

World's First Garden City Looks to the Future with GIS Software from Cadcorp

North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) is migrating from a bespoke web mapping application to an off-the-shelf application from British software developer, Cadcorp. The upgrade will make interactive web mapping available to more than 300 council employees.

NHDC's GIS Manager, John Barnacle, explains the move, "The Council licensed Cadcorp's geospatial web services engine, GeognoSIS, in 2005 and Cadcorp developers built us an associated web mapping application to our own specifications based on that engine. The application has served us well for the last ten years, both as a public-facing web site, and as a back-office application. However, we are constantly reviewing our IT infrastructure, and we have decided now is the time to make a step change in our investment in GIS. We will be replacing a bespoke 32-bit web mapping application with a 64-bit version of Cadcorp's off-the-shelf product – Web Map Layers 8.0. It will bring us new functionality, a modern and responsive user interface, and we will have future-proofed our investment in GIS."

Web Map Layers will be managed from the council offices in Letchworth. This town of 33,000 people was the world's first Garden City, and the management of green space continues to be a council priority, as John relates: "Our grounds maintenance contractors are enthusiastic users of web mapping in Letchworth and elsewhere. When we ask them to maintain playing fields, for example, they will go to the web mapping application, identify the location, measure the land area to be treated, and calculate the amount of fertiliser to be applied. They are able to create maps as PDF documents and share these electronically with their workforce. They will be able to do this and more in Web Map Layers 8.0. For example, they will be able to view and query map data online in the field using smartphones and tablets."

Generic web mapping is widely used by council employees on a daily basis, both in the office and when working from home. Tasks range from querying land ownership through to planning the location of polling stations. Council employees can also access mapping as an embedded component in IDOX applications serving environment, planning, building control, land charges, street naming and numbering. The underlying technology is the same: Cadcorp Spatial Information System (Cadcorp SIS).

The sharing of both spatial data and technology is central to North Herts' approach to GIS. "I am a firm believer in the benefits of holding spatial data in a centralised database" noted John. "As GIS Manager I am responsible for keeping the council's map data secure and up to date. When I update maps, I want to make the updates once, and have the updates made available immediately and automatically for all my users. Cadcorp SIS takes care of this in the way it manages spatial data in Oracle, and it will continue to do this when we move to SQL Server."

Mike O'Neil, CEO Cadcorp commented "Change and innovation are the norms in software development, and geospatial software is no exception. It is encouraging to see a local council looking to take advantage of recent technical developments in GIS and web mapping."

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