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**DAO(GEN)08/05**

Dear Accounting Officer

4 July 2005

## RECORDING PROPERTY INFORMATION ON e-PIMS

**This letter sets out the details of the requirement to use e-PIMS, the electronic Property Information Mapping Service operated by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), to record information about all the properties central government bodies own, use, control, occupy or plan to occupy.**

**2. It is the second of a series of three letters following up different aspects of the recommendations of the Lyons reviews<sup>1</sup>. The first was [DAO\(GEN\)05/05](#) on Treasury approval of accommodation proposals. There will be a further DAO letter in the near future on civil estate coordination replacing and updating part of [DAO\(GEN\)1/96](#).**

### **Action**

**3. Accounting Officers should draw this letter and the requirements in the annex to the attention of their staff. They should also copy it to their executive agencies, together with any arm's length bodies for which they are responsible, including their non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs). This letter sets out the arrangements to implement the Ministerial decision for the mandatory recording of central government property information on e-PIMS. The arrangements do not**

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<sup>1</sup> ['Well Placed to Deliver? – Shaping the Pattern of Government Service'](#) published in March 2004 and ['Towards Better Management of Public Sector Assets – A Report to the Chancellor of the Exchequer'](#) published in December 2004.



apply to local authorities, the NHS (except for Special Health Authorities), public corporations, privatised railway undertakings, the Crown Estate or the Defence Estate (subject to some exceptions). If there are any questions about the coverage of these arrangements, departments and public bodies should consult OGC.

4. Accounting Officers should ensure that their departments and agencies have arrangements in place to implement these requirements effectively and should agree with their sponsored bodies arrangements to incorporate their property information on e-PIMS. Bodies will need to work within the terms of an up-to-date service level agreement (SLA) with OGC. These SLAs should be completed as soon as possible and in any case no later than 31 December 2005. Bodies will be responsible for entering complete and accurate information about all the properties they use and control to the following timetable:

- all office properties by 31 March 2006; and
- all other properties, including land, by 31 March 2007.

5. After an appropriate period, the use of e-PIMS will be subject to a review that will include the scope and effectiveness of the various applications. Users and other stakeholders will be consulted. This will take place after the data entry, as described above, has been completed, and will be in addition to the audit of data accuracy that all e-PIMS users and OGC will be required to undertake. The use of e-PIMS is free of charge (except for some optional services).

## **Contact**

6. All enquiries about this letter or e-PIMS should go to the OGC service desk on 0845 0004999 or at [servicedesk@ogc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:servicedesk@ogc.gsi.gov.uk).

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## THE ELECTRONIC PROPERTY INFORMATION MAPPING SERVICE (e-PIMS)

### what e-PIMS does

1. e-PIMS is an on line electronic data management system designed to hold information about all the properties owned, controlled or used by central government departments and their sponsored bodies. OGC developed it in response to the 1999 White Paper, [Modernising Government](#).

2. e-PIMS relies on industry standard linkages (for example, BS7666) and the government wide protocol e-GIF (electronic government interoperability framework) so that it can serve a wide variety of users. Some departments and agencies have been using it since November 2001, when the government secure intranet (GSI) version became generally available. There is also an internet version of e-PIMS (for bodies without GSI access), which allows users access only to their own records and high-level data, as defined in the service level agreement (SLA) with OGC.

3. When fully populated, e-PIMS will be a comprehensive electronic register of all central government property holdings, including information about future demands or requirements for new accommodation, and vacant and surplus properties. e-PIMS is intended to enable departments to manage their own estates and property transactions more effectively. As e-PIMS gives an overview of the extensive central government estate, OGC and the Treasury will use it to monitor implementation of the Government's commitment to better estate management in line with the Lyons [relocation](#) and [assets management](#) reviews. The Treasury will also look to e-PIMS to support efficient asset management in central government as a whole.

4. Users of e-PIMS can manage their own property holdings and make informed decisions about the property they employ to pursue their business objectives. They can also develop electronic linkages to e-PIMS from other systems, such as finance systems, and so avoid duplicating systems and data entry requirements. Users of e-PIMS can also:

- keep track of the properties in their estates using electronic Ordnance Survey maps;
- update this information on line; and
- where appropriate, make bulk transfers of data to the database quickly.

5. Users of e-PIMS should seek early opportunities to migrate any property information they hold to e-PIMS, and avoid running property management systems in parallel with e-PIMS. They are also advised to avoid setting up new internal property databases except where these are important as part of wider information management systems (IMS) strategies. When procuring or