

CASE STUDY

Wakefield and District Housing PlanWeb

“PLANWEB HAS EXCEEDED ALL EXPECTATIONS. PEOPLE ARE USING IT—AND THERE’S NO HIGHER ACCOLADE THAN THAT!”

Graham Hyde, GIS Analyst, WDH



Challenge

The fifth largest housing organisation in England, Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) became the largest single housing stock transfer in 2005 and subsequently needed to organise its vast spatial data into one place to make it available to as many people as possible.

Solution

An established MapInfo Professional® customer, Wakefield and District Housing selected PlanWeb, a powerful, browser-based corporate intranet GIS solution, and quickly stored and deployed its critical data which is now accessed by some 1,400 users across the organisation and will play a key role in upgrading its stock by 2010.

SUMMARY

Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) became the largest single housing stock transfer organisation, taking responsibility for over 31,000 homes in the Wakefield District in 2005 when it was established as a separate, not for profit organisation from Wakefield Council, responsible for housing.

WDH secured one of the largest investment funds in the country to bring all homes up to the ‘Wakefield Standard’—a higher specification than the Government’s Decent Homes Standard. It is using this £720 million fund on a major refurbishment programme running until 2012 upgrading many of the 100,000-plus tenancies across its jurisdiction.

WDH’s vision is to build confident communities which it aims to achieve through three key core objectives:

- Building a more competitive knowledge-based economy through local innovation and by having a skilled and flexible workforce
- Creating socially inclusive communities; reducing deprivations and inequality
- Improving the quality of Wakefield’s environment by providing better housing

Turning to Pitney Bowes Business Insight in late 2006, WDH’s GIS team was looking to organise all its spatial data into one place, to provide a central resource for up-to-the-minute asset data across all

departments and for working effectively with the police and local agencies.

In researching potential suppliers, WDH was impressed with Wakefield Council’s deployment of Pitney Bowes Business Insight location intelligence solutions. Despite some cross-over of data with the Council, WDH’s ultimate selection of PlanWeb was wholly independent of the relationship, but recognised the added value the system provided in sharing data—more of a ‘nice to have’ than a necessity.

One of the key criteria for WDH was the need to make spatial data work for the organisation; to make it accessible to everyone to help informed decision-making and analysis across departmental boundaries. Further, it needed to facilitate the stock upgrade planned for completion by 2010 and support the major refurbishment programme to bring all WDH homes up to ‘Wakefield Standard’ by 2012.

Immediately after deployment, PlanWeb was delivering unparalleled service to more than 1,400 users across the organisation. The value of spatial data had moved from isolated silos operated by three GIS analysts to a rich and valuable enterprise-wide resource. From field engineers, property services, the regeneration team, the legal department and customer facing advisors, the system is registering high volumes of access and feedback has been unprecedented.

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Graham Hyde, GIS Analyst, Wakefield and District Housing

RESULT

WDH's key objective is to improve the lives of people in Wakefield, and in equipping those who serve the community to better do their jobs; PlanWeb is playing an integral role in meeting this goal.

"Confidence is key to effective and efficient service," said Graham Hyde. "In deploying Pitney Bowes Business Insight location intelligence technology, we've enabled people across every department to make better, quicker and well informed decisions."

Users are confident that data is up-to-the-minute; as properties become empty, new tenants can be allocated quickly and appropriately. Efficiencies in resources have been notable. For example, easy access to mapping and aerial photography detailing boundaries, parking, grassed areas, roofing, fencing etc., means a significant reduction in site visits for engineers and estates officers. The system is proving invaluable in supporting the 'One Call' customer call centre; equipping customer facing staff to log, respond and advise the community on detailed enquiries with confidence.

Importantly, PlanWeb has enhanced relationships with the police and local agencies; supporting its Community Safety Partnership by sharing crime data, and critical asset infrastructure information with the fire service as well as adding value to its environment scheme by sharing data with Groundwork, the environmental regeneration charity.

Internal promotion has played a pivotal role in its adoption. The GIS team has actively increased the user base by holding web seminars, roadshows and showcase sessions across the organisation.

"People won't just stumble upon it," Graham Hyde points out. "Promoting the availability and capability of PlanWeb has been key to its uptake—and word of mouth is also powerful, once people start using it!"

Ease of deployment also helped. As an out-of-the-box, fully customizable solution, PlanWeb was quick to set up, easy to use and get running and came with helpful and reliable support:

"Pitney Bowes Business Insight support was truly first class," said Hyde. "We have a strong relationship with our consultants who make us feel valued and give us regular product updates. The latest version has given us valuable extra functionality; it's evident that they are constantly striving for greater improvements and are very much on top of their game."

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