

Cultivating greater customer satisfaction with effective grounds maintenance

Flagship Group

The Challenge

- Plan, implement and manage grounds maintenance tasks in-house for the first time, replacing multiple contractors

The Benefits

- Improved customer satisfaction with 50% fewer complaints to the contact centre
- Projected 10% reduction in grounds maintenance costs
- Greater employee efficiency, with 68% of process steps removed or automated
- The capacity to consider new business opportunities



As part of a bold strategy to in-source its grounds maintenance activities for over 22,000 homes, Flagship Group developed a fully integrated and automated grounds maintenance management system based on Esri's ArcGIS platform. The initiative resulted in greater customer satisfaction, created significant internal efficiency gains and paved the way for an innovative new business venture.

The Challenge

With around 22,500 properties, Flagship Group is the largest housing association in the East of England, comprising Flagship Homes and repairs and maintenance company RFT Services. Since its inception, the organisation had relied on two or more subcontractors to carry out its grounds maintenance tasks, including mowing lawns, weeding driveways, trimming hedges and maintaining shrub beds. However, Flagship had little or no visibility of when and whether specific tasks were taking place and which areas were being routinely maintained. This lack of transparency hampered Flagship's ability to respond quickly and effectively to customer queries relating to grounds maintenance.

Committed to delivering the highest possible quality of customer service, Flagship made the strategic decision to bring its grounds maintenance activities in-house, by expanding the remit of RFT Services and creating a new digital, integrated process for planning, implementing and managing the entire process. The immediate priority was to create a centralised source of accurate, up-to-date information on all aspects of the grounds maintenance service and make it accessible to employees across multiple departments.

The Solution

Having recently acquired Esri's ArcGIS Enterprise solution from Esri UK, Flagship Group set about developing a customised grounds maintenance solution, based on ArcGIS Server. The organisation was able to very easily integrate ArcGIS with its existing Microsoft Windows 365 applications, Microsoft SQL Server and bespoke intranet platform to create a fully integrated and automated enterprise system.

The ArcGIS-based grounds maintenance solution was launched on the day that the supplier contracts terminated and, from the outset, it transformed the grounds maintenance process, providing complete transparency into all aspects of the service. "Now, we don't just have a picture of a strip of grass that needs to be cut; we can click on the map to immediately see when it was last cut, when its next cut is due, what it costs to cut and which customers pay for it," says Abi Tassie, GIS Developer at Flagship Group.

Up to 180 employees have instant access to the interactive grounds maintenance map while in the office and PDF map booklets (derived from ArcGIS) while in the field. Grounds maintenance operatives use the solution to see which areas are (and are not) owned by Flagship and when they need to attend each site. The Field Management Team uses the solution to plan visits, reduce drive times and increase productivity. The Finance Team accesses cost information via automated reports, embedded within the interactive map, to calculate the grounds maintenance charge per property. Meanwhile, call handlers and housing officers access the system to resolve queries at point-of-contact, for example, when lawns will be mown or what is included in service charges.

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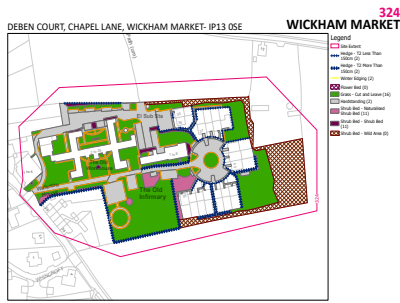
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“ Getting it right for our customers is what matters most to us at Flagship – and ArcGIS is enabling us to do exactly that ”

Morgan Manricks, IT Business Intelligence Manager, Flagship Group



ArcGIS displays the different types of grass, hardstanding and shrub beds surrounding a property and the grounds maintenance requirements.

The Benefits

A tangible uplift in the customer experience

Since in-sourcing its grounds maintenance activities, Flagship has been able to provide better information to customers and provide a more effective service across its 22,500 properties. Indeed, since bringing the service in-house, Flagship now receive 50% fewer calls into its contact centre relating to failures in the grounds maintenance service, while at the same time it has been delighted to receive dozens of unprompted calls from happy customers, praising the improvements to the service. “Getting it right for our customers is what matters most to us at Flagship – and ArcGIS is enabling us to do exactly that,” says Morgan Manricks, IT Business Intelligence Manager at Flagship.

10% reduction in grounds maintenance costs

Flagship has projected an annual reduction of expenditure on grounds maintenance of at least 10% by bringing the service in-house. This cost saving not only endorses the organisation’s decision to implement such wide-ranging changes in its approach to grounds maintenance, but also gives it the opportunity to improve the quality of its service.

Significant time savings from process automation

In the development of the ArcGIS-based solution for grounds maintenance, Flagship Group either removed or automated 68% of individual steps creating a far more efficient and streamlined process. The service charges team, for instance, now saves many weeks of effort every year, as it can fairly allocate grounds maintenance costs to the right customers automatically. “Having great people, using great software with great data makes life a lot easier,” says Matt Brazier, Director of IT at Flagship Group. “If we had not deployed ArcGIS before in-sourcing our grounds maintenance, I’d hate to think how much time and money we would have wasted.”

A platform for business innovation

Such has been the success of Flagship’s in-house grounds maintenance service that the business is now considering tendering for other contracts for grounds maintenance work from other organisations in its region. Tassie says, “Our automated approach based on ArcGIS allows us to do more things in the time we have available. It therefore allows us to consider innovative new business ventures that otherwise wouldn’t have been possible.”