Multi-million Pound Deal Makes Ecometrica's Software Available across University of Edinburgh

Academics and students at the University of Edinburgh School of Geosciences are set to become the first to gain unlimited access to millions of pounds worth of state-of-the-art Earth Observation, geospatial intelligence and satellite mapping applications, thanks to a ground-breaking memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between sustainability software and data company Ecometrica and the University of Edinburgh.

The MoU formalises the ongoing collaboration between Ecometrica and the University of Edinburgh, which is expected to be worth around GBP4.5m to both parties over the next five years. Ecometrica will make its Mapping suite – a web-based, universal, disruptive geographic information system (GIS) – available on a limitless basis to the University, so that it can be used for research and teaching purposes.

The Ecometrica Platform, which has emerged as a key tool in global efforts to understand and predict environmental impacts, collates vast amounts of satellite data and allows users to input their own information gathered on the ground to build and share detailed interactive maps illustrating complex and changing situations.

Spatial data

Ecometrica CEO Gary Davis said the Ecometrica Platform will go into immediate use at the School of Geosciences, which already works with Ecometrica on a number of ecological mapping projects. It will be rolled out to other University of Edinburgh Colleges and Schools looking to use spatial data platforms, along with tailored training.

This is a big commitment, which paves the way for undertaking larger collaborative research involving unprecedented amounts of data from satellites, such as the European Space Agency's Sentinel missions, and a range of earth observation sources, Davis continued.

The international reach of the University of Edinburgh will open up new and exciting research possibilities, and help to position the Ecometrica Platform as the world's de facto geospatial mapping software, he added.

Positive impact

Professor Mathew Williams, of the School of Geosciences at the University of Edinburgh, said the Ecometrica Platform will enable researchers in the School of GeoSciences to carry out sophisticated mapping of all kinds of geographical and environmental data. This will support research and teaching in areas ranging from health geography to land use, forestry and sustainable agriculture. Williams stated they are particularly excited about how the platform will connect their science outputs to users outside of academia, through its open web based interface, and therefore increase the ability to make a positive impact on people’s lives.

An agreement signed earlier this year, involving NASA and the UK Space Agency, has already seen the Ecometrica Platform deployed at the School of Geosciences in a joint project with the Universities of Maryland and Leicester to explore the collaborative use of Lidar technology and earth observation data assets, ahead of the launch of NASA's Lidar mission on the International Space Station.

Winning collaboration

The latest memorandum of understanding gives the University of Edinburgh a licence to obtain continuous use of the Ecometrica Platform's Mapping suite for teaching and research purposes across its three Colleges and 20 Schools. In return, the University will incorporate the Ecometrica Platform into research applications in the geospatial area.

Ecometrica's chief financial officer Adrian Smith, who helped spearhead the deal, which will pave the way for collaborating on large scale research transactions, commented this is a winning collaboration for both parties. Providing unlimited use of the Ecometrica Platform to the School of Geosciences alone would have a major impact, but as we roll out to other Schools he expects they will find uses for the software in the humanities, and areas such as medicine and healthcare. Inclusion in a growing number of research bids, over the many fields in which the University of Edinburgh plays a leading role, will undoubtedly bring us many new funding streams and avenues for business.