



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: IONA GERRARD

Iona Gerrard from Fife Council has become a GIS expert over the last 6 months, providing invaluable skills and resources in using the ArcGIS software to her team. She has achieved this by using the learning on-demand approach provided by GIS247.

In her day to day work Iona uses Fife Council's Street Gazetteer - through ArcGIS. Nevertheless she knew that the Business Development Team she's in undertakes work and provides resources for the Transportation Services of the authority by doing a lot of work using the core ArcGIS software.



*Iona Gerrard, Fife Council*

She wanted to both broaden and deepen her knowledge of ArcGIS to be able to do more work in other projects. Not only would it put her in a better position with additional skills and more experience, it would better place her team in being able to provide resources to Transportation Services and inevitably make both her and her team more valuable to the authority as a whole.



As Fife Council purchased an unlimited licence to the ArcGIS training at GIS247 it meant that anyone in the authority could have access for no additional cost.

Fife's initial licence ran for 12 months during which time all their users could access all the ArcGIS courses as well as the range of mini and super modules that are available. The training courses cover all abilities so different users can follow the training for their current level of experience, job requirement or interest.

The Improvement Advisor (GIS Development) at Fife Council, Cliff Mwando observed that the online training offered a cost effective opportunity to build the GIS expertise within teams across the Council to manage, analyse and redesign services to help meet the current efficiency challenges.



*Cliff Mwando,  
Improvement Advisor  
(GIS Development)*

With the training being accessible at different skill levels from beginners to those with more experience, and with content that can be tailored to the individual user's specific job requirements, the Council recognises this online resource as a cost effective and user friendly way of providing skills training to new and existing users of ArcGIS.

The first step to taking full advantage of the GIS247 resource was to make Fife Council's GIS users aware of its availability. Through promotional e-mails to various teams highlighting the benefits of these training resources and targeted induction sessions that focussed on how to use the facility as well as mapping specific job and business requirements to particular training and support resources, over 90 ArcGIS users across the council have signed up and continue to make use of the training.

Once her account had been set up, Iona could access the e-learning at GIS247 whenever she wanted. It also meant that she didn't have to travel away from home. Although she had some familiarity with the ArcGIS software Iona decided to start with the 'Beginners Guide to ArcGIS' course.



*Iona Gerrard with one of her eight training assessment certificates.*

Whilst still undertaking her day to day work, Iona put aside a few hours each Thursday to follow the ArcGIS training. As GIS247's Learning Management System keeps track of each users' progress it was really easy for her to log-in and carry on from where she got to. In total she has worked her way through 8 comprehensive training courses, which follow on from each other and built up her expertise. Since Iona works in an open plan office, it was necessary for her to watch and listen to the presentations wearing headphones. "When I did some training I just popped my headphones on and I got on with it. Being in the office was useful as if I was needed for something then I was still available", says Iona.

As part of the on-line training Iona took advantage of GIS247's assessment process and submitted an assessment for each course once she completed it. Not only did Iona pass but she obtained distinctions in all of them!

This is a real achievement as a grade of over 90% is needed to reach this standard. "Having the certificates shows that I've done a lot of hard work and it has been great to show my team. They have been really supportive and proud of me", says Iona.

