



A report of the annual conference of Compass Informatics Limited, held at the Clyde Court Hotel, Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4, Ireland, on 13 September.



Registration for Compass12 began at 8.30 a.m. with 200 registered attendees, accompanied by 25 staff from Compass on hand to inform the attendees about Compass activities, projects, software products and services, including hands-on demonstrations. There were also 10 staff present manning the exhibition stands from Spectra Precision, Handheld Group, VisionID, Sigma Seven, Ordnance Survey Ireland, National Biodiversity Data Centre, and Compass' own information and demonstration stands.

The conference started with a welcome from **Gearóid Ó Riain**, Compass Informatics' Managing Director, who set the scene for the day, encouraging all attendees to actively participate in the day, as the event was held on their behalf. They were encouraged to become better acquainted with the technology, tools and services available from the firm, and to learn more about the ICT solutions that colleagues from other organisations had implemented or were involved in now.



Following Gearóid's welcome, **Tom Stafford**, from the Environmental Protection Agency, offered a stimulating keynote entitled "Are We There Yet? Pushing back on GIS to reveal its true potential!", focusing on technology, processes, people - and best use of resources, in times of tight budgets. He noted that, within the "Data-Information-Knowledge-Wisdom" paradigm, most of our work to date has focused on data and information, and that integrated information (spatial and otherwise) is needed in order to gain knowledge which will hopefully lead to wisdom.

One of Tom's main messages was that "GIS alone does not have the answers" – but rather, it is a valuable tool in helping users across numerous sectors to analyse and appreciate their information in that difficult search for knowledge. He concluded with the messages that we need to work together to deliver more efficient GIS services, to collaborate on projects that are relevant to us all, to focus on shared services, to appreciate that consultants can act as integrators – and to "get out of the trenches and see the bigger picture!"



The keynote was followed by two ‘future views’ - from **Hugh Mangan**, of Ordnance Survey of Ireland, and **Koen Verbruggen**, of the Geological Survey of Ireland.

Hugh Mangan’s presentation was titled “Your National Mapping Agency: A valuable role in the modern and future economy” focusing on such themes as how geography underpins the nation, and how location matters to government, at all levels, as well as to citizens. To support these themes, OSi’s role in national mapping is to maintain and develop the underlying physical infrastructure Ireland needed to support mapping applications, by creating consistent, homogenous, and well maintained digital databases. OSi achieves this through its data collection and management expertise, especially dealing with very large datasets. Many different ‘drivers of change’ are involved in recognising the value of geoinformation, across sectors and nations, as spatial data infrastructures (SDIs) are being built at many different levels, building bridges between organisations and encouraging greater collaboration.



As to the future, Prime 2 - “a new spatial database to meet current and future demands” - is to be completed by June 2013, based on an open and robust data model that follows OGC standards. Hugh also presented MapGenie, the award winning web-based mapping service that allows users to connect directly to OSi’s national map database online. Concluding his presentation of OSi’s future, he acknowledged that OSi will continue to act as a trusted custodian for spatial data, storing it centrally and helping to serve and share it wherever needed.



Koen Verbruggen’s presentation was titled "Geological Survey of Ireland and INFOMAR seabed survey - issues and the future view", during which he provided a comprehensive overview of GSI – and the massive volumes of data it holds in its data repository, adds to annually and delivers to customers, under a ‘free digital data’ policy. Amongst the many web mapping sites offered by GSI are the GSI public viewer, and viewers for INFOMAR and Groundwater, the Geotechnical viewer, Brefnie viewer, Mineral “Open Files” and the GeoUrban Dublin viewer – all served from the organisation’s ArcSDE GSI Mapstore.

After an introduction to the Irish Spatial Data Exchange (ISDE) data discovery (catalogue) service, and some of the datasets that can be viewed via ISDE links, Koen moved on to INFOMAR – another GSI ‘data monster’ involving two 25 Terabyte servers – located on boats! Information provided within INFOMAR is critical for implementation of various EU policies and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, plus for offshore energy. It makes extensive use of web map applications and 3D visualisation and processing.

Koen concluded his presentation with a look at why GSI has adopted the ‘free data’ policy, a look at future IT challenges, including the Cloud and Virtualisation, HTML.5, IPv6 and 'Big Data', plus GSI’s own ‘data challenges’ in respect to these global drivers and the technology GSI plans to use to meet these challenges.

Both of these ‘future view’ presentations were very well received by an appreciative audience, before we broke for the first coffee break and a chance to visit the exhibition and software demonstration stands. (See later in this report).

Following the break, Compass’ **Paul Mills** chaired a session on “Enterprise Solutions”, with three presentations.



Clearpower’s **Simon Dick** and **Oliver Castle**, of Compass, presented the project on which they have been cooperating for Severn Trent Water in the UK, titled “Biosolids Integrated Operations (BIO) solution: Supporting 700,000 Tonnes of Sludge”.

The EPA’s **Tom Stafford** then returned to the podium to speak on “Delivering a Licensing and Enforcement Management Application – Mapping & Data Analysis in a Service Oriented Environment”.

