

Location-based Services Supporting Citizen Self-service

UK local authorities are increasing the number of public-facing services with access to geospatial data, according to a new research report commissioned by Pitney Bowes Business Insight. Over the next six months, UK councils expect to provide more location-based services to the public as online mapping interfaces become a common part of citizen self-service applications.

The study, "Understanding the Future of GIS Usage in the UK Public Sector", was undertaken in June 2010 by K2 Advisory and surveyed 100 GIS practitioners working for local authority organisations in the UK. The report is available as a [whitepaper on this website](#). Some conclusions are:

- 44% of local authorities have recently been involved with projects to provide the public with access to mapping data, which was previously only for internal use
- 73% of local authorities expected to provide more location-based services to the public within the next six months
- 47% of local authorities have integrated GIS with core applications such as CRM and ERP systems, for more informed analysis and decision-making

"We are at the start of an information revolution, where previously hidden data is being opened up to the public to improve the services they use," said Steve Deaville, Head of Public Sector Strategy, Pitney Bowes Business Insight. "Local authorities are leading the drive to make online information and services more accessible to everybody. The release of location-based data in particular is leading to new ways of improving citizen self-services via easy-to-use, interactive mapping interfaces on council websites. These might include 'where's my nearest?' enquiries or reporting issues in the built environment such as faulty streetlights, abandoned vehicles or illegal fly-tipping.

"Not only does better access to online self-services lead to an increased 'feel good' factor among the public, but also frees up the time of front line staff tasked with answering incoming queries, leading to improved efficiencies and cost savings."

The report also found that the growing integration of location-based data into core applications such as CRM and ERP systems has enabled increased sharing of information with subcontractors, such as utilities companies, allowing faster and more accurate decision making. Transport, traffic and highways management is the area which has seen the greatest increase in the use of geospatial data, while the second highest increase is in emergency planning.

"Councils have long been accused of failing to sufficiently co-ordinate utilities' roadworks, but our research shows that there is now much greater sharing of information between local authorities and sub-contractors via location-based data," commented Dr Katy Ring, Director of K2 Advisory and co-author of the report. "We also found that GIS professionals in local authorities acknowledge that sharing this sort of data can significantly simplify relationship management with the many different parties they have to co-ordinate and liaise with on a regular basis."