

TRANSPARENCY BOARD

11th June 2014

15:00 – 16:45

Venue: Admiralty House, the Music Room

Transparency Board Members:	
Francis Maude Minister for the Cabinet Office	Steve Thomas Experian
Carol Tullo Director, Information Policy and Services, The National Archives	Prof Sir Tim Berners-Lee Open Data Institute
Liam Maxwell Government Digital Service	Professor David Rhind Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information
Stephan Shakespeare YouGov	Sir Mark Walport Government Chief Scientific Advisor
Heather Savory Open Data User Group	Nick Hurd Minister for the Civil Society, Cabinet Office
Dr Rufus Pollock Open Knowledge Foundation	Professor Sir Nigel Shadbolt Open Data Institute

Officials (Regular Attendees):	
Malcolm Scott Department of Business, Innovation and Skills	Paul Maltby Director, Open Data and Innovation Group, Cabinet Office
Marcus Besley Science Capability & Networks, GO-Science	Oliver Buckley Deputy Director – Transparency Team, Cabinet Office
Joe Taylor Private Secretary, MCO, Cabinet Office	Olivia Burman Transparency Team, Cabinet Office
Simon James Deputy Director, Information Rights and Devolution, Ministry of Justice	Sam Roberts Transparency Team, Cabinet Office
Jemma Insell Transparency Team, Cabinet Office	

Officials (Presenting):	
Paul Leinster Chief Executive, Environment Agency	Jude Hillary Head of Data & Statistics, Department for Education
Richard Lumley , Department for Education	

Apologies:	
Andrew Stott Transparency & Digital Engagement advisor	Mike Bracken Government Digital Service
Matthew Hancock Minister for Skills	Dame Fiona Caldicott Chair of the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust
Bill Roberts SWIRRL	Simon Hughes Minister of State, Justice

Introductions

The Chair welcomed the Transparency Board and noted apologies from absent members.

Update from Cabinet Office Transparency Team

Ollie Buckley updated the board on the actions of the Cabinet Office Transparency Team (COTT).

- COTT are pleased with traction on the highest priority datasets e.g. Environment Agency has publicly committed to the transition to becoming an open data organisation and this includes a commitment to release their flagship National Flood Risk Assessment dataset (biggest revenue generator). The Environment Agency have committed to releasing the data from the beginning of the next financial year.
- Companies House are assessing options for a change in their business model to enable the release of their companies register.
- COTT are working closely with HMRC to secure the release of the CHIEF datasets of UK exporters which will require legislation.
- COTT are working closely with EDS and other interested departments to provide advice to the Prime Minister regarding action on Ordnance Survey data by middle of July. The Chair and Sir Mark Walport will be kept fully abreast of developments around the release of this data.
- COTT are drafting the initial response to Public Administrations Select Committee report on Open Data and Statistics. COTT are considering key questions raised in the report focussed on cross Whitehall co-ordination and consistent narrative.
- Internationally, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) steering committee met in Indonesia, at an Asia-pacific regional outreach event, and then at a European regional outreach event in Dublin.
- The UK is currently re-running for the OGP steering committee; elections are taking place throughout July.
- A shortlist of UK projects is being identified for Open Government Awards. The UK is pushing open data as an agenda item in the G20.

In discussion the following points were made:

- The international influence of the Open Data Charter continues to be significant and it has recently been discussed in Australia in the context of the G20 agenda.
- Cabinet Office has hosted the APPSI Glossary on data.gov.uk; this has been widely commented on and has been recognised as a success.
- Land Registry holds approximately £0.5bn of cash assets within the trading fund, Craig Lester explained that this is to be used for future projects.

Open Addressing

Paul Hadley presented on the state of play.

