

AGI – putting INSPIRE inside GI

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The Association for Geographic Information (AGI) is the representative body for members of the Geographic Information (GI) community in the UK. It has both corporate and individual members from all sectors - public & private, producers and users. We believe that our mission statement effectively describes the aims of INSPIRE - to maximise the use of geographic information (GI) for the benefit of the citizen, good governance and commerce. This presentation describes the AGI's efforts since INSPIRE was conceived and looks at how effective they have been in achieving the AGI's (and INSPIRE's) mission.

AGI took an early interest in INSPIRE, published a policy statement in 2003, registered as an SDIC in 2006, and set up an Action Working Group in 2007, as the Directive was adopted. AGI has held and supported INSPIRE awareness events with speakers from public and private sectors, from the EC and from other European countries. These started in 2005 with the latest being held in January 2008. Also in 2006 a separate SDI Seminar took a more in-depth look at the state of SDI in the UK. At this year's annual conference we expect to have an INSPIRE session with a lively debate on what it might mean for us all.

AGI has responded to all of the calls for comments on INSPIRE documents. AGI has run GIGateway – an online geospatial metadata service for the UK public sector – under contract to the government for the last five years. The contract currently operates on a care and maintenance basis, until decisions are made on how the INSPIRE metadata requirements will be met at a national level. The experience of running this service will be shared together with some lessons learnt about the 'carrots and sticks' that may be needed to ensure a smoothly running metadata service.

British Standards Institution (BSI) Technical Committee IST/36 deals with standards for Geographic Information and is sponsored by AGI which funds its secretariat. As well as providing UK's (considerable) input to ISO & CEN deliberations, it has worked hard on the BS7666 standard for gazetteers which is now being used as a reference document by several of the INSPIRE thematic working groups.

Although the immediate efforts to transpose and implement INSPIRE will inevitably take place in the public authorities producing the GI data that is most affected, it is vital for the whole of the sector to understand the processes that will lead to INSPIRE compliance over the next 10 years. In the UK, AGI is represented on the GI Panel that is developing a UK Location Strategy and AGI Branches in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been heavily involved in their devolved GI Strategies. Many AGI members, from both public and private sectors, are actively participating in INSPIRE – as members but also in some cases as SDICs or LMOs directly.

The process of implementing a Directive, such as INSPIRE, with potentially wide ranging effects, requires constant attention to detailed outputs of the EC team. In addition, the process inside each Member State requires that representative organisations keep up with transposition and implementation 'at home'. AGI is well placed to act as a communicator of all aspects of the INSPIRE process but may also need to represent its members – and in some cases specific groups of them – when vital issues are being discussed or negotiated.