

# UK Woodland Conservation with Cadcorp GIS



The UK's leading woodland conservation charity, The Woodland Trust, has deployed a next-generation corporate geographic information system from specialist British software developer, Cadcorp. The system will play a key part in helping the trust to manage its existing woodland sites and in supporting its role as the leading advocate for British woods and trees. It replaces a bespoke system which has been in use for the last ten years.

GIS Manager Ian White said that spatial information is central to the key aims of the Woodland Trust. These are: to create more native woods and trees; to protect the ones we have; and to inspire everyone to enjoy and value them.

The Woodland Trust was formed from very small beginnings some forty years ago. Yet it now looks after more than 1,000 woodland sites throughout the UK, covering approximately 240 square kilometres. Nearly 350 of the sites contain ancient woodland, of which 70 per cent is semi-natural ancient woodland – land which has been under tree cover since at least 1600. The Trust also manages over 110 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. It has planted over 16 million trees, 3.2 million of them by children, and become the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. It would be inconceivable for the Trust to operate without the support of GIS today.

## New Demands

In 2012, the trust recognised that its very success was placing new demands on its information processing capabilities: demands which couldn't be met by its existing GIS.

The existing GIS was originally developed in-house as a bespoke application in 2003, continued Ian White. By 2012 its limitations had become apparent. They wanted to give many users the ability to annotate maps and edit data. However, the application was read-only and there was no support for new on-line data sources such as Web Mapping Services (WMS). The bottom line was they had to decide whether to invest in enhancing the existing system, or migrate to a new platform. They decided on replacement rather than enhancement.

They set about looking for a system that was quick and responsive, that could be customised to meet the needs of a wide range of Trust teams, and which we could use at scales ranging from individual woodlands, through to UK-wide. The system also had to be capable of dealing with a wide range of datasets and data sources.

Following a competitive tender, the Woodland Trust selected Cadcorp to provide the replacement. Cadcorp technology met their functional specifications, continued White. And they were also impressed by its level of interoperability. It allowed them to work with its existing system and data in parallel, for all long as they wished. It also gave direct support for OS MasterMap Topography Layer – which is very import to Woodland Trust - without having to buy additional data loaders.

## Cadcorp GIS

The new GIS has quickly shown its worth as an investigative tool. For example, the trust has used the system to help identify woodland affected by the proposed route of the HS2 high speed rail line. The Cadcorp GIS is being used to superimpose the route against Ordnance Survey maps and georectified aerial photography. The trust has so far identified sixty seven ancient woods within 200m of the track, thirty three of which are within 25 metres.

Mike O'Neil, CEO of Cadcorp said it is inspiring that the concerns of a retired Devon farmer about the loss of native woodlands some forty years ago should lead to the creation of the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. Cadcorp is proud that the Woodland Trust has chosen Cadcorp technology to help it continue with its work.

*Image courtesy: The Woodland Trust.*