

Unlocking the economic benefits of geospatial data & maps

Ordnance Survey Ireland

The Challenge

- Make geospatial data about Ireland more accessible and usable
- Offer new functionality for OSi's 1.5 million web users

The Benefits

- Improved access to multi-party geospatial data, from a single web site
- The ability for users to create and share maps using mobile devices
- Trusted information to support decisions about new investments in Ireland
- New value-adding services for members of the public

Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) has launched a new online mapping service that helps to unlock Ireland's vast reserves of geospatial data by making trusted, location-based information easy to find, interpret and share, from one place, using any device, for the first time. Called GeoHive, this free web app is expected to support the recovery of the Irish economy and pave the way for public and private sector organisations to save millions of Euros

The Challenge

OSi is in no doubt of the incredible value that geospatial data can deliver for the Irish economy. In 2013 it commissioned an Economic Assessment of Ireland's Geospatial Industry, which concluded that better use of location-based information could lead to annual cost savings of €82m in the public sector, time savings with an economic value of €279m and competition benefits of €104m. Inspired by these findings, OSi decided to take a lead in making Ireland's vast geospatial data resources more widely available via the Internet.

The national mapping organisation already had an online map viewer, which attracted over 1.5 million unique visitors a year. However, the technology behind this web service was becoming out dated and couldn't deliver digital cartography to tablet and mobile devices. OSi therefore launched an ambitious project to replace its existing map viewer with a new online portal that would improve the user experience, as well as make third party, public sector data easily accessible from a single location.

The Solution

A long-standing user of Esri geographic information system (GIS) technology, OSi worked closely with Esri Ireland to completely redevelop and modernise its online mapping capability, using Esri's ArcGIS platform. Named GeoHive (www.geohive.ie), the new, free-to-use web service now delivers significantly enhanced facilities for users, including a new 'make your map' capability. "For the first time, users can access current and historical OSi maps on their mobile phones and tablets, whenever they need them," explains Hugh Mangan, general manager of business and marketing, OSi. "GeoHive also gives users the ability to create maps in a much simpler way, save them and share them instantly with colleagues using any device."

Most importantly, GeoHive combines OSi mapping with data from a wide range of public sector partners, to create an authoritative national Spatial Data Infrastructure. "GeoHive is a classic portal, in that it provides an access point to lots of existing sets of spatial data that have already been published," Mangan says. "However, it is unique in Ireland in the way that it combines over 142 layers of third party data from 35 public sector bodies and presents them seamlessly to the end user from a single site."

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Colin Bray, chief executive, Ordnance Survey Ireland



As part of the GeoHive development project, OSi used Esri's ArcGIS Online and story map templates to publish ready-to-use maps with “curated content” on specific topics. For instance, OSi has built a map viewer for people buying residential properties that displays key considerations such as schools, environment, transport, employment, hospitals and crime. “We've taken all of the hard work out of finding information, by presenting everything that people might want to know in one place, with a logical interface,” says Mangan

Benefits

Launched on 3rd November 2015 by Ireland's Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, GeoHive is now enabling OSi to achieve its aspirations. The online portal delivers:

Greater access to geospatial information

With the development of GeoHive, OSi is now able to expose many more individuals and organisations to the vast reservoirs of geospatial data that exist in Ireland. From one single website, users can combine and layer different data sets against the background of up-to-date OSi maps, to uncover fresh insight into situations and easily share that information using mobile devices.

Trusted evidence to support investment decisions

It is anticipated that GeoHive will help to encourage new investments in Ireland, supporting the recovery of the Irish economy. For example, an industry story map, included in GeoHive, shows information about the working population, skills, infrastructure and transportation. “If a business owner is considering opening a new office or factory in Galway, GeoHive presents all the information that they need to help them understand the area and make informed decisions,” Mangan says.

Substantial opportunities to make cost savings

OSi is confident that GeoHive will play a key role in helping organisations to improve their efficiency and thereby unlock the significant cost savings opportunities identified in its Economic Assessment of Ireland's Geospatial Industry. According to OSi's chief executive, Colin Bray, “ArcGIS has enabled OSi to deliver a service that has the potential to really boost the value of geospatial data to the Irish economy. By making location-based data more accessible, useable and meaningful for everyone, GeoHive will help public and private sector organisations to reduce costs, save time and capitalise on new business opportunities.”

Improved public services for citizens

GeoHive enables all participating public sector organisations to deliver a better customer service, by making their data more accessible to a wider number of potential users. Citizens can not only find public information more easily, but also have simple-to-use tools to help them apply it to their areas of interest and make informed choices that will enrich their lives. Summing up, Mangan observes, “GeoHive provides a window to a wider world.”

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