

*Postcode*  
**NEWS**

**50**

WINTER Q.1/08

## Happy New Year!

The 50th issue of Postcode News celebrates two AFD anniversaries. TEN years on the Isle of Man and TWENTY FIVE years in the Address Management business.

We hope this issue of Postcode News is special to you. It tracks the story of the things we believe have enabled us to serve you well.

If you are one of the 7,500+ organisations using AFD Software, THANK YOU for your custom and loyalty. If you are considering selecting an AFD Name, Address or Bank Validation solution – we hope our track record encourages you to do so!

Hundreds of organisations have been with AFD for more than 10 years. If you are one of them WIN £1,000 for your nominated charity by being the first to send us your copy of the third edition of Postcode News from Winter 1995/6. (It's missing from our archive!)

**AFD**  
**SOFTWARE**

**25**  
**YEARS**



### **“Lofty Launch”**

Whilst Microsoft was started in a garage, AFD started in an attic in Scotland in 1983. During these early days of desk top computing AFD started maintaining and processing charity address databases as a computer bureau. In 1985 AFD expanded into supplying computer systems and training to the charity sector and other address-intensive users. Our launch of AFD MailSaver in 1988 helped to make it easy for organisations to make major savings by sorting mailing data for postal discounts.

### **Affordable addressing**

In 1994 AFD turned its addressing expertise to produce AFD Postcode. With a first year license at just £154 compared to over £800 for a comparable competing product – rapid, accurate addressing became affordable to smaller organisations for the first time.

### **Investing for the Long term**

From the early attic days AFD has expanded through four different buildings. A central pillar of expansion is substantial investment in infrastructure. In 1997 AFD moved to the Isle of Man, purchasing new buildings in 1998 and 2005. AFD utilises the latest technology to

provide world class resilience and customer service. Today over 90% of AFD customers download software and updates from its Electronic Software Distribution centre and register software through its automated online and automatic telephone registration systems. The latest server technology, resilient triple routing, bandwidth investment and full three phase on-site emergency power generation plant combine to provide a near 100% hosted service up time. Our technical HelpDesk provides 95% of enquiries with a first response within 15 minutes – and customers talk to real people, right here, free of charge.

### **Awards & Independent Endorsement**

AFD products have competed with the UK’s best to win awards and endorsements. Awards include the ‘Technology Smart’ award for Postcode Internet and ZipAddress Internet, ‘New Media’ award for BankFinder and ‘Outstanding New Product’ award for Refiner. Independent test results showed Postcode Plus to be up to 70 times faster than the nearest similar product and the Association of British Investigators made its first ever product endorsement – AFD Names & Numbers.

### **Leading Edge Technical Innovation**

Investment in research and development continues to lead to key breakthroughs. In 2000 AFD patented Robot® technology which



# 25 Years

recognises and validates postcodes, bank sort codes, DX numbers etc as typed by the user into virtually any Windows application. In 2001 AFD were the first to put 47 million contact records on to a tiny handheld device. In 2003 AFD were the first company to provide 'slim updates' which incrementally update compressed data with a very small file – ideal for mass electronic distribution to small sites.

## Creating Valuable Accessible Data Sets

Geodemographics reveals relative affluence, life-stage and lifestyle, bringing new intelligence to decision making. Price and complexity denied most organisations access to these important insights. In 2004 AFD developed a simple, world class, geodemographic system "Censation" – available to all users through all its name and address management solutions free of charge. 2007 saw the launch of "AFDJust Built™" and its inclusion in Postcode Plus and Names & Numbers – again completely free. AFD continue to develop product features to appeal to special segments. In 2005 AFD developed the occupancy and address type indicator for the mail-order, distribution and carrier industries. In 2006 AFD made Welsh alternative data available to Postcode Plus users. In 2007 AFD partnered with DX to launch special

DX versions of Postcode Plus and Names & Numbers for DX Members - of particular value to the legal and public sectors without any additional cost.

