

# GEO Business Conference Spanning the Spectrum



In his introduction to the GEO Business 2017 conference, Conference Chairman Stephen Eglinton announced that this would be “a conference spanning the spectrum of geospatial activities”. So, looking back at the first day, did the GEO Business organising committee manage to deliver? The first session certainly spanned national mapping, remote sensing and GIS. Ordnance Survey (OS) CEO Nigel Clifford opened his keynote, entitled ‘Geospatial: Innovation, Integration and Impact’, with the comforting thought that geospatial in Britain is actually in pretty good shape.

Geospatial World Forum’s Geospatial Readiness Index places the UK in second place behind the USA. But we can’t rest on our laurels, he said. He sees the role of the OS as a facilitator for geospatial development in the UK. Data has to be accessible, whether it is

produced by the OS or by other organisations. To this end, the OS has been partnering with other organisations to generate value and that means focussing on applications, he explained. GeoVation promotes the development of new applications and now supports 700-800 individuals in turning their bright ideas into businesses. Other development areas include the mapping needed to support 5G and a project called City Verve which is putting the Internet of Things into practice in Manchester.

## Satellite data

Stuart Martin from the Satellite Applications Catapult followed with a talk looking into the future for satellite data along its three channels: positioning, Earth observation and communications. The future is full of new constellations, with 50 planned over the next ten years, he explained. The most significant result will be a step change in the temporal resolution of data from the current revisit period of a few days down to daily or even hourly. He sees the Catapult’s role in bringing together stakeholders to develop applications. He gave two examples: a global network for detecting illegal fishing, and bird.i which makes current Earth observation data accessible and affordable.

## National mapping authorities

Charles Kennelly, chief technology officer at Esri UK, shared his thought processes in reaching the conclusion that national mapping authorities do have a role in producing and maintaining a national ‘geospatial fabric’ of authoritative data with complete coverage – not just the profitable bits. In his crystal ball, he said, he sees increasing using of artificial intelligence to achieve this and more.

In the panel discussion that followed, Andy Coote asked the speakers questions on topics ranging from the future role of national mapping agencies to Brexit. It is safe to say that this was an invigorating start to a conference that is buzzing with energy, as is the exhibition.

*By Richard Groom, contributing editor*