thinkWhere Helps Atholl Estates Transition to Opensource GIS

thinkWhere is helping one of Scotland's best-known Highland estates realise the benefits of opensource desktop mapping software. Originally introduced to support the process of land registration, Atholl Estates is now using the QGIS solution to create, store, analyse and share a wide range of spatially referenced data. Applications of the free to use software include farming, habitat assessment and utilities and infrastructure management.

A specialist in opensource GIS technologies, thinkWhere worked alongside Atholl Estates to implement QGIS and integrate it with existing workflows. They also provided training for key personnel, undertook data capture and conversion exercises and is delivering ongoing technical support.

"Prior to the implementation of QGIS, we had a standalone mapping tool which was only used for forestry applications," said Andrew Bruce-Wootton, chief executive of Atholl Estates. "However, a new land registration process, being promoted by Registers of Scotland, and changing operational needs meant we needed to consider our use of spatial data and technology."

Atholl Estates undertook a comprehensive review of available systems including networking with other organisations and estates before selecting QGIS. "We discovered QGIS was used extensively within the land management sector and feedback was very positive. We also knew we could access data services, training and support from thinkWhere, which would be crucial to the successful uptake and ongoing use of the software," he continued.

Working with Atholl Estates, thinkWhere helped set-up the cross-platform QGIS and undertook the process of transferring existing paper and digital records, including those already held within the forestry software, to the new system. The land registration process, a primary driver in the QGIS project, mapped estate boundaries using existing plans and local knowledge to create a digital spatially referenced record of land and property.

"Working with thinkWhere has been a bit like having our own IT department which just isn't practical for an organization of our size and nature. They are responsive, informed, available and the skills they have imparted are allowing us to get the most out of the software and data," concluded Bruce-Wootton.

Atholl Estates consists of three main blocks of land, the largest to the north and east of the village of Blair Atholl in Perthshire, Scotland. Five main operating groups; tourism, agriculture, forestry, renewable energy and let property, account for the commercial activities of the estate, however, a primary aim of the estate is the preservation and enhancement of the natural, built and social environment.