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Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Dear Sirs

**Re: Triennial review of the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information**

The Market Research Society (MRS) and the MRS Census and Geodemographics Group (CGG) welcomes the triennial review of the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI) and the opportunity to submit views. This follows the e-mail exchange of 22 May between Dr Barry Leventhal and Patricia Humphries, in which Ms Humphries kindly agreed to our request to send our submission in a letter, to reach you no later than 6 June.

Public sector information (PSI) is a vital input to research and marketing. Substantial economic benefits are generated when it is openly and freely available, and government initiatives on open data have been welcome. But more remains to be done, and it is essential that government continues to receive expert and impartial advice on the complex issues of PSI. We urge The National Archive to retain APPSI in this role, and to give more weight to independent advice.

MRS is the world's leading authority on research and business intelligence. MRS is for all those involved in generating creative and intellectual capital from marketing sciences, insight, research and analytics. With members in more than 60 countries, MRS represents, regulates and promotes those sectors providing world leading training, qualifications, content and skills. The UK is the second largest market in the world for these research services. Full details about the MRS and its activities are available at: <http://www.mrs.org.uk>

The Census and Geodemographics Group (CGG) is an MRS advisory board, founded in 1989 to represent the interests of this important activity. The CGG has specialists in market research, retail site location, market and database analysis, as well as census distributors and academic researchers. The CGG is involved with Census developments through representation on the ONS Business and Professional Interests Advisory Group, and with wider matters through membership of the Statistics User Forum as well as through an extensive network of contact in the market and social research sector. Full details about CCG are available at: [https://www.mrs.org.uk/census\\_and\\_geodemographics](https://www.mrs.org.uk/census_and_geodemographics)

The need for advice based on an all-round understanding is well demonstrated by the position faced when using statistical information with geographical information both from the public sector for commercial purposes. The former are generally open data while the latter are mainly charged for under restrictive terms. These different licensing regimes may

suit the narrow interests of parts of government, but they inhibit full and integrated use by business. It is essential that government can call on independent advice to help resolve such issues within broader PSI policies.

Our view is that APPSI is well placed to continue to provide such independent advice. We are not aware of another body or group that might replace the Panel, and doubt that its contribution could be replicated under any of the other options mentioned in the notes on the questionnaire, particularly at the minimal cost of APPSI to the taxpayer.

From our perspective of information users, we find APPSI approachable at a group and individual member level, we find its contributions to the information debate insightful, the APPSI website is a model of transparency, and, on the evidence we see, the Panel has the necessary balanced approach. However, we believe that the balance of advice would be further improved by increased representation from commercial users of PSI, and ask that this should be given early consideration.

We appreciate that users may not always see how influences come together within government to move PSI policy forward, but we believe that Ministers and officials should be encouraged to give more weight to broadly based expert and impartial advice, in doing so adding value to the work of APPSI, and demonstrating that government listens to information users and the needs of business.

We would be pleased to expand on the views in this letter if that would be helpful, and comments within this response may be attributed to MRS and CGG. We would also be most grateful to be kept in touch with progress and outcomes of this Review, with opportunity for further comment on PSI when appropriate.

Yours faithfully,



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