

iShare NEWS

36 live sites 56 systems integrated

ISSUE THIRTEEN – CHRISTMAS 2011

Seasons Greetings!

Busy busy is probably the best way to describe the last few months, lots of new development and customer activity including the first of what we hope will be many Shared Service arrangements.

Mike Saunt won the stand-up Soapbox 'Georant' at the AGI Annual Conference. You can see the video here: <http://bit.ly/n9DPLL>

This time of year is always busy on the conference front too and we

attended both the annual Exemplar Awards and the AGI Cymru conference.

News here too of iShare 5, a fast evolving iShare GIS and also Astun Data Services.

And that's not all, 2012 will see the formation of an iShare user group and some new training opportunities.

Happy Christmas!

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Quick News from iShare

Welcome to the fold...

We have some new customers to report and welcome to the iShare community.

They are:

- Chichester District Council
- South Norfolk Council
- Carlisle City Council
- Cotswold District Council

I should point out that the last two are working together in Shared Service arrangements with Allerdale Borough Council and West Oxfordshire District Council respectively.

OEA's

In the summer issue of iShare News we reported on the signing of our fifth Open Enterprise Agreement (OEA), our way of supporting iShare deployments across the enterprise. Well the news is that we now have 9 Open Enterprise Agreements in place including two who are new iShare customers.

An OEA needs to be in place before authorities can enter into 'Shared Service' arrangements with iShare. So if you are feeling left out or want to know more about how an OEA can help your organisation please contact Mike Smith - mikemsmith@astuntechnology.com

iShare Help

We have recently introduced online iShare Help. There's nothing like a customer endorsement to get people to take a look. This one was posted in the customer forum by Robert Steele at Mole Valley: "Hi guys. Just wanted to say that this online help is brilliant. I use it nearly every time I have to do something new in iShare and I often find the answer. Most recent was assistance

in displaying RSS feed contents in MyHouse." Thanks for that Robert, much appreciated.

iShare User Group

In the summer we polled our iShare users to see if there was interest in setting up an iShare User Group. There was and well over half who responded to the survey were prepared to help out too.



Richard Lewis – Newport City Council

In the meantime we have our first chair – Richard Lewis from Newport City Council. Richard will be working closely with Mike Smith and others to kick off the User Group early in 2012. In the meantime if you are interested in helping out with the user group please contact Mike Smith.

iShare 5

We are heads down in development for iShare 5 which will include a major upgrade to iShare GIS. We will be introducing a revised, cleaner user interface plus lots of new features such as ability to write plug-ins, functionality restriction based on user role, enhanced querying (attribute based) and annotations/red lining.

Shared Services



Church Green, Witney, West Oxfordshire

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Cotswold District Council (CDC) already have a number of shared working arrangements in place, including several joint senior manager posts. From 2012 they will start developing a single IT service for both councils.

One of the first projects under review are the two Council's websites. Much of this has focused on usage patterns, the user experience and the actual design. The research has been quite detailed involving both internal and external focus groups and online questionnaires. People it seemed liked being able to access information that was specific to their location a reference to the iShare deployment, 'My West Oxfordshire'.

It soon became clear that both sites would benefit from the same type of iShare deployment as this was something that the WODC team felt they could achieve quickly based on the experience they had from doing it themselves in 2010. Both websites could be re-developed hand-in-hand. It soon became clear that there was no need to have two separate iShare deployments when one would suffice.

Under an Open Enterprise Agreement it would be possible to have WODC acting as a 'node' holding all the data and CDC becoming a 'sub-node'. Under this arrangement CDC will provide all their own data

but WODC will be responsible for system administration and project management.

The My Cotswolds site will be up and running by April 2012, as Sarah Turner, West Oxfordshire's Business Solutions Manager says "We are just going to take a carbon copy of what we already have here with the only real difference being the underlying data. The other advantage of the Open Enterprise Agreement is that the iShare GIS deployment can start with CDC because they don't currently have such a facility. That means deployment, data set up and user permissions can be 'learnt' and fully tested prior to implementing a refresh at WODC. It'll be a huge win for CDC because they have never had universal intranet access to mapping or the aerial photography before. They will start to benefit from everything that decent mapping, aerial photography and GIS can provide, such as fewer site visits, better planning enforcement and much more."

