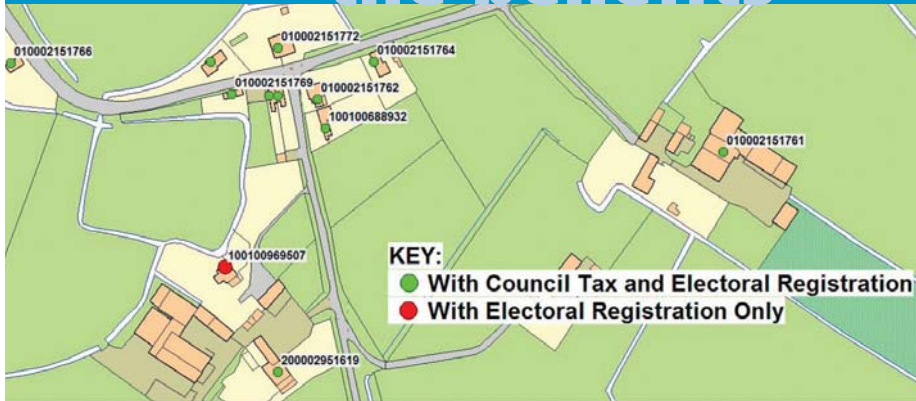


Addressing: the benefits



Above: synchronizing property data allows anomalies to be identified.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES have traditionally maintained a multiplicity of back-office systems with standalone address feeds. Citizens may register on the electoral role but may not always notify council tax departments as there is no direct legal requirement to do so. It is the responsibility of the council to ensure that all citizens pay council tax, where applicable.

Local authorities work hard to keep up with changes to properties, such as occupancy and change of use. A simple change in occupancy or address may often

Having proved the value of the pilot project, the Welsh Government has facilitated the roll-out of the programme throughout Wales, with some English authorities subsequently adopting the methodology.

The UPRN is allocated by local authorities when producing their Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) and is fed into the National Land and Property Gazetteer hub, managed by GeoPlace® (a joint venture between Ordnance Survey and the Local Government Association).

The information supplied is then supplemented with additional information from Ordnance Survey and Royal Mail® and used to form AddressBase® the definitive source of address and property information for Great Britain. AddressBase is available to the public sector through the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA), enabling all to benefit from spatially enabled, accurate and consistent addressing data.

The benefits from this initiative include increased revenue from identification of missing properties – over £100 000 from Newport and Cardiff alone, with

Good address management delivers savings

The use of Ordnance Survey's AddressBase and the UPRN system is proving to deliver significant savings, following a Welsh Government led project linking electoral registration, revenue and benefits and other systems.

require processing across several departments, with perhaps only one department holding the correct information. This is both time consuming and prone to errors. Welsh local authorities needed a solution to make the process more efficient, reduce errors and detect potential avoidance and fraud.

Welsh local authorities needed to ensure that changes to, and within, a property were identified at the earliest possible opportunity and that this information was shared throughout council departments where appropriate. Address data is used across many departments, and the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) is used to ensure property data can be synchronised effectively and communicated accurately between departments. The synchronisation and reconciliation identified:

- Previously unbilled or incorrectly billed properties.
- Self-contained annexes in breach of approved planning conditions (leading to further revenue income.)
- The sheer scale of year-on-year lost revenue.

A simple misunderstanding about properties with similar names can lead to misallocation of council tax bands, loss of revenue for the council and frustration for residents. Improved processes and communication now ensures that council systems are kept up to date and changes are implemented as early as possible.

a further £160,000 from the nine additional participating local authorities. Additionally, future savings, based on projections, are likely to be over £0.5m across Wales and potentially in excess of £7m when extended throughout England and Wales.

Other benefits include:

- reduction in errors through use of the UPRN avoiding confusion.
- efficient processing through system synchronisation, leading to faster debt collection and reducing duplication of effort between departments.
- reduced fraud – the project can be extended to investigate potential fraud in council tax single occupancy discounts and housing benefit.
- wider intelligence gathering and sharing by other public sector organisations (for example, emergency services), who are now underpinning their systems with the UPRN.

Data products used:

- Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRN)
- Local Land and Property Gazetteers (LLPG)
- AddressBase*

The local authorities involved used the UPRNs from their Local Land and Property Gazetteer, but any public sector organisation could do the same through the use of AddressBase under the Public Sector Mapping Agreement.

'Projected benefits are likely to be over £500 000 across Wales – potentially in excess of £7 million extended throughout England and Wales'

Shaun Powell,
Newport City Council