

New automated Scottish Police Gazetteer

Scottish Police lead the way in information sharing to fight crime.

Just over a year ago, the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) set out to develop a comprehensive centralised address gazetteer for police services across Scotland as part of its business change programme. The new gazetteer system is a critical part of the new national Command and Control computer system, which will boost crime-fighting for all Scottish police forces.

This project breaks new ground in the UK, and presents a model for other police authorities in fighting crime.

Command and Control brings new efficiencies to Scottish policing, driving down administration time and costs. It removes disparate databases that are tied to police force boundaries, giving a unified and fully comprehensive system for all Scottish police forces. With a common system, there will be no duplication, inaccuracy or information black holes.

At a time when police forces throughout the UK are feeling the squeeze on their budgets, projects like these will help with maintaining satisfactory policing services for protecting the public.

The high-tech automated gazetteer solution helps with identifying precise locations of incidents and aids with the allocation and despatch of the nearest, best equipped police patrol. It puts paid to searching through different databases by centralising the information into one easily accessible and searchable repository.

The Scottish Police Gazetteer is based around the One Scotland Gazetteer, which is managed by the Scottish Government. The One Scotland Gazetteer is a definitive dataset containing the address and location of every property in Scotland, compiled from local gazetteers maintained by each of the 32 Scottish local authorities.

The eight police forces access the gazetteer using advanced spatial data enabled software (GGP NGz, GGP Systems Ltd, Croydon, UK). This is done from the desktop or while on the move using web-enabled devices. This instant access to the gazetteer delivers intelligence to frontline police officers without the usual delays of calling in incidents and waiting for information. The GGP software also allows police officers to provide on-scene feedback to the gazetteer, such as location information, exceptions and the ability to validate data with their observations. It also allows police analysts to access accurate, up-to-date incident records and allocate resources.

The gazetteer links to the Scottish Command and Control system (STORM

MA from Steria UK) and GIS (ESRI [UK] Ltd, Aylesbury, UK) where incident locations can be viewed on a digital map. This visual incident data also incorporates the location and details of available police resources in the area, detailing foot and vehicle patrols and the number of available officers.

The combination of the gazetteer and GIS allows call handlers to identify the location of the incident and expedite deployment of police officers to the scene, improving response times and resource use.

Updates from the One Scotland Gazetteer are fed automatically into the Scottish Police Gazetteer ensuring it holds accurate and up-to-date geographical information including any historical or local references. Each geographical location is also geocoded so that location coordinates can be plotted on a map, giving visual incident data. The technology also displays the location and details of the nearest available police resources, including whether it is a foot patrol or vehicle patrol together with the number of available officers.

The geocodes link to additional details and intelligence from a range of sources. These include records of previous incidents involving the police, a points-of-interest dataset and verified postal addresses. This gives an accurate and up-to-date database of land, property and locations.

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Livingstone, Project Executive of the ACPOS National Command and Control project said: "The National Command and Control application is the first policing application to be linked to the new gazetteer service and it is expected to be operational by the end of 2010. Combining the new national application with data from the Scottish Police Gazetteer will allow call handlers to identify precise locations and allocate the best equipped and nearest police patrol to the incident thus improving our response times and ensuring the most efficient use of resources."



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