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Migrating GIS services to the cloud
Sheffield City Council

The Challenge

- Migrate GIS services to the cloud

The Benefits

- An enhanced user experience
- Unfettered access to the latest GIS technology
- Agile development of innovative GIS apps
- Simplified system support responsibilities

As part of a new 'cloud-first' IT strategy, Sheffield City Council migrated its ArcGIS systems to Esri UK's Managed Services. Now, GIS apps are performing faster, employees are working more productively and the GIS team is empowered to innovate.

The Challenge

Geographic information system (GIS) technology is deeply embedded in the way that Sheffield City Council delivers services for the population of around 584,850 people who call Sheffield home. GIS is used to help the council fulfil its statutory duties, in areas such as maintaining rights of way; it is used to help the council allocate resources based on an improved understanding of citizen needs in different parts of the city; and it is used by the general public to find information about council services and make the council aware of issues such as faulty street lighting.

For many years, the management and maintenance of the infrastructure and systems providing these essential GIS services was the responsibility of an outsourced IT provider. The council had a small in-house GIS team but it struggled to introduce new solutions and update existing GIS applications quickly. When the council decided to adopt a new 'cloud first' IT strategy and move all its IT systems away from the outsourced IT provider, the GIS team was presented with an ideal opportunity for change.

The Solution

Sheffield City Council started looking for a cloud-based GIS solution and, as it had been using Esri's ArcGIS technology for nearly a decade, it approached Esri UK for information about its Managed Services. "It didn't take us a long time to decide to stay with Esri," recalls Anne Tetley, Geographic Information Strategy Officer at Sheffield City Council. "Esri UK offered a really great opportunity for us to have GIS experts managing our preferred GIS software for us."

Sheffield City Council's in-house IT team was under a lot of pressure at that time, as it needed to migrate a large number of on-premise IT systems away from the outsourced provider simultaneously. The council was, therefore, delighted when Esri UK got all of the GIS architecture up and running in the cloud within just a month of procurement. "It was amazing," Tetley says. "Esri UK's professionalism and efficiency was really appreciated given the complexity that the IT team was dealing with at the time."

The migration to the cloud took place in the nick of time, as the COVID-19 pandemic emerged just weeks later. Using the new solution, the GIS team set up hundreds of new user accounts rapidly, enabling employees to access data and GIS services from home during lockdowns. "We were able to very quickly deploy new web apps and remote desktops – something that was very much appreciated by teams across the council," Tetley explains.

The Esri UK Managed Service complies with government-recommended standards such as Cyber Essentials and was procured through the G-Cloud Framework. "We know we can trust Esri UK to keep our systems and data secure," Tetley says. "I have been really impressed by the knowledge of the Esri UK team and by how quickly they have responded to our queries."
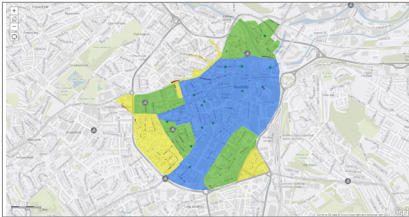
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> **"** Moving to Esri UK's Managed Service has enabled us get data and evidence into more areas of the council, where it can be used to help us deliver services more efficiently and engage with the public in more interesting ways. **"**
>
> Anne Tetley, Geographic Information Strategy Officer, Sheffield City Council

An ArcGIS web app displays information about city centre parking

The Benefits

An enhanced user experience

Following the migration to Esri UK's Managed Services, users at Sheffield City Council have been able to work more productively. The council's highways records team, for example, can now perform tasks more quickly thanks to the improved performance of ArcGIS and simplified data sharing. "Map projects that used to take 15-20 minutes to open now open in less than 20 seconds," Tetley reports. "This has hugely improved the user experience and, in turn, improved the general perception and adoption of GIS within the council."

Unfettered access to the latest GIS technology

Whereas previously Sheffield City Council had access to some ArcGIS solutions via its outsourced IT provider, the organisation now has access to the full suite of ArcGIS technology. This means that it has been able to use ArcGIS Portal for the first time to share data and apps internally in a far more logical and accessible way. It has also begun to use Story Maps and has expanded the use of geospatial data analysis throughout the council to support evidence-based policy making. According to Tetley: "Moving to Esri UK's Managed Service has enabled us get data and evidence into more areas of the council, where it can be used to help us deliver services more efficiently and engage with the public in more interesting ways."

Agile development of innovative GIS apps

The move to a hosted GIS system has empowered and inspired the council's small in-house GIS team to create innovative new apps and GIS services, more quickly. In the past, it could have taken as long as four days for a requested application change to be actioned due to over-complicated workflows. Now, Tetley and her colleagues can develop, adapt and deploy apps themselves on demand. She exclaims, "It used to be so frustrating! Now, though, things that used to take days just take minutes."

Simplified system support responsibilities

Under the terms of the Managed Services agreement, Esri UK will update the council's ArcGIS software annually and review performance quarterly, simplifying system support responsibilities for the council's IT team. "Esri UK's Managed Services take the burden of application support away from our new in-house IT function and give us the reassurance of having our GIS applications managed to agreed performance KPIs and nationally approved security standards," Tetley says.

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