

Overseas Territories get together and enthusiastic about open source GIS!

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Hello from the Falklands! I arrived just two weeks ago after a few interesting days spent in Gibraltar and Ascension Island where I met with other enthusiastic GIS specialists working for the other Overseas Territories (OTs).

Gibraltar hosted the first OTs meeting entirely dedicated to GIS on the 8th and the 9th of September, its application and its use as a decision support tool for environmental and planning studies. There were presentations on habitat mapping through the use and analysis of satellite images in Anguilla; on using GIS as a decision support systems for coastal environment, protected habitats, waste management and contingency planning in the Cayman Islands, Jersey and Gibraltar; and examples of public participatory GIS for marine spatial planning in the Shetland Islands. The event turned out to be a great opportunity for bringing together "GIS people" from the different OTs, from the Caribbean islands, to the South Atlantic region and the European OTs. The great interaction and rapport we were able to build through exchanging knowledge and experience revealed that, despite the different backgrounds, the GIS issues encountered by everyone were in fact fairly similar. We could all learn from everybody else's work.

The use of open source GIS, and in particular QGIS, was under the spot light. Paolo Cavallini and Luigi Pirelli were demonstrating the functionalities of the latest release of QGIS (2.0 Dufour) and the possibility of developing it by writing Python scripts and sharing them with the broad community of QGIS users. We were all thrilled and we came back to our respective islands (territories) perhaps with more enthusiasm than that with which we arrived.

The good news for me did not end in Gibraltar. Invigorated by that experience I flew to Ascension to meet up with the Conservation Centre "gang". Sam, Nicola, Jo and Natasha were extremely kind and hospitable and we were immediately tuned in to the same "GIS frequency". It is amazing to see how much goes on in such a small and remote island such as Ascension. The team is involved in many projects, for example research is carried out on green turtles, seabird monitoring, and cataloguing of endemic plants and heritage buildings/sites. We worked on how to facilitate the use of some of the databases already set up and available, and how to make them more user-friendly. The stopover in Ascension was educational and beneficial as we will be working more and more closely with each other for the realisation of the GIS data centre for the South Atlantic OTs.



SAERI NEWS

I carried on my trip to the Falklands thinking positively and looking forward to the start of the project with SAERI. After the first two weeks we have a draft design of the architecture of the GIS data centre and information system. It involves the use of a metadata catalogue, QGIS for data editing, analysis and mapping, a spatial database and a web GIS service...all open source. This is in its infancy so please watch out for the next blog as we hope to come back with big news! Last but not least mention...it is great to finally meet the SAERI gang and be down here in the gorgeous Falkland Islands!