



PDC Consultation
Transparency Team
Cabinet Office
4/W2
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2AS

27th October 2011

Sent by email: pdcconsultation@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Sirs

Response to Consultation: 'A consultation on Data Policy for a Public Data Corporation'

I am writing on behalf of The Market Research Society (MRS) in response to the above Cabinet Office/BIS consultation. No part of the MRS submission needs to be treated as confidential.

With members in more than 70 countries, MRS is the world's largest association representing providers and users of market, social, and opinion research, and business intelligence. All individual MRS members and MRS Company Partners agree to self-regulatory compliance with the MRS *Code of Conduct*. Full details regarding MRS and its activities can be found via: www.mrs.org.uk

MRS has an advisory board, the MRS Census and Geodemographics Group (CGG), which recommends MRS policy in relation to geographic, demographic and census information and which has advised MRS in the formulation of this response. CGG has been operating continuously for the last twenty years and has been a leading voice representing business users. It includes members with experience in the creation and use of population statistics, census data and geographic information. MRS and CGG have worked with the UK Census Offices, via the Office for National Statistics (ONS), representing the needs of the research sector in consultations on the 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses.

Two members of CGG have also submitted consultation responses reflecting the particular views of the organisations that they represent. These are Mr Keith Dugmore (Demographic User Group) and Mr Peter Sleight (Association of Census Distributors).

MRS and CGG have completed the separate consultation response form (see attached). There are however, a number of additional points we would like to cover in addition to highlighting some specific points from the consultation response form:

- We welcome the PDC project aiming to bring together data-rich government organisations to provide a more consistent approach to accessibility of PSI. We feel that it is important that it has real power with strong independent regulation.
- We are certain that the benefits of increased business activity and efficiency (and increased tax revenues) will outweigh lost revenues from removing or cutting charges. Note that making the 2001 Census free at the point of use resulted in considerable growth to value added applications.
- We note in the aims of the PDC there is 'creating a vehicle that can attract investment'. We can see no merit in this and feel that it could be potentially in conflict with the objective of freeing up data. We trust that it in no way suggests

privatisation. However, we do see room for outsourcing of appropriate functions to the private sector. At all times it is important that the government retains the IPR.

- We hope that the PDC can move towards minimising charging for data from the 'trading fund' bodies after the perception that such bodies have taken advantage of monopoly positions.
- We recognise that Open Data does not necessarily mean Free Data. However, we think that the data within the public task should be Open Data and be free (with possibly in some cases allowance for charging of marginal costs).
- We see an opportunity for the PDC to examine costs in addition to revenues – looking at it from a day one perspective. There may even be opportunities for merging all or part of existing suppliers, with appropriate savings.
- We have pressed for several years for the creation of a National Address Register as a single definitive source of accurate address information. We welcome that this has become reality, but we are very disappointed at the two tier pricing regime that makes its purchase prohibitive in the main for the private sector but free to the public sector under the PSMA. The quality of this database is clearly of huge benefit and can generate significant savings and efficiencies. We feel strongly that the NAG should be Open Data and if appropriate under the PDC umbrella.
- For the users that we represent it is important that data provided has UK coverage, including all countries when possible.
- Where data is incomplete or with deficiencies and there is no immediate improvement forthcoming, our users would generally prefer that the data be made available, with appropriate metadata explaining the caveats to its quality.

The wider context of MRS and CGG views on the Open Data initiative is supplied in our response to 'Making Open Data Real: A Public Consultation'.

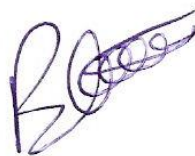
Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require clarification regarding this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Debrah Harding'.

Debrah Harding
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Email: Debrah.harding@mrs.org.uk

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Barry Leventhal'.

