

## Pooling resources to improve services for citizens

# Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and Fingal County Council

### The Challenge

- Make it easier for the public to engage in Development Plan consultations
- Improve the efficiency of the Development Plan process

### The Benefits

- Greater convenience for members of the public
- More efficient internal council process
- Time and cost savings from collaboration



### The Customers

Fingal County Council serves a population of around 240,000 while Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (DLR) County Council serves a population of approximately 194,000. Both councils are located in County Dublin.

### The Challenge

Across Ireland, every county and city council is obliged to produce a County/City Development Plan every six years to set out an overall strategy for development in its region. During the production of these Development Plans, councils have to provide three formal opportunities for public consultation.

DLR County Council wanted to make it easier for members of the public and other interested parties to participate in this consultation process, by enabling them to view and submit information online in connection with development proposals. The council was convinced that an online submissions facility would also help it to improve its internal efficiency. It had already migrated its Development Plan to a geographic information system (GIS) platform, based on Esri's ArcGIS software, and was keen to maximise the value from this investment.

Meanwhile, Fingal County Council was thinking along similar lines. Like DLR County Council, it had already used ArcGIS to replace traditional processes centred on CAD drawings with a single, continuous, seamless geodatabase in its Planning Department. From the outset of its preparations for its 2010 Development Plan process, it intended to implement online submissions, complete with digitising. Given the geographical proximity of the two councils, it made sense for them to collaborate.

### The Solution

The GIS teams and Development Plan personnel from both councils worked closely together with consultants from Esri Ireland to design, develop and deploy a bespoke solution based on ArcGIS. Time was an important consideration for DLR County Council, which was entering one of the final and most important rounds of submissions. As a result, DLR opted to have the solution hosted by Esri Ireland, while Fingal County Council decided to host it within its own data centre.

Because the two councils were working together on the project, they could share development ideas and share the testing which had to be carried out on a number of platforms under a range of different conditions. *"The partnership approach reduced the amount of effort that we had to put into it and ensured a well tested and robust product,"* says Colette Cronin, GIS officer at DLR County Council.

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“We have saved time through more efficient work practices.”

Colette Cronin, GIS Officer, DLR County Council



Dun Laoghaire Rathdown – County Development Plan Viewer.

The new online submissions facility went live in May 2009, in time to be used for public consultation by both councils' Development Plans. Using the new online submissions facility, individuals or their agents can now enter a summary of their concerns or proposals, make a full text submission, mark the boundary of the area relating to their submission directly onto the plan and attach up to five supporting documents. When the submission is completed, the solution automatically provides the interested party with a confirmation message and a unique submission reference number.

The data entered then goes directly into the council's back office systems. *“It removes a substantial amount of work that our Development Plan Team would otherwise have to undertake internally,”* says Hazel Farley, systems analyst, GIS Team, Fingal County Council. *“When citizens mark out their own boundaries, this information is captured immediately in our core database.”*

### Benefits

By sharing ideas and pooling their resources, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and Fingal County Council have achieved their goals with half the effort and half the cost.

The new online facility for making Development Plan submissions has been well received by the general public and local organisations in both regions. Farley believes that this is because the new solution improves convenience for people who want to make a submission to the Development Plan. She says: *“From the comfort of their own homes, at a time that's convenient, members of the public can view the Development Plan and make their views known. They don't have to post anything or come into our offices.”*

Although it is still early days, the online submission facility has enabled both councils to improve the efficiency of their Development Plan processes. *“We have saved time through more efficient work practices, as the information now comes to us in a format that we can readily assimilate into our systems,”* says Cronin.

These time savings will grow over time, as more and more people take advantage of the online service in future rounds of public consultation. Fingal County Council estimates that it saves ten to fifteen minutes for every submission received, where the citizen has captured the boundary through the online submissions process. In the next round of public consultations, it expects to receive in the region of 1,200 submissions. If all of these comments were submitted online, the council could save 60-80 hours (based on the assumption that approximately one quarter of those submissions would have a boundary captured by the citizen).

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