

Information Released under Freedom of Information Act

Subject: Enquiry regarding Companies House Free Company Data Product

Date Released: 4 September 2014

Summary of request: The enquirer requested information regarding Companies House Free Company Data Product

Information released

Firstly I should explain that some of the information you asked for is not applicable to the approach that CH takes in respect of its Free Data Product.

CH does not make public information, including the Free Data Product, available under the Open Government Licence (OGL).

CH examines and stores company information delivered under the Companies Act 2006 and related legislation, and makes this information available to the public. All this information is made available to searchers pursuant to s1085 and s1086 of the Companies Act 2006. We accept all information that companies deliver to us in good faith and place it on the public record. The fact that the information has been placed on the public record should not be taken to indicate that CH has verified or validated it in any way. More specifically with regards to your queries, CH does not verify information provided by companies with Royal Mail or Ordnance Survey.

Most of the material on the companies register, with the exception of a small category of material which is exempt from statutory disclosure requirements, is "public information" that the Registrar of Companies is under a statutory obligation to make available to the public. Where information on the register is supplied by a company or someone acting on its behalf, any copyright in that information belongs to that company (or its agents). It does not belong to the Registrar. The Registrar supplies this third party copyright information to customers under authorities given to him under s47 and s50 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and Schedule 1 of the Database Regulations (SI 1997/3032).

CH places no restriction on how the information is used, but advises all customers to take their own legal advice regarding possible breach of third party copyright.

In summary, I have answered your specific questions below:

1. To your knowledge, does the dataset contain any information that is copyright Royal Mail, or data over which Royal Mail has a database right?

As explained above, CH does not verify the content of information provided to the Registrar and any copyright in that information belongs to the company providing it to the Registrar.

2. To your knowledge, does the dataset contain any information that is copyright Ordnance Survey, or data over which Ordnance Survey has a database right?

As explained above, any copyright in the information belongs to the company providing it to the Registrar.

1. How was the database behind the published dataset first created, specifically:

a. Who created it, when, and from what sources?

b. Was the Postcode Address File from Royal Mail or AddressBase from Ordnance Survey, or any predecessor products to AddressBase, or any products incorporating these products, used as a source of addresses when creating the dataset?

c. Were any of these products used to check, validate or correct addresses from another

The database is created from information provided by companies to CH and, to reiterate, CH does not verify the content of information provided to the Registrar.

2. How is the database behind the published dataset updated, specifically:

a. What sources of information are used to update the database?

b. Are updates from Royal Mail or Ordnance Survey used to provide updates to the database?

c. Do you check, validate or correct addresses in updates to the database against either the Postcode Address File from Royal Mail or AddressBase from Ordnance Survey, or any service that uses those databases as its source?

Again, to reiterate, the database is updated from information provided by companies to CH and CH does not verify the content of information provided to the Registrar.

3. Have you taken legal advice prior to making this data available under the Open Government Licence that by doing so you are not infringing third-party intellectual property rights?

This question is not relevant, as explained above, CH does not make public information, including the Free Data Product, available under the Open Government Licence (OGL). As a result of your enquiry CH has liaised with Data.Gov and changed the wording on the site to make it clear how CH information is released.