esri Ireland

Transforming the planning application process
Carlow County Council

At a time when the Irish economy is beginning to revive and new development projects are taking off again, Carlow County Council is set to process a significant increase in planning applications with the same number of employees. It has used Esri's ArcGIS platform to transform its planning application system and deliver a high quality of service for citizens.

The Challenge

- Create an efficient and reliable planning application system for the newly merged local authority

The Benefits

- Time savings from the use of automated GIS analysis
- Better information to support faster, well-informed decisions
- Improved access to information for developers
- Better public services for citizens
- A more reliable, high performance IT platform

The Challenge

The IT systems used to process planning applications in the town and county of Carlow in south-eastern Ireland had become outdated. They were slow and unreliable and, to make matters worse, the IT vendor had announced that it would be discontinuing support. So, when Carlow County Council was required to merge with Carlow Town Council in 2014, this significant reorganisation provided precisely the catalyst needed for a brand new approach to managing planning applications.

The Solution

Having used Esri's ArcGIS Online for nearly two years and been highly impressed by it, Carlow County Council approached Esri Ireland for help in designing and developing a state-of-the-art planning application system, based on geographic information system (GIS) technology. The resulting solution, known internally as 'Planning GIS', is based on Esri's ArcGIS platform, seamlessly integrated with the council's existing iPlan planning administration database.

Now, when new planning applications are received, the site location maps are digitised and verified, to make sure that site details are correct. The planning register is then accessible to employees right across the council and can also be accessed by the general public and commercial organisations via an ArcGIS web map service.

ArcGIS then automatically draws in supplementary information from external sources, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Office of Public Works and the Department of the Environment. Using these diverse data sets, it automatically analyses the site location, detects potential conflicts, such as proximity to a special area of conservation (SAC) and presents planners with all of the relevant spatial information necessary to make better informed planning decisions.

To further enhance its planning application process, Carlow County Council has scanned and geo-registered its vast collection of old hardcopy planning maps using ArcGIS. Consequently, planners can open these historic maps from within the planning system, turn them on and off, or layer them over up-to-date maps, to gain a clear perspective on land changes over time. "Having ready access to this information is really important," says William Barry, IS Project Leader at Carlow County Council. "We can see at a glance the planning history of a site and make decisions accordingly about necessary planning conditions."

Esri Ireland
Dublin
Block B | Ashtown Gate
Navan Road | Dublin 15
T +353 (0) 1 8693900 | **F** +353 (0) 1 8693901
Belfast
T +44 (0) 2890730165 | **F** +44 (0) 2890730167
E mapsmakesense@esri-ireland.ie
W esri-ireland.ie

Learn more at: esri-ireland.ie

> " In a recovering economy, we will be able to process a far larger volume of planning applications and deliver a service that is low in cost and high in quality. "

William Barry, IS Project Leader, Carlow County Council

Planning GIS provides clear, online visibility of the planning register

Benefits

Planning GIS has delivered significant advantages for Carlow County Council, including:

Greater internal efficiency

The automated analysis capabilities of Planning GIS help to improve the productivity of the council's planners, by reducing the amount of time required to check site locations for potential environmental or historical conflicts. As Barry explains, this efficiency gain will be particularly important for the council when the number of planning applications increases in the future. "In a recovering economy, we will be able to process a far larger volume of planning applications and deliver a service that is low in cost and high in quality," he says.

Better-informed decisions

As planners have instant access to the full history of a particular site and all the environmental data that relates to it, in one place, they are able to make faster, better decisions. "Everything we need is there in front of us," Barry observes. "If an area is designated or is located close to a protected structure for example, planners can see that straight away."

Added support for developers

Developers, construction firms and other organisations working in the building industry can use the ArcGIS web feature service to view the council's planning register on demand. Consequently, they don't have to waste time visiting the planning office for information and have better insight into upcoming projects. As Barry says, the planning application "Helps the local construction industry as a whole, by allowing developers and other professionals to do their jobs more efficiently."

Improved services for citizens

Employees across all departments in the council can access Planning GIS to help them make better long-term decisions about new road infrastructure projects and other public services, to ensure that investment is made in the right areas to meet the needs of citizens. Equally, individuals and companies, who have applied for planning permission, can now monitor the progress of their applications online and don't have to keep phoning the council for updates.

More reliable IT

Finally, the council's IT department is now relieved of the pressure of trying to maintain an IT system that had begun to outlive its usefulness. "Planning GIS is a faster, more responsive and more reliable system," reports Barry, adding simply, "It just works well."

Esri Ireland
Dublin
Block B | Ashtown Gate
Navan Road | Dublin 15
T +353 (0) 1 8693900 | **F** +353 (0) 1 8693901
Belfast
T +44 (0) 2890730165 | **F** +44 (0) 2890730167
E mapsmakesense@esri-ireland.ie
W esri-ireland.ie

Learn more at: esri-ireland.ie