

# ESG NEWS

ASTUN TECHNOLOGY'S ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL & GOVERNANCE NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN/WINTER 2022



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**ASTUN**  
TECHNOLOGY



# Grow your GIS skills whilst protecting the planet

We've made our public training courses more environmentally friendly. All courses are now delivered online and the entire process is paper-free... even our certificates are digital!

## QGIS Essentials

Two days  
8 CPD points

## QGIS Advanced

One day  
4 CPD points



## PostGIS Essentials

Two days  
8 CPD points

## PostGIS DBA Essentials

One day  
4 CPD points



## GeoServer Essentials

Two days  
8 CPD points

## GeoServer Advanced

One day  
4 CPD points



## Python Essentials

One day  
Not CPD accredited

## Python for QGIS

One day  
4 CPD points



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EXPERTS IN PLACE



## Introducing ESG at Astun

Find out why we're determined to make a difference.

**Environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) is used to measure the ethical and sustainable impact of a business.**

Although we're an SME, we aim to routinely use our products, services, expertise and profits to make life better for the community, fellow GIS practitioners, our team and the environment.

Simply put, we believe that ESG means doing business the right way. This newsletter recognises and celebrates our team's commitment to ESG.

### Benchmarking our ESG

Earlier this year, we asked sustainability assessment experts EcoVadis to rate our environmental, social and ethical performance. The EcoVadis Rating covers a broad range of non-financial management systems, including Environmental, Labour & Human Rights and Ethics impacts. Over 90,000 organisations across 200 industries have already been assessed by EcoVadis.

After a rigorous assessment process, we were awarded a silver medal which places us in the top 20% of organisations rated by EcoVadis. We were especially pleased to receive a 90/100 score for ethics.

Find out more about our ESG plans for the future on our [website](#).



### Introducing our ESG Champion

Please welcome Leigh McLaren Brierley, our Business Operations Executive.

As the right-hand woman to our management team, Leigh is ideally placed to help ensure that we have the biggest possible positive impact.

Leigh has recently attended mental health first aider training to help ensure that we uphold our Mental Health at Work commitment and give our growing team the support they deserve.



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**About us**  
The Experts in Place

We're experts at helping organisations to improve decision-making and service delivery. Our expertise enables clients to discover, catalogue, share and collaborate on place-based data.

Our solutions, consultancy services and training have helped hundreds of organisations to implement cloud technology, develop custom web maps and manage their data more effectively. If you think we can help you, please get in touch.



# Thames Valley Tech Awards Finalists

We may not have won but we had fun!

This year, we were finalists in the Sustainable Tech Company of the Year category of the Thames Valley Tech Awards. The award is for companies that have developed (or are developing) products and services that support the ESG ambitions and objectives of their industries, consumers, or clients.

Awards organisers recently commented, "ESG is no longer just a label, it is a vital business consideration."

Today it is necessary that the climate and sustainability is factored into business models, into technology, into working practices and even the workspaces that we use. Technology plays a huge part in this.

Successful nominees will be able to demonstrate how this is contributing to the growing push for sustainable practices and business, while reducing the impact of business on the environment."



## Paying the Living Wage

The real Living Wage is the only UK wage rate paid by businesses who believe that their staff deserve a wage that meets everyday needs.

Although we've always paid above the Living Wage (and we always will) we felt it was important for us to make our commitment formal by joining the ranks of the 10,000 accredited Living Wage employers in the UK. We hope that our actions will encourage other SMEs to make the same commitment.

### Who benefits from the Living Wage?

It's not just staff and their families who benefit when a business pays a Living Wage.

Paying fair wages helps employers avoid unnecessary challenges. For example, when a talented employee leaves in search of higher pay, their employer is left with the cost of replacing them. This is in addition to the disruption caused by bringing in a new member of the team.

Customers also benefit from increased staff retention. Our clients regularly tell us that they appreciate being able to turn to someone they know well when they need advice and support.

### What the Living Wage accreditation means to Astun

Our MD, Mike Saunt, explains why paying above the Living Wage is so important to him:

"Our clients trust us to solve complex problems. They need our team to be able to concentrate on finding the right solution for them, not worrying about how to pay for food, heating and other bills."

Paying above the Living Wage makes it easier for all employees to focus on what they do best – finding creative solutions to clients' challenges. We've always paid above the Living Wage and we always will. I encourage all employers to do the same as it's a win-win for everyone."



## Did you know?

Tom Chadwin, our iShare Development Lead, is the brains behind open source web mapping software, qgis2web.

