXPECTATIONS LEAD TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

Scotland – the best small country in the world. How do you beat that? Yet this is the challenge we've been given by our First Minister. We're a (relatively) new devolved administration within the United Kingdom framework. This isn't a federal structure, but the government in Scotland is now responsible for most of the activities that affect the lives of the Scottish people. The First Minister is the head of our devolved government, and when he says that he wants Scotland to be the best small country in the world, we have to deliver the goods. So, not too big a job then!

As a true Scot, I'm more than happy to sign up to this challenge. And as the civil servant in charge of GI for the government in Scotland, I believe with a passion that GI can make a major contribution to this big vision for our country.

We can use it to highlight our strong points – the landscape, the heritage and the people. We can also use it to identify the problems – social deprivation, bad health and the legacy of our industrial past.

So can we do it? I think we can.

## One Scotland – One Geography

We've already made a big start. We've published our GI Strategy – "One Scotland-One Geography". This has defined the issues and highlighted the problems we need to solve. The vision statement sums it up:

"We recognise the value of geographic information, and the advantages of using it for the benefit of Scotland's economic and social development, health, justice, transport, education, environment

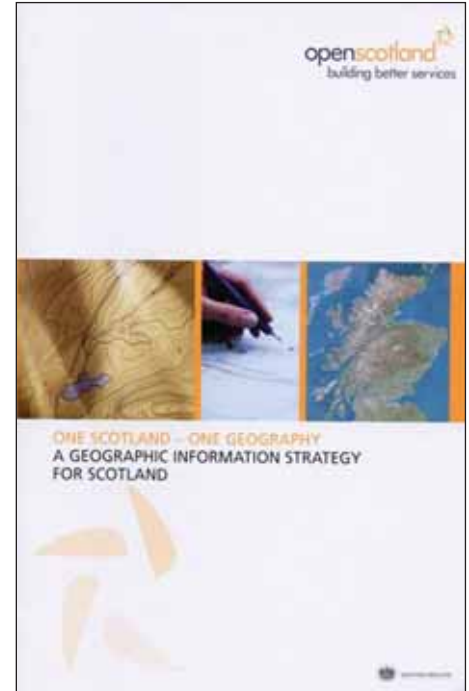
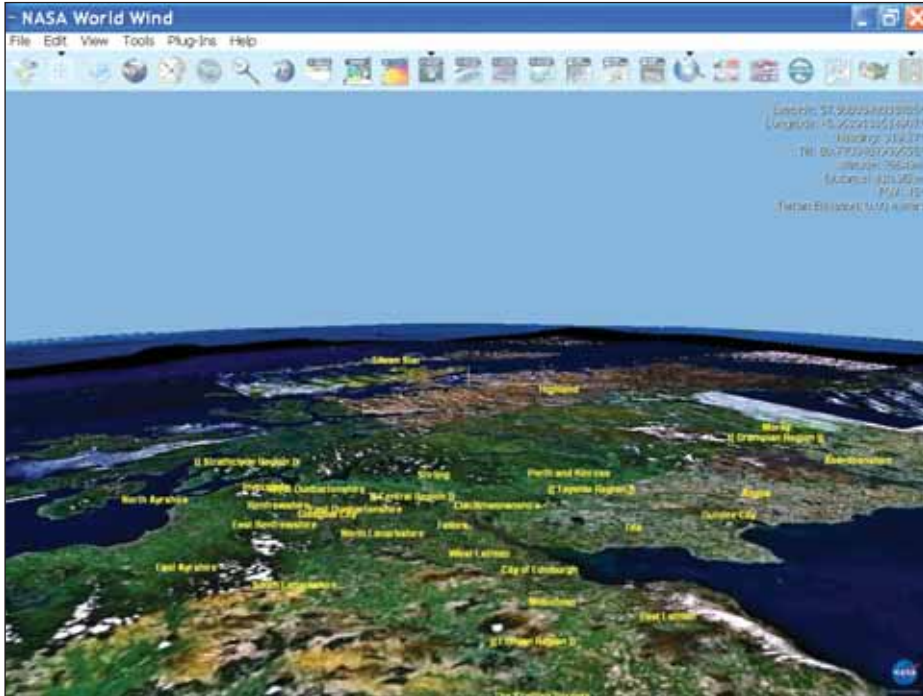
and culture. The strategy aims to overcome the barriers to maximising the use and value of geographic information, for the benefit of Scotland."

Although it's something that only a civil servant could appreciate, the Strategy was launched by the Minister for Finance and Public Sector Reform, and holds the key to the future.

