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Photo credit: London Fire Brigade

London Fire Brigade Idox's Bluelight Gazetteer as an alternative to Esri's LocatorHub

Background:

Delivering an effective service to a mega city

London Fire Brigade (LFB) is the busiest fire and rescue service in the country, protecting people and property from fire within the 1587 km² of Greater London. With the city fast approaching mega city status, its seven million address records need meticulous maintenance, management and data integration to deliver the most effective service.

Challenge:

Using UPRNs as the gold thread to link data

LFB's corporate gazetteer underpins everything it does. The Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRN) are critical for linking disparate datasets to provide the detailed layers of information on every property that is needed to tailor and deliver the very best service. To attempt this without the UPRNs would be very difficult and time-consuming, if not impossible.

Richard Jebb, Corporate Gazetteer & Mobile Data Manager, LFB comments, "Through the UPRNs, we can run Power BI Reports to get the integrated information we need immediately. With the vast amount of data we have, and being the biggest city in the UK, it's crucial we can layer and access data in this way."

At LFB, there are several key corporate applications which need to consume the gazetteer directly, for example, the Fire Safety System with data on fire safety inspections, building regulations etc; the Home Fire Safety Visit System; the Incident Management System that captures information on every incident attended; and the LFB diary. This diary logs a vast amount of data from training to any data captured resulting from daily business, such as risk information captured from a visit. Data from the diary is then pushed out to other databases depending on the criteria set, e.g. the Operational Risk Database, or the electronic Premises Information Plates that hold the footprints for high-rise buildings and assist with any initial information gathering at an incident. In addition, other systems require specific selections of data, for example, some have local-only data appended to AddressBase Premium and others have data filtered out. The complexities and volume of data LFB needs to link are vast.

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Corporate Gazetteer & Mobile Data Manager
London Fire Brigade



Solution:

An advanced Gazetteer Management System for a complex fire and rescue service

LFB has been consuming AddressBase Premium and the associated UPRNs through Esri's LocatorHub as its Gazetteer Management System (GMS). However, with Esri retiring this product at the end of the year, LFB needed to source an alternative system that was capable of accommodating its complex requirements both now and in the future. As a result, LFB has subscribed to Idox's Bluelight GMS (Aligned Assets platform) as its advanced capability and development roadmap greatly extends the potential of the gazetteer.

Until now, LFB's databases consumed address data from the gazetteer via LocatorHub's locators that were served up by a web service to the different applications. One of LFB's challenges has been to identify how these locators could be replicated in another GMS. Instead of using locators, Idox has been working with LFB to connect its applications straight to Idox's Bluelight APIs, enabling connecting systems to search for an address directly from the gazetteer, ensuring it is the most up-to-date, accurate address available.

Another requirement of the GMS is for LFB to be able to add local-only records. This is particularly critical for the Incident Management System where it may need to create local records for locations not recorded on AddressBase Premium, such as tunnels between underground stations. This requirement for local-only records is likely to increase for LFB as it moves towards replacing its Fire Safety System with One Risk – a system that integrates the Operational Risk Database, Fire Safety Database, and Home Fire Safety Visit system. By doing this there will be an increase in local-only and temporary records as they will be needed for associating specific information. Idox's Bluelight GMS is not only capable of this, but it will also reconcile with the AddressBase Premium Change Only Updates (COU) to ensure there is no duplication resulting from new locations being added to AddressBase Premium.

In addition, LFB will be extending the Bluelight GMS with Idox's Xtended Data Manager (XDM) to enable quick spatial queries to show the fire station area a property sits within. Historically, this was a time-consuming process that was required every six weeks after the COUs. By using XDM, LFB can consume this information in real time without any lengthy processes required. This extension will also be used for recording and accessing risk information quickly and effectively, as well as utilising the most up-to-date business names data from the 118 Group.

Outcomes:

Future proofing the GMS

LFB is still in the early phase of migration to the Bluelight GMS. While Idox has been working with the LFB team to tailor the GMS to best meet their needs and increase efficiency through improved processes, LFB's future requirements must also be considered. Currently, LFB's Mobilising System does not consume the gazetteer, meaning it has to push the six-weekly COUs out to the third-party administrator to upload to the Mobilising System. Inevitably the updates fall behind as the changes are not applied as quickly as they are supplied – as such there is a disconnect in the data until the third party has applied the changes.

"In 2025, we will be replacing our Mobilising System with one that will consume the Bluelight GMS directly. This will be of huge benefit as updates will be in real-time, ensuring all units are mobilised to the absolute most accurate address, with the relevant risk information readily available," comments Jebb.

There is also a plan for LFB to adopt Ordnance Survey's (OS) new Emergency Services Gazetteer (ESG). LFB will implement this in the Mobilising System, Incident Management System and the LFB diary. Idox has been collaborating with the OS in the development of this dataset and investing in Bluelight GMS to be able to consume this.

"While we are currently in the initial stages of migration, we are looking forward to this longer-term journey with LFB, helping the team to achieve more in the communities they serve, through accurate, inter-connected location data," comments Claire Russell, Head of Address Data Solutions Products, Idox.

The next chapter of this case study will cover the migration experience and the initial benefits LFB is experiencing as a result.

Call us now on 0333 011 1200 or email marketing@idoxgroup.com to find out more about Idox's Bluelight GMS.

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