This QGIS plugin exports a QGIS project to a web map, using Leaflet or OpenLayers as its mapping library.

Qgis2web has been downloaded over 800,000 times.

## Sharing our knowledge and expertise

### Being part of the GIS community

When Mike Saunt founded the business in 2005, he had a vision of using open source technologies to reduce costs and foster collaboration. Since then, we've proudly shared our learnings and innovations with others for the common good.

Each year, we support the GIS community by providing sponsorship, encouraging volunteering and sharing our knowledge via free presentations and webinars. We're proud to be part of the open source GIS community and we use our reach and reputation to help attract interest from those who are new to open source GIS as well as those who are keen to further their abilities.

This year, we're taking a more active role in supporting young people in GIS. We are building relationships with universities and groups that support early careers professionals, such as the AGI Early Careers Network.

We will shortly be adding a student section to our website. This will include hints and tips from our team on how to build a successful career in GIS, including which groups to join and even who to follow on social media.

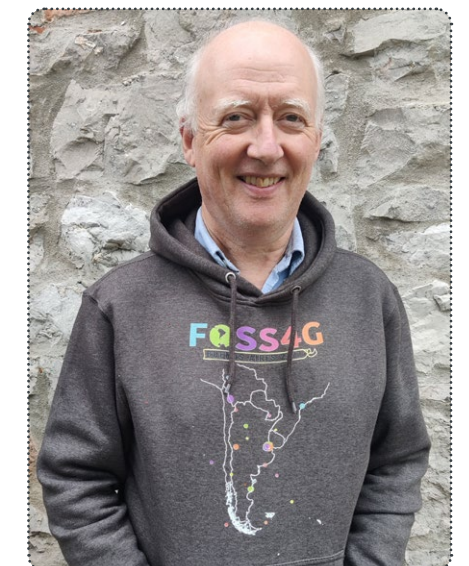
## Humanitarian mapping

MapAction is a non-governmental organisation that specialises in providing mapping for humanitarian emergencies.

For the last ten years, Ant Scott, one of our Senior GIS Consultants, has been using his GIS experience to support MapAction. Working with MapAction puts him and his colleagues at the forefront of humanitarian crises. These include the earthquake/tsunami in Indonesia, Hurricane Matthew in Haiti and the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone.

Astun's flexible working policies enable Ant to commit time to MapAction and be part of responses to humanitarian emergencies around the world at short notice. Earlier this year, we helped Ant free up his diary so he could support MapAction's work with Ukraine.

Read more about Ant in our [blog](#).





# Supporting OSGeo

The Open Source Geospatial Foundation, is a non-profit non-governmental organisation whose mission is to support and promote the collaborative development of open geospatial technologies and data.

We have a long track record of supporting OSGeo. As well as providing financial support via sponsorships, we've also contributed to and funded features for PostGIS, OpenLayers, QGIS, MapServer, MapProxy and Loader.

We seconded several colleagues to the Local Organising Committee of FOSS4G 2013 and we're one of the sponsors for this year's FOSS4G:UK Local 2022 events. You can find out more about FOSS4G:UK Local 2022 on page 15.



## OSGeo Committee

Ant Scott



**Ant Scott** currently serves as Secretary for OSGeo:UK.

Ant helped secure Astun's sponsorship of FOSS4G:UK Local 2022 and will be co-hosting the event in Bristol.

## OSGeo Committee

Tom Chadwin



**Tom Chadwin** (centre front) serves on the Committee of OSGeo:UK.

Both Tom and Ant attend committee meetings held during working hours with Astun's support.

## OSGeo Code Sprint

Jo Cook & Ian Turton



**Jo Cook** (Data Discoverability Lead) and **Ian Turton** (Lead Geospatial Specialist), both centre, recently spent five days in Bolsena, Italy, as part of the OSGeo Code Sprint.

During this time, they worked on new scripts for GeoNetwork.

# Protecting client's data

Your data is one of your most important assets. As a trusted service provider, we take steps to ensure your data is safe in our hands.

Cyber Essentials offers protection against over 80% of the most common cyber risks. Since 2014, it has been mandatory for central government contracts that involve handling personal information and providing certain ICT products or services.

Nick Turner, our Head of Product and Cyber Essentials lead, explains why Cyber Essentials is a critical part of our cyber security strategy:

"We help government agencies to make their datasets accessible

under the Q-FAIR principles, but data is often sensitive and needs careful handling. Managing and sharing data goes hand in hand with privacy concerns.

