

# GeoPlace: awards event



Held in Nottingham's prestigious Albert Hall, the awards attracted nearly 300 delegates.

address databases for Britain, now there are. . . still three but very different products and at least all available from the same source.

Attended by nearly 300 delegates, the event marks innovative and exemplary use of the National Land & Property Gazetteer (NLPG) and National Street Gazetteer (NSG) by local authority custodians.

The aforementioned marriage has involved 'a great deal of hard work', according to GeoPlace's **Steve Brandwood**. The address datasets are now available to local government and public sector users through the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (the same one that gives them OS MasterMap and other primary products from the national mapping agency). Some 35 million records have had to be matched and checked so that by this autumn 98.55% were in sync.

Brandwood used the delegates' digital voting devices to illustrate the variability of addresses,

## Everything happened in Nottingham

This year marked the arrival of one addressing organisation for Britain. Combining Ordnance Survey's address layer products, the Royal Mail's PAF file and the comprehensive records from local authorities across England and Wales has brought dividends, as *GiSPro* discovered at Nottingham.

HAVING THE "RIGHT ADDRESS" was once an essential part of one's place in society. Growing up in London's Maida Vale I was all too aware of this. The other side of the road was Paddington and we didn't mention it much. Back then Paddington was certainly more run down than today; it seemed to have come off worse than its neighbours during the ravages of the Luftwaffe. Rather we focused on the proximity of St John's Wood, a much more upmarket part of town back in the 1950s. However, as I grew up I learnt you could gain more street cred by mentioning the Paddington connection and even more amongst Irish friends by dropping into the conversation the closeness of Kilburn (known as "County Kilburn" back then).

Today the focus is not so much the "right address" in a social context but having the geospatially correct address so that those who need to reach you know exactly where you are. To do this, as readers of *GiSPro* know, requires more than a simple postcode and house number. Enter GeoPlace and their annual awards event to celebrate all things addressing.

Under the banner of "Everything happens somewhere" this year's awards at Nottingham's Albert Hall took place against a very different backdrop. Last year the awards were hosted by Intelligent Addressing; this year by GeoPlace, formed by a marriage with Ordnance Survey, the Local Government Association and the Royal Mail. Where once there were three

especially over time. Given four variations of the spelling of Nottingham few chose the correct one as the city's original title – Snottingham. One can perhaps see why.

He concluded with a more challenging brain teaser, apparently set by Google for its aspirant employees in its early days: How many times does the big hand of a clock pass over the little hand during a 24-hour period? I will leave you to ponder.

### Good news story

Introduced by GeoPlace MD **Richard Mason**, the first of four keynotes came from **Stuart Young**, director of local government partnerships at the LGA (Local Government Association). He stressed the importance of data in efficiency and delivery of services despite the parlous state of UK's public finances and the Localism Agenda pursued by the Government, including the prime minister's stated desire to focus on "120,000" troubled families, which risked raising yet greater expectation of local government to deliver. Nevertheless, some of the regulatory burden on councils has been lifted with the Audit Commission gone.

For its part, the LGA argues for pooling of public funding, localisation of council tax and business rates. Young believes the arrival of a single gazetteer for addresses will be 'highly beneficial' and lead to cost savings. 'It is a significant good news story' he concluded.



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As director of data collection and management **Neil Ackroyd** looks after some 550 staff at Ordnance Survey. He finds it very inspiring to see how local government uses location data. He paid tribute to the professionalism in GeoPlace, which has blended OS, Intelligent Addressing and local government staff. He welcomed the PSMA, believing it 'encourages OS to collaborate driven by a sustainable model.' He assured us of the value that Ordnance Survey places on address data through his personal engagement with government ministers to help them understand how addressing can be a key economic driver.

**Glenn Dobson** of Kingston upon Hull City Council is chair of the LSG regional custodians. He is a philosophical sort of fellow and posed an interesting quote from Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*: "If you want things to stay the same, then things will have to change". And things did seem to be changing. Quality is up in the 1.247 million streets identified in the NSG in 2010 and now refined to 1.235 million although he was unsure where the 12,638 streets had gone! Nevertheless, errors are down and there is better 'synchronicity' he said, citing Jung's theory of synchronicity. I think we'll leave the philosophy there.

