



**British
Geological
Survey**

Geological reports for home buyers

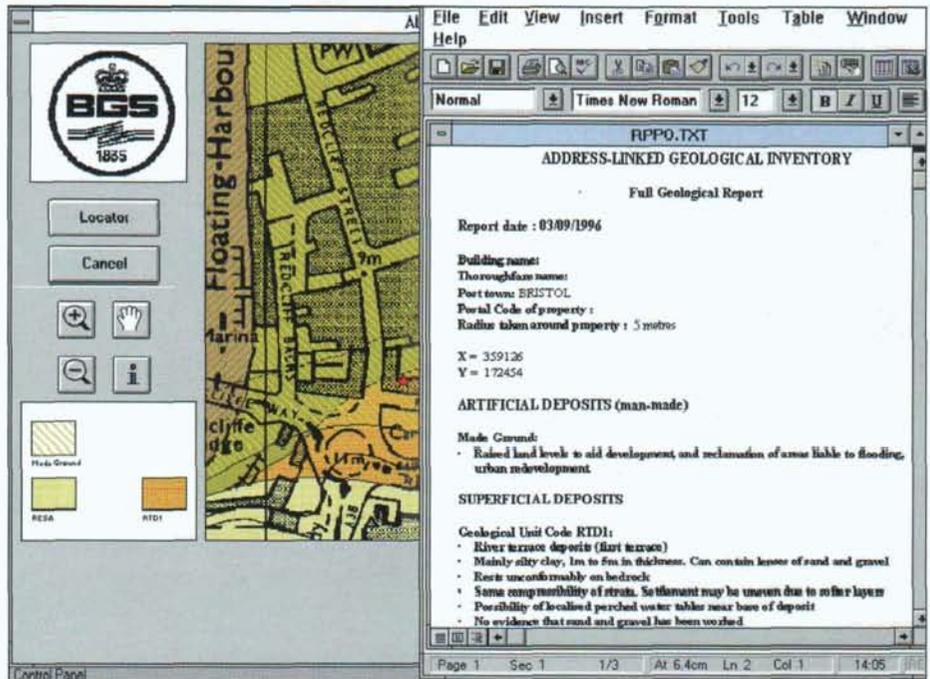
Poul Strange

Keyworth

Property damage caused by subsidence, flooding, mine shafts or ground cavities costs in excess of £1 billion each year. In addition, home buyers need to know whether their families could be in danger from natural or man made hazards such as radon or land-fill gases.

The BGS has developed a computer-generated automatic report service for home buyers. The service, known as ALGI (Address-Linked Geological Inventory), has just been launched for the Bristol area and will cover London, within the M25, by August 1997. In Scotland, plans are underway to cover Glasgow with an ALGI service within the next few months.

The prototype area of Bristol was chosen following the Land Registry's decision to use Bristol as the pilot study for their National Land Information Service (NLIS). The NLIS system will provide conveyancers with direct on-line access to a number of data providers such as Bristol City Council, Ordnance Survey, the Valuation Office and the Land Registry (who also maintain the 'hub' of the system). The BGS will be an important data provider with regard



Screen image of the ALGI report-generating system.

to earth science information which could affect ground stability.

The BGS have now completed the digitisation and attribution of the 1:10 000 scale geological maps covering Bristol, and a large number of other layers of data, such as radon potential, abandoned mine workings, shaft locations, and areas susceptible to flooding, have been incorporated in ALGI. A local company, Bristol Coalmining Archives Ltd, have provided some layers of mining information, and have assisted in improving the accuracy of mine shaft locations.

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When the report is generated, the property is located using Ordnance Survey's Address-Point product which provides a detailed grid reference on the centre of every one of the 26 million property addresses in the U.K.

The report for conveyancers has been carefully tailored to suit the market, following a number of meetings with conveyancing solicitors. The text has been made easy for the layman to understand, and will provide a checklist of

ground conditions which may affect a property. Care has been taken not to create 'blight', as in most cases the ground conditions will have been taken into account already when planning, designing and constructing the property.

“... it is hoped that ALGI reports will become a standard feature of property conveyancing ...”

The ALGI Homebuyers Report has been priced at £20+VAT, which puts it in line with many other comparable searches. It is hoped that ALGI reports will become a standard feature of property conveyancing.

Initially, ALGI reports will be generated at the BGS Headquarters at Keyworth, Nottingham, and can be either faxed or posted to the customer within one working day. Later however, with the NLIS system in operation, customers should be able to receive a digital copy of the report instantly.

Expansion of ALGI will depend on the level of interest in the service, but it is hoped that the main urban areas can be quickly covered at the 1:10 000 scale, and the rural and semi-rural parts of England and Wales covered at the 1:50 000 scale.