Common hymn book

Gayle Gander of Intelligent Addressing – the custodian of the NLPG – explains how a true "joined up" database is now a reality, how the NLPG will help underpin the new regional control centres for the fire service, and how all emergency services will soon benefit.

Derbyshire, Gloucerstershire and Somerset, the first to "cut over" to the regional control centre, will also be the first emergency services to pilot NLPG. If successful, the new database will be offered to emergency services nationwide.

The NLPG was initiated in 1999 to become the master address dataset for England and Wales and the central hub for the 376 address creating Local Authorities and their Local Land and Property Gazetteers (LLPGs). Based on unique property reference numbers (UPRNs) the underlying principle of these gazetteers is to provide a single definitive address database for all departments and systems across a local authority in order to cut costs, improve efficiency and service delivery.

The dataset enables to now offer true "joined up" government database in which each property is given a unique property reference number (UPRN) which transcends (property) numbers, names, descriptions and postcodes. UPRNs are assigned for the full life of the plot and/or building.

The project was given a significant boost in 2005 with the introduction of the Mapping Services Agreement, which committed all local authorities to bringing their gazetteers up to standard and to start submitting regular updates to the NLPG hub for use by national and regional organizations as well as fire and police forces. Collaboration with DNA-S (Definitive National Addressing for Scotland) means that the a British addressing infrastructure is now a reality.

Intelligent Addressing (IA) is a specialist private sector consultancy employing recognised experts in addressing. As the custodian of the NLPG, IA is responsible for managing the NLPG central hub and providing all the associated data, consultancy, training and support services. In addition, IA is responsible for distributing the NLPG to the 575 organisations that are entitled to use the NLPG data through the Mapping Services agreement.

IA is presently working with the FiReControl Project, providing expertise in address matching. The work involves comparing the current data used by the fire services to the NLPG in order to associate any currently held associated data relating to historic incidents or specific risks to an NLPG UPRN. This will be vital in enabling fire services to benefit from the accuracy and completeness of the NLPG as well as the invaluable operational data required for effective response to incidents within the planned regional control centres.

Initially this service is being offered as a pilot scheme to the fire services for Derbyshire, Gloucestershire and Somerset (who will be the first to "cut over" to the RCC) and if successful it will be offered nationwide.

There are a number of main drivers for the emergency services use of the NLPG.

To help deliver a high quality service, the police and fire and rescue authorities depend critically on the availability of accurate and up to date geographical information – in particular to assist with initial emergency call handling, determining the location of an incident from the information given by the caller, and dispatching resources quickly to those locations.

Access to a comprehensive and consistent gazetteer of places, streets and properties has an important role in supporting more effective collaboration and mutual assistance between the police, fire and rescue authorities both regionally and nationally.

The NLPG has been chosen to underpin the new Regional Control Centres for the fire and rescue service. The reasons for its choice are equally as valid for the police service and can be summarised by:

- The data model is fundamentally compliant with BS7666, the national standard for addressing.
- The MSA has had a key role in underwriting a programme of continual improvement and consistency, ensuring that the 500 or so individuals from local authorities that are contributing to the NLPG are regularly submitting data to agreed standards. All local authorities gazetteers are based on LLPG data entry conventions for the inclusion and modification of real world addressable objects (both mail-addressable and non-mail-addressable) in Local Land and Property Gazetteers conforming to British Standard (BS 7666:2000-1 and BS 7666:2000-2). This means that data across the country is consistent.
- Regional Control Centres will be owned and managed by Local Authority controlled companies – mapping and gazetteer data for local authorities has already been procured through the MSA.
- Using the same framework agreement (and hence data sets) as local authorities and fire and rescue services will facilitate data sharing.
- Local authorities manage the street naming and numbering process and are therefore the authoritative source.
- Local authorities are the originators of addressing information and so an address dataset, developed and maintained at source by users of the data will inevitably have a high level of currency and completeness.
- The NLPG model and content support the data requirements of FiReControl.

CLG is working closely with IDeA to support the implementation within the fire and rescue service community. IDeA has recently introduced a new common data entry convention that is compliant with BS7666:2006 to further develop and assure the gazetteers being developed and maintained by local authorities across England and Wales.

As part of the new arrangements, the fire and rescue services will become regular and intensive users of the NLPG, and this will generate a volume of change information. This will be fed back to local authorities via a national hub and will facilitate continuous improvement in the integrity of the information locally. Additionally, use of a common base data-set and referencing system will enhance the ability of fire and rescue services to interchange data with local authorities. This will ensure that the new Regional Control Centres can mobilise resources using top quality and consistent location information.

The co-operation with local authorities through data sharing is a fundamental part of the resilience agenda and an exemplar for the information sharing aspects of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA)

Every incident has to happen somewhere. The NLPG allows organisations to link their data to the same high-quality source of references that define locations and addresses.

At the core of the NLPG is a definitive list of records of property units on which local authorities and others such as the emergency services hold information. These property units include those that receive mail and others that do not, but still require a service to be delivered to them. Each record has an immutable Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN). Each UPRN has a description or address and may in fact have a number of additional alternative descriptions or addresses if these exist in the real world.

For example, one particular property could have a number of alternative addresses, a blue light service needs to be able to quickly and efficiently identify the correct address to attend. If all of the alternative addresses are linked by a common UPRN, it becomes possible to immediately identify the right property.

The creation of the UPRN as the single property identifier across a range of cooperating services and IT applications lies at the centre of potential benefits to wider users as they can be sure that (i) their address reference source is complete, and (ii) it confirms the definitive identity of the property.

The addresses used are structured in such a way that they optimise the ability to link records in different databases and they describe where the property is (a geographic address) rather than the route taken by post to get to that property (a postal address). In addition, every record in the NLPG has a representative pair of national grid coordinates to enable linkage to mapping.

Each property in the database is given a unique property reference number (UPRN) which is assigned for the full life of the plot and/or building.

Intelligent Addressing is working with FiReControl, comparing the current data used by the Fire Services to the NLPG, in order to associate any currently held data relating to incidents or specific risks to an NLPG UPRN.