

“INSPIRE... Where are we now and what’s in it for me?”

We put this big question to the industry - here is a selection of responses.



Chris Holcroft
Director and CEO, AGI

“INSPIRE legislation is in place and a government project to deliver it - the UK Location Programme. This is a long term, mandatory commitment. Successfully delivered, INSPIRE will mean easier discovery, access and exploitation of publicly held geographic information by end-users and public bodies. For business, better opportunities to innovate by using this geographic information for value-added purposes and to engage with data publishers and users to provide new products to drive future INSPIRE activity”.

The AGI exists to represent the interests of the UK’s geographic information (GI) industry; a wide-ranging group of public and private sector organisations, suppliers of GI software, hardware, data and services, consultants, academics and interested individuals.

URL www.agi.org.uk



Steven Ramage
Business Development
Director, 1Spatial Group

“Contract awards relating to INSPIRE mean it is really happening and will gain momentum. Education is critical -we offer INSPIRE training for this reason. As part of the consortium awarded the contract to provide JRC technical guidance around INSPIRE transformation services, we believe INSPIRE offers benefits to all European organisations. It will stimulate the geospatial data supply chain and the European knowledge economy”.

1Spatial participated in the testing of INSPIRE data specifications and has also developed a ‘Tried and Tested’ schema transformation solution for INSPIRE, which includes quality validation and GML3.2.1 encoding. This has been developed as part of the ESDIN project with national mapping and cadastre agencies throughout Europe, many of whom are Legally Mandated Organisations for INSPIRE.

URL www.1spatial.com



Andy Wells
Director of Government
Services, Infoterra Ltd

“I was encouraged by the recent “what’s in it for the suppliers” meeting arranged through the AGI by the UK Location Programme. In a challenging economic climate, development is progressing and there was a clear willingness to engage with all members of the geospatial community to deliver the best possible outcome. Infoterra still believes the aims of the programme to redirect focus from low level data access and management issues to real applications and benefits will generate huge opportunities in the future for ourselves and the UK as a whole.”

Infoterra Ltd is a leading provider of GI products and services. Its portfolio includes airborne and satellite data acquisition, geo-information creation, database management and outsourced hosting. The company has major customers in government, defence, insurance, utilities, engineering and oil, gas & mineral exploration.

URL www.infoterra.co.uk



Eddie Curtis
CTO and Co-Founder,
Snowflake

“INSPIRE is finally getting real. The legislation is being transposed, the technical guidance is being published, but most importantly data owners are gearing up to deliver their data in an INSPIRE compatible way. Many data owners see INSPIRE compliance as simply part of a bigger picture in which they are updating the way they distribute data to take advantage of web services and open standards. In that context, INSPIRE forms a well defined target which can act as a test-bed for the new approach. INSPIRE is getting real, and so are the solutions.”

Snowflake Software, the data eXchange company has been at the forefront of standards-based solutions for data exchange since 2001. By combining our off-the-shelf GO Loader and GO Publisher products with our specialist consultancy, training expertise and support infrastructure, we deliver solutions built with configuration rather than customisation to a customer base across Europe, North America and Asia.

URL www.snowflakesoftware.com

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Paul Gomez
Anglian Water,
Information Manager -
personal view not that of
AWS's

“To-date there has been little engagement with commercial organisations in the UK beyond geospatial systems or service providers. As key data providers to INSPIRE, the utilities (especially Water) will incur costs, but currently stand to receive little commercial benefit. The daily operation of utility companies involves information exchange with a broad set of public bodies, from central and local government to regulators and emergency services. There is currently no consistent method for achieving this. If approached correctly, INSPIRE could provide valuable benefits, simplifying interaction, reducing cost and ensuring current data are used. Given it is easier to address requirements at the start of IT projects than attempt to accommodate them retrospectively, industry engagement is required to define the operational protocols that could transform INSPIRE from a data publishing exercise into something of genuine benefit to UK Plc.”

Anglian Water is the largest water and Wastewater Company in England and Wales, covering 27,500 square kilometres, representing 18 per cent of the area of England and Wales. It provides water and wastewater services to more than five million domestic and commercial customers.

URL www.anglianwater.co.uk



Michael Nicholson
MD, Intelligent Addressing

“We have been involved in both INSPIRE and EURADIN projects and fully support their objectives. EURADIN is sponsored by the EU through the eContent initiative, and it aims to help harmonise address data exchange in Europe and work towards data inter-operability. INSPIRE with its emphasis on interoperability and standards provides a means for Europe to fundamentally reshape the way that information is exchanged and used. This has the potential, taken together with the recent OS consultation and the restructure of the Location Council, to see a fundamental shift in GI policy to benefit anyone using spatial data.”

Intelligent Addressing is a world leader in location-based information management services, specialising in address and property information. IA has vast experience in data cleansing, data maintenance, matching, formatting and standardisation, having worked with millions of addresses over the past ten years.

URL www.intelligent-addressing.co.uk



Ralph Diment
Marketing Manager,
Western Europe,
Intergraph

“The common purpose of any SDI is to increase the visibility and re-use of existing geospatial data. However, their capabilities differ wildly reflecting the types of user each system was created to serve. The initial generation of SDIs have been driven by the requirements of existing GIS users, primarily to aid discovery and download of data into personal projects. Paraphrasing Max Craglia of the JRC, to-date SDI is largely an extension of GIS, perhaps doing what we already do better and faster, but with little innovation. As he says, it is “critical to move beyond search-ability towards use”. INSPIRE presents a real opportunity to transform geospatial data usage, enabling information to be accessed from source and combined on-the-fly with other data, applications and processes to fulfil complete workflows. In doing so, it can help address unmet demand for spatial information and processes amongst the far larger non-GIS community.”

URL www.intergraph.com



Ben Allan
MD, Dotted Eyes

“INSPIRE offers very little to most users as a stand alone requirement, but it has driven a move to recognise the potential of the themes that it builds on. As an example, it has encouraged public sector organisations to appreciate the value of sharing their information in support of partnership working. As a result, data sharing, management and quality are now receiving significantly more investment and delivering good value in return. It is to be expected that practical initiatives, such as our ready-made hosted data sharing portals, will continue to run ahead of INSPIRE timescales as INSPIRE functions much more as a catalyst than an end in itself. The trick will be to ensure that implementations chase the value and not just the certification.”

URL www.dottedeyes.com

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“GIS is part of the new era of ‘democratisation of data’ (sharing data over the web) - said ESRI President, Jack Dangermond, at the latest European UC in Vilnius. However, he added: “the next step is for shared services. The results will be a large community of users and applications; Government to Government, Government to Citizen, and Government to Business. These are the new applications areas and the spatial framework in which this all happens is the realisation of the SDI/INSPIRE vision.” (See Geo:International Vol.9, Issue1, Pg. 44)

Contact the Editor for future events or questions to be considered for next issues.