Savings accrue from joint procurement via an Open Enterprise Agreement. WODC were going to implement these improvements in any case but for CDC it is even better. They will benefit from a location enabled website and an intranet GIS solution at a fraction of the cost of doing it on their own.

In the spotlight

Across the Enterprise

Surrey Heath Borough Council has featured in iShare News a number of times firstly for its innovative My Protected Trees application which used iShare to map out its Tree Preservation Orders. We wrote a subsequent piece because of the way the Council had enthusiastically used iShare to pull data from multiple service delivery systems. Then this time last year we featured Surrey Heath's innovative use of Logger for public consultation on a major planning development, the site of the former Deepcut army barracks.



Surrey Heath Borough Council extensive use of iShare pulls data from multiple service delivery systems across the website.

But nothing stands still for long and a recent move to a virtualised environment within the Council led to a review of an 'ancient' Oracle server. This had done sterling work hosting both 'HeathMap', the Council's intranet GIS, plus vector mapping data including OS MasterMap and their own GIS layers. That Oracle server also served the land charges system, the planning system, iShare and anything else that needed mapping.

What to do? A straight replacement was out of the question on grounds of cost. It would require some spending but thanks to savings that had come about through the PSMA, the impact could be minimal.

James Rutter, Surrey Heath's GIS Manager takes up the story. "By stepping up to an Open Enterprise Agreement (OEA) with Astun we found it would be possible to retire the Oracle server and replace it with an entirely new Open Source Solution. This is not a standard install and involves a fully supported PostGIS cluster. The OEA covers everything, including basic iShare, My Alerts, Publisher, Logger and iShare GIS which will replace our ageing HeathMap

Intranet GIS."

"All the spatial data was migrated to a new server very easily with all the Map configuration files used by HeathMap now being served by PostGIS. None of our users even noticed although someone commented that the performance when loading MasterMap was noticeably quicker."

When iShare GIS is deployed everything including MasterMap will be pre-rendered out to a tile cache as raster data. There will also be much better controls to make it easier to configure who has access to the many different GIS information layers held by the Council.

Surrey Heath are also one of the first Astun customers to benefit from new iShare backup routines. Two virtual machines are snapshotted every day so there is an instant fallback should the need arise. There's a dump every day to a NAS on the Windows network, each being kept for 5 days before being refreshed. All this is completely automated and provides confidence and peace of mind.

New Product

Astun Data Services

Astun has been working on some customer focused data services for a number of months. This has come out of the work Jo Cook and Matt Walker did in the summer with the MasterMap loader, subsequent testing by Ordnance Survey and work we've done with OS OpenData. The idea is to produce a set of services, such as:

- OS Premium (Vector Map Local, MasterMap) for PSMA signatories and
- OS OpenData for everybody else.

These will be TMS (Tile Map Service) or WMS, hosted by Astun. We already have a client, which has over 70 local authority customers which we hope to be able to start talking about soon. Other potential services in the future include drive time and routing web services that will plug and play into iShare and other web & desktop applications. We'll be publishing more about these services soon.

New Service

Training with Astun

In 2012 in addition to providing consultancy, training and support for iShare, we will also be providing training on the core Open Source products themselves. We have been encouraged by the response to the workshop we ran at the OSGeo conference in the summer, by our recent customer survey and by some of the requests we have received for Data Services, (see above). Loader (a GML loader/translator) that we developed for OS MasterMap and Vector Map Local has been fully tested and received the thumbs up from the Ordnance Survey themselves so now its time to share some of this with our customers. Details of the courses are currently undergoing finalisation but we hope to publish the full outlines in the New Year. They will include:

- GeoServer (Spatial Data Infrastructure)
- MapServer (Advanced rendering and map query engine)
- OpenLayers (JavaScript map viewer)
- Quantum GIS (Desktop GIS)

The training will be undertaken in small groups with 'hands-on' exercises to ensure maximum 'knowledge transfer'. Attendees on all courses will receive an electronic copy of the course notes for subsequent reference. We hope to run public courses at our Epsom offices (25 minutes from Central London by train) or we can come to a venue of your choice and run a bespoke course, just for you.

If you are interested in iShare or Open Source training please contact Mike Smith:

miksmith@astuntechnology.com

Life's too short...

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Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from everyone at



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