## Research, Development & Integration

AFD has always believed that the best place for our technology is right within the software that drives each business. So from the very first AFD Postcode license issued in 1994, developer integration was made easy and developer support friendly and free. The AFD Research & Development team identifies and moves with all key technological developments and ensures that software application developers can achieve an accomplished integration quickly. Over 400 partners and hundreds more corporate developers enjoy access to rapid development resources including code generation wizards, comprehensive documentation, free evaluation software and expert technical assistance. In 2006 AFD revolutionised development across its entire range through the release of a Common API enabling access to all validation tools through a single developer interface. This simultaneously accomplished future proofing, backward compatibility and a platform independent upgrade path.



*Postcode* **NEWS**



## Continuous Development

AFD has a strong ethos of identifying changing customer needs and responding to these intelligently and positively.

- 1994 AFD Postcode. First rapid address entry / affordable to all
- 1995 AFD Postcode Plus lightning fast property-level validation.
- 1996 First Internet Postcode Lookup + AFD batch cleansing
- 1997 ZipAddress software launched in the USA
- 1998 Postcode Internet launched, designed for web servers.
- 1999 International address formatting through Address 2000
- 2000 WAP Mobile Addressing
- 2001 Validation of bank, account and sort codes with BankFinder
- 2001 TraceMaster providing access to historic residency data.
- 2002 Platform independence through XML server-based solutions
- 2003 Refiner, advanced address cleansing / with de-duplication
- 2003 Unix and Sun Solaris address management solutions added.
- 2004 AFD launch Censation Geodemographic system – free
- 2005 Electronic Distribution Centre opened.
- 2006 Single API access to all AFD name, address & bank solutions
- 2007 Special DX integration available to 26,000 DX members.

## Continuous Improvement

Major launches are complemented by a process of continuous improvement and development to take advantage of new technology and in response to customer feedback.

## Private, Public and Not for Profit

AFD is delighted to serve many major UK organisations. Private, public and not for profit sectors are well represented including Unison, BMW, AOL, Bank of Ireland, De Montfort University, Boots Opticians, Ministry of Defence, Scottish National Party, Allied International, Computershare, Help the Aged, Geopost, Amtrak, Harvey Nichols, Eversheds LLP, Weightmans LLP, British Red Cross, Amicus, Dreams PLC.

The AFD Software team extend a warm welcome to all new customers including Oxford University Press, OLM Systems, Best Western Hotel Buckingham, The Game Conservancy Trust, Hilton International, West Bromwich Building Society and many others.

# KEYS TO 25 YEARS OF GROWTH AND LOYALTY

**David Dorricott, AFD Group Managing Director explains what he sees as the keys to sustained growth and customer loyalty over 25 years.**

*"I think AFD is rather unusual in actually doing what it says! We deliver on time or early and usually more than we promised. We don't have layers of hierarchy and our systems are highly automated. This keeps overheads down and means we can offer high levels of personal customer contact."*

*"When AFD Postcode first launched at £154 a market-leading comparable product was £800. People questioned the low price – and those who tried found AFD Postcode to be not only affordable, but technically better. We then made address management even more accessible to small users by introducing an all-inclusive monthly payment plan starting at just £15 per month."*

