

The return on investment

Talking about the financial returns that Drum Housing expect, Tim says, 'Our investment in GIS is currently £5 500 pa (this covers licensing and support for SIA dataMAP and the browser interface) with Ordnance Survey licence fees currently £14 000 pa.' He concludes, 'This is a long term project, and it will be up to 18 months before we will be able to see the impact of this investment on our costs, on our customer satisfaction ratings and on our performance indices. However, we are sure the financial returns we will get will be substantial. We would not have made this investment otherwise.'



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Building better services at Drum Housing Association

Drum Housing anticipates significant benefits from switch to OS MasterMap® and SIA integrated asset management system.

Case study





Executive summary

Drum Housing is a charitable housing association based in Petersfield, Hampshire, and owns or manages approximately 5 000 properties in the East Hampshire, Chichester, Havant, Gosport and Portsmouth areas. As existing users of SIA's dataMAP GIS, Drum Housing has now extended GIS of its Intranet and is moving to OS MasterMap intelligent digital mapping. Drum has also embarked on the implementation of a SIA integrated asset management system. This significant investment in GIS will enable Drum to:

- obtain better value for its investment in the maintenance of its housing stock;
- improve communications with customers;
- open up access across the whole of the organisation to help Drum's Customer Service Officers to provide a faster and better service;
- make effective use of OS MasterMap-based datasets from other organisations; and
- extract more detail from OS MasterMap than from Land-Line®.

Over the next 18 months Drum Housing anticipates measuring the impact on planned and responsive maintenance costs, on customer satisfaction ratings and on performance indices.



The challenge

Providing affordable housing against a background of rising costs

In addition to providing high-quality, affordable housing to its residents, Drum Housing also offers services to the communities it serves, such as low-cost repairs, an emergency alarm call service and a care-attendant scheme. Tim Leather is Assistant Director (ICT) at Drum Housing. He regards the association's greatest challenge as, '...providing affordable housing in this area against a background of escalating land costs, decreasing availability of building land and ever-rising construction costs.'



The solution

Handling growth with the same resources

Tim sees the solution as, '...using GIS to enable more efficient ways of working by extending access to our Intranet users, moving to OS MasterMap intelligent digital mapping and implementing an SIA integrated asset management system.' He continues, 'This means we can handle more growth with the same staff level. It also means we can decrease the overhead cost per housing unit, lowering our costs and allowing us to invest in more housing provision.' As an example, Tim says, 'Given that a site visit by one of our staff costs at least £30 per hour minimum, whereas a ten-minute phone enquiry costs us just £2, the more issues we can resolve through our Customer Service Officers, the better for all.'

The benefits

Saving time and providing a better quality of service

Drum Housing currently has five dedicated users of SIA's dataMAP GIS in three departments. Neil Challen, Valuation Manager, is one such user. 'It is my responsibility,' he says, 'to keep the land terrier accurate and up to date, recording all our land, property boundaries and open spaces. Every land transaction comes across my desk: land bought, sold or repurchased.' He recalls, 'Previously, when an enquiry came in, I'd have to walk down the office, find the relevant plans and identify the property in question and so on. Then I'd have to return the phone call or post a response. You also have to remember that photocopies of plans are not particularly accurate either. Now I can give an immediate response, saving time and providing a better quality of output and service. The ability to produce plans at different scales is an invaluable asset too.' He comments, 'Even though I'm not an IT expert, I've found dataMAP easy to use. Yes, there have been frustrations, but any problems have been fixed pretty quickly.'

SIA integrated asset management system

Drum is now implementing the SIA integrated asset management system, linking the GIS and core business systems and providing user access through the Intranet. Tim Leather again, 'This system, developed in partnership with SIA, enables us to bring information together from our IBS OPENHousing housing management system and from our Anite® Codeman:4 integrated asset management system. We can then represent that information spatially. For example, we can extract boiler end-of-life data from Codeman:4 and display it on a map, showing boilers overdue for replacement with a red marker, boilers due for replacement within six months with an orange marker and those not due for replacement with a green marker. We can then plan our programmes in the most efficient and cost-effective way.' Tim reports, 'The system is at an advanced stage and is useable, though still a pilot, and we are fine tuning it for optimum performance.'

Investing more in planned maintenance

Peter Evans is the Assistant Director (Property Services) at Drum Housing. He says, 'We will be using the SIA integrated asset management system to help us appraise our options. For example, by bringing together information from our various IT systems about repairs-and-maintenance hot spots and displaying it on a map, we'll be able to make soundly based decisions about where best to direct the investment we make on our housing stock.' He explains, 'Currently, responsive repairs, those carried out as a result of customer call-outs, account for 35% of our expenditure and planned maintenance represents 65%. By using the system, we'll be able to identify problem trends, which means that we'll be better able to plan maintenance programmes, so reducing the proportion of responsive repairs even further, to 30% within two years and ultimately to 25%.' Peter adds, 'Contractor travelling time and cost is a significant part of the £1.2 million we will spend on responsive repairs this year. Achieving our planned reduction means that more of our expenditure will go on actual productive work and less of it will be spent travelling. On a like-for-like basis, we'll have freed up some £200 k to invest in planned maintenance. In effect, we'll get better value-for-money and higher-quality outcomes with planned maintenance.'

Significant benefits anticipated over the next 12 to 18 months

Malcolm Farmer, Planned Maintenance Manager at Drum Housing, has been using the new system for just a few months and finds that it is, '...making the job a lot easier already. I can see that over the next 12-18 months the benefits are going to be significant.' He takes up the story, 'Our main current programme involves kitchen and bathroom renewal to achieve the Decent Homes standards, though we also have re-roofing and central heating boiler replacement programmes.' He explains, 'Historically we have planned these programmes based on tables of remaining-life data from our stock condition survey. This has not necessarily



been the most efficient way to run these programmes, since it generally involves contractors carrying out works all over the district, losing time and costing money through travelling between properties. Far better that we can plan our programmes on an area basis, getting all the kitchens on one street done as one job, or all the roofs done in one village as one job.' Malcolm continues, 'With the integrated asset management system, we can do exactly that, displaying the required information against an OS map. This way we can identify and target areas with a high incidence of properties requiring particular attention.' He adds, 'This is so easy with a map; you can clearly see the areas to target from clusters of appropriately colour-coded dots. The maintenance programmes literally jump out at you from the screen!'

Improved communication with customers

Mike Fitzpatrick is Assistant Director (Housing) at Drum Housing and will also be using the new system. He says, 'Currently we provide around ten different open space services for our customers, including grass and hedge cutting, litter and rubbish collection, graffiti removal and abandoned vehicle disposal. However, our estates are generally multi-ownership, comprising land owned by us, the various tiers of local authority and private owners.' He points out, 'A customer wishing to report an abandoned vehicle, for example, has to spend time ringing round those organisations to find out who owns that open space. By using the system to publish land ownership details to our Customer Service Officers, our customers can phone in and immediately find out who is responsible for a particular piece of land so that the appropriate agency can take remedial action.' According to Mike, 'It's all about improved communication, providing our customers with up-to-date information about service delivery and performance standards, which in turn will enable customers to monitor performance.' He adds, 'We will be measuring customer satisfaction on an estate over a 12-month period to see if the satisfaction level has increased. If it has, I think it will be fair to say that our GIS will have helped.'



Opening up access across the whole organisation

Drum Housing will complete the transition from Land-Line.Plus® to OS MasterMap by the end of summer 2007. According to Tim Leather, 'There is more detail in OS MasterMap than in Land Line and we'll be able to make effective use of datasets from other organisations in our area that have built on OS MasterMap. The costs will be broadly the same and OS MasterMap's change-only updates will clearly save us time.' He also points out, 'We are in the process of providing Intranet access using SIA's dataMAP Intranet GIS browser. This will help our Customer Service Officers to



provide a faster and better service to our customers and prospective customers. For example, they will now be able to give immediate answers to questions about the location of facilities such as nearest school, medical facilities, community centres and sports facilities. We just could not provide that level of service previously. It would have been too difficult and time-consuming.' He adds, 'Anyone familiar with the web should find the dataMAP browser interface easy to use. We've already tested it ourselves and soon we will roll it out to the whole organisation.'

