DO YOU NEED A SURVEY?

A practical guide for UK clients

Highlighting the benefits of using a professionally recognised geospatial firm.

Produced by: chartered ICES RICS THE SURVEY ASSOCIATION

What do you look for when choosing the company to collect the geospatial data for your project?

The survey is often one of the earliest elements, if not the first, of a major project — and getting it right first-time can save you time and money while reducing project risk.

The value good geospatial data can bring to a client often outweighs its initial costs and — if done professionally — represents an excellent return-on-investment.

It also reduces liability and can help smooth project progression, through the continual use of and reference to geospatial data.

This value is a central element of any successful project and is recognised at a national level by the UK Government and detailed in the Geospatial Commission document: **'Measuring the geospatial ecosystem: innovation to quantify complexity'**.

With all these advantages to using a professional geospatial firm, why use one that isn't?

The possible consequences of engaging a less reputable or underqualified business simply due potential lower costs could be disastrous.

Who is this guide for?

This information is aimed at professionals such as engineers, architects, planners and other related professions, to help cut through any confusion and support you in making the correct choice when commissioning a geospatial survey.

There are many companies that claim to be surveyors — but how do you know they can provide you with the geospatial information and professional service you need?

If you do nothing else, ensure your prospective provider can confirm they're a member of at least one of the following organisations:

- **The Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors (CICES) — individual members**
- **The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) — individual members**
- **The Survey Association (TSA) — member companies only**

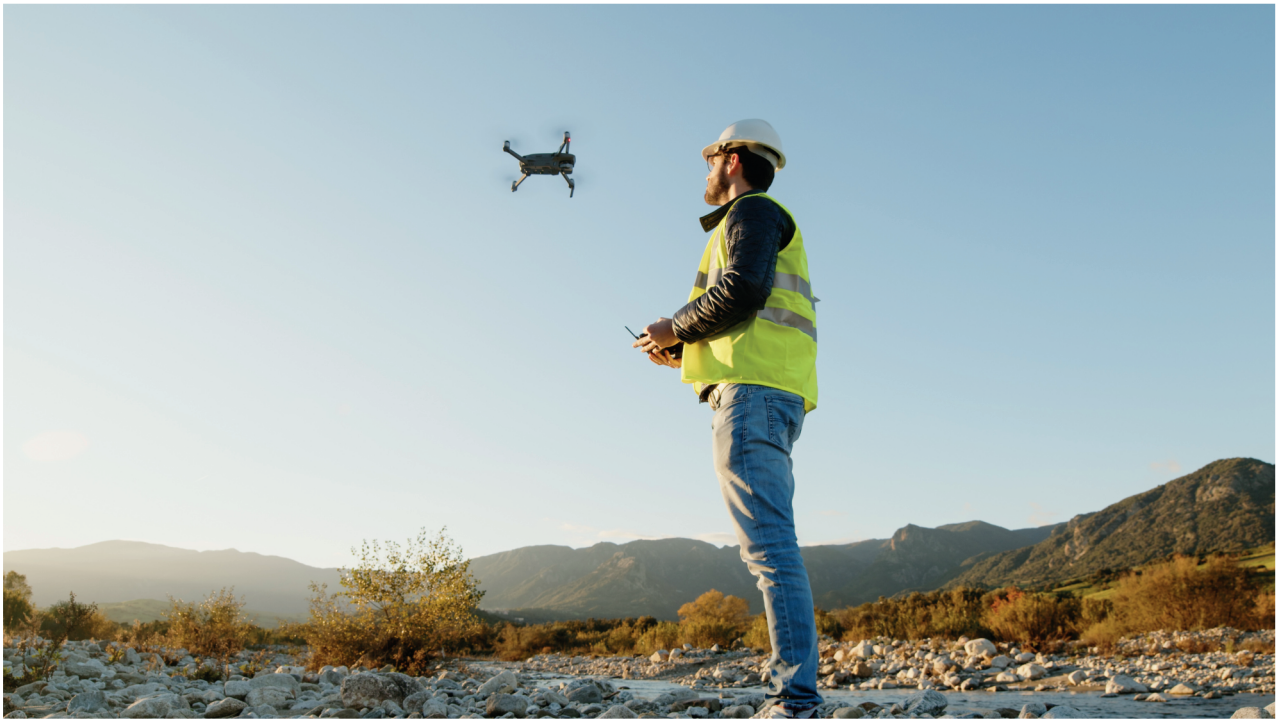
A significant number of professional survey companies in the UK are members of one or all the above organisations.

