Case Study

West Sussex County Council

Client:

West Sussex County Council is the local authority for the county of West Sussex, serving over 850,000 people.

Industry:

Local Authority

Product:

Aerial Photography

Challenge:

West Sussex County Council faced several operational challenges that impacted efficiency across different departments.

1. Tasked with responding to planning applications on behalf of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) for the whole county, officers and Access Rangers, especially those new to the role, found it difficult to have complete ground-level knowledge of every path.
2. In the Highways department, rapid changes due to housing developments and road network upgrades made it difficult to maintain accurate digital maps that correctly show the road and its markings for Traffic Regulation Orders work.
3. Planning and enforcement teams struggled with resource-intensive site visits when sourcing evidence for enforcement cases and residential monitoring matters.
4. Property Services needed a dependable method to help them detect land encroachments and assess site evolution.

Summary:

West Sussex County Council has significantly enhanced its operational capabilities by integrating Bluesky's aerial photography into its internal Geographic Information System (GIS). The high-resolution aerial photography has become a vital resource across multiple departments in the organisation, enhancing decision-making, improving data accuracy, and reducing the need for physical site visits.

Solution:

To address these challenges, West Sussex County Council turned to Bluesky's aerial photography. Made available free at point of use via the APGB Web Mapping Service (WMS), it was made accessible to the relevant departments through the internal GIS platform. This now enables PRoW Officers and Access Rangers to instantly view any paths and terrain from their desktop. The clarity of the photography proves invaluable, indicating what the PRoW might look like on the ground and therefore helping to shape their responses to applications.

Highways teams now use current aerial photography in their GIS platform to refine and update the road network. This ensures they have an accurate recording of new junctions, roundabouts, and road markings, allowing them to easily confirm new markings and developments.

Planning and enforcement officers are now leveraging timestamped photography as evidence to support enforcement cases and residential monitoring from their desktop, negating the need for some on-site visits. During residential monitoring work, historical aerial photography is particularly useful offering a site view at a set point in time which may have been inaccessible during the annual monitoring survey, delivering a holistic view.

Finally, Property Services apply historical and current aerial photography to analyse land use, identify building locations, and detect encroachments, helping them to better investigate when and where issues arose. The historical photography means the team can track and report on change. One example is where the team has been able to support applications submitted by the Department of Education for changes to school sites by utilising historical aerial photography.

Results:

By integrating Bluesky's aerial photography into its GIS, West Sussex County Council has achieved substantial time and resource savings across multiple departments. Instant access to up-to-date, high-resolution aerial photography has enabled teams to complete tasks such as planning reviews, enforcement investigations, and asset monitoring directly from their desktops, reducing the need for initial fieldwork and in-person visits at certain sites.

The availability of timestamped, historical photography has improved data accuracy, enabling staff to pinpoint planning issues, track land use changes, manage assets, and maintain road maps across the county more closely and with greater precision. As a result, departments can respond more quickly to operational demands and provide better informed input on planning applications and traffic queries.

	Imagery Specification	
Resolution	**12.5cm**	**25cm**
Coverage	Great Britain	Great Britain
Accuracy XY	± 30cm rmse	± 60cm rmse
Formats	Include: JPG, TIFF, ECW	Include: JPG, TIFF, ECW
Standard Projection	British National Grid	British National Grid
Tile Size	1km x 1km (8,000 x 8,000 pixels)	1km x 1km (4,000 x 4,000 pixels)
Metadata	Gemini 2.3	Gemini 2.3

Get in touch today at **support@apgb.co.uk**