Finally, **Dr Liam Lysaght** presented an update on the National Biodiversity Data Centre – “A New Piece of Ireland’s Data Infrastructure”. (Note that the National Biodiversity Data Centre is operated by Compass Informatics on behalf of The Heritage Council & the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht. Dr Lysaght is Centre Director).

In the final session before the lunch break, Paul also chaired the first of Compass’ Rapid Fire Snapshots sessions, during which Compass staff present tools, technologies and solutions being used to service Compass clients. Compass MD **Gearóid Ó Riain** kicked the session off with an introduction to iGeotec and the Ubipix spatial video on your smartphone.

Andy Day offered a look at Compass MapView, the company’s rapid web mapping and reporting toolkit, followed by **Gert Conradie** presenting “Integrating spatial data into office solutions: Using Dynamics CRM and SharePoint”. Andy also presented some of Compass’ MobileGIS – mobile mapping app developments, and **Ali Robinson** and **Omar Sarhan** concluded the session with their work on “data analysis unlocked through mapping”.



During the one-hour buffet lunch break, participants had the opportunity to both network with their peers from other organisations and visit the exhibitors’ stands and the Compass demonstration area.



Remember, the annual opportunity to meet departments, from to share views and



Compass conferences are an excellent colleagues from other government academia and from industry partners, catch up on the news!

Following lunch, **Liam Lysaght** chaired the Planning session, which comprised four presentations.



Beverley Sherwood, of Fáilte Ireland, presented the work on “Tourism Scorecards: Data analytics and destination planning” with which they have been involved, with support from Compass. This is potentially ground-breaking work for which we expect to see future reports on application of the methodology to the tourism industry.

William Hynes, of the Downey Hynes Partnership, then presented the joint project work of DHP and Compass on “A Web Based Development Contributions Model for the National Health Service, UK” – one of Compass’ early forays into the UK market.



Beatrice Kelly, of The Heritage Council, then presented the “Heritage Map Viewer: A Heritage Data and Planning Resource for Ireland” which is based on the Compass MapView framework. (Note: The Heritage Viewer was also the focus of a presentation at the global GSDI 13 Conference in Quebec City, Canada, in May, for which the paper can be downloaded from [here](#), for more information on the Heritage Viewer).

Finally, **John Manning**, of Pobal, presented “Pobal Maps: A gateway for data sharing and working smarter”, another set of online mapping services developed using the Compass MapView product line.



Following the second coffee break of the day, Compass’ **Paul Mills** chaired the second session of Rapid Fire Snapshots. During this session, **Seth Girvin** presented the Compass River NetworkSolver (RiverSolver) and Road NetworkSolver (RoadSolver) tools used in spatial/network analysis and modelling by different Compass clients. **Colette O’Flynn**, from the NBDC, then offered a look at the National Invasive Species Database, followed by **Kevin Lydon**, from the Environmental Protection Agency, with an “Update on Land Use Land Cover Mapping and Progress Towards a National Programme”.



The Rapid Fire Snapshots were followed immediately by the Transportation session, again chaired by Paul, during which **Peter Cranny**, of the National Transport Authority, presented “NapTAN – Creation of a national transport stopping points database”, followed by **Paul Fox**, Local Government Management Agency, on “Delivering a Cross Local Authority, Cross Platform Roads Management Solution” with which Compass have been involved in development.

The conference closed with final remarks from Compass MD, **Gearóid Ó Riain**, thanking all the participants, speakers, exhibitors and those manning the demonstration stands,

reminding the audience of future events at which Compass will be present, including especially GIS Ireland 2012, for which Compass are Platinum Sponsors.



Throughout the day, while the main presentations were underway in one large conference room of the hotel (Grosvenor 1), workshops and demonstrations, plus the exhibition stands, were located in an adjoining room (Grosvenor 2).

Surveying workshops, led by **Louis Mullen** and **Seamus Costello**, began at 1000h, with overviews of both the Spectra Precision and Handheld Europe product lines, for surveying and rugged portable computers, respectively. Following the first coffee break, the workshop moved on to demonstrations and user case studies of the surveying and mobile GIS equipment. Following lunch, **Andy Coleman** and **Andy Gosney** of **Sigma Seven**, and **Gert Conradie** of Compass, presented the GeoField field survey software package.



In the penultimate slot for the day (3.40 – 4.15h), a further round of three presentations covering the general topic 'Data Discovery' was also held in Grosvenor 2, chaired by Roger Longhorn, Compass' Senior SDI Expert. Roger began the session with a review of where Europe (and Ireland!) is with implementation of the INSPIRE pan-European SDI Directive. He was followed by Compass' Alison Robinson with an overview of spatial web services, demonstrating various examples of such services, online. The session concluded with Oliver Castle bringing the audience up to date on some of the latest technology developments involved in furthering the Irish Spatial Data Exchange (ISDE), which serves as the 'proving ground' for an INSPIRE-compliant pilot geospatial information discovery service for Ireland.



Compass Informatics wishes to thank all those who participated in the conference, especially our exhibitors and sponsors - and we look forward to seeing you again at the next Compass Conference – if not before!