## Turning the g into e and i

Having tried for years to find the "killer app" that would finally convince the world that GI was important, those of us with common sense have finally realised that the only way forward is to do away with the "g" or "geo" prefixes, and concentrate on the "information" bit. Suddenly this opens up a whole new world. With *spatial* information as a sub-set of government *information*, we can build on the power of mainstream government "e" and "i" initiatives. And this is what we've done in Scotland. Implementation of the GI Strategy is now the responsibility of the Department of Finance. It is now embedded in the mainstream activities of government that cover public sector reform and efficiency in government. It sits beside such big policy areas as digital inclusion, efficiency savings and the national ICT infrastructure. It has a hand on the levers that guide some major government funding streams. Suddenly, implementing the GI Strategy has the formal government mandate that the GI community in Scotland has been dreaming about for years.

So can we deal with this raised expectation? I think we can, and the way we'll do it is to develop a Spatial Data Infrastructure.



### The Faces, Spaces and Places of Scotland – A Spatial Data Infrastructure for Scotland

There are nine themes in our SDI, spookily reflecting the nine geographies of Nordic mythology that are so much part of our Viking heritage.

**Governance** – We’ve already got a framework with senior level involvement, but we’ll develop it to make sure that it is as inclusive as possible, involving public, private and voluntary sectors.

**Reference Data Framework** – We’ve struck a chord by re-defining our reference data as the “Spaces, Faces Places” of Scotland. More specifically we have categorised these as:

- *Open Spaces* – the base mapping, boundaries and associated thematic layers that define the surface landscape of Scotland.
- *Hidden Spaces* – the underground infrastructure of pipes and cables on which Scotland depends.
- *People’s Spaces* – the land and buildings that are owned by people, and can be categorised as assets.
- *Spaces for the Faces* – the identifiers, address and postcode, that define where people are for any particular purpose (“everyone is somewhere”). These are the key to the statistical data about Scotland’s people.
- *People and their Places* – people relate to and describe their surroundings by giving names to places. These are the key to Scotland’s written and cultural archive.

We’ll be producing a series of data and interoperability standards for each of these themes, and they’ll become mandatory through the Scottish Executive’s OSIAF scheme – (Open Scotland Information Age Framework), which is

equivalent to the GB e-GIF standard.

**Project Register** – We’ve created a Projects Register that could/should define everything that’s happening in Scotland’s GI world. This is vital to avoid duplication of effort. However, it does have a wider utility, so everyone can join in!

#### Central Procurement of GI Data and Systems

We’ve already made the big first step and GI data and systems have been formally recognised as part of the Scottish government’s central procurement process. Although some big issues about spatial data supply to the British government still need to be resolved, we aim to make sure that spatial data is readily available to the public sector in Scotland and that artificial barriers to data sharing are removed.

#### Data Sharing Framework

We’re starting to define the protocols that will free up data flows between public sector organisations. We’ve defined a number of common themes within the “Spaces, Faces and Places” framework, and over time we’ll build the GML schemas within them that will move similar types of data between organisations and take advantage of existing business processes:

- National (virtual) Map Library – creating the mechanism whereby base maps, national boundaries etc will flow from data creator to specific application, doing away with the need for public sector data warehouses.
- National (underground) Infrastructure Register – ensuring the exchange of data among Scotland’s utilities and local authorities.
- National Land & Property (Asset) Register – bringing together the asset information held by the public sector.
- National Address Gazetteer – creating the common address structure that can be

shared by all public sector applications.

- National Place Names Gazetteer – bizarrely, there is no place naming convention in Great Britain. Given that Scotland has three languages (English, Scots and Gaelic) we are well placed to take the lead in establishing such place naming protocols,

#### What Next?

Some of these, such as the National Address Gazetteer are already happening. Others, such as the National Place Names Gazetteer will take some time to put in place. We’ve started to develop the timetable to deliver this ambitious work programme, but the big plan is to have our SDI in place by 2011. To celebrate this, and to make sure we deliver our big ideas, our aim is to host the 2011 EC GIS Workshop in Scotland. We’ll give you a real Scottish welcome then.

#### Hands across the Sea

Many of you will be reading this and saying “so what, we’ve already done that”. Believe me, we’re well aware of the fact that we’re not doing anything new. We know that our vision has already been made a reality in countries across the world. However, we haven’t done it before and so we’re really keen to learn from your experience. If anyone can give us any handy hints or tips that will help us avoid reinventing the wheel or making big mistakes, please get in touch. We’ll be delighted to hear from you!

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Project Register: <http://www.gisprojects.net/>  
 For More information: The Strategy can be found at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Open-scotland/OneScotland/Introduction>