

Bluesky Aerial Photomap Definitive Information Resource for Irish Council

Waterford City and County Council is one of the first organisations to benefit from the most up to date Bluesky aerial photography of Ireland. Captured in 2015, the high-resolution aerial images are being made available to all staff via the council's intranet map portal, and to specialist users via desktop Geographical Information System (GIS) and Computer Aided Design (CAD) software. The council has also taken delivery of Colour Infrared (CIR) imagery, and is about to receive detailed height models – Digital Terrain Models (DTMs) and Digital Surface Models (DSMs) – covering the whole of the city and county area.

“There was a recognised need within the council for a more up to date source of information as our previous datasets were several years old,” commented Jon Hawkins, GIS Project Leader for Waterford City and County Council. “Bluesky was selected as a supplier following a rigorous tender process. Having now taken delivery of the data, feedback on the currency, accuracy and quality has been very positive.”

The council is already deploying the datasets via the council's intranet map and data servers, which gives access to the data – described by Hawkins as ‘a definitive resource’ – to the entire council. Specialist staff in the council's five directorates access the data via desktop GIS from AutoCAD and MapInfo. Early applications of the data have included informing engineering and flood defence projects, supporting water mains rehabilitations projects, updating asset management for the highways department and use by the planning section to process applications.

There are also plans to use the Bluesky data to underpin a project to ensure compliance with granted planning permissions. Staff within the council's planning department will overlay the imagery, aerial photography and CIR, with other map layers, including records of permissions granted, to see if work has commenced. They can then establish if the terms of permission are being adhered to and if the correct fees have been levied and paid. It is hoped that this use of the data to complete desktop surveys will reduce the need for site visits, ensure compliance with current policy, minimise costs and maximise revenues.

Bluesky originally announced its plans to capture high resolution, leaf on, aerial photography and CIR imagery for the whole of The Republic of Ireland in 2014, and began flying as planned during the spring of 2015. Committed to a three-year update cycle for core data products, Bluesky recommenced flying in spring 2016 and has already captured several thousand square kilometres of new data.