



The three-word system devised by what3words can locate any spot on the planet, including the location of this traffic jam in Nepal

Ikea helps put what3words on the map

[James Hurley](#), Enterprise Editor

Wednesday March 24 2021, 12:01am, The Times

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The investment division of the giant Ikea furniture group has put money behind a British mapping service that uses a grid of 57 trillion squares, each with a unique three-word name, to help to pinpoint addresses.

Ingka Investments has backed what3words with nearly £12 million to help to launch it in new international markets.

The company was set up in London in 2013 to tackle poor and inaccurate addressing, which it says remains a problem in developing and developed countries alike.

What3words has divided the world into a grid of three-metre squares, each with a unique combination of three words that are randomly assigned and will stay the same. For example, the door of 10 Downing Street is “slurs.this.shark”.

The system is more precise than postal addresses and has been used by the logistics industry, for navigation, for finding unaddressed locations, and assisting emergency and humanitarian organisations.

More than eight out of ten UK emergency services and the AA use the service in Britain. For example, police have used it to locate a key witness who had fled from a murder suspect, while a mountain rescue team used it to locate four tourists trapped in a blizzard on Ben Nevis.

What3words licenses its technology to commercial partners but provides it free to consumers, emergency services and humanitarian organisations.

Chris Sheldrick, 39, its co-founder, said that there were “just enough” unique combinations of three words to map the globe with 57 trillion squares.

Ingka is investing in a series of start-ups related to areas such as digitalisation, home delivery, financial investment and

environmental sustainability and Sheldrick hopes to convince large retailers to add what3words as a delivery option in online checkouts.

“We envisage a world where on every platform, in every checkout field, you can give your what3words address, with retailers able to deliver to that precise three-metre square.”

He said that a trial had suggested that the service could cut the time spent on the road during the final mile of deliveries by up to 30 per cent.

Between April and August last year, usage of the app was up by 430 per cent as users turned to it to plan deliveries during the pandemic.

The service has been used to improve the postal service in Mongolia, while Germany is among markets being targeted for expansion.

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