ORDNANCE SURVEY® OF NORTHERN IRELAND

CASE STUDY

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND (PSNI)

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) As a Core Component of Operational Planning

"A VISUAL IMAGE WITHIN ANY PLAN TELLS US MUCH MORE, FAR MORE QUICKLY AND INTUITIVELY, THAN A THOUSAND WORDS."

Paul Varley, SPTO, Head of Imaging Branch, PSNI

Background: Policing a Scheduled Event

When the PSNI decides an event needs to be policed, Commanders must balance the public order and safety requirements with the available resources.

The PSNI's Mapping Section delivers cartography to the Operational Planners, who produce a policing plan for the event from the maps. Data accuracy is vitally important because Police Commanders rely on the plans to police the event.

This case study shows how OSNI digital mapping enhances the capability of the PSNI's Mapping Section to speedily deliver accurate mapping to Operational Planners.

Planning to Police a Scheduled Event: Operational Challenges

PSNI Operational Planners must consider a number of factors when they are producing a policing plan for a scheduled event:

- location;
- potential crowd size;
- likely hostility;
- traffic disruption.

Operational Planners must try to accurately predict where crowds of people might congregate or hot spots for likely trouble. Accurate information about the event location and its demographics are crucial.

Useful Terms

Geographic Information
Information about objects or phenomena associated with a specified location on the surface of the Earth.

What is a Geographic Information System (GIS)?
GIS is a software information system that finds, analyses and displays geographical information. GIS tools visualise the layout of a location to aid the user in their decision making.

Overcoming Operational Challenges with OSNI GI

Below is one example of how the Operational Planners use GI to overcome the challenges of producing an effective police plan for an event.

In this example OSNI digital data was input into Computer Aided Design (CAD). From this, PSNI's Mapping Section could then create a bespoke simplified drawing of Brookeborough village to highlight a number of key organisational features.

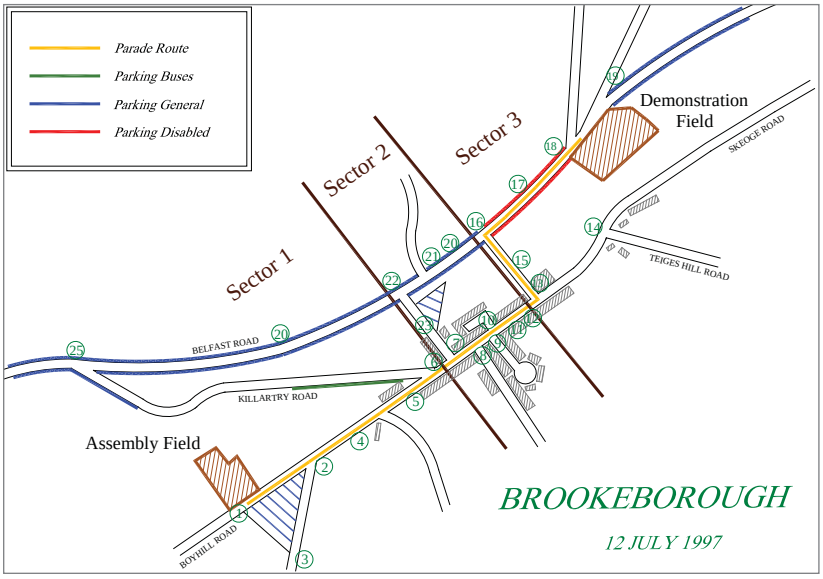

Figure 1 - Plan of Brookeborough village that was used to assist the policing plan for a parade.

Commanding Officers were given sectors on the map that defined their individual area of responsibility. Each Commanding Officer took responsibility for the public order and safety requirements of this sector on the parade day.

Each Commander, and each Officer under their command, received a copy of this map. A simple key indicated the parade route, parking allocation and likely position of any spectators or demonstrators. This information ensured that the PSNI's decisions about where to position officers on foot were properly informed.

The PSNI also used the OSNI mapping to mark the location of routine traffic cordons and closures in the wider area around the village.

By using OSNI data the PSNI can be confident that the information in the CAD drawing produced is accurate and up-to-date. OSNI mapping also helps to determine alternative routes and diversions required to respond to an emergency situation.

Benefits of OSNI GI for Policing Scheduled Events

Visual representation of the location

GI gives the PSNI's experienced decision makers a visual image of the location. This allows them to determine points of potential danger or weakness more quickly. It can also reveal favourable vantage points for monitoring a crowd or assessing dangers on the day.

Higher quality of briefing information to stakeholders

The PSNI is responsible for briefing its officers and other stakeholders of an event (local council, bus service, ambulance service) with a policing plan. The operational map is a core element of the brief. Operational Planners can be confident that their brief to stakeholders is accurate because OSNI maps form the foundation of these maps.

Faster distribution of information

The PSNI Mapping Division mostly uses digital geographic information from OSNI. The electronic format of GI speeds up the production of and amendments to maps produced for operational planning. The format also means that the information can be emailed, making it quicker and cheaper to distribute.

Summary: Contribution of GI to Operational Planning

The case study shows how valuable the use of GI is to operational planning in the PSNI. GI provides the accurate spatial data that is essential to inform the decisions taken by the Operational Planners. It also addresses the wider responsibility of providing other stakeholders with a quality brief by producing an accurate and usable map.

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