- The recent Katalysis report into options for establishing an open address database contained a range of options. The Postal Address File had remained an asset of Royal Mail at privatisation. Royal Mail had been consulted during the preparation of the Katalysis study but had taken issue with a number of points, however, BIS were content that the Katalysis report was accurate and subsequently released the study and sought views on it.
- In 2010 HMG had established the National Address Gazetteer as a single, authoritative and definitive address database. It sought to tackle the long-standing issues of competing address data sets referencing the same property differently and the issues that this caused for both public and private sector organisations.
- Royal Mail was introducing revised licensing terms and a simplified pricing structure for PAF during the course of 2014/15 with the new arrangements fully effected by 31

March 2015. There were a variety of options for developers so that datasets can be used without payment, depending on purpose.

- BIS had recently implemented a three year licensing agreement for PAF with Royal Mail for a Public Sector use ending on 31 March 2017.

In discussion the following points were made:

- There is a strong appetite from the Open Data Community for an Open Addressing product, but there is currently no additional funding from government sources available to compensate Royal Mail and Geoplace for lost revenue were the PAF to be released as Open Data.

Release of Data Fund

Heather Savory gave an update on previously funded projects.

For this tranche of funding, Heather outlined three of the bids for discussion:

NaFRA Flood Data Early Release:

Project description:

- This bid details the cost for the Environment Agency to convert flood data into open data before the proposed date of April 2015 (at this point the data will become permanently open and available). The bid also detailed a pro-rated cost for releasing this data early; this cost is for revenue-loss compensation. The cost to release data before the flood season will be approximately £400,000. The board felt that further information about the costs of this project should be verified before awarding funding.

Comments made in discussion:

- The board acknowledged that funding revenue compensation is not something that would normally be considered, however as this will hasten the release of data which will then be permanently available – and hence represents a one-off cost – they are willing to consider on this occasion.
- The Chair will write to Lord Smith to seek further clarification on the expected costs of releasing the data early, so as to ensure best value for money.
- The board also feel that there is an opportunity for the Environment Agency to release data in a raw format for free, and still offer chargeable services that add value.

Decision

- The board approve the project costs (£17,000) and agree in principle to funding early release of the NaFRA dataset pending further clarification of the costs.

Open Addressing:

Project description

- This proposal is for the Open Data Institute (ODI) to begin a project to generate a genuinely Open National Address dataset. A preliminary “exploration phase” is recommended by the ODUG reviewers for funding of (£28,800) to fully outline the risks and milestones for this project. The board supported the delivery of the project in principle and agreed that the exploration phase as a first-step will allow for a greater understanding of the landscape.

Points made in discussion

- The board feels that the creation of an openly available addressing product would be an important part of the UK data infrastructure.
- The Royal Mail would not necessarily be required to participate in the generation of the alternative PAF.

- The Royal Mail-owned PAF is far from perfect and does not utilise recent technological advancements in Geolocation - an alternative product could therefore be more accurate.
- The board feel that stimulating competition would be a positive step forward. Delivery of an Open Addressing product that could be openly used would be rapid if funding for such a project is granted.

Decision

- The board approve the funding of the exploration phase (£28,800) followed by the generation of a robust work plan with tangible milestones and deliverables; once these are known the further stages of the proposal (£132,000 then £250,800) will be considered with a view to approving.

Births, Marriages and Deaths:

Project description

- This proposal is to provide a publicly accessible database of the index of Births Marriages and Deaths between 1983 and 2006 currently held by the General Records Office.

Points raised in discussion

- A number of issues were raised and the proposal has been scrutinised as it is potentially controversial owing to the recent “right to be forgotten” issues around data controllers. There is also a question of who owns this data and the release data around public records - official forms such as Birth Certificates are protected under Crown Copyright. The Home Office is currently discussing whether this bid is realistic and achievable.

Decision

- The Transparency Board feel that this project is positive and approved funding, however, it will be for the proposer to engage with recent EU legislation around data and to adequately address the issues raised.

The Board approved the following further projects:

- PHE Public facing National Cancer Intelligence (£200,000)
 - The Cancer Commissioning Toolkit is a ‘one-stop shop’ for cancer information covering the patient journey. It is sourced from the National Cancer Registration Service, the single repository for linked, patient level data for all primary cancer diagnoses in England, and is highly sought after.
- Trafford Innovation Lab (£50,000)
 - Project to open Trafford’s data to the people of Trafford. Public benefits are increased transparency, particularly through data released as part of the transparency code. The project will give developers the opportunity to explore available data, test ideas and prototypes, and give them a better chance of success.
- Greater Manchester Infrastructure Master Plan (£330,000).
 - The project will develop an open interactive mapping tool of critical infrastructure in Greater Manchester (GM). This project builds on a scoping project carried out on behalf of the GM LEP in 2013 which identified the barriers and possible solutions to develop a GM Infrastructure tool.

Department for Education

- Department for Education (DfE) collects a large amount of pupil level data from schools and local authorities each year. They also collect qualifications level data from testing agencies and awarding bodies. This data is used for decisions around

funding schools and local authorities, for accountability, for policy development, and for maintenance and operational actions.

- The National Pupil Database (NPD) forms a significant part of the evidence base for the education sector and supports accountability and school improvement; DfE supports better access to this data to help improve the education and well-being of children in England.

DfE have improved data access by:

- Publishing more data within Performance Tables.
- Amending legislation to give NPD access for a wider range of purposes.
- Streamlining the NPD application process making it easier for applicants and to further improve response times.
- Launching a new service which enables access to linked (DfE, FE and HE) education data.

DfE have encouraged greater use of data by the market, this was evidenced through requests for the NPD:

- 57 external requests received in April and May 2014 compared to 33 in the same period in 2013.
- 90% of requests have been processed within target time in the last 90 days compared to 83% in the last 12 months.
- A list of requestors since April 2012 and their project aims has been published.

DfE are stimulating the market by:

- Encouraging more external users to develop applications and web tools.
- Supporting the Open Data Challenge prize ran by the Open Data Institute (ODI) and Nesta - DfE is contributing to this by granting access to the NPD to allow competitors to respond to the Education related question:
 - “How can open data be used to help parents make informed choices about their children's education in one (or more) of three key areas:
 - Expressing a preference for a school
 - Choosing a subject or other learning priorities
 - Engaging with their children's learning”

Next steps for DfE:

- The Department is working with the ODI and Nesta to build on the technology used in the Education Challenge Prize, to investigate the creation of an Application Programming Interface (API). This will allow developers to build apps that use NPD to inform student choices.
- Exploring other data we can share, such as the school workforce or international data.
- Working on new legislation that will allow additional data linking/sharing – there are clauses in the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill that will allow us to link education and HMRC data.

Comments:

- The Board commended the use of API.
- It was highlighted that, though the DfE were sharing their data more widely, there were restrictions on its use, therefore, this should not be confused with ‘*Open Data*’.
- Board members recommended that DfE consider setting up a Sector Board. The Chair supported this suggestion.

Actions:

- Cabinet Office to explore with Department for Education the possibility of creating a Transparency Sector Board.

National Information Infrastructure (NII)

Olivia Burman outlined the government's progress on the NII.

- The first iteration of the NII was an important first step towards creating a robust roadmap of data held about the country.
- However, it is acknowledged that there is substantial potential to improve on the first iteration; the intention is to strengthen the next iteration of the NII through an open policymaking process to take place over the next few months.
- As per the NII commitments, reporting on progress against the commitments will be incorporated into the Quarterly Written Ministerial Statement (QWMS) process. The next QWMS will be laid in July and will cover the period from January – March 2014.

Heather Savory presented a paper on behalf of the Open Data User Group (ODUG) scoping the work ODUG is doing to analyse the NII, which includes:

- Better defining the NII, looking at what datasets are available, working on a definition of what constitutes '*core reference data*' and then conducting a gap analysis to understand priorities.
- ODUG identified improved structure, core reference data and related data types, user stories and thematically consistent standards, as part of the review.

Any Other Business

- Heather Savory provided an update on the complaint about OS pricing which was being handled by OPSI.
- Carol Tullo explained the complexities and sensitivities around the complaint. The Chair commented that this is an issue that arises regularly and asked Carol Tullo to advise whether it would be useful to settle this through a Ministerial group, COTT to look at possibilities for how this could work.