

THE CASE OF THE MISSING WORDS

OIL AND GIS DISAPPEARED AT ESRI'S EUROPEAN PETROLEUM USER GROUP IN NOVEMBER. **ALISTAIR MACLENAN** PUT ON HIS DETECTIVE'S HAT TO FIND OUT WHERE THEY WENT

The oil industry is changing rapidly and the GIS company that has served it faithfully for so many years, appears to be transforming itself at a similar pace.

These two insights for the price of one came to me after I had spent a couple of days at the ESRI European Petroleum User Group meeting in London in the UK in November.

Affectionately referred to as the 'EPUG', this annual two-day meeting brings explorers, producers and transporters of hydrocarbons together to learn about the latest offerings from the Redlands-based GIS giant.

It is also one of the few forums where a famously tight-lipped industry compares notes on how they use this ever-present and, as I discovered, ever-growing software.

In the middle of last year, Ben van Beurden, CEO of Shell, gave voice to the measure of industry change when he said that "lowering emissions to the point that the world is no longer adding to the stock of greenhouse gases and the atmosphere is the only way to go."

The scale of that challenge is better understood when you know that his super-major was accused by The Guardian

newspaper of being seventh in a list of 20 companies that have created one third of all greenhouse gas emissions since 1965!

But it appears that Mr van Beurden and his 19 contemporaries aren't just paying lip-service to this perceived need for cleaner energy production. Whilst Shell is now a self-styled 'energy transition company', French giant Total has purchased significant stakes in SunPower (the clue is in the name), green power utility company Lampiris, renewables company Eren and Clean Energy Fuels.

Reflecting this industry-wide sentiment towards greener energy production (although there are a couple of notable and sizeable exceptions), Equinor opened the EPUG plenary by explaining how the company that used to be known as Statoil and which is now a 'broad energy company' has a "material position in renewable energy". It is equal partner with SSE in the development of what will be the world's largest offshore wind farm.

And that set the theme: it was hard to find a presentation at the meeting that mentioned the word 'oil'. 'New energy' has arrived and it is taking over – there was even

talk of dropping the P from next year's EPUG!

It was equally difficult to spot the word – okay, abbreviation – 'GIS' when the Esri staff took to the stage. Only days before the meeting, Esri had released its first ever TV commercial: 60 seconds of perfectly choreographed and professionally produced near-misses between people, transport and goods that showed how being able to "see what others can't" allows for the effortlessly smooth running of a collision-free world.

It's a new step for a company that has always sold software to other technical businesses and one that presumably says 'we want to get into the business intelligence departments of all companies'.

The presentations of their new software certainly supported that ambition. The focus was laser-like on making the presentation and sharing of location data as simple as possible.

Users drag and drop components on to canvases and voila! A new website is created in minutes that shows information in easy-to-digest charts, animations and story maps.

Insight in an instant.

Jack Welch, arguably General Electric's most successful leader, said that it was vital to "change before you have to". It seems that both the oil industry and one of its most important suppliers are heeding that advice.

Alistair MacLenan is founder of the geospatial B2B marketing agency Quarry One Eleven (www.quarry-one-eleven.com)



NEW WEBSITE



COMING SOON

GeoConnexion.com