The Cyber Essentials scheme aims to reduce cyber security risks in government supply chains. Our Cyber Essentials Plus Accreditation reassures our clients that we take cyber security seriously. It also gives us peace of mind that we are following best practices in the management of our clients' prized assets."



Simon Chapman, Support Lead and manager of this year's certification process, explains, "The requirements for Cyber Essentials have been refreshed recently. This year, 14 members of the Astun team were independently audited to ensure compliance with multi-factor authentication."

Find out more about our Cyber Essentials certification [here](#).

# Sharing knowledge with the AGI

The AGI Early Careers Network (AGI ECN) helps students and those in the first ten years of their career.

Earlier this year, Dan Ormsby, then Head of Operations, and Jack Cornish, Programme Manager for the Ramblers, joined forces to deliver a presentation on Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI) to the AGI ECN.



We helped the Ramblers build a VGI platform that enabled the charity to find historic rights of way before they were lost forever. Find out more in our [case study](#).

If you're interested in running your own VGI project, you'll find Dan and Jack's [helpful hints](#) useful.



# Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The GIS community in the UK isn't noted for its diversity, but the Association of Geographic Information (AGI) is working hard to change this.

Our Data Discoverability Lead, Jo Cook, has helped set up the AGI's new Working Group on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.





# The Astun User Group

In June, we invited our clients and prospective clients for a free user group at Aston University in Birmingham.

Before setting up the user group we reviewed feedback from previous attendees. This helped us decide on a location, topics and even the day of the week!

## User group goals

Our user groups are a way to bring GIS professionals together, giving them a vital opportunity to build networks as well as hearing about the latest developments in GIS. This is especially important for public sector GIS teams which often consist of just one or two people.

User groups are also an important way for us to gather information from attendees. Understanding their goals helps us to develop products and services that meet their needs.

## User group format

The user group blends networking opportunities with the chance to learn from Astun's subject matter experts and clients. We also included a fun competition and several short Q&A sessions.

## Future user groups

We want to enable as many people to attend our user groups as possible. If you couldn't attend, please let us know why [here](#).

## User Group best bits

We've put together a short video of our User Group highlights. Watch it [here](#).

## Sign-up to our newsletters

Our newsletters feature product/service news, industry news, top tips and invitations to webinars and events.

You can [sign up](#) on our website.

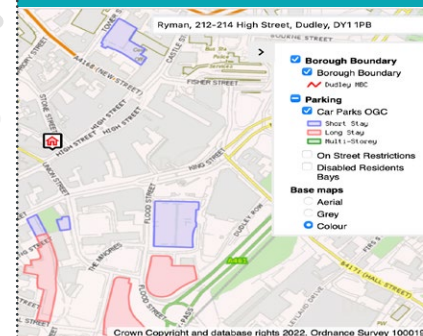
If you've enjoyed reading this ESG newsletter, don't forget to tick the ESG box to receive future editions.



# User Group Highlights 2022

## Spotlight

Simple web mapping



Presenter: Nick Turner

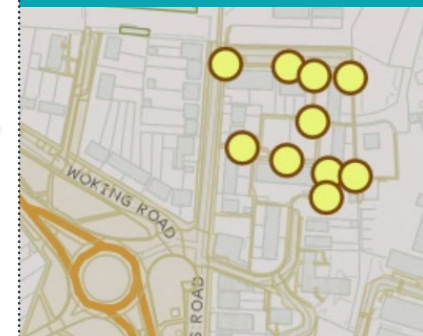
Spotlight enables website users to quickly find answers to common questions, for example, 'Where is my nearest recycling centre?' or 'Who is my councillor?'.

Spotlight is a free add-on to iShare or can be used on its own.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

## Logger

Easy fault reporting



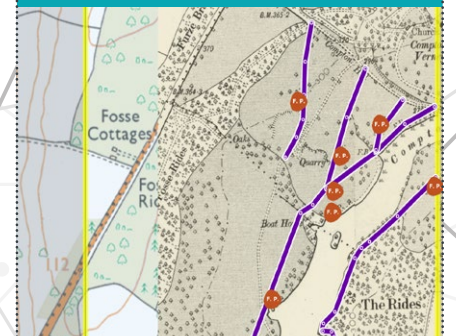
Presenter: Nick Turner

Logger makes it easier for residents to report faults, such as a broken street light in an alleyway or potholes. Logger can automatically feed issue reports to the correct teams, enabling councils to respond more quickly.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