**Andrew Young**, chair of LLPG regional chairs, reviewed the new relationships forged through the creation of GeoPlace, wondering if it was inspired by Monty Python, Ant & Dec or the Bionic Man & Wonder Woman, before settling on a homely image from another age when two men could share a bed without a hint of innuendo or double entendre, especially when one was Eric Morecombe with his pipe.

An all too brief Q&A session found delegates asking, how do custodians make the case for resources in these cash-strapped times? Hone your arguments down to an 'elevator pitch' so if you run into the chief exec or leader of the council and you're stuck in the lift for 30 seconds or so, you have all the arguments distilled into simple English. What happens to the profits from GeoPlace? They're all ploughed back in. And what will be the relationship between the NSG and OS's Integrated Transport Layer? No decision yet on that one.

The awards cover a disparate range of activities, from naming new streets to the integration of new technology. The categories also include: Finance, Integration, Technology, the Citizens Award and the obligatory Green Award. Delegates are also able to choose an overall winner. Several of the winners really were stand out entries and we offer more insight on these below.

### Big bang approach

Barnsley MBC, winners of the CIPFA sponsored Finance Award to demonstrate real financial savings, adopted what they described as a "Big Bang" approach to rolling out their Local Land & Property



*Above: Delegates had plenty of time to network and visit the small exhibition.  
Left: LGA's Stuart Young believes a single gazetteer will be "highly beneficial".*

Gazetteer. In the words of custodian Riley Marsden it was 'nothing new, radical or clever'. But by developing a business case, in which a fixed-term investment in resources would yield cash and efficiency savings to the council, Marsden and his team were able to deliver £1 million expected savings over four years from waste collection route optimisation along with other benefits, including increased taxation income, of £20k per annum. Their work, which was achieved with two staff on 12-month fixed contracts, has also helped identify new opportunities from address integration like better call handling, electronic service delivery, GIS data analysis and enabling information to be made available to the public via a web-based property account. 'If we can do it anyone can' concluded Marsden.

### Major challenge

The Integration Award is meant to show how the National Gazetteers are linked to all council services or local partnerships and the benefits of this brings. Sponsored by SOCITM, the winner must have had a major integration challenge before they did any real work. It involved Bristol City, South Gloucestershire, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset Councils, Police, Fire & Ambulance Emergency Services, Primary Care Trusts & the NHS in the greater Bristol Area. The project, "Total Place Asset Mapping", was sponsored by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. South Gloucestershire Council acted as overall project manager with Bristol City Council's Corporate



*... how do custodians make the case for resources in these cash-strapped times?*



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## The role of GeoPlace



Correct and geospatially positioned addressing has the potential to deliver significant cost savings across the public sector. A single definitive database will assist with the streamlining of services, reducing duplication and facilitating partnership working with private and third sector delivery bodies. By synchronising data and processes nationally, significant cost savings can be achieved by eliminating the need for users to undertake data matching of different datasets.

Following the creation of the joint venture earlier this year between Ordnance Survey and the Local Government Group, GeoPlace has announced three new addressing products, which will be available to the public sector under the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA).

- **AddressBase Premium** a detailed view of an address and its lifecycle by providing information relating to an address or property from creation to retirement. It contains local authority, Ordnance Survey and Royal Mail addresses structured in a relational database model based around the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN), current (approved) addresses, and alternatives for current addresses (reflecting the changes in addresses), provisional addresses (proposed planning developments) and historic information for addresses (including historic alternatives) where available. Objects without a postal address (OWPAs) and cross references to the OS MasterMap topographic identifiers (TOIDs) are also included.
- **AddressBase Plus** contains current properties and addresses sourced from local authorities, Ordnance Survey and Royal Mail matched to the UPRN and structured in a flat file model. It includes OWPAs, such as subdivided properties, places of worship and community centres. It also enables location an address or property on a map by cross referencing with OS MasterMap Topography and Integrated Transport Network Layers' TOID references.
- **AddressBase** contains Royal Mail PAF addresses (25.2 million for England and Wales), both commercial and residential, matched to the local authority UPRN and structured in a flat file model. This allows users to link additional information about a property to a single address. It also provides an enhancement to PAF data by assigning an X and Y coordinate to every address.

