

Geographic Information Panel

21 June 2005

Present

Vanessa Lawrence (Ordnance Survey) – Chair
Mark Addison (Defra)
Stan Brown (Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland)
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)
Jil Matheson (Office for National Statistics)
Jim Meldrum (Registers of Scotland)
Nick Starling (Association of British Insurers)
Andrew Stott (e-Government Unit, Cabinet Office)
Bob Wilkins (East Sussex County Council) for Cheryl Miller (SOLACE)

In attendance

Hugh Buchanan (Ordnance Survey) - Secretary

Action

1 Since this was the first meeting for several Panel members, Panel members introduced themselves.

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

3 GI Panel website

A draft website for the Panel was demonstrated and discussed. After discussion, a number of points were agreed:

- Various changes to wording and presentation of pages
- Images to be more representative of geographic information
- Definition of geographic information to be added to home page
- Hugh Buchanan (HB) to check what is expected of the Panel regarding notifying members' interests

HB

HB will arrange for the site to go live, incorporating these comments.

HB

Members agreed to supply a photograph, biographical details and subject to HB's investigation, information on related interests.

ALL

4 UK GI Strategy

Email discussion among Panel members has concluded that the Scoping Study for a UK GI Strategy should be carried out by Robin McLaren of Know Edge Ltd. It was also concluded that it is likely a tender under OJEU regulations would be let to commission the work for the full UK GI Strategy. Paper 1/2/05 set out draft Terms of Reference for the Study. In discussion of those draft Terms of Reference, the following points were raised:

- It is important to be clear what the output from the Scoping Study will be. The output will be a short report setting out the parameters for a tender document for the creation of a UK GI Strategy.
- It was noted that international experience of GI strategies has been very varied, with some strategies being driven by a clear business requirement such as the completion of a census or an election, while others have been driven by theoretical considerations. In addition, the implementation of some strategies

has failed from a lack of clear business drivers to support maintenance.

- The task of reviewing the experience elsewhere may be too large for the short Scoping Study. It was agreed that the review would only extend to understanding the scope of other strategies, not the totality of their content.
- It is important to have a clear definition of geographic information, encompassing the interests of all groups, for the purpose of the Scoping Study. The GI Panel will decide a definition by email which will encompass the interests of all groups. **ALL**
- It was agreed that it is essential to approach a strategy from the perspective of users of geographic information, and to engage with the correct stakeholders to ensure this.
- The draft Terms of Reference need to include explicit reference to the need to build on existing regional strategies within the United Kingdom. **HB**
- A strategy can be seen as one component of a National Spatial Database Infrastructure (NSDI): there was some discussion about whether the term NSDI adds value or is too theoretical a concept.
- The Appendix in the Terms of Reference is a long list of bullet points – are these the correct bullet points? There may be a need to prioritise within this list, and if so that prioritisation should reflect the business drivers for a Strategy, barriers to the creation of a Strategy, maintenance of data, leadership, standards and responsibility for delivery and sustainability of the Strategy. A table of drivers identified elsewhere (perhaps categorised as political, technical, academic etc) would be useful.
- Data hubs have been tried unsuccessfully in several countries where maintenance of data is separated from the creator of the data. Maintenance of data, and associated metadata needs to reside with the data creator.
- The Scoping Study should not be prescriptive about how a Strategy should be delivered, but instead should allow for and encourage tenderers for that work to be innovative and effective.
- Similarly, with the completion of the Strategy, the Panel would like to be offered a range of options for implementation, and not a fait accompli.
- Identification of benefits should be clear made early in the process.
- A GI Strategy must not be technically driven; this has been a failing of the GI industry in the past. Therefore the Scoping Study must take account of the need for strategic visibility and engagement with influential leaders, including private sector stakeholders.
- Once the Scoping Study is complete, and the Panel have accepted its report, then the Secretariat will produce a tender document from that.

The Secretariat will finalise the Terms of Reference and complete the contractual arrangements for the Scoping Study. Robin McLaren will attend the next GI Panel meeting to present his report. **HB**

5 National Interest Mapping Services Agreement (NIMSA)

Vanessa Lawrence (VL) made a presentation entitled "Overview of NIMSA today". She noted that NIMSA, which exists to provide universal consistent coverage of data, and underpinning infrastructure, would end in March 2006. ODPM are currently considering how to take forward its renewal.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were made:

- ODPM is responsible for the management of NIMSA, and would like to hear from individual Panel representatives if they have any views.
- Robert Mann (RMn) noted that the process of the renegotiation of NIMSA had

been delayed by a number of months and now coincided with a number of other important initiatives, including the National Spatial Address Infrastructure (see section 6 below). In view of the breadth, complexity and national importance of NIMSA, the AGI would prefer ODPM to extend the current agreement until March 2007. The AGI is also concerned because a prolonged delay in coming to a decision on the future of one element of NIMSA (the gateway metadata service) could seriously affect AGI's ability to establish a sustainable financial and staffing plan for 2006. RMn made a second point about gateway. He explained that the gateway team and advisory panel were concerned by the reluctance of a number of public sector organisations to update their gateway catalogue entries and/or create key new ones. He therefore asked the Panel to lend its support to the gateway initiative.

- To help Panel members to form a view on this, it was agreed that HB would circulate the web address of gateway and invite Panel members to comment. Michael Kell (MK) indicated that ODPM would be interested in these views. **HB**
- Stan Brown (SB) noted that under the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations (SI 2005/1515) public bodies will be under an obligation to document and catalogue their data that is available for re-use, on-line if possible, and that in the case of mapping this constituted metadata. He also noted that the NIMSA under discussion only applies to Great Britain, and that a separate NIMSA-like arrangement is under negotiation for Northern Ireland.
- MK explained ODPM's future actions on NIMSA. A decision on NIMSA will be made by Baroness Andrews (ODPM Minister), possibly before the next GI Panel meeting. ODPM expect to issue a consultation on their proposed course of action in July, and MK would welcome any comments from Panel members. Any comments should be made to him directly, and not through the Panel secretariat. **ALL**

6 National Spatial Address Infrastructure (NSAI)

VL made a presentation on the recent announcement from ODPM on NSAI. The prospectus for NSAI is available from the ODPM website at http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/downloadable/odpm_plan_037965.pdf

In discussion, the following points were made:

- The complexity of addressing for different purposes was acknowledged.
- The experience of Northern Ireland is that developing maintenance processes for address data is the essential and complex part of the system, that ground validation is onerous but that resulting address products themselves can be supplied in very simple data format, e.g. as CSV files..
- NSAI is essential in order to improve the data quality of current address datasets.
- Private sector users of address data cannot be compelled to use the output from NSAI, but NSAI will result in improvement in consistency of existing datasets.
- Various bodies will be both suppliers and users of this data, and this will be reflected in licensing arrangements.
- The ODPM prospectus refers to central and local government licence fees for NSAI being 50% more than current fees for Ordnance Survey address products. This has caused concern among the local authority community.

The Panel noted that addresses have to form part of the UK GI Strategy, and asked to be kept aware of NSAI developments.

7 Any Other Business

Mark Addison (MA) offered to arrange an update for update the Panel on INSPIRE at a

future meeting.

It was agreed to circulate a draft agenda round Panel members 2 weeks in advance of future meetings.

It was agreed that a future presentation on the issue of Intellectual Property in public sector information would be useful, from either the Office of Public Sector Information, or the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information.

Stan Brown (SB) has made a number of copies of the current MOSAIC newsletter (April 2005) available, describing current developments in Northern Ireland. Copies are available from the Secretariat.

The Pan Government Agreement for the supply of geographic information to central government was suggested as a future agenda item.