
Response to comments received on Place Matters: The Location Strategy for the United Kingdom

Version 1.00

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Response to Comments

The Location Council wishes to thank all respondents who took time to provide valuable comments about the UK Location Strategy, published in November 2008, and how it should be implemented. A total of ten sets of comments were received from stakeholders within the public, private and academic sectors within the time period. The majority provided support for the UK Location Strategy.

The UK Location Strategy has been approved by Ministers and will not be issued in a revised form in the foreseeable future. However, the constructive comments received will be used to influence and improve how the UK Location Strategy is implemented.

Some comments received, e.g. those on charging, were considered out of scope of the terms of reference of the UK Location Strategy. Where appropriate comments have been sent to OPSI for consideration.

The comments received have been grouped into a number of common themes:

1. Clarification of Scope of Strategy

Although the Location Strategy was designated under a 'UK' scope, it was highlighted that it is primarily a public sector strategy. It is also acknowledged that it will also impact other parts of the economy. Many respondents felt that the Location Strategy should be more inclusive and more closely involve the private, academic and 3rd sectors in its management and implementation. The Location Council was also encouraged to not just implement the minimal requirements associated with the EU INSPIRE Directive, but to take the opportunity to implement wider changes as indicated in the Location Strategy.

Response:

The Location Strategy is a public sector strategy across the UK. It was also envisaged that it would hopefully influence the future direction of developments by private sector organisations in the areas of data collection and data management. This will create an interoperable location infrastructure that will support the delivery of more innovative and joined up services for the public good. The public sector must firstly establish better technical and business frameworks for the effective management and use of its location information before significant benefits can be provided downstream to other sectors; benefits will start to be derived by other sectors in a 12 - 18 months timeframe. Implementation, exploitation and success will be dependent upon the support of stakeholders from across all parts of the private,

academic and 3rd sectors.

The Location Council recognises the opportunity that the EU INSPIRE Directive has provided in establishing a Europe-wide framework of standards to underpin location information management across government and beyond, its remit is to ensure also that the wider objectives of the Location Strategy are achieved.

2. Governance

The membership of the Location Council has been restricted to senior representatives of the public sector. Many respondents indicated that the Location Council, like several equivalent governance structure around the world, should be much more inclusive and have members from the private, academic and 3rd sectors.

Response:

The governance structure is directly related to the scope of the Location Strategy and the INSPIRE Directive; the immediate focus is on improving the quality, interoperability and management of public sector location information. Therefore, the public sector focus is reflected in the governance arrangements. Adequate provision has been made through the Location User Group, the Location Interoperability Board (formerly called the Location Data and Interoperability Board) and Independent Assurance to effectively engage with the wider stakeholder community, including industry representatives who will have to deliver solutions to support and exploit the resulting information infrastructure.

3. Roadmap and Timescales for Implementation

The publication of the Location Strategy did not include a plan for its implementation. Several respondents enquired as to when one would be published.

Response:

The Location Council is currently formulating a Conceptual Design and Roadmap for the implementation of the Location Strategy; this will be published when approved in the second quarter of 2009. In the interim, the INSPIRE timetable published by the EU should be used "as a guide" to some aspects of this timetable.

4. Capacity Building

The respondents positively supported the capacity building aspects of the Location Strategy and emphasised the need to build on current location qualification initiatives and to encourage school leavers to seek career opportunities in the location sector.

Response:

The Location Council will lead a capacity building programme to embed location information awareness and analytical skills as a business tool enabler across public services and professions and will ensure that professionals can obtain a range of location qualifications to match their business needs.

5. Derived Data, Free Data and Crown Copyright Issues

Several respondents raised issues over the restrictions on the use and access to public sector location information caused by current licensing and pricing regimes of some public sector data suppliers.

Response:

Solutions to these pricing, copyright and licensing issues are out of scope of the UK Location Strategy. However, the Location Council will work with other parts of government, including OPSI and the Treasury, to identify opportunities for change to support the wider benefits of all stakeholders.

6. Standards

Although respondents indicated that the INSPIRE implementing rules and ISO Standards, supplemented by Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) Standards, would form the basis for the standards required to support the Location Infrastructure, they suggested that profiles or interpretations of these formal standards would be required and consideration should be made for creating some as British Standards.

Response:

There should be no need to create new standards. The INSPIRE Implementing Rules and underpinning ISO standards will provide a robust framework for standards to support the implementation of INSPIRE and the Location Strategy. However, the role of the Location Council will be to provide effective technical guidance for their widespread implementation. This will be a fundamental role of the Location Interoperability Board. Where specific profiles are deemed necessary – these will require strong business justification.

7. Core Reference Geographies

The majority of respondents endorsed the objective of creating a set of Core Reference Geographies to support information interoperability and sharing. However, concerns were raised about: the level of affordability; their independence from licensing restrictions of related products; the principle of public ownership; the lack of clarity of how 'raw' these themes of information will be; and the feasibility of resolving current, competing public sector products.

Response:

The creation of fully integrated land, sea, air and underground Core Reference Geographies in the public sector lies at the heart of the Location Strategy and the Location Council is committed to their creation and maintenance in line with the UK Location Strategy (and the INSPIRE Data Specification Implementing Rules). Although the ownership of Core Reference Geographies will be in the public sector, their capture and maintenance can be in the private sector, where appropriate. The Core Reference Geographies will form a key component of the national interoperable Location Infrastructure that can be accessed and used by the private, academic and 3rd sectors.

8. Cost Benefits

Although the respondents agreed that the benefits of implementing the Location Strategy will far outweigh the associated costs, several respondents were concerned that their organisations would directly pay for the costs of migrating their existing information solutions to be compliant with the new Location Infrastructure and that no central funding would be made available.

Response:

The Location Council will aim to minimise the interventions required by stakeholders and maximise their associated benefits. The incentive and cost of migrating to support the new Location Infrastructure will be directly driven by the business need and benefits of information sharing and the delivery of innovative new services. The Location Council will ensure that stakeholders have access to best practice, self-help and technical / business toolkits to support these business change programmes with robust business cases.

9. Privacy

Concerns were raised about the use of location information that can refer directly to or is capable of being related to people. It was recommended that this information is assessed in terms of the potential to impact on the privacy of the individual. Advice was also provided on access limitations on some location information on the grounds of national security.

Response:

The Location Council does not anticipate any information about individuals being directly in future scope since the strategy focuses on location objects. However, the Location Council is aware about potential inferred links to people and will be sensitive to these issues; within the Conceptual Design, the Location Council is considering aspects of Rights Management to ensure that all kinds of rights are protected and managed.

10. Pilots / Demonstrators

The usefulness of pilot projects or demonstrators in the early stages of the implementation of the Location Strategy was highlighted by several respondents.

Response:

The Location Council recognises the importance of collaborative pilot projects to demonstrate and test the feasibility of technical and business solutions in implementing the Location Strategy. The Location Council will use demonstrators and pilot projects to ensure that they are exposed to a wide set of stakeholders for review.

11. Future Communication with Stakeholders

Most respondents requested that the Location Council have a high degree of transparency and provides effective communication and engagement with the wide range of stakeholders in the sector.

Response:

The Location Council is implementing an effective communication strategy that will initially provide a website, regular newsletters and a series of regional events. Engagement with stakeholders is a top priority for the Location Council. The Location Council will use plain English explanations for location terminology wherever possible.

Location Council, March 2009

Any questions about this report should be referred to Keith.Murray2@defra.gsi.gov.uk