

Renovating an entire housing business with a simple IT upgrade

Aster Group

The Challenge

- Replace four separate asset maps with a single enterprise-wide system to make business information easier to find and use

The Benefits

- The ability to respond more quickly and effectively to customer enquiries
- Improved employee efficiency leading to accelerated business processes
- Support for key strategic projects around the business
- Better information to support health and safety decision making



After using Esri geographic information system (GIS) solutions for over eight years, landlord and developer Aster Group decided to migrate to Esri's Portal for ArcGIS. This upgrade has transformed the efficiency of employees across multiple departments, leading to significant improvements in customer service, supplier management and decision making.

The Challenge

The not-for-dividend business Aster Group is driven by the desire to ensure everyone has a home. Over the next seven years, the organisation aims to develop 10,000 new homes for sale and shared ownership, and will reinvest the profits into developing more homes for rent. It already owns and maintains over 28,000 homes across the South and South West of England and delivers services for 75,000 customers.

For over eight years, Aster Group had used Esri's ArcGIS platform to collate, visualise and share information about all of the organisation's homes and assets via interactive maps. This GIS had become invaluable to the business, but following a series of acquisitions and other organisational changes, Aster Group had ended up with four separate web maps, each containing different data sets. This fragmented approach sometimes made it hard for employees to find the information that they needed and prevented them from working with optimal efficiency.

The Solution

When Esri launched Portal for ArcGIS, Aster Group realised that if it migrated to this new solution, it could create a single, interactive map to support employees across all business teams. Moreover, the organisation discovered that it could accomplish this systems enhancement with no additional expenditure on software, as the cost of the upgrade to Portal for ArcGIS was included in its annual ArcGIS maintenance package.

Recognising the importance of GIS to the business, Aster Group decided to engage consultants from Esri UK for three days, to guide the migration to Portal for ArcGIS and pass on their expertise to the in-house GIS team. "The consultancy from Esri UK was really worthwhile," says Luke Angwin, GIS Administrator at Aster Group. "We certainly wouldn't be where we are today without that knowledge transfer."

The upgrade to Portal for ArcGIS enabled Aster Group to replace its four legacy asset maps with a single, enterprise-wide system, containing a far more extensive range of data sets – up to 50 layers of information in total from internal and external sources. At the same time, the upgrade enabled Aster Group to deliver improved capabilities for users, such as simplified printing, more professional report generation and the ability to mark-up areas and boundaries on maps.

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

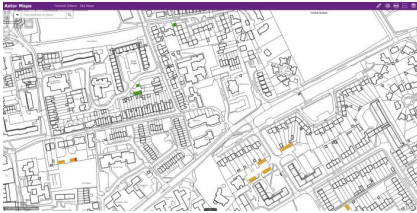
© ESRI (UK) Limited 2016. Registered in England and Wales No.1288342. VAT No.787 4307 91. Registered Address: Millennium House, 65 Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 7QG. All rights reserved.

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

“ ArcGIS has been vitally important to our business for many years, but now it plays an even more critical role by providing employees with easier access to the information they need to deliver quality customer services, support key strategic projects and make informed business decisions. ”

James Barnes, GIS Manager, the Environment Agency



Portal for ArcGIS displays garages owned by Aster Group and their relative classification for rental charges

The Benefits

From what appears, on the surface, to be a relatively simple upgrade from one Esri solution to another, Aster Group has achieved some remarkable business improvements. As Roger Taylor, Assistant Director (Property Investment) at Aster Group says, “ArcGIS has been vitally important to our business for many years, but now it plays an even more critical role by providing employees with easier access to the information they need to deliver quality customer services, support key strategic projects and make informed business decisions.”

More responsive customer service

Customer service agents can now respond far more quickly to customer enquiries, such as checking if the organisation is responsible for cutting a verge in front of a house. “As everything is contained in one map, customer service is more straightforward now,” Angwin says. “Employees don’t have to have historical knowledge of our properties to know where to look to find answers to questions.”

Improved employee efficiency

Throughout the business, teams can work more efficiently, as they can perform basic GIS tasks, such as producing and printing maps for themselves. The drainage team, for example, now uses Portal for ArcGIS to mark areas, such as car parks, calculate square meterage and produce accurate request for tender documents, with maps, to send to prospective suppliers. The team no longer has to request maps from the GIS team for this purpose, which saves time and significantly accelerates the tender process for new drainage contracts.

Stronger contractor and financial management

As all of the information displayed in Portal for ArcGIS is not only up-to-date and complete, but also easy to interpret, employees can access contract maps and customer charges more effectively. The grounds maintenance team can better monitor whether contractors are meeting their contractual obligations, as contract maps can be accessed via hyperlinks embedded directly in the maps for the first time. Equally, the garages team can more easily spot discrepancies in garages classified as basic or prime, and ensure that all customers are charged appropriately for the services they receive.

Clear understanding of health and safety responsibilities

Aster Group takes its health and safety responsibilities very seriously, and through its upgrade to Portal for ArcGIS, it has been able to improve the visibility of information that is pertinent to fire safety regulations. For instance, it can now distinguish between properties that are leaseholder and freeholder, at a glance, for the first time. This distinction was particularly critical in the light of the Grenfell fire disaster, as the organisation could see instantly where it potentially had a responsibility to carry out additional fire safety checks.

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 2016. 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