By using a survey company that fits this profile, you can ensure peace-of-mind by confirming the following details:

- **Their survey staff are members of a professional body charged with ensuring they maintain skills through ongoing CPD and training, specifically related to the geospatial profession.**
- **They are governed by appropriate codes-of-conduct, regulation and industry best practice standards.**
- **They hold minimum levels of indemnity insurance.**
- **In the unlikely event of something going wrong, there is a means of redress through an independent body.**
- **They will have formal complaints procedures available.**

The aim of this guide is to provide you with a starting point to procure a survey firm that will perform in a professional and diligent manner and will support your project through its entire lifecycle.

There are numerous technical guides available that can further assist you when specifying your requirements — details of online resources can be found at the end of this guide.



Why do you need a survey?

When commissioning a survey, explaining the purpose and what you are hoping to achieve will be critical to the success of the survey.

Examples may include:

- **Initial project feasibility**
- **Detailed design**
- **Control for setting out?**
- **Area referencing for sale of an asset?**
- **As-built survey**
- **Locating specific features to assist with maintenance regimes or environmental planning**

If you share and discuss this information with a professionally recognised survey firm, they will be able to advise on the best method of data capture to ensure what you receive is fit-for-purpose.

Remember, the more info you can provide, the better the outcome that will be achieved.

How do you choose your survey company?

Much of what a professional firm will provide is outlined in the opening lines of this guide and clients can be confident that they're receiving good geospatial information from experts, reducing risk and aiding project efficiency.

Outlined below are some important questions to consider when requesting a survey.

Experience on similar projects?

Think about the survey you need and the environment where it will be taking place, then find a company with a successful track record of completing surveys of a similar nature.

For example, working in the following environments may require a specialist firm to assist:

- **Airports**
- **Railways**
- **Watercourses**
- **Nuclear and utilities**
- **Commercial/industrial properties**
- **Motorways**
- **Coastal and inshore**
- **Confined spaces**

The above list isn't exhaustive, so it's important to ask the survey company to provide at least two examples of projects of a similar nature and size.

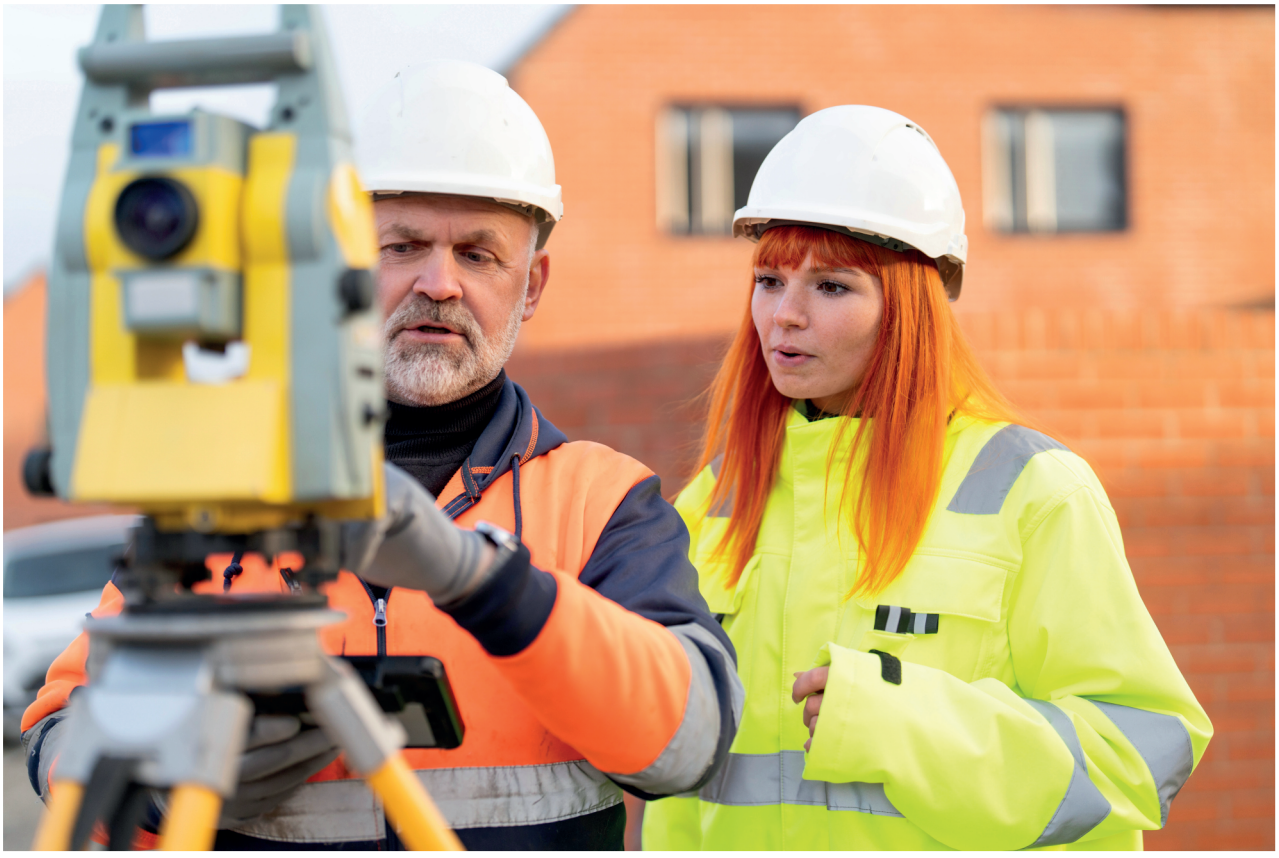
In turn, you may be required to provide details of levels of accuracy required, or desirables from a site liaison (e.g. road closures, vegetation, timeframe for completion, list of features to be collected).

