Case Study – Housing

Plus dane group dramatically improves productivity and data sharing with Cadcorp SIS.

Plus dane group was formed in June 2008 when Dane Housing Group and Plus Housing Group merged; the group now has over 15,000 homes in ownership and management across Merseyside and Cheshire. They have an asset value in excess of £500m; a combined development fund in excess of £210m and a turnover of over £50m. They are one of Britain's Top 100 companies to work for and employ over 400 people.

Plus dane group describe themselves as 'neighbourhood investors', aiming to spend less on running the business and more in the neighbourhoods they serve. Their business model is founded on the principle that only a radical shift in the use of resources will improve quality of life, choice and opportunity in our society. Using Cadcorp SIS helps *plus dane group* meet these objectives by improving productivity and data sharing.
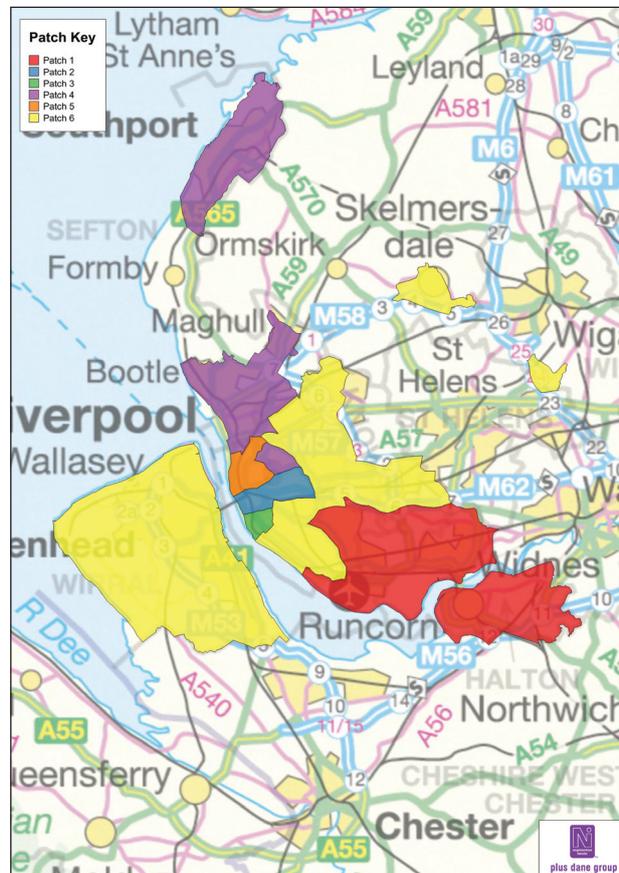
The challenge

The coming together of two very different companies presented a challenge to *plus dane group's* new GIS department; Dane Housing Group had a small fully functioning GIS department whilst Plus Housing Group had none. Users varied from those managing tenants, grounds maintenance and land ownership to arrears and property administrators. Each user has very different needs so *plus dane group* needed to find a solution that would promote data sharing across the group and work for everyone in the company whilst also being easy to deploy and develop in the future.

The solution

Plus dane group chose Cadcorp to deliver a desktop and web based GIS solution via its intranet which has empowered faster thinking, better sharing of data and ensures everyone is using the most up-to-date information.

The solution includes Cadcorp's web based mapping application GeognoSIS Viewer; desktop licences of Map Modeller and Map Editor; and mSIS, Cadcorp's mobile data capture package. Cadcorp's Housing Toolkit was included with the desktop licences. This provides a number of productivity tools that streamline the processes of map production typically carried out by Housing Associations. The solution was integrated with an open source PostGIS database which has helped to reduce the cost of ownership of the system.

Plus dane group were already using a desktop GIS solution but they decided to assess the market to see what other products

were available. They were really impressed with Cadcorp, who stood out amongst the competition, for a number of reasons:

Customer focused, tailored solution

Although *plus dane group* had a GIS department and previous experience using GIS systems they did not have the skills in-house for extensive GIS development and programming. Cadcorp offer creative and flexible solutions with a genuine interest in building a good rapport, Cadcorp experts and support staff were available to work with plus dane to help specify and implement any detailed requirements. Cadcorp's GeognoSIS system was tailored to ensure it was exactly what they needed.

Flexible licensing models

Cadcorp offer a flexible, cost effective, concurrent licensing model. This allowed *plus dane group* to avoid the costs often associated with concurrent licensing.

Excellent customer support and service

Plus dane group wanted to be able to get help quickly and easily. Cadcorp offer a highly accessible and efficient customer support service.

The benefits

GIS data created on the desktop are compatible with the intranet

Cadcorp SIS allows GIS data to be created quickly and easily on the desktop which can be quickly and easily shared with others over the corporate intranet. This saves plus dane group time and means that staff with little or no GIS experience can access up to the minute data – improving communication and information sharing such as land ownership and grounds maintenance.

Understanding numbers and values in geographical areas has increased productivity

Cadcorp SIS has a comprehensive spatial analysis capability. One of the functions is to be able to quickly and easily count the number of points in a polygon. *plus dane group* use this feature to ensure Arrears Officers are allocated tenants fairly, with equal numbers in each territory. Previously situations arose where different officers could have tenants in the same street, tenants spread over a wide area, or far more tenants to manage than others. Being able to map these territories, quickly edit and change an area and see accurate data on the number of tenants has enabled sensible reallocation. This makes much more sense geographically, helps Arrears Officers to be more productive and reduces management cost.

Hot spot analysis helps manage resources effectively

Cadcorp provide a tool which allows creation and display of hot spots such as districts with higher arrears; the tool is used to quickly and easily highlight properties and areas which owe the most money. *plus dane group* can then direct resources accordingly.

The future

Plus dane group would like to integrate more mobile GIS across the company. This would enable those staff on estate walkabouts to photograph and report on situations such as fly tipping, graffiti, vandalism and dog fouling. This reduces the need for the pen and paper and avoids misunderstandings from word of mouth reports; improving data information flow and response to issues.

A new intranet is being installed which will allow tenants and staff to report problems such as plumbing, heating, grounds maintenance etc. directly to their local contact centre. The resulting communication and dialogue will improve relationships between *plus dane group* and its tenants.

"We chose Cadcorp because they were willing to go the extra mile. They were the only vendor who was offering a package that we can develop and attune to our current and future needs; with the added bonus of flexibility, excellent support and a great rapport. Cadcorp developed a system that will grow with us as we extend our plans and integrate more uses of the software. Sharing data, such as land ownership and grounds maintenance, via our intranet is just one way Cadcorp SIS helps us streamline business processes and allows better communication with our tenants and other third parties".

Alex Hill, GIS Manager, plus dane group