

New Forest Interview with Sharon Elson

Introduction

The area covered by New Forest District Council is located stretches from the borders of Wiltshire in the north to the Solent in the south, and from the borders of Dorset in the west to the waterside towns of Totton, Hythe and Marchwood in the east.

New Forest District Council covers an area of 290 square miles (75,100 hectares), has a population: 173,000 The council's main offices are at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst with other key departments based at the Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington.

The GIS unit is part of the ICT Service department and is a driver of GIS across the corporate enterprise. GIS is managed by Sharon Elson.

Purchase Date

New Forest District Council placed their first order for Cadcorp SIS – Spatial Information System in 1998. This was for 3 Map Modeller licences for use in Planning, Land Charges and Coastal Management.

Products Ordered

11 x Map Manager on Desktop PCs
16 x Map Editor on Desktop PCs
14 x Map Modeller on Desktop PCs
1 x mSIS
1 x Active Server Component (ASC), for Web-based GIS

Which departments use Cadcorp SIS?

Desktop licences serve: Planning, Building Control, Tree Team, Coastal Management, Community Safety, Engineering Works, Highways, Street Naming, Legal, Grounds Maintenance, Estates Management.

Web-based GIS additionally serves Customer Services who provide a first point of contact for the citizen.

What were your reasons for purchasing Cadcorp SIS?

"We purchased the MVM 20/20 Land Charges and Planning systems that are underpinned by Cadcorp SIS", stated Sharon Elson. "We liked the product and realised its strengths to provide the basis of a corporate GIS. We also wanted one software supplier that could fulfil our needs corporately", she added.

What do you like about Cadcorp SIS

Sharon Elson continued: "Cadcorp SIS allows the use of Wizards to take you step by step through various GIS activities. It is truly Windows based, and works just like Microsoft Office. The desktop products offer an 'out of the box' solution that is also customisable using Visual Basic. The ability to read numerous file formats without translation is invaluable. We don't particularly need to worry about receiving a dataset in a specific file format and we are easily able, if necessary, to convert files to a different format for other organisations, so we can share our data with them", she added.

Examples of data sharing would include accessing the Federal County Database and querying Crime and Disorder data.

"Cadcorp SIS integrates with our other systems", she continued. "I've already mentioned MVM's 20/20 suite, but other examples would be our Terrier and Estates Management systems from Greenly software", she added.

How does Cadcorp SIS make any tasks easier?

Being able to resolve queries at the first point of contact and having joined-up processes are important objectives in modern local government. At New Forest, Cadcorp SIS assists with this. Sharon Elson explains: "The Customer Services can look at base maps overlain with Council data to identify and resolve queries made by members of the public".

Data sharing internally is also important: "We can share information easily between Council Departments. We can perform spatial queries to answer questions and develop scenarios. This is much easier with Cadcorp SIS than simply using databases – we can visualise our data", added Sharon Elson.

What are Cadcorp like to work with?

Sharon has found that dealing with Cadcorp is "excellent. The company is always willing to help. Customer Support is almost always able to resolve a query immediately. They offer advice and solutions that are not always within the sphere of Cadcorp software, answering questions that are wider in scope than what you could usually expect. Individuals take ownership of queries and their resolution".

What future plans do you have for the software?

"We will extend the use of Cadcorp SIS into other areas such as Housing and Leisure. We also intend to extend our Intranet based GIS to every desktop in the Council, including giving Councillors access. Cadcorp SIS is our corporate GIS solution and grows with the continued take-up of GIS across the enterprise", stated Sharon Elson.