

Today, Southampton; Tomorrow, the World



As I finished my editorial this news arrived and deserves, I think, pride of place. We all know how Vanessa Lawrence has driven Ordnance Survey through some turbulent times as the longest-serving head of OS for over 100 years and her gradual departure is certainly newsworthy:

Dr Vanessa Lawrence CB, Director General and Chief Executive of Ordnance Survey, will step down on 14 April to focus, for the rest of this year, on a new role as Secretary General of Ordnance Survey International. Her current deputy, Neil Ackroyd, will act as head of the national mapping agency until a successor is recruited. Vanessa will also continue in her role as Co-Chair of the UN-GGIM. We will of course report on her new roles but I can't help wondering what 2015 will bring!

I am pretty sure that Vanessa was a founding member of the Association for Geographic Information in 1989 and was certainly its chair for one of its 25 years. Anne Kemp, in the current chair's column, explains AGI's new branding and is delighted that the Council is entering into discussions on closer cooperation with the Royal Geographical Society. Could we see a merger?

Land Registry are on a road to at least partial privatisation – the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has closed its consultation on how best to set up a 'service delivery company'. At the same time, the Land Registry is seeking views on its potential role handling Local Land Charges – the two are clearly related as the latter would increase the value of the new service delivery company, which in turn would require a change in legislation to take over a role now handled by local authorities. See our news pages 6 and 7.

Future Cities was the theme of a very successful AGI event in Glasgow – as reported by Abigail Page – and Smart Cities feature in Mark Jackson's article on page 10. Whether 'future' or 'smart' there will be city lights and Faith Clark details how Bluesky are monitoring those lights in Leicester (page 08). We also have a case study on the use of Open Source software in the water industry and Roger Longhorn explains what the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association is all about. Plus your editor will be helping to facilitate a "thinkshop" in Edinburgh later this month – cunningly scheduled for St George's Day in the land of the Saltire – as part of the EC smeSpire project supporting small businesses using environmental data. Talking of INSPIRE, we have persuaded the AGI SIG to document its response to the mid-term consultation on that Directive – seven years down and seven to go! See page 16.

Also in this issue is news about English local authorities receiving £2.6m from Defra for INSPIRE implementation; ONS recommending that the next census should go online but be compulsory for all households as at present; and Royal Mail drafting a new public sector licence for PAF, which will run from April 2015 and replace the existing temporary deal.

And finally, my visit to Ireland on St Patrick's weekend was very illuminating about Irish GI, not least the forthcoming Irish postcodes. Yes I'm writing on 1 April but after noon! There should be postcodes all over the emerald isle by 2015 – but not as we know them (see page 22).

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