Irish City of the Future Uses Aerial Photomaps to Inform Development Plans

Limerick City and County Council is using the latest aerial photography and 3D height data from Bluesky to improve the planning and delivery of strategic services. Served to advanced users via the council's Geographic Information System (GIS) software and via the corporate map browser for the remainder of staff, the highly detailed digital photomaps give a real world view of the city recently awarded a chart topping place in the European Cities of the Future Awards 2018/19. The Irish Council has also taken delivery of detailed height model of the entire council area and boundary with neighbouring authorities.

"This is the second set of aerial photography has been secured from Bluesky and despite high expectations the Limerick Council has not been disappointed," commented Michael Healy, Data Analytics and GIS Manager at Limerick City and County Council. "Not only is the data more up to date and therefore more relevant to their ambitious plans to promote Limerick as an excellent place for investment and business, it is also more detailed which makes it more usable and more useful."

Open source

The high resolution imagery; 25cm for rural areas with a 12.5cm dataset for the urban conurbation of Limerick city, was captured by Bluesky in 2017 and delivered to the Council for use in its open source cross platform software QGIS. Served to specialist users as a WMS (Web Map Service) layer the Bluesky photography can be viewed and analysed alongside the entire corporate data inventory which includes layers from Ordnance Survey Ireland as well as other council datasets. Initial applications of the Bluesky photomaps include projects within the Community and Leisure, Planning and Property, Business and Economy and Environment Directorates.

3D County Model

In addition to the aerial photography dataset Limerick Council is also using a 3D model of the county created by Bluesky. The Digital Surface Model (DSM) gives an accurate representation of the earth's surface as well as structures, such as buildings, and other features, for example trees. This data is becoming increasingly important to the council with applications within the Water and Drainage division such as flood prevention informing river drainage programmes and flood response including risk assessment and emergency response planning.

The combination of a detailed representation of what is actually on the ground together with a 3D model of the surface and its structures is very powerful, continued Healy. These data will help to make informed decisions in a timely and effective way right across the organisation and therefore represent excellent value for money.