## Don't Lose Your Way

Protecting the environment



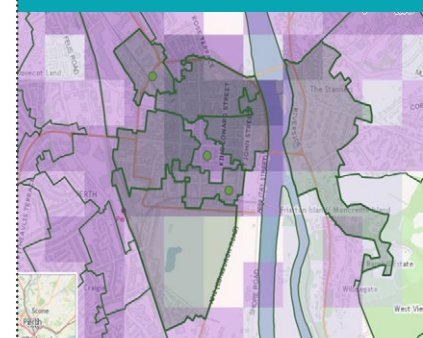
Presenter: Matt Walker

Leading walking charity, The Ramblers, embarked on a mission to save historic footpaths for future generations. We helped develop an online map that enabled over 3,000 volunteers to find and map over 39,000 miles of paths.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

## Scottish Heat Map

Making Scotland greener



Presenter: Dan Ormsby

The Scottish Heat Map plays a critical role in assisting Scotland in meeting its renewable heat, low carbon and fuel poverty targets. Developed for the Scottish Government, it has a diverse range of users including developers, local authorities and policymakers.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

## OS update

Free emergency maps



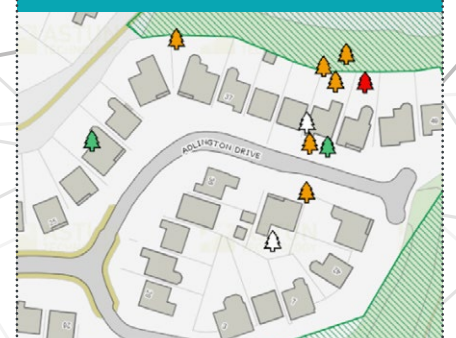
Presenter: James Armstrong

Ordnance Survey's presentation included information about free mapping available in emergency situations.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

## Mobile GIS

Accurate data capture in the field



Presenter: Andy Bailey

Our new mobile GIS solution makes it easier for field workers to collect data about the condition of trees. It can also be used to monitor and prolong the life of other assets, such as playground equipment, bus stops and recycling bins.



# Helping Walsall Council transform service delivery

Find out how Walsall's small GIS team used iShare to ensure service continuity during COVID-19.

**In 2020, COVID-19 forced the closure of Walsall Council's busy Civic Centre. Almost overnight there was a significant societal shift to digital for many residents.**

Fortunately, Walsall Council had already accelerated its investment in spatial data and GIS mapping after recognising the importance of driving efficiencies for internal customers (Council services) as well as residents.

The timely implementation of our **iShare** GIS and iShare Maps portal would prove critical to enabling the Council to share key information during the unexpected lockdown.

## Sharing public health information

During the lockdown, iShare enabled the Council to give residents easy access to critical information.

Furnished with data from their colleagues in Public Health, such as the location of pharmacies and emergency dentists, the GIS Team used MyMaps, iShare's popular public web mapping portal, to share up-to-date information.

Supplementary maps helped to ensure that the vulnerable had extra support. For example, parents were able to locate shops accepting school meal vouchers and key workers and the elderly could

find nearby supermarkets offering priority shopping hours.

The GIS team also published green space data on a public-facing map. This encouraged residents to maintain their pre-lockdown levels of fitness. It also helped to reduce pressure on Walsall's famous Arboretum, where increasing user numbers had made social distancing difficult.

## Delivering better services to vulnerable children

Integrating GIS systems with back-office databases via live connections ensures that Walsall's data is current and service delivery is optimised.

The Council-administered Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) is a great example of this.

In 2020, Children's Services staff were able to easily see the distribution of over 13,000 Free School Meal (FSM) children across the borough. The HAF team used the database's Unique Property Reference Numbers aka UPRNs to create a targeted mailer offering food recipe boxes and free holiday activities. Responses added to the system allowed the team to identify the geographic areas that needed further reminders through school or other channels.

In the summer of 2021, Summer Club providers uploaded details of over 140 holiday clubs across 52 locations. Families received a unique access code to an online web map showing club locations. This enabled them to browse activities and make online bookings. All bookings were linked back to the database. The website's central registration and booking system gave providers the ability to manage their bookings. This was recognised as one of the programme's greatest successes and the solution is now being sold to other local authorities.

This is an extract from a recent blog. Read the full article [here](#). Tracy and Matt also spoke at our user group in June (see picture, right).

## Walsall at the MJ Awards

Recently, Tracy and Matt from Walsall Council were invited to the MJ Awards in London to celebrate being shortlisted as finalists in the Business Transformation category.



“

Our location intelligence enabled the Council to gather data across services, such as health and education, and turn it into shareable, interactive mapping accessible to all Council employees, residents and businesses.”



