

## Geographic Information Panel

13 December 2005

### Present

Vanessa Lawrence (Ordnance Survey) – Chair  
Simon Bevan (Ministry of Defence), for Nick Rigby  
Stan Brown (Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland)  
Andrew Burchell (Defra)  
Michael Fishwick (Demographic User Group)  
Michael Kell (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)  
Rob Mahoney (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors)  
Robert Mann (Association for Geographic Information)  
Jim Meldrum (Registers of Scotland)  
Cheryl Miller (East Sussex County Council)  
Andrew Stott (e-Government Unit, Cabinet Office)

### Apologies

Karen Dunnell (Office for National Statistics)  
Nick Starling (Association of British Insurers)

### In attendance

Hugh Buchanan (Ordnance Survey) - Secretary

### Action

#### 1 Addressing

David Prout reported to the Panel on ODPM's work over the last 18 months to develop a National Spatial Address Infrastructure (NSAI). David does not lead on addressing or geographic information for ODPM, but instead was given a specific task in early 2004 by the ODPM Permanent Secretary. This was to reach an agreement on addressing with 2 conditions: that there should be no additional government money spent, and that it should be through the amicable agreement of Ordnance Survey and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). He has now concluded that at the moment, this is not possible.

In early 2004, David had led round table discussions, assisted by Dennis Roberts of ONS. Ordnance Survey had offered to invest £10m in NSAI, and this led to without-prejudice discussions on the basis of NSAI being hosted and run by Ordnance Survey. In April 2005, Heads of Terms were agreed and presented to Ministers, and £2m from ODPM's local e-government budget was earmarked to assist. This was the basis of the April 2005 NSAI prospectus.

From April to July 2005, intense negotiations with legal input took place between Ordnance Survey and the IDeA in order to move from Heads of Terms to contracts. These discussions became very complex, and no agreement was reached by the contractual date of 31 July 2005.

A further fresh look was initiated, led by Andrew Hudson of the Valuation Office Agency. In early December, Messrs Prout, Hudson and Roberts concluded that there was no viable way forward.

David Prout summarised the current position as:

- ODPM officials have confirmed with Ministers that they accept that no agreement can be reached on NSAI at present.
- The results of the consultation held on the NSAI prospectus will be published.
- Central government will review its specification of requirements for a national address dataset.
- If Ordnance Survey and the IDeA come forward with a joint proposal, then

ODPM will consider it.

- ODPM will be interested in any proposal for an independently hosted lookup table between the different identifiers in use.

David Prout then responded to questions from Panel members:

Q1: Since greater progress seems to be being made in Northern Ireland and Scotland, why is it proving impossible across all of the UK? The primary reason for the lack of progress remains unclear. In Northern Ireland the issue of shared IPR has been solved, so why can it not be solved here?

A1: Scotland and Northern Ireland are starting from different positions. Lessons were learnt from them through work by Alex Clark of ONS.

Q2: There is a lack of guiding geographic information policy to act as a framework for decisions such as this. Such policy should be for the benefit of users, not data suppliers. Is it ODPM policy to create a monopoly supplier in addressing, or a competitive market in addressing? Local government have invested in LLPGs and NLPG, and there are suspicions that a covert decision has been taken within ODPM. This is a commercial opportunity for the UK, which if missed may be taken by overseas interests.

A2: ODPM have taken no decision, covert or otherwise, about establishing a monopoly supplier. The NSAI discussions were entered into freely by both the IDeA and Ordnance Survey. ODPM do not have a preferred outcome.

Q3: Why have ODPM not forced an agreement between the parties, since trying to achieve mutual agreement has failed? ODPM has a degree of authority over both Ordnance Survey and the IDeA. Addresses are fundamental, and worth billions of pounds to business.

A3: Ordnance Survey and the IDeA are not the only two parties involved. Furthermore, the IDeA is not within the control of ODPM, but is owned by local government, which in turn comprises a set of elected bodies. In addition, Ordnance Survey is a non-ministerial government department answerable to Parliament through a Minister in ODPM.

Q4: In the private sector, the importance of the issue would mean that a solution would be found. It is important to negotiate the details, not the principles. Who better to maintain and distribute an address product than Ordnance Survey? Can the issue be escalated?

A4: Agreement in principle was reached, but there was a failure to reach a detailed agreement. The issue has been considered by Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. There is agreement from various departments including Treasury that it is an important issue, but no offers to fund a solution. Although money is not the obstacle to finding a solution, it does play a part. Government has studied the cost benefit of having a single NSAI, and found it difficult to justify the cost that would occur.

Q5: These difficulties in addressing impinge on bigger issues such as PPP and information trading. Local government are under pressure to act more commercially. Would consideration of these financial issues lead to more engagement among government departments?

