

Demographics User Group

Making data work

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The Rt. Hon. Francis Maude MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office
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by Email & Post

Dear Mr Maude

The National Address Gazetteer: being run in the interests of Ordnance Survey, to the detriment of citizens and the private sector

Just over a year ago, the Demographics User Group (DUG), along with many other organisations, congratulated the government on the announcement of the creation of a definitive National Address Gazetteer database, and its being made available free at the point of use for all public sector bodies under the centrally funded Public Sector Mapping Agreement.

However, the members of DUG – **Barclays, Boots, Camelot, Co-operative Group, E.ON, Everything Everywhere, GlaxoSmithKline, John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Nationwide, Sainsbury's, Serco, Tesco, The Children's Mutual, and Whitbread** – expressed concern that the announcement continued “Commercial customers will be able to license the data in the same way as they do for the Ordnance Survey and local government products they use today.” We observed that “When it is said that the public sector pays to use the NAG through the Public Sector Mapping Agreement, it must be remembered that nearly all of that funding has been provided by millions of citizens, and 2.3million businesses, through taxation – yet both these sectors are now penalised, being barred from obtaining the data free at the point of use, and having to pay again.”

Twelve months on, the new address file is marketed on Ordnance Survey's website, but branded as Address Base rather than the National Address Gazetteer (or National Address Register). It's presented very much as one of several OS products, rather than the definitive file produced by GeoPlace. For anyone outside the public sector, the prices for GB coverage and 100+ users range between £130,000 p.a. for the basic version to £189,000 p.a. for the full product. Even a single user would have to pay £24,000 p.a. These prices are prohibitive for almost all potential customers, and appear designed to protect OS's existing policy of setting high prices for a small captive market.

Turning to the Autumn Statement, we welcome its many initiatives for Open Data, and the reference to making available for free a range of core reference datasets. We believe that the NAG is fundamental to this. If, however, in the short term, it is necessary to impose a charge, the new Data Strategy Board and the Public Data Group should give top priority to changing the current pricing policy to one designed to greatly increase sales and use of this national asset by charging much lower prices. This should be done in conjunction with Ofcom's review of the pricing and licencing of PAF.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you and / or your team.

Yours sincerely,



Keith Dugmore, Director

c.c. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills