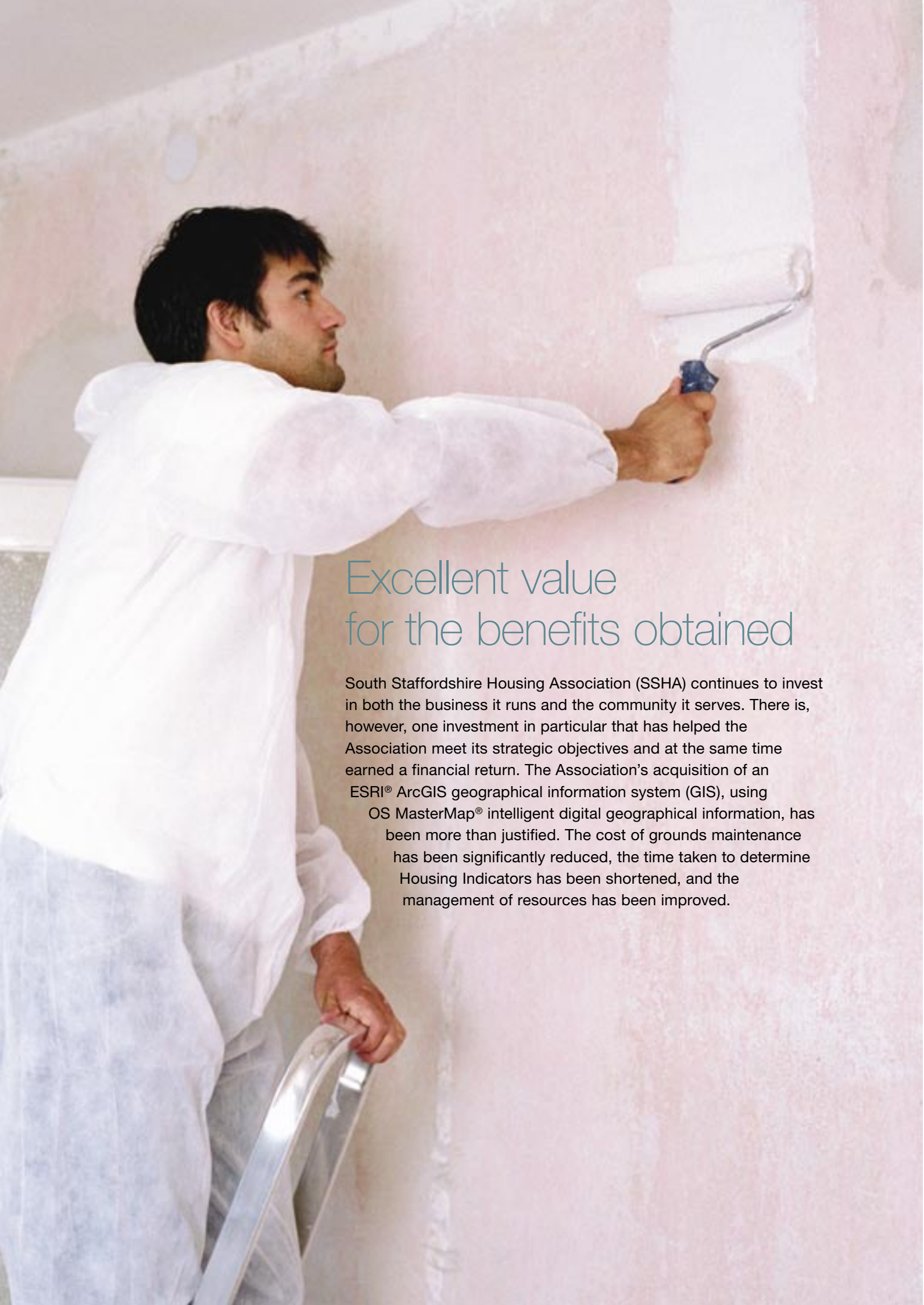


Managing services and assets

South Staffordshire Housing Association





Excellent value for the benefits obtained

South Staffordshire Housing Association (SSHA) continues to invest in both the business it runs and the community it serves. There is, however, one investment in particular that has helped the Association meet its strategic objectives and at the same time earned a financial return. The Association's acquisition of an ESRI® ArcGIS geographical information system (GIS), using OS MasterMap® intelligent digital geographical information, has been more than justified. The cost of grounds maintenance has been significantly reduced, the time taken to determine Housing Indicators has been shortened, and the management of resources has been improved.

