

GIS Courses in Ascension and Falkland Islands

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It took a couple of months to make it real but finally scientists and government and non-government officers in both islands had the opportunity to learn about GIS and the open source QGIS. The course was organised by SAERI and delivered by Dr Katie Medcalf, Environment Director of Environment Systems Ltd. The audience was mixed not only because of the different professional background of the attendees but also because of the level of knowledge about GIS, which ranged from complete beginners to intermediate and advanced in GIS users.

It was therefore a challenge to deliver a course that could make everybody happy but at the end the results and feedback were very positive and it was a pleasure to listen and see enthusiastic people at the end of the course. Clare Cockwell, Protected Areas Project Officer at Falkland Conservation for instance said:

"Thanks again for a really good course. Having to stay strong today in order not to spend the day playing on QGIS" and many others commented that they "really enjoyed the course and found it useful"

Essentially the main goal was to raise awareness of how GIS can contribute in supporting the analysis of spatial data (data with spatial reference). The course objectives were to provide the main concepts behind GIS and show some direct applications of GIS tools to data collected in Ascension and in the Falklands. The point was to teach people that data are not "just a table" but are much more. Geographic data is "spatial information" that can be seen in a spatial context and is likely to be in relationship (correlation) with other data that are collected in the same geographic area.

Using real examples and data brought in by the attendees was much appreciated

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Next is to keep on surfing the GIS wave by creating a GIS community and spirit in the islands, where people get directly involved in working and using GIS. The idea is to engage people in a sort of forum where they can exchange their experience and knowledge on GIS tools, they can post their “discoveries” about how to carry spatial analysis, and ask for help. In addition, the last initiative is to open one day a week a “GIS clinic” for problem solving.

Keep on watching this space for more interesting news and activities in the South Atlantic region!!!