

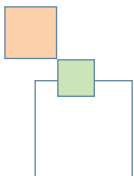
# Oldham Council cleans up – with a helpful Spirit!

Mobile computers are now widespread and are not only used for indoor operations but also by many workers in the field. One example is Oldham Council, which uses Gotive H42 Wireless Enterprise Communicators for street surveys. These versatile hand held devices are supplied by Spirit Data Capture Limited, a consultancy that specialises in automated data capture solutions.



Oldham Council provides a wide variety of services to the people of the Borough of Oldham and has an annual budget of some £500 million. Its work is carried out by five directorates, one of which is the Environmental Services Directorate. Within this, Street Scene looks after grounds maintenance and street cleaning.

Street Scene's responsibility includes the mechanical sweeping of all highways, grounds maintenance on verges and estates, litter bins, the removal of graffiti and the disposal of fly tipping. It also organises the removal and recycling of rubbish from large events staged in the local area. The group carries out cleaning surveys three times a year, as well as resident surveys that assess the perception and satisfaction levels of its customers. ▶



## Case Study

Street Scene recently decided that it needed some mobile computers to streamline its survey work. Project Co-ordinator, Will Wills, comments: "We had been carrying out surveys using paper documents. As a result, the information we collected when we were out and about had to be typed up in the office afterwards. This ultimately meant that data from some 2,400 sides of A4 had to be inputted manually each year – which was a very labour-intensive process and inevitably prone to human error."

The group started looking for an automated mobile solution. Will Wills continues: "We had been taking part in a lot of campaigning and survey work in conjunction with the environmental charity, ENCAMS (Environmental Campaigns). They recommended an independent consultancy, Spirit. Spirit had supplied ENCAMS with Gotive H42 hand held devices, which we had subsequently used during local and district environmental surveys.

"When we started looking for our own devices, we decided that we needed a mobile computer that was fairly light, so that we could use it comfortably all day. It also needed a bright display that could be read in sunlight; touch screen facilities; good memory and back-up capabilities; and GPS positioning. We carried out some research on several models and soon realised that the Gotive H42 could meet all of our business needs."

The Gotive H42 is compact and rugged, with an IP54 rating, and is also very versatile. It offers a choice of radio options, including WPAN (Bluetooth); WLAN (802.11b); and WWAN (GSM/GPRS). The Gotive incorporates 520MHz of processing power and a powerful memory (128MB RAM and 246MB ROM). It has a HVGA colour display and touch screen as well as a dual battery system. A GPS software navigation package is also available as an added option.

Will continues: "Because the Gotive is Windows-based, we were able to link it with our other systems. Our surveyors are now using the devices when they are out in urban or rural areas, identifying

any potential environmental issues. We follow the National Indicator framework, using the NII95 standard (improved street and environmental cleanliness) to monitor performance across different transects."

The Gotives were supplied by Spirit, which owns the UK and Ireland distribution rights for the mobile computer. A form for recording the survey information for Oldham Council was developed with the help of both ENCAMS and Spirit, and this was then loaded onto the Gotives. The data can now therefore be inputted directly onto the form in the field by the surveyors, using simple drop-down menus. The information can then be transmitted to the Council's system.

"The Gotives are performing very well and the surveyors are happy with them," says Will. "It's great to have viable information in an electronic format – this greatly reduces any human error and speeds up the whole survey process. With the GPS receiver linking in with our [www.tidyoldham.co.uk](http://www.tidyoldham.co.uk) website, we are also able to upload information onto our internal system very quickly so that we can then start analysing it."

He adds: "Spirit's service has been great throughout. We have since carried out evaluations on another couple of hand held units, but the Gotive still came out the best. We are delighted with the support we have received from Spirit and we are now looking at getting the latest upgrades for the Gotives."

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Project Co-ordinator