Barry Leventhal
Chairman
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Enc. Response form for 'A Consultation on Data Policy for a Public Data Corporation'

Response form for 'A Consultation on Data Policy for a Public Data Corporation'	
Name:	Debrah Harding (MRS) and Dr Barry Leventhal (MRS CGG)
Organisation:	The Market Research Society (MRS) & MRS Census and Geodemographics Group (CGG)
Email address (optional):	Debrah.harding@mrs.org.uk barryleventhal@googlemail.com
Category of operation for organisation*: *Please choose one of the following categories: Business representative organisation (Please see covering letter for more information)	Advanced manufacturing <input type="checkbox"/>
	Business and professional services <input type="checkbox"/>
	Business representative organisation/trade body <input type="checkbox"/>
	Central Government <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Charity or social enterprise <input type="checkbox"/>
	Construction <input type="checkbox"/>
	Digital/creative industries <input type="checkbox"/>
	Financial services <input type="checkbox"/>
	Healthcare/life sciences <input type="checkbox"/>
	Individual <input type="checkbox"/>
	Local representative <input type="checkbox"/>
	Local Government <input type="checkbox"/>
	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
	Public sector <input type="checkbox"/>
	Retail <input type="checkbox"/>
	Tourism/hospitality <input type="checkbox"/>
Trade union or staff association <input type="checkbox"/>	
Voluntary sector <input type="checkbox"/>	
Size of business (if applicable): Please indicate the size that best suits your business Broad range of Member Company sizes	Individual <input type="checkbox"/>
	Micro (1-9 staff) <input type="checkbox"/>
	Small (10-49 staff) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Medium (50-250 staff) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Large (250 + staff) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Chapter 4 – Charging for PDC information

1. How do you think Government should best balance its objectives around increasing access to data and providing more freely available data for re-use year on year within the constraints of affordability? Please provide evidence to support your answer where possible.

The PDC should aim, as you have stated, to provide data within a fair and transparent charging regime. To ensure that the appropriate incentives are in place to encourage increased and innovative use of data, pricing should be free or reasonable and affordable for a wide range of users (including SMEs) and the burden of complex and costly licence and royalty arrangements minimised. The wider the use of ‘Open Data’ in the private sector, the more economic benefits for the UK economy will result through increased business activity and efficiency (and this is supported by international research studies). We appreciate the need to create a sustainable business model for the PDC, but would stress the importance of taking a ‘big picture’ view of the benefits to the wider economy and maximising the accessibility of data.

There may also be some scope for reduction of the costs of existing suppliers (such as trading funds) by outsourcing to the private sector (but we do not support private sector investment involving any form of data ownership).

Further thoughts from MRS and CGG are included in our covering letter.

2. Are there particular datasets or information that you believe would create particular economic or social benefits if they were available free for use and re-use? Who would these benefit and how? Please provide evidence to support your answer where possible.

In our covering letter we have identified the National Address Gazetteer as an important dataset that would realise significant benefits for accurate Market Research and Marketing if available to all under the Opendata banner. As it stands this data is free for the Public sector but chargeable to the private sector under an inherited unfavourable (and to most unaffordable) pricing regime.

There are many other government datasets that if accessible under favourable conditions would have the potential to greatly improve the efficiency of market research, consumer targeting, site location and many other applications. Many of these are likely to be proposed for future use by the ONS ‘Beyond 2011’ development. Examples are various statistics at Output area level when possible, mapping data as available under the PSMA, Land Registry, VOA and Companies House data, Transport statistics and various Local Authority data. A more detailed list is available if required.

To deliver their full potential, it is essential that these data wherever possible are made available with full UK coverage.

3. What do you think the impacts of the three options would be for you and/or other groups outlined above? Please provide evidence to support your answer where possible.

Option 1 – Status Quo

We are not in favour of this option; MRS and CGG would prefer a more pro-active approach to take full advantage of the opportunities. A ‘commitment’ to more data free for re-use is insufficient.

Option 2 – Harmonisation and Simplification

There is some merit in this single fee approach but MRS and CGG does not think that it is desirable for public sector bodies to provide products and services beyond their public tasks. It is generally accepted that private sector developers, with free or reasonably priced data, are more likely to produce and market effectively products and services appropriate to end-user applications. This option would damage that innovation.

