

## Geographic Information Panel

19 September 2005

### Present

Vanessa Lawrence (Ordnance Survey) – Chair  
Tim Allen (Defra) for Mark Addison  
Bruce Oelman (Office for National Statistics) for Jil Matheson  
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)  
Jim Meldrum (Registers of Scotland)  
Cheryl Miller (East Sussex County Council)  
Nick Rigby (Ministry of Defence)

### Apologies

Nick Starling (Association of British Insurers)  
Andrew Stott (e-Government Unit, Cabinet Office)

### In attendance

Hugh Buchanan (Ordnance Survey) - Secretary

### Action

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

### 2 Matters arising

#### a Definition of geographic information

After earlier email discussion, various definitions of geographic information were discussed, and it was agreed that the most appropriate one for the Panel's work at the moment is:

"Geographic information is information that can be related to a location defined in terms of point, area, volume on or of the earth, at a specific point in time, particularly information on natural phenomena, cultural and human resources."

#### b National Spatial Addressing Infrastructure

Vanessa Lawrence (VL) recapped progress to date, as published through ODPM press releases in May and August 2005, and explained that discussions are continuing among various parties through ODPM.

During discussion the following points were made.

- There is perceived to be a lack of information on current progress from ODPM, and as a result mixed messages are emerging.
- Part of the difficulty may be the lack of a policy framework for work on addresses, and VL was asked whether the Panel can assist Government in establishing an appropriate policy framework.
- VL was asked about costs of dissemination of Government information. VL summarised current Government policy on information dissemination which supports a variety of models, including profitable dissemination and dissemination at no cost. The diversity of this policy agrees with the approach taken in the recent Public Sector Information Regulations.
- Experience from other countries can be useful, but national differences such as the degree of development of the private sector, and public views on information

policy mean that experience elsewhere cannot be immediately applied to the situation in the United Kingdom.

- A developed GI Strategy and its implementation will help to inform the policy debate, and form infrastructure for discussion of such issues beyond single departments.
- Government may not choose to form policy on addressing as such, but Government requirements for addressing will arise from other policies.
- The Panel would like to help in any way to facilitate progress on NSAI because of the importance of addresses within a GI Strategy.

It was agreed to invite David Prout of ODPM or Dennis Roberts of ONS to speak at the next Panel meeting on the current position on NSAI.

VL

### 3 Awareness Training

Rob Mahoney (RMh) led a discussion on sharing of experiences among Panel members. The Panel noted that at its meetings, members brought very different backgrounds and experiences, and discussed whether it would be useful to have a higher level of shared understanding of issues and inhibitors. Among the possible approaches would be presentations by members, and site visits. In the discussion, the following points were made:

- Need to focus awareness training on business and not technical issues.
- Sharing persuasive examples that members can use in external conversations.
- Members offered to contribute useful examples and material from their own experience.

It was agreed to incorporate awareness training of this sort into the agenda for the December meeting. RMh agreed to coordinate this work, and lead the session at the next meeting.

RMh

### 4 Scoping Study on UK GI Strategy

Robin McLaren presented his report on a Scoping Study for a UK GI Strategy. In discussion, the following points were made:

- The requirements for a GI Strategy need to be considered alongside broader information requirements
- The Strategy is primarily about Government information. There is a need to align the Strategy with one or more of: improved policy delivery; need to address market failure; competitiveness of the UK; or national interest such as a defence issue.
- The Scoping Study includes consideration of the needs of the private sector, and development of capacity in the private and the university sector is important.
- A short business case is required to identify the drivers and outcomes of a Strategy. The Business Case needs to provide clear analysis on what interventions are required, the resources required and how creating a Strategy will address these.
- The business case needs to make some quantification of the benefits to the UK of having a GI Strategy. Since there is little reliable quantifiable data available elsewhere, the assumptions made will need to be clearly stated.
- In developing a business case, it is important to separate the benefits of developing a GI Strategy from the benefits of use of GI.
- It is important not to oversell the possible benefits of a Strategy, but instead to demonstrate a direction of travel towards for example simpler data creation, standards, model of leadership.

- What the Strategy will not aim to create is a top-down data hub. Instead a Strategy will aim to deliver interoperability, data sharing and information services to access data.
- The Strategy needs to recognise and where possible build upon the existing regional strategies, rather than control them.
- The timescales outlined in the Scoping Study reflect the time required to complete the different packages of work, but does not allow for tendering and procurement, nor for public consultation once the Strategy has been developed.
- In addition to the work identified in the Scoping Study, the development of a Strategy will incur a management overhead.
- The Panel is considering a Strategy for GI in the UK, which does not include GI elsewhere in the world that might affect the UK.
- It is possible to view the different options identified in the Scoping Study as Phases that will be taken on in turn.
- The need for the Panel to focus on small achievable outputs, building towards a larger whole was emphasised.
- Regarding budget, nominal contributions from Panel members' organisations will help to demonstrate the case for further funding.

It was agreed to develop a short business case for the creation of a GI Strategy for discussion with ODPM.

It was agreed to circulate the presentation slides electronically to members of the Panel.

## 5 Any Other Business

Robert Mann encouraged Panel members to attend the AGI 05 conference and exhibition ([www.agi2005.org.uk](http://www.agi2005.org.uk)).