

THE SPACEIAL NW USER TESTING PANELS - A HUGE SUCCESS

The SPACEial NW map viewer and website have been developed with the end user in mind. On the 14th & 15th January 2014, 80 users from across different agencies, local authorities, tourism bodies, communities and different walks of life in the North West Region came together to test the system and to ensure that the information captured was meeting their needs and requirements.

A hands on training seminar was given by Mr Philip McLaughlin, ESRI Ireland. Each participant had access to a PC, which made the sessions interactive and lasted for a period of two and a half hours. Initially, the trainer established the participant's level of exposure to using GIS. Each of the participants were then asked to locate the Regional Training Centre in Stranorlar, by navigating through the street view option on the map viewer and then zooming in closer to locate the building with the use of the aerial photography. There was a mix of abilities among the participants in all sessions in terms of the previous experience of using a mapping system. Many participants had no previous experience of mapping.

The trainer then took the group through the various widgets, the initial one being the "view my data" tool. This tool proved to be invaluable by all present at the event. It offers the user access to information in terms of "People, Planning and Places", for example; populations dispersions, number of planning applications in an area, zonings, number of buildings, dispersion of towns in terms of size, DED's Wards etc. Further, capabilities of this tool enables the user to explore areas (Wards and DED's) in terms of "Local Economy and Infrastructure", "NI Water", "Neighbourhood Services", "Deprivation Index", "Health & Learning", "Heritage", "Funding", and "Data Boundaries".

Participants noted the value of access to data like population dispersions, particularly for organisations like the HSE for the future planning of their primary care teams. The community organisations that attended these sessions welcomed the simple and user friendly capabilities of the site and stated that they felt it was an incredible tool which would enable them to gain access to statistics for the future identification of needs and services required in their local areas.

The next widget which sparked excitement in the eyes of the users was the "Find My Nearest" tool. This tool has developed the concept of taking a location and enabling the user to find the nearest services in terms of fire stations, police station, credit union, primary school, secondary school, hospital or third level institutions.

The fourth widget "Demand for my Service", like the output from the other tools is very visual. It enables the user to zoom into their selected 'Ward', 'DED' or 'Small Area' and view the demand for a particular service in that area. This provides the user with a table containing a pie chart detailing the population distribution and below this set out the services (e.g. dentists, primary schools, recycling facilities, GP's) available in that particular area. This tool is of interest to the ordinary person looking to relocate to an area, someone who has just relocated to an area, an investor looking to relocate his/her business or family to a particular area.

The fifth widgets notably the "Data Scenarios", further develops the demand for my service widget. This tool is of interest to a foreign investor seeking information on a particular location; tourists wishing to visit an area; residents looking for information on services in their

areas and planners developing a new local or area plan. It allows the user to select an area and formulate a report that clearly details all information relative to the selected area, from population counts, building counts, zonings, type of services available etc.

The sixth widget presented was “Elevation Profiles”. This provoked interest among the more active and athletic participants present at the sessions. This offers the user the ability to select two points on a map and then track the elevation between them points. This would be of interest to walkers, or cyclists. A member of one of the groups stated that this would be invaluable to the horse riding clubs in the area, as it would enable the clubs to develop treks that would be of gradients that would not over exert the horses.

Other aspects of the web viewer was also presented such as the “Bookmarks”, “Swipe and Spotlight” and finally the “Print” tool.

Overall, the training sessions proved to be highly beneficial to all participants as it gave them an opportunity to test the system, ask any questions they may have had and most importantly offer their opinions in terms of information that could be further added to the system.

You can find out more about this project by visiting our website www.spaceialnw.eu, following us on twitter @SPACEialNW or by contacting the Research and Policy Unit, Donegal County Council, Lifford on 074 91 72569.

The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Finance in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU structural funds Programmes PEACE III and INTERREG IV designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society. The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

The INTERREG IVA Programme, funded under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is worth €256 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. It has two distinct priority measures to create co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable cross-border region.

For more information on the SEUPB please visit www.seupb.eu