Option 3 – Freemium

Such a model can successfully work in a private sector competitive market, but it is completely inappropriate for a publicly funded supplier with monopoly control over key datasets.

We believe that raw data should be free to encourage use and development by end-users and developers, as outlined above. There should rarely be cases where charging for value-added products within the public task is appropriate. The model we recommended is for Open data to be free (or at marginal cost at most) and value added contributed by the private sector, for the reasons stated.

4. A further variation of any of the options could be to encourage PDC and its constituent parts to make better use of the flexibility to develop commercial data products and services outside of their public task. What do you think the impacts of this might be?

Please see our response to Options 2 and 3 above. MRS and CGG believe that development of value added products and services outside the public task should be a function for the private sector.

5. Are there any alternative options that might balance Government's objectives which are not covered here? Please provide details and evidence to support your response where possible.

MRS and CGG support the arguments for the enhanced 'right to Data' and the 'Policy Principles on the provision of PDC data' outlined in Section 4. However, we question whether the aim of 'creating a vehicle that can attract investment' will always be consistent with freeing up data; as there is an implied profit component that may increase data charges. There could, however, be sensible use made of private sector out-sourcing for suitable tasks.

We believe that good data (free or reasonably priced) encourages innovation and drives efficiency in value-added services produced by developers. As we have stated, it is important to take a 'big picture' view of the longer term benefits to the wider economy resulting from improvement to the accessibility of data.

Chapter 5 - Licensing

6. To what extent do you agree that there should be greater consistency, clarity and simplicity in the licensing regime adopted by a PDC?

MRS and CGG fully agree with these aims, and with the UKGLF licensing principles.

Historically, complex licences have been counter-productive to increased use of data and value created. For example, Ordnance Survey has been particularly criticised for the complexity of their licences and inflexibility of their IPR claims.

7. To what extent do you think each of the options set out would address those issues (or any others)? Please provide evidence to support your comments where possible.

MRS and CGG hope that the majority of data will be free, and thus fall under the OGL regime. For any charged data:

Option 1: Use-Based Model – Other than very simple data (such as a Companies House entry), we think that a use-based model is likely to result in greater complexity, and is not an attractive option. This has been the research sector’s experience of similar arrangements used in Ordnance Survey and Postcode Address File licences.

Option 2: PDC-wide ‘overarching agreement’ – We think that this is a promising approach, supplying simplicity with sufficient flexibility.

Option 3: PDC-wide single license model – The inclusion of much irrelevant information (and increased length) makes this a less attractive option.

8. What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options would be? Please provide evidence to support your comments

As above, MRS and CGG believe that Option 2 offers a solution to the complexity problem, assuming the supplementary components are confined to essentials and do not introduce specific conditions or IPR issues.

9. Will the benefits of changing the models from those in use across Government outweigh the impacts of taking out new or replacement licences?

MRS and CGG believe that the benefits of improved data accessibility arising from simplified and less restrictive licensing will far outweigh any costs or inconvenience.

Chapter 6 – Regulatory oversight

10. To what extent is the current regulatory environment appropriate to deliver the vision for a PDC?

The current regulatory and policy framework is somewhat fragmented. MRS and CGG believe that the regulatory environment should be reviewed and strengthened as a preliminary task to ensure that the implementation of a PDC goes smoothly. It is important that there is clear definition of the public tasks and detailed arrangements and powers.

11. Are there any additional oversight activities needed to deliver the vision for a PDC and if so what are they?

MRS and CGG consider that creation of a PDC will require creation of a separate, independent regulator, taking up many functions of National Archives and OPSI, plus new ones.

12. What would be an appropriate timescale for reviewing a PDC or its constituent parts public task(s)?

MRS and CGG believe that a review should take place at a minimum of every two years.

Please return this form to:

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