

The National Trust Opts for GIS Training



The introduction of a new software platform can be discomforting even for experienced users. The solution is to turn to experienced trainers.

The National Trust is a conservation charity looking after over 300 historic buildings and gardens, and more than 250,000 hectares of land of our most special landscapes and natural habitats. With a move to a new ArcGIS platform in 2013 the Trust turned to trainers GIS247 to help staff adapt to the new platform opted for unlimited access to e-learning for ArcGIS. Currently, the Trust has 29 users making the most of the training, now in its fourth year.

Users at the Trust are enjoying the flexible nature of the training and the confidence it has given them. Head of Data Conservation Information, Huw Davies, explains: "GIS247 is a fantastic training resource for the organisation during this time, as we are making a major transition in our GIS. It's a great plus to be able to offer our users such a wide range of comprehensive training material in a format that is so flexible."

Huw feels confident they've made the right decision: "We've chosen GIS247 because our organisation has a very large user base that is highly dispersed across three countries, making face-to-face training challenging." Huw's team has the responsibility of rolling out the new ArcGIS platform and he tells us: "We were delighted that GIS247 offered the range of modules, from complete beginner to advance, in a way that gave the user complete flexibility to pick up and put down the training as required. It's also making great efficiency savings for us, saving both the travel and time taken for internal training courses and / or the expense of external classroom training."

Flexibility: whole days or just dip in Huw says that the flexibility offered was really important in choosing GIS247: "E-learning clearly gives greater flexibility when it comes to how users can approach their training and development. Different users have different learning styles. Some like to book out whole days and do the training in a more traditional format, others dip in and out as time allows... using the topic modules that are available through the GIS247 platform. Even users who were already experienced in ArcGIS have commented that they found the topic-based modules useful to expand their knowledge in specific areas."

Fiona Henry, Conservation Data Manager (CDM) in Northern Ireland, has also found the training invaluable. Due to work pressures Fiona has not yet been able to complete the assessments, so has instead selected what's most relevant to her at this stage: "I have concentrated on the presentations and have used these to look up any questions I may need to find an answer". She says she found the presentations to be clear and easy to understand and adds "I intend to set aside the time to complete, especially as I will now be more in tune with the detail of the content. I would hope to have access to this training for some time to come."

Fiona's colleague, London & South East CDM, Joanna Gilroy-Scott said that although she had a good understanding of GIS, her prior knowledge of ArcGIS Desktop was extremely limited before taking advantage of GIS247. "The online modules helped me reach a good level of understanding in a short space of time. They gave me the confidence to jump into the ArcGIS world before I was pushed!" She is keen to complete the course very soon: "I've now finished the beginner and intermediate modules. I need a little more time before taking it to the next level and then I'll be returning to the advanced modules of GIS247."

Huw says that the success with the users so far means they'll endeavour to roll out the training further in the future: "Currently we've just rolled it out to our central team and regional GIS managers – but the plan is that once everyone grows in their familiarity and confidence with the ArcGIS products we will roll it out to other National Trust users across a wide range of disciplines, from Ranger to wildlife specialists, to archaeologists and customer insights."

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