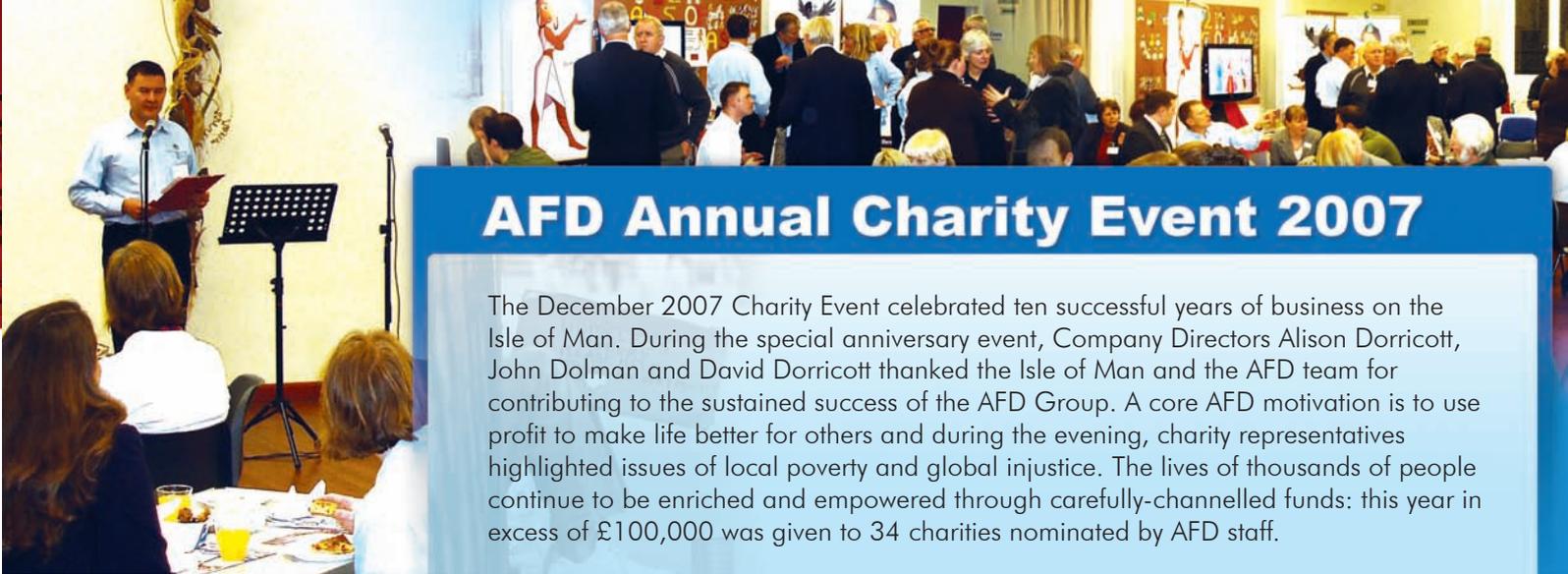
*"In address management we've actually pressed the keys ourselves - so understand the real pain and issues involved in ensuring data is accurate, up-to-date and well structured – our products reflect that experience and are designed to remove the pain."*

*"We apply technology. For example we saw the Internet coming and in 1996 developed address management solutions for this environment. Royal Mail actually wrote to us asking us to stop - because at that time they couldn't understand the Internet! Hindsight shows that address management is a vital online service but at the time what we did was revolutionary."*

*"We have built relationships with an enviable list of public, private and not for profit organisations and we continue to grow and develop our software partner channel. We continue to provide big wins in terms of value, productivity, data integrity and professional integration tools, documentation and support."*

*"During this 25th year we will continue to develop range, depth and simplicity in our products which deliver real benefits to the many, many thousands of people who use our products each day. We enjoy serving our customers and hope you each continue to sense our passion and commitment."*





## AFD Annual Charity Event 2007

The December 2007 Charity Event celebrated ten successful years of business on the Isle of Man. During the special anniversary event, Company Directors Alison Dorricott, John Dolman and David Dorricott thanked the Isle of Man and the AFD team for contributing to the sustained success of the AFD Group. A core AFD motivation is to use profit to make life better for others and during the evening, charity representatives highlighted issues of local poverty and global injustice. The lives of thousands of people continue to be enriched and empowered through carefully-channelled funds: this year in excess of £100,000 was given to 34 charities nominated by AFD staff.

### Data News Q.1/08

The latest AFD data release (Q.1/08) sees over 150,000 new delivery addresses, over 12,000 new postcodes and 12 new localities. Postal Address Data is constantly changing - new buildings are constructed, existing buildings are changed to apartments or back to large houses, and some are demolished. Royal Mail Postcode Address File statistics and newly announced changes can be found at:

[www.afd.co.uk/news/datanews](http://www.afd.co.uk/news/datanews)

Bank administration is also constantly changing. Consolidation, centralisation, re-organisation and regionalisation are regular occurrences. Without BankFinder updates, details that should be rejected may be accepted and vice versa. Occasional 'emergency updates' from BACS are immediately made available to BankFinder customers who receive updates.

Updates range in price from £60 +VAT per annum to £150 +VAT per annum depending on the product. For details and to order updates please call 01624 811711 or email: [postcode@afd.co.uk](mailto:postcode@afd.co.uk). AFD's monthly Postcode Ownership Plan (POP) covers all costs (including updates & VAT) in a single monthly payment.

[www.afd.co.uk/pop](http://www.afd.co.uk/pop)

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