

## Delivering lightning-quick boundary changes: A tale of two sites

### How a digital approach to elections can deliver the speed, accuracy and flexibility to serve councils of all sizes

Conducting boundary changes is a critical and ongoing task for every local authority.

The current manual process is a lengthy, resource-intensive and error-prone activity that presents significant challenges for electoral teams across the UK. That's why we've developed Atlas – a fully piloted and proven system that processes boundary changes in minutes – not months – introducing simplicity and efficiency.

#### A solution fit for now and for the future

With Atlas, we've provided a solution that minimises the arduous work involved at the 'end' of a boundary review. The solution overcomes the three challenges of list creation, actioning changes and error review in one consolidated service, while also acting as a platform to accommodate additional functionality – regardless of the EMS in place.

As of Summer 2018, Atlas is the first end-to-end system for Boundary Reviews and Changes in the UK – not only supporting the final stage of a boundary overhaul, but also enabling electoral teams to decide what their electoral boundaries are in the first place, and run routine quality checks on postcode data throughout the year.

And its scalability doesn't just end there – we're already developing the solution to accommodate processes such as canvass area optimisation, automated staff allocation at polling stations, reviews and division of districts.

#### A solution fit for all

Atlas has the ability to flex according to the needs of each local authority, and because boundary overhauls are complex irrespective of scale, the solution can – and already is – helping councils ensure accurate, timely completion, regardless of size or scope.

On the opposite page, we tell the story of two sites, both opposing in size and scale, but with a shared ambition to accelerate a recent boundary change exercise through digital technology and automation.

How did they do it? Welcome Atlas...

If you would like further information, please contact the team at: [sales.elections@idoxgroup.com](mailto:sales.elections@idoxgroup.com) or visit [elections.idoxgroup.com](https://elections.idoxgroup.com)

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## South Lakeland District Council

### Undertaking boundary changes with a small team

#### Challenge

Serving an electorate of just over 82,000, South Lakeland District Council is a rural authority that encompasses most of the Lake District and operates a lean team consisting of five staff. Following recommendations from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, the authority was challenged by a need to reduce its 45 wards to 18 in time for elections in 2018 – an overhaul deemed necessary given the Council tended to elect by thirds for predominantly single-member wards, which was at odds with legislation that presumed three-member wards. With such a short window to implement the changes, the Council turned to Atlas to provide a more timely, visual and accurate approach to completing the process that was less reliant on data entry or analysing spreadsheets.

#### Implementing Atlas

Atlas' rich functionality provided the Council with an automated, end-to-end solution to process the changes. The team were able to interact with the software visually and spatially on an interactive map, which was far more efficient than attempting to work from lists. With opportunities to check for inconsistencies and perform a trial run before actioning the changes, Atlas provided both the reassurance and efficiency the Council was looking for.

#### Outcome

The Council was able to complete the boundary change process successfully and swiftly across 56,000 properties – avoiding the need to budget a further two weeks of resource to manage its completion.

Tom Benson, Electoral Services Manager at South Lakeland District Council said: "The boundary change process went very well. The tools there to help you resolve issues actually helped us increase the accuracy of our GIS data across the Council, and the checks in place for quality assuring the process made it almost impossible to get it wrong. We made our boundary changes on schedule, re-published the register without a problem and I'm pleased to say we had no issues with boundaries at the all-out elections that followed.

"I'm excited at the possibilities available with a tool like Atlas. I would not want to go through a boundary change without this technology, and I can see possible applications for it in canvassing, property database maintenance, and statistics."

## Birmingham City Council

### Undertaking boundary changes for Europe's largest authority

#### Challenge

Large and expansive, Birmingham City Council (BCC) serves 740,000 electors and is Europe's largest local authority. An independent operational review in 2014 mandated a need for a major boundary overhaul, which involved reducing ward sizes to predominantly single member seats – transitioning from 40 to 69 wards. Given the agreed boundary changes had to go live by 1 December 2017 to accommodate all May 2018 pre-election activity, the Council needed to work both quickly and efficiently to ensure the all-out boundary changes were applied on time – something made even harder following the unexpected snap election in June of that year.

#### Implementing Atlas

With Atlas, BCC had the tools to action the changes at pace. Dealing with 430,000 properties, the team were able to know precisely where they were situated based on their geographic coordinates. 'Shape files' were used to identify the exact location of the new boundaries and determine what needed to move. As minimal resource was required to action the changes, Atlas also freed up staff time enabling team members to work on other areas, driving productivity.

#### Outcome

Atlas successfully conducted the largest-scale boundary change ever likely to be faced by an authority in Europe. The solution moved properties and streets into their new boundaries in less than 30 minutes – an activity that previously would have taken months.

Robert Connelly, Head of Electoral Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer at BCC said:

"Thanks to Idox Elections' innovative technology, we were able to complete the entire boundary overhaul in just 26 minutes. Everything was moved successfully, old wards disappeared, no staff time was spent on manual tasks, and minimal checking was required afterwards.

"We can confidently say that none of this would have been possible in such a short space of time without Atlas. They've managed to create a product that distils a process from months to minutes, and provided the technology needed to help us easily action further changes in the future."