

Helping the Scottish Government Maximise Coverage of Superfast Broadband

Bringing high-speed broadband to Scotland is one of the most ambitious infrastructure programmes in Europe.

Customer

The Scottish Government's Digital Strategy sets out a vision for Scotland as a vibrant, inclusive, open and outward looking digital nation; it is action-focused and includes specific priorities that put digital at the heart of all government activities. It includes delivery of inclusive economic growth, reform of public services, preparing children for the workplaces of tomorrow, and tackling inequalities by empowering communities.

The Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme is a key element of the wider Digital Scotland Programme, and supports the Scottish Government's aim to make Scotland a world-class digital nation. The programme is divided into two sub-projects with dedicated teams – one covering the 'Highlands and Islands', and one for the 'Rest of Scotland'.

DSSB funding partners include the Scottish Government, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, BT Group, the UK Government through Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), local authorities and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Problem

The £428M DSSB programme is helping to bring high speed broadband to Scotland and is one of the most ambitious infrastructure programmes in Europe. Despite the national scale of the project, effective programme management is based on the ability to implement and efficiently use granular information on individual property addresses.

Effective programme management of the DSSB contract therefore generated a need to identify the requirements and the outcomes of the programmes on a premise-by-premise basis. A mechanism was required to match premise related outcomes to national reference datasets to facilitate a variety of programme management activities. Sharing the outputs of this exercise, alongside other spatial datasets held in relation to the Digital Infrastructure programmes was also required, both internally between programme management teams and externally with other Scottish Public Sector agencies in a secure manner.



Effective use of spatial data is an invaluable way to bring together information on digital connectivity to inform programme management.

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Solution

thinkWhere won a contract to undertake quarterly address-matching exercises for the DSSB programme. In practical terms, the Scottish Government receives ongoing updates to a list of addresses that have been connected to fibre infrastructure as part of the DSSB programme. The address-matching service provided by thinkWhere has allowed the programme to match premises listed by Openreach to both core reference address datasets as well as a variety of additional thematic address-related data used by the Scottish Government.

thinkWhere's cloud-based GIS, Location Centre, was also implemented, giving internal programme management staff access to address-related information alongside a variety of other contextual and digital infrastructure programme-related spatial datasets. The use of spatial data and mapping has been found to be a useful way to bring together a variety of information on digital connectivity to inform the programme and its stakeholders.

thinkWhere was also tasked with training DSSB programme management staff in the use of Location Centre. This training has allowed staff with no prior specialist GIS knowledge to implement Location Centre's gazetteer search, spatial query and spatial analysis functionality as part of business-as-usual processes to drive effective programme management.

In Action

Location Centre is currently being used to support a wide variety of programme management tasks. These include enquiry management, stakeholder engagement and analysis and decision-making in relation to infrastructure deployment. As programmes are managed by individuals working across a range of organisations, being able to share data through a secure but flexible platform, accessible via a web browser, means its use isn't constrained by specific ICT policies or providers.

In April 2018, the programme announced that more than 95 per cent of homes and businesses across Scotland can now access fibre broadband. Combined with commercial coverage, the DSSB programme exceeded this target ahead of schedule.

The additional insight provided by thinkWhere's address-matching and address data management services has also been used by DSSB to map premises in relation to other contextual data held by Scottish Government to support a variety of programme management workstreams. This has allowed, for example, the identification of small businesses, connected to infrastructure by the programme as a result of specific European funding streams. It is also being used to identify the ongoing benefits of the programme at both local and national levels.

Summary

Effective management of the DSSB programme reporting can only be achieved through the effective implementation of granular address-related information at national scale that is consistent and shared across all programme workstreams. The address-matching exercises, undertaken by thinkWhere, have delivered insight and facilitated effective programme management within the DSSB programme. Dissemination and onward use of this data within the Location Centre platform also supports a wide variety of programme management tasks.

More than 95% of homes and businesses across Scotland can now access fibre broadband – a target reached ahead of schedule.

Benefits

- Validation of programme data against national reference datasets and Scottish Government information to support a variety of programme management activity
- Integration of GIS functionality with business-as-usual programme management processes and workstreams
- Means to interrogate programme information to support a variety of management functions
- Visualisation and reporting on programme progress

thinkWhere use leading edge cloud, Open Source and GIS technologies, to develop innovative software and solutions, backed by a wide range of GIS implementation, consultancy, support and training services.

They provide an online platform for storing, sharing and using maps and geographic data, and help solve real-world problems using open data and open technology.