



The search for missing persons made easier by the use of digital mapping

Collaboration with other emergency services by having instant access to digital map data using handheld devices has improved the coordination of resources and reduced search response times.

The challenge

Lowland Search Dogs (LSDogs) is a non-profit voluntary organisation founded in 2002. It oversees the standards and testing for dogs used to search for missing persons in lowland

areas of the UK and assists the police and other agencies involved in search and rescue operations.

Finding missing persons (for example, a young child or someone with Alzheimer's) quickly can be vital to their survival and having fast access to detailed and accurate mapping is essential. Effective communication with other agencies involved in the search and rescue operation also helps to find the missing person involved as quickly as possible.



The solution

In June 2011, LSDogs joined the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA), which enabled it to access digital map data products from Ordnance Survey, such as OS MasterMap® Topography Layer. It had previously only been able to access paper mapping.

A dog can search an area of 50-80 acres with a high probability of detecting the whereabouts of the missing person in an hour to an hour and a half. Search teams are now using digital mapping for navigation and assigning areas for individual dogs and dog handlers during an incident. They use specialist handheld GPS devices; having access to the same map data as other search and rescue organisations, such as the police, helps to identify and manage search locations, coordinating the search response more effectively.

LSDogs is now looking at other ways it can benefit from Ordnance Survey's digital map data, such as identifying and reporting on danger hotspots.

The benefits

- Coordinators and dog handlers on the ground can now quickly and easily access accurate and up-to-date mapping data using specialist equipment such as handheld GPS devices. This helps



to ensure that the search response team finds the missing person as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- Having the same map data as other organisations, such as the police and fire services, has improved communication across all the organisations.
- The search response has been improved, with larger search areas possible due to being able to access Great Britain-wide digital mapping. This has also assisted with cross-border search operations.

'We have reaped the benefits of joining the PSMA as it enables us to provide a better service to our number one customer, the missing person. Teams throughout the country now use modern digital equipment that provides all the lowland area mapping that our teams need. This also means that all teams are able to provide cross-border support to their colleagues in times of need.'

Séamus Kearns,
Chairman of LSDogs

Data products used:

- OS MasterMap Topography Layer
- 1:10 000 Scale Raster
- 1:25 000 Scale Raster
- 1:50 000 Scale Raster



Dog handlers use handheld devices with Ordnance Survey mapping to carry out searches.

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