

Case study

gaist

•EDINBURGH•  
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL



City of Edinburgh Council:  
delivering better places via  
enhanced [roadscape data]

When you've been used to doing things a certain way for many years, you might think that there's only one way of operating – that there's no room for improvement. Particularly when you're part of a joint contract with other local authorities. Not so for the City of Edinburgh Council.

Like all 32 of Scotland's councils, Edinburgh gets its Road Condition Index from the Scottish Roads Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS). But it wanted to take its road network intelligence to the next level.

Which is why in 2020 Edinburgh made a shrewd investment. It started working with Gaist.

## Using condition data in a more productive way

Like all Scottish councils, in addition to the SRMCS, Edinburgh has records relating to defect repairs, accident claims and safety inspections.

“But these very rarely inform any sort of investment”, says Sean Gilchrist, Asset and Performance Manager for City of Edinburgh Council, “because they're quite reactive”.

But since Edinburgh began working with Gaist, Sean says they have been able to use the data provided in a more productive way – to better inform their investment strategies.

That's because Gaist helps give them a holistic view of their asset management.

## Driving through your network – from your desk

Capturing asset data, if it's done just by people going out on site, can be very expensive. And it can be time consuming. Sean estimates it would take about two years to walk Edinburgh's network and capture what they need. But Gaist gives them that data in just one sweep.

“Last year, Gaist carried out a full network survey for us. We had numerous data sets captured with just one drive-by survey.”

Not only does Gaist save Edinburgh time and money but, says Sean, it provides them with accurate data of such high quality.

“It gives us fantastic data without actually having to go on site, which can be quite costly.”

And because they can really drill down into the data, Sean and his team can spend a lot more time on designing.

“Each section has high-definition imagery associated with it, so we can drive through our network as we're sitting at our desks looking at it. This has been particularly useful for designing schemes, picking up information on the site, and capturing all your assets without having to go out the office. And the zoom-in is of exceptionally high quality.”

## Visualising everything together

But Sean stresses an important point: data is not really useful when it's isolated.

It doesn't make sense to repair a road surface only to dig it up a month later for new streetlights. Yet, without a holistic view of asset management, this can be exactly what happens in many local authorities.

Everything needs to be viewed together, not in silo – especially given how tight budgets are in the current climate.

Gaist enables you to do this – without the need for any proprietary software. We make our data available in many different ways and it can be connected to any asset management system. In Edinburgh's case, that's Confirm.

“One of the main reasons we went with Gaist is that their data is compatible with Confirm. It allowed us to bring in that data into our existing asset management system.”

The result? Better planning and better decision-making.

Repairs and maintenance work can be properly grouped together, minimising costs and the disruption caused to residents.



## Building up a bigger picture

Where Gaist's data has really made a massive difference is in allowing Edinburgh to make better decisions on its investment strategies. And the superior visualisation that Gaist helps provide has enabled Capital and Revenue to work better together.

"We're building up a bigger picture of what exactly is happening on our network."

Sean's team can bring in capital programmes from various departments throughout the Council – and tie that investment together.

"We're bringing these all together and visualising them so that we can create programmes that allow us to draw all the funds from various different areas."

## Making the most of developer contributions

Local authorities sometimes find themselves handing back developer contributions where they haven't been able to tie them in with other capital programmes.

But Edinburgh is now mapping its developer contributions.

"We're building that into our investment strategies so that we are aware of all the Section 75s that exist, which may accelerate certain capital investment schemes in order to make use of that money."

That's all because of the greater visualisation they now have - and the accurate data Gaist provides.

## Designing for a World Heritage Site

Edinburgh has lots of conservation areas and its Old and New Towns are a World Heritage Site. To maintain these areas, particular materials have to be used. This adds another layer of complexity for council staff.

"But we can map that as well so that designers know what is expected of them before they go and design up a scheme."

## Nothing but positives

Gaist's accurate data has led to real cost and time savings for Edinburgh. It's also boosted their chances of gaining external funding.

So what are Sean's final conclusions?

"We're achieving our mission to create better places ...after all 'Place is in the name of our department!'"

By working with Gaist, Sean can proactively consult and engage with the various prominent stakeholder groups across Edinburgh that have interests in promoting walking, cycling and other forms of active travel.

"We have had nothing but positives on the road we've taken over the last few years. The Gaist data has taken us to that next level of accuracy, and we will be looking to expand on that as we move down through the years."

Get in touch today to find out how Gaist can [level up your understanding] of your road network, saving you time and money along the way.