

Esri gifts NI schools with £100m worth of digital mapping software



Geographic Information Systems company Esri has announced that over £100m of digital mapping software is to be made available for free to primary and post-primary schools across Northern Ireland.

In today's increasingly digital world, schools are now frequently working with industry to give students access to the information and tools they will need to learn in order to create the jobs and businesses of tomorrow. Esri's generous donation of over £100m of digital mapping software will give over 300,000 pupils in up to 1,146 schools across Northern Ireland a vital teaching resource and skills for the future.

Esri's mapping platform includes maps and geographical data, but also allows students to collect their own information, analyse it, and create visualisations. Students can collect data on points of interest, and have used it to study everything from environmental issues to their local history and survey data. In addition to providing access to its ArcGIS mapping platform, Esri is offering ongoing support, tailored lesson plans, and mentorship for teachers who want to engage their students in the technology.

The platform has been tested in 6 pilot schools in Northern Ireland has proved incredibly useful for students, who were able to learn more about their area's history and even produce reports on cross-community issues and demographics that are particularly important to Northern Ireland.

Alistair Hamill, Head of Geography at Lurgan College discussed one such project his school pioneered: "The cross-community element of the project was very important. Residential areas in Lurgan tend to be segregated, and shared public spaces are often underused, especially at night. The project brought together students from every school in the town to explore these divisions. Using Esri's mapping platform and mobile app, students visited areas across the town and recorded their perception of safety within that space."