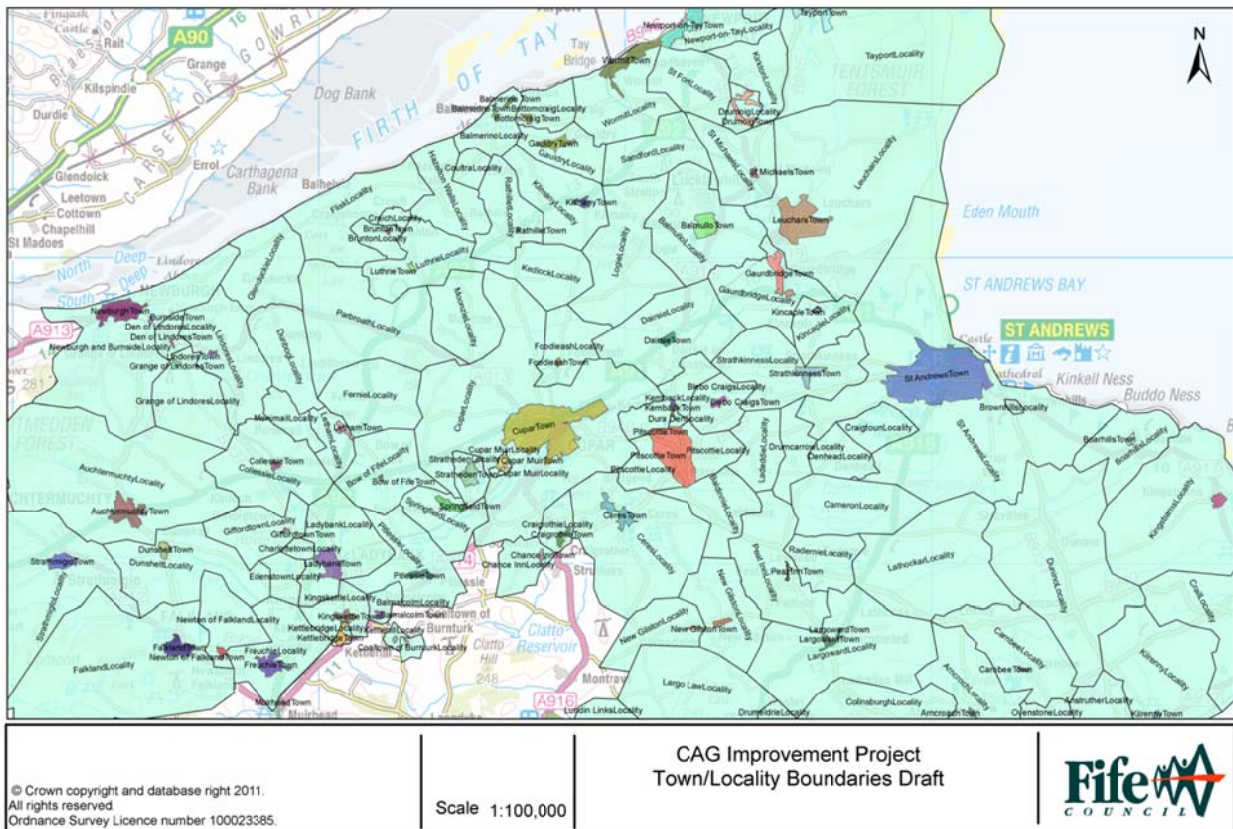
Iona says that she found the nature of the on-line training really useful, "Particularly in being able to re-watch the presentation. It was really useful to watch them again sometimes before doing the follow on exercise and sometimes after. It was great to have the flexibility. The exercises were very good and I really enjoyed doing them. As I progressed I felt more confident in what I was doing".

"Other ArcGIS users in my department now feel that they should make more use of the training in order to keep up with the software developments and progress themselves."

"My manager Rod Wallace is delighted with my development and that I now provide additional skills on more projects. My immediate colleagues have found my increased knowledge really useful too. When I am asked a question or we are discussing how to do something I can now offer a solution. This is because I have not only a broader knowledge of what we can do with ArcGIS but also now because of my experience in using the software through the exercises of how to go about it in the best way."

As a result of her new skills Iona is currently undertaking work on a project called the '*corporate address gazetteer improvement project*'. The project is necessary to improve the addressing found within the Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG). The CAG is data from both the Local Street Gazetteer and Local Property Gazetteer.

Currently much of the data held for rural areas do not have any locality/town names attached. The solution is to identify settlement boundaries based on spatial analysis and to capture those extents by creating polygons. It is a huge project. The benefits of this project are many with the starting point that it will allow rural addresses and streets to be assigned a town or locality. This will not only help council systems, but our external customers.



*An example of the work being produced by Iona of the Corporate Address Gazetteer for North Fife.*

Iona is enjoying the new challenge of this project, “The work I am doing now is really interesting. A lot of the tips that I learnt on the training courses are turning out to be very useful. The skills and tricks I learnt on the Advanced Editing course are particularly relevant at the moment. Topology can be quite tricky so it’s really useful to have a thorough understanding and know why you need to do certain things”

Fife Council has found the nature of the on-demand training so useful that they have renewed their licence to the unlimited training that GIS247 provides. This continues to support and develop their staff for a further 12 months, with a flexible, repeatable and cost effective approach.

“We currently use version 9.2 so I undertook my training in this version,” outlines Iona, “but the authority is now moving to version 10.0 and because Fife has renewed our GIS247 licence it means that I can now follow the ‘What’s New in ArcGIS version 10’ and other specific version 10 courses. I’m finding that having this information to hand is really valuable”.

In conclusion Iona says “I am really pleased with the new skills that I have gained. I think I have found my niche and really enjoy using spatial data in the different projects – it’s really interesting!”