All three products are maintained from the best parts of local government's National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG), Ordnance Survey's OS MasterMap Address Layer 2 products and the Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF).

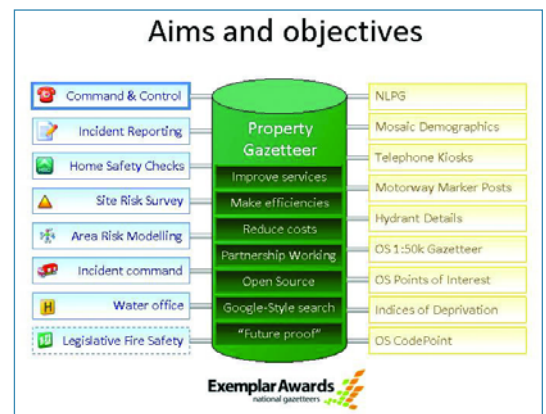
GIS team commissioned to undertake the mapping and asset matching.

The work required the various participants' major property assets to be plotted on a single layer and made available through a web-based GIS and thereby achieve better and more flexible use of public sector assets across the sub-region. Potential savings of £1.5 million per annum are expected from this work over the next ten years.

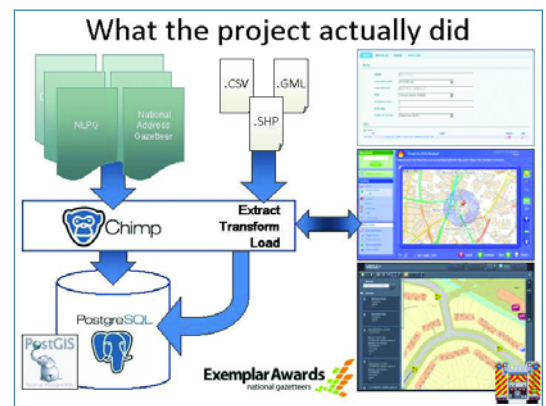
### Open source win

The Technology Award sponsored by UK Location looks for innovative examples of the application of technology using the National Gazetteers. This is a hotly contested section but the winners were not just the judges' choice but the delegates' overall choice of winners too. Quite an achievement.

Chimp is a dynamic gazetteer-generator with an integrated extract, transform and load tool. It was developed exclusively using web-based open source software by West Midlands Fire Service. It can



Above: Chimp was developed entirely inhouse using open source technology.



Chimp has significantly reduced software costs, avoided vendor lock-in and enabled a collaborative approach to software development.

coalesce traditionally disjointed data products by generating bespoke and feature-rich gazetteer software. So how did they do it?

Several objectives were set for the in-house development team:

- Localities must reflect names likely to be reported during an emergency call, and not ward names or similar
- Coordinates must be validated and repaired as necessary
- Spelling anomalies must be resolved
- Missing organisation names needed specifying
- A detailed model of the motorway system (defined using NLPG records) needed positioning in-sympathy of ITN routing nodes
- Over 112,000 pieces of location-specific data needed linking to NLPG BLPUs and streets, including emergency rendezvous points, asbestos presence, police arrangements, pre-arranged vehicle attendance and other critical risks

Meeting these objectives resulted in the creation or modification of over one million pieces of data.

Developed both under time and budget to replace a command and control system, Chimp has already been adopted by two other fire services and

others are pending. The design of Chimp allows for freedom of choice in relation to base gazetteer format, a benefit which is wholly attuned to the approach of the Public Sector Mapping Agreement.

By using open source technology, Chimp has significantly reduced software costs, avoided vendor lock-in and enabled a collaborative approach to software development, bringing benefits in cost sharing and pooled talents.

There is a full list of entries on the GeoPlace website (<http://www.geoplace.co.uk/>) but below are some of the key winners:

**Citizen Award:** Merseyside Fire & Rescue

**Green Award:** Northumberland County Council

**Naming Award:** Colchester Borough Council

**Exemplar Award:** West Midlands Fire & Rescue

**Peer Award:** Shaun Powell

**NLPG Most Improved:** Barnsley Metropolitan Council

**NSG Most Improved:** Staffordshire County Council

In addition, 20 Best in Region Awards mark the most improved councils with a further 66 Gold awards to councils who have achieved GeoPlace's Gold Standard of LLPG.

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