

Computer Technology and LVT

THE GIS conference at Earl's Court, London, in September, explored the latest developments in computer technologies that enable digital mapping to be integrated with other land related data. As such, it is a tremendously powerful tool that can facilitate the introduction of Land Value Taxation. Tony Vickers' paper on the relevance of Geographical Information Systems for LVT was heard by around 60 delegates and there were several interested questioners. There were numerous other papers with the following being most relevant.

1000 Years of Ownership: Registering the City of Bristol

Tim Musgrave (Principal Consultant, Terraquest Information Management Ltd) and John Flack (Principal Solicitor, Bristol City Council)

There was recognition at the Ground for Hope Bournemouth Conference that land must be registered for LVT to be practicable. There are other government related reasons why local authorities would need to register their land including best value initiatives, joined up government and electronic service delivery. So there is a need to establish best practice for registering land.

Any council has to consider the most effective use for its properties and co-ordinate the service demand and availability. The starting point for this is to identify all the legal interests in the land and property. In a city with as complex a history as Bristol, this can be difficult and

time-consuming. For example, it takes more than 4 miles of shelving to hold all the documents relating to land for the city!

The City Council used voluntary registration to decrease the costs that would be entailed. This is easier in the buoyant property markets of Bristol. However, there is still a considerable workload for HMLR, which needs to be considered. Still, there are many benefits for the council such as finding land that the council had not realised it owned or land being encroached on by third parties. Nevertheless, there is much work to be done, with an estimate of five years to complete the work.

Sustainable Land Use Planning for Brownfield Sites

Sandra Alker and Daniel Clayton (Urban Mines Ltd.)

A brownfield site can be defined as 'land or premises which has previously been used or developed and is not currently fully in use, although it may be partially used or occupied.' (Alker *et al.* 2000). In the Government's 'Sustainable Regeneration: A Good Practice Guide' (DETR, 1999), there are many arguments for using brown field sites:

- ✓ It can help concentrate new development in existing urban areas.
- ✓ It can reduce transport needs.
- ✓ It is a prudent use of natural resources.
- ✓ It can contribute to social progress.

These arguments support the arguments for LVT, which would make more brownfield sites available.

Use of the site depends on the context and locality and should take into account stakeholders, planners and developers to find the best use for the site. This paper considers that the end use of a site is better determined by the characteristics of the site rather than preconceived ideas for the site. This is perhaps even more important when there is site contamination.

GIS: Providing a Foundation for Community Government

David Lochead (Edinburgh On Line Programme Manager)

This paper included a discussion on how mapping of information can be a tool for democracy. Because we tend to visualise our world as pictures (rather than graphs for example), a map can be a clear way of showing people what a situation is like. When people understand their world better, they are more likely to engage actively in decision making.

Mapping can break down the barriers over who does what and help groups work together. Processes can be integrated more easily. Also, since political representation is by area, strengthening the understanding of administration geographically can lead to more links being established. Mapping of land values and the revenue raised from them could of course be an integral part of this process.

The Reformed Land Tax-a New Instrument of Municipal Land Policy?

Reidenbach, M.

INFORMATIONEN ZUR RAUMENTWICKLUNG (1999) No. 8 pp.565-576

This article examines the current German land tax system and its weaknesses. The author claims that it is time for a reform of the policies and looks at recent discussions of the possibilities. These suggestions usually involve measure that take sustainability and other land policy measures as well as the more conventional fiscal concerns. Those in charge of urban land policies advocate a pure land value tax, as a result of which, this idea currently has real political importance. However,

there are others who would prefer to see both land and buildings assessed for tax with implications for simplification of administration. Both systems need to be examined for their particular effects on the constitution as well as on society and the economy more generally. The author doubts that LVT alone could be administered with a tax rate that is high enough to have an impact on areas with restricted land use and considers a high tax specifically for building land to have more potential.

The National Countryside Monitoring Scheme Visualisation and Analysis System

Jon Pettenburg (Director, GeoWise) and Michael Shewry (Environmental Statistician, Scottish Natural Heritage)

This project used aerial photography from the late 1940s, the early 1970s and the late 1980s to show changes in patterns of land use for a series of sample squares throughout Scotland. In this case, habitat changes could be monitored and because the system used is digital, it can also be interactive and results can be extrapolated to other areas that weren't covered. This could be of great assistance in discovering and mapping land values.