Gatwick Airport Plans for the Future Using Bluesky Aerial Photography

Gatwick Airport, one of the busiest single-runway airports in the world, is using aerial photography from Bluesky to plan long-term development and growth. The high-resolution map's accurate imagery will feature highly in the airport's soon-to-be-published Master Plan. The plan, which explores options including the increased capacity for its existing runway, additional use of a standby runway and safeguarding for a new runway, outlines how the airport will meet an increasing demand for air travel, create new opportunities for the region and manage its environmental impact. The Bluesky photography, delivered to Gatwick Airport as a 12.5cm-resolution digital dataset ready for use in desktop mapping, GIS and CAD systems, is the most accurate and up-to-date record of the airport currently available.

Used within Gatwick SAFE, a bespoke GIS based on Autodesk technology, alongside additional map layers from Ordnance Survey and more than 60 years' worth of legacy data, the aerial photography provides a real-world view of airport infrastructure and the local area.

Real-world context

"Aerial photography has become the 'go to' map layer for a wide variety of applications," commented Simon Richardson, CAD Manager within the Graphical Data Team at Gatwick Airport. "It provides real-world context for otherwise potentially abstract information such as buried utilities, risk and future developments, and is used for both major projects, such as the Master Plan, and daily tasks."

"Unlike traditional map data the Bluesky aerial photography is easy to interpret; water is blue and trees are green, and more detailed with features such as runway markings, car parking spaces and even evacuation points clearly visible," continued Richardson. "It is also the most up to date record of both the airport infrastructure and surrounding environment."

Wide range of applications

Gatwick Airport is a long-term user of aerial photography with digital archives dating back to the 1990s. Gatwick purchased the Bluesky 2018 imagery from its off-the-shelf, nationwide coverage that is updated on a rolling three-year programme. Applications of the Bluesky data include flood risk assessment, emergency response planning, noise abatement, engineering and construction, development planning and control, for example.

"It is understandably getting more and more difficult to operate survey aircraft within the vicinity of an airport," concluded Richardson. "So we were delighted when Bluesky was able to capture our location in such detail."