A5: No. The difficulties arose from the specific issues of how the NLPG is constructed; NLPG exists but it is difficult to establish who owns the intellectual property in it because of its complex history of development. The Treasury was contacted regarding the trading status of Ordnance Survey and confirmed unreservedly that a Trading Fund is the optimum status for Ordnance Survey.

Q6: Is it the case that the underlying question is a lack of understanding of IPR in NLPG, and hence an inability to construct a business model? If so, this is a problem which cannot be resolved by government.

A6: NLPG contains Ordnance Survey IPR, which is normally licensed separately, so NLPG cannot be permitted to supply Ordnance Survey's IPR free of charge. In addition, there is other intellectual property whose provenance is uncertain. There are very strict confidentiality agreements covering the parties which make it impossible to discuss

details. Agreements were placed in Escrow covering the Mapping Services Agreement, NLPG licences and an NSAI agreement. All parties entered the discussions in good will.

Q7: What plans are there for future progress? Is there another route that can be tried? Are there any circumstances that could lead to resolution?

A7: ODPM have concluded that until Ordnance Survey and the IDeA agree an alternative way forward, there is no purpose in holding further meetings. Both Ordnance Survey and the IDeA fully understand the issues and why they cannot be solved.

Q8: What is the worst case outcome? Is it simply a lost opportunity, or will there be repercussions for Ordnance Survey products, or for NLPG?

A8: For the next few years at least, both NLPG and OS Address Layer Release 2 products will exist, since NLPG is currently funded through the Mapping Services Agreement. At some point, the market will probably decide between the products.

Q9: What can the GI Panel do to lend weight and credibility to try to achieve a solution?

A9: Probably the most effective would be to interview participants in the style of a select committee hearing. However, warnings were given that confidentiality agreements will restrict what participants can discuss.

After the questions and answers the Panel noted its thanks to the various individuals who have put considerable effort into trying to facilitate an agreement on NSAI, and had a broader discussion, making the following points:

- The development of a UK GI Strategy is not dependent on the existence of a single NSAI, but a UK GI Strategy may take a view on the importance of addressing.
- A single NSAI would assist in the efficient delivery of the Census in 2011.
- Addresses create commercial opportunities, and Ministers will not intervene in a commercial issue.
- The role of the Panel is to advise Ministers. Can the Panel identify an issue that the ODPM-led discussions have not already clarified? Is competition between address products so harmful that Ministers should act?
- The Panel's ability to influence progress by interviewing NSAI participants is limited, and a better use of the Panel's resources will be to make progress on a UK GI Strategy.

2 Minutes of previous meeting were accepted as a true record.

### 3 Matters arising

#### Circulation of papers

Draft guidance on circulation of papers was discussed and a revised version will be circulated.

HB

### 4 Sharing Experiences

Rob Mahoney led a contributed session designed to share experiences on the use of GI around the GI Panel, with contributions from Stan Brown, Simon Bevan and Michael Fishwick. The slides used by the different presenters will be placed on the GI Panel website.

HB

### 5 UK GI Strategy

Vanessa Lawrence noted that at the AGI 2005 conference, the Minister in his speech had been very supportive of the creation of a GI Strategy for the UK led by the Panel.

A paper from the Panel making the case for funding for the development of a UK GI Strategy had been submitted to ODPM, and circulated to Panel members. In response,

ODPM had prepared a short paper.

In the discussion, the following points were made:

- at the September meeting, the Panel had deferred a decision on which of the packages of work identified in the Scoping Study to recommend, until there was greater clarity on funding.
- the funding offered by ODPM is sufficient to fund the package of work identified as Option 2 in the Scoping Study.
- the unused Panel budget from 2005/06 can be carried forward to 2006/07 to cover any ad-hoc costs of the Panel.
- other organisations represented at the Panel could be asked to contribute financially to the development of the Strategy.
- procurement should be through S-Cat for speed and efficiency
- the Scoping Study will form the basis of the tender documentation
- Robin McLaren's slides from the September meeting will be placed on the Panel website
- the tender process will be run by the Secretariat.

**HB**

## **6 Any Other Business**

- a** A report of a survey by the e-Government Unit of the Cabinet Office on interoperability and information sharing in geographic information has been published on their website:  
[http://www.govtalk.gov.uk/schemasstandards/egif\\_document.asp?docnum=971](http://www.govtalk.gov.uk/schemasstandards/egif_document.asp?docnum=971)
- b** Stan Brown expressed concern about the lack of clarity of vision and mission of the Intra-Governmental Group on Geographic Information (IGGI) that he had found when attending a recent IGGI meeting. Michael Kell will discuss this with those of his staff responsible for supporting IGGI's work.
- c** Robert Mann noted that the Panel is due to consider its Chair and membership after a year. A paper will be tabled at the next meeting.

**MK**

**HB**