

Optimising the role of 60,000 volunteers

National Trust

The Challenge

- Enable more people to get involved in volunteering
- Provide a better experience for volunteers
- Let volunteers see the value of their contribution

The Benefits

- A positive experience of volunteering with the National Trust
- An effective way to involve larger numbers of volunteers
- Well-informed decisions about conservation and maintenance
- More successful collaborative conservation projects



Volunteers play an invaluable role in helping the National Trust to protect and care for the nation's cultural heritage and natural landscapes. The not-for-profit organisation is now embracing crowdsourcing and is using ArcGIS in a series of ground-breaking pilot projects that will enable more people to get involved and make a valuable contribution to its conservation work.

The Challenge

The National Trust has over 60,000 volunteers who play a vital role in helping the charity to manage 250,000 hectares of land, 778 miles of coastline, 80,000 archaeological features and 28,000 buildings. The organisation wanted to optimise the role played by this enthusiastic group and find a way to engage even more people in its activities. At the same time, it wanted to show its volunteers the value of their contribution and help them to feel more involved in conservation projects.

The Solution

The National Trust is now pioneering new ways to engage with volunteers using Esri's ArcGIS platform. In a series of pilot projects, the organisation is beginning to use ArcGIS mobile solutions, including Collector for ArcGIS and Survey123 for ArcGIS, to allow volunteers to upload information from their smartphones and tablets to a central portal. Called ArcGIS Hub Premium, this portal provides secure, authenticated identity for huge numbers of volunteers, which allows them to see the data they have collected, in the context of the wider project. Volunteers can therefore appreciate what they have done and the value of their contribution to the National Trust's conservation schemes.

In the first of the National Trust's pilot solutions, volunteers in the Peak District are gathering data on the condition of archaeological features on National Trust land, including barrows, ruins and ancient quarries. They are then uploading and sharing this data via ArcGIS Hub Premium, helping the National Trust to build up a clearer picture of the condition of ancient sites that are rarely visited but are nonetheless important to the history of the nation.

A second, similar pilot solution allows people to record and share information on the condition of styles, gates and steps when walking along the 25,000 km of footpaths that cross National Trust land. This app is currently being trialled by National Trust staff members, but will be rolled out to volunteers and members of the public in the near future, so that more information can be obtained to help the organisation plan footpath maintenance activities.

The National Trust has also developed a volunteering solution for a Riverlands conservation project near Manchester, which will be used by its own volunteers, as well as partner organisations and their teams of volunteers. Large numbers of people will be able to use the same ArcGIS apps to collect data on everything from biodiversity and invasive species to water quality. They will then all be able to view this data on the ArcGIS Hub Premium portal and gain a shared understanding of the conservation challenges along the river valley.

Esri UK | Millennium House
65 Walton Street | Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire HP21 7QG
T 01296 745500 | F 01296 745544
E info@esriuk.com | www.esriuk.com

© ESRI (UK) Limited 2019. Registered in England and Wales
No.1288342. VAT No.787 4307 91. Registered Address:
Millennium House, 65 Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 7QG.
All rights reserved.

The Esri globe and Esri products, services and trademarks mentioned are trademarks of Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. Other companies and products mentioned herein are the property of their respective trademark owners.

“ ArcGIS Hub Premium will allow individual volunteers to see the emergence of critical conservation issues and appreciate the importance of their contribution to the project. ”

Huw Davies, Head of Conservation, National Trust

The Benefits

A positive experience of volunteering with the National Trust

When these pilot projects are fully implemented they will help the National Trust to provide a more engaging experience for visitors and volunteers. It will be far easier for volunteers to collect data on their mobile devices than on paper and, using ArcGIS Hub Premium, they will be able to see the data they have collected and understand the bigger picture. Huw Davies, Head of Conservation at the National Trust explains, “ArcGIS Hub Premium will allow individual volunteers to see the emergence of critical conservation issues and appreciate the importance of their contribution to the project.”

An effective way to engage larger numbers of volunteers

The rollout of ArcGIS volunteering apps will eventually help the National Trust to significantly expand its volunteer base. For the first time, students, families and corporate groups will be able to play a role in conservation activities on a casual basis, without having to commit a minimum amount of time or apply through the National Trust’s formal volunteer application process. For example, the National Trust is currently planning a new pilot project for litter collections on beaches, which will eventually enable the organisation to crowdsource data from the general public, significantly increasing the number of people who can support its coastal conservation projects.

Well-informed decisions about conservation and maintenance

Over time, the use of the new ArcGIS volunteering apps will enable the National Trust to collect a larger quantity of high quality data, which it can use to support its decision making. In particular, the organisation anticipates that volunteers will be able to help it build up a far more comprehensive picture of the condition of assets and habitats, such as signs and ponds. It can then use this information to see where it should prioritise its conservation activities and how best to plan effective, proactive maintenance programmes.

More successful collaborative conservation projects

Although it is still early days, the National Trust already recognises that ArcGIS Hub Premium is a highly effective tool for improving collaboration with large numbers of volunteers and partners. In initiatives such as the Riverlands project near Manchester, the organisation expects ArcGIS Hub Premium to play a pivotal role in enabling large numbers of people to share data and work together. “It feels exciting,” Davies says. “Our pilots are putting crowdsourcing into practice and demonstrating how volunteering programmes can be managed more successfully in the future.”

Esri UK | Millennium House
65 Walton Street | Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire HP21 7QG
T 01296 745500 | F 01296 745544
E info@esriuk.com | www.esriuk.com

© ESRI (UK) Limited 2019. Registered in England and Wales
No.1288342. VAT No.787 4307 91. Registered Address:
Millennium House, 65 Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 7QG.
All rights reserved.

The Esri globe and Esri products, services and trademarks mentioned are trademarks of Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. Other companies and products mentioned herein are the property of their respective trademark owners.

Learn more at: esriuk.com