Managing and maintaining assets

SSHA is the largest local housing association in South Staffordshire, providing over 5 000 homes and other services. With over 450 new tenants to house every year, the association has a significant holding of dynamic housing stock and associated assets to manage and maintain. SSHA pursues excellence in all areas of its work and looks to new information technology to find ways of improving services to tenants and staff working methods. Originally, SSHA held several stand-alone databases pertaining to rents, open space, property, maintenance and tenants, making it difficult to extract, link or cross-reference information.

GIS enables accurate and unified data

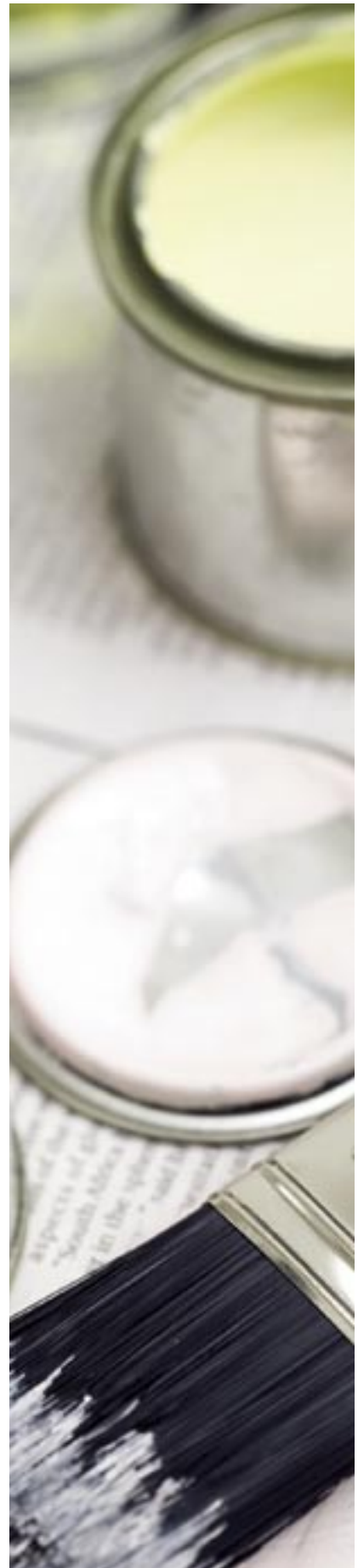
When the Association implemented a GIS in 2001, all the data was stored and referenced in one system. However, the digital data they used was supplied in predefined tiles, making it difficult to reference individual land and property parcels, and producing a rather flat CAD image. As Tyrone Field points out, *'We were given the paper plans by the council. The grounds people had one set of maps about grounds and the land registry people had another set of maps. When we put them on the GIS we found that there were complete estates missing off some of these maps because they had not been updated.'* *'A lot of the strategic decisions that were being made and a lot of the work that was being done were based on inaccurate information.'*

Making savings from the off

Using ESRI's ArcGIS platform, SSHA took OS MasterMap from Ordnance Survey, replacing its former data holdings. Staff were attracted by the ease with which they could manipulate and clip OS MasterMap data. The TOID® functionality of OS MasterMap – where every feature is assigned a unique reference number to allow data association – enables easier geocoding (x and y coordinate attribution) of SSHA's assets. Layers of information can be created and switched on and off dependent on the query applied. Tyrone recalls, *'The system was up and running within a week. A staged development process was implemented that meant the Association could begin making savings, in time if not money, from the off.'*