# Our climate commitment

## How we're helping your supply chain go green

Going green doesn't have to be costly. At Astun, we're taking measures to reduce our impact on the environment without increasing our overheads.

Emissions from business and industry have almost halved since 1990 (source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)).

Most of this reduction has taken place in the most energy-intensive industries. Now, it's time to focus on less energy-intensive businesses, such as SMEs. Although they are by their very nature small, SMEs collectively generate a high volume of emissions. As a growing SME, it's clear to us that we have a responsibility to reduce our own emissions and to lead by example.

### The SME Climate Change Commitment

We've made the SME Climate Change Commitment. This encourages SMEs to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by half before 2030 and eradicate them by 2050.



SME Climate Hub  
**COMMITTED**  
2022



99% of all UK businesses are SMEs

(source: House of Commons Library)



Over 50% of the UK's territorial emissions from business and industry come from SMEs

(source: BEIS)

## Six ways we minimise our impact on the environment

### Reduce meetings

A team effort



#### Eliminating unnecessary meetings

Our fully remote team uses the latest technology to minimise the need for face-to-face meetings.

We even run a weekly 'virtual pub' on Google Meet to help new starters build relationships with their colleagues.

### Sustainable hosting

AWS



#### Choosing key suppliers carefully

Amazon Web Services is on a mission to power its operations with 100% renewable energy by 2025. The carbon footprint of our AWS usage in 2021 was 0.1 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e, i.e. a tenth of a metric tonne, an estimated 7.7 metric tonnes lower than if we hosted servers on-premise.

### A greener venue

Aston University



#### Thinking green at all times

We chose to host our user group at Aston University as it's easy to reach by train and its conference centre has a 2\* rating with the Sustainable Restaurant Association. 59% of its total annual food shopping basket is produced in the UK and food waste is minimised using the 'Too Good to Go' initiative.

### Trains, planes & autos

Greener travel



#### Encouraging greener travel

Astuners are encouraged to car share or use public transport to attend meetings. Over 95% of Astuners attending our recent meet-up travelled by train.

Pictured is Ant Scott enjoying the scenery on his way to Firenze for FOSS4G.

### Collateral

Going paper-free



#### Minimising printed materials

Where possible, collateral is shared digitally. For example, our full range of **case studies** is available **online**.

When printing is essential, we use a local company and request eco-friendly paper.

### Minimising email

Company policy



#### Sharing information sensibly

We encourage the team to save files to a shared Google Drive instead of emailing attachments and we use Google Chat to send short messages.



# FOSS4G Firenze

## Andy Bailey explains why FOSS4G is a highly anticipated event in the open source GIS calendar.

Firenze made for a beautiful setting to discuss all things geospatial at FOSS4G this year.

Congratulations must be given to the local GFOSS.it team who put on a wonderful show. It attracted over a thousand attendees from all over the world, including those whose participation was made possible by travel grants which facilitated accessibility and diversity.

The range of presentations and workshops, including three by our team, was almost overwhelming. I noticed some key topics, such as the handling of SpatioTemporal data (STAC) and a good number of mobile data capture solutions.

Hopefully, videos will be made available soon of all the presentations, so there's no excuse not to dive in, get a taste of what's available and come along next time.



Andy Bailey, Ant Scott and Mike Saunt enjoyed the views and sunshine during FOSS4G's social events.

**40**  
WORKSHOPS

**60**  
LIGHTNING TALKS

**200**  
PRESENTATIONS



### Andy Bailey

iShare Delivery Lead



#### Mobile data capture

Andy's talk on 'From the field to the desk' explored end to end mobile data capture in an enterprise environment.

### Ian Turton

Lead GeoSpatial Specialist



#### Using stackexchange

Ian's talk on 'How to get a good response on stackexchange' drew on his experience as a moderator to help novice users get the answers they need.

### Ant Scott

Senior GIS Consultant



#### QGIS

Ant delivered a talk on 'Analysing access to UK public rights of way with the #QGIS Graphical Modeler'. This featured our work with the Ramblers.

## YOUR INVITE!

This year's volunteer-led  
**FOSS4G:UK LOCAL 2022** will be  
held online and at various venues  
across the UK on 17th November.



Book your place now

This year, we're a business sponsor for FOSS4G:UK Local 2022. We'll also be attending meet-ups at Brunel's Boardroom in Bristol (hosted by Ant Scott) and at the offices of the British Geological Survey in Keyworth.

Attending FOSS4G:UK Local 2022 is free, although donations are welcome.



**FOSS4G:UK**  
LOCAL 2022



# ESG NEWS



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