Qualifications of the survey team?

Who will be undertaking the survey or authorising the work — and what qualifications and professional competencies do they hold?

Ensuring the product you receive at the end has been signed off by a qualified professional will give you a level of assurance.

Many professional firms employ highly-trained and experienced surveyors who understand the complexities of geospatial data collection and analysis, so always ask for evidence of the experience of their team before making your decision.



Professional institutions' codes-of-conduct should ideally underline the importance of being appropriately qualified to carry out work and include regulatory consequences for those that break these rules.

Unregulated or inadequately qualified firms have no such requirements and may not accept any liability for the work they carry out, often leaving the client unsatisfied and often out-of-pocket.

Health and safety credentials?

Any geospatial survey company that is a member of one of three organisations mentioned earlier will take the health and safety of their employees — and those their work may affect — very seriously.

By sharing the purpose of the survey, the professional firm will be able to ensure sufficient control measures are in place to allow data to be collected safely.

And again, understanding their experience of working in similar environments is key — many survey professionals have experience of a wide range of work environments, from railways and rivers to confined spaces or mountain tops.

Survey control?

Every survey, no matter what the purpose, location and environment, will require a level of geospatial control to ensure the accuracy of the data.

A survey for a new bridge will need a much tighter control network than a feasibility survey for a proposed planning application.

The geospatial control framework will be used by all surveys, from feasibility through to as-built stages of the project.

Various technical guides are available, which explain this in more detail — but we recommend asking for specific detail on the level of control required to meet your project needs.

It's also advisable to check if the survey company has a quality control system, such as ISO9001, or an equivalent in place.

A reputable professional firm will understand your needs and provide the level of quality that you require.

Conclusion

Hiring a professional geospatial survey firm in the UK provides significant benefits, including expert knowledge, advanced technology, data accuracy, regulatory compliance, cost efficiency, comprehensive services and effective risk management.

Investing time in choosing professional surveying services ensures the success and sustainability of your project, saving time, money and other resources, while delivering high-quality outcomes.

It's vital to remember that the lowest price is often not the best choice, as a poor geospatial survey can have serious downstream consequences for your project and may greatly increase liability and project costs.

A professional firm that is a member of the CICES, RICS or TSA will offer expert advice and consultation, guiding you through the complexities of your project and supporting you in making informed decisions.

By opting for professional geospatial survey services, you are making a strategic decision that supports the success and integrity of your project and ensures a vibrant and sustainable profession in the UK.

More information:

chartered ices — **cices.org**

RICS® — **rics.org**

THE SURVEY ASSOCIATION — **tsa-uk.org.uk**