No hardware upgrades required

SSHA now uses OS MasterMap (Topography, Address and Imagery Layers), 1:10 000 Scale Colour Raster data and 1:50 000 Scale Colour Raster data. In the words of Andrew Cutts, GIS Officer at SSHA, *'We didn't need any hardware upgrades when implementing the ESRI GIS system. The GIS data has its own place on the SQL server and we needed to allocate 1.77 Gb to OS MasterMap data.'*



Geographic data in the mainstream

Using OS MasterMap data, SSHA's GIS solution is now in the mainstream of its business and IT operation. Examples of applications include:

Neighbourhood analysis

The Association needs to know what properties it owns, and has sold. Users overlay OS MasterMap large-scale Topography Layer data with information about SSHA/tenant ownership and property type. This is presented visually through different shaded areas. Buildings without addresses, such as garages, are quickly located by TOID, used to hook information such as who owns the garage at a particular point in time, its location and rent details.



Boundary enquiries

SSHA's legal department requires 1:1250 scale red boundary line plans marking boundary ownership. Relevant data polygon outlines in the Topography Layer can be easily highlighted in red to display and store this legal information.

Housing Quality Indicators

The Housing Quality Indicator (HQI) system is a measurement and assessment tool designed to allow housing schemes to be evaluated on the basis of quality rather than simply of cost. Layered 1:10 000 Scale Raster mapping enables staff to produce the required indicators. Local amenities, such as schools, doctors and libraries, are represented as symbols and can be switched on and off as required. Rob Bird, Business Development Manager at SSHA, is responsible for the determination of HQIs. He notes, 'The ESRI GIS system has drastically reduced the time it takes to produce our Housing Quality Indicators. Before we had GIS, it was a major problem for us to produce this information. I'd have to go out on site and find everything out for myself. With the GIS, we've been able to pull all our different databases together so I can do most of the work from the desktop. Now it only takes a day per project, whereas it used to take two.'



Resource management

By linking the GIS into its housing software the Association has been able to create geographically represented reports that assist in resource management. This system has allowed the Association to focus the required resources in those geographical areas demanding most attention.

Centralised reporting

Integrating all databases allows different layers of information – such as void properties, repairs and anti-social behaviour orders – to be overlaid against OS MasterMap data for displaying trends. According to Andrew Cutts, 'Because we have integrated our databases through the GIS, we can very quickly give answers to questions on such varied topics as car parking, access rights, land ownership, rent arrears and levels and locations of anti-social behaviour. As a result, we get asked more questions. This is a performance benefit rather than a direct cost benefit.'

Grounds maintenance

'The ESRI GIS system has been used to accurately map the Association's grounds maintenance responsibility and has highlighted areas of replication and overspecification in the existing contract. This information has contributed towards a complete rewrite and retender of the Grounds Maintenance contract, which should deliver an improved service.' (Tyrone Field) This retendering is expected to reduce the total cost of grass cutting by 6%, saving around £40 000 in a full year.



More for less

SSHA's GIS solution with OS MasterMap data is undoubtedly delivering significant benefits.

These include:

- More data for less money: in taking OS MasterMap, SSHA has halved its data costs at the same time as receiving more data.
- Joined-up services: SSHA can share information with the local council as they both use OS MasterMap. This enables greater integration of council resources and services.
- Flexibility: SSHA can clip the data in irregular shapes to the exact area needed, rather than receiving data in prescribed tiles.
- Integration: data silos have been eradicated with the total integration of disparate management information systems.
- Efficiency: OS MasterMap data is easy to handle and query, increasing productivity of staff time.
- Currency: SSHA staff can download data updates resulting from changes in the South Staffordshire area at their convenience, in the knowledge that they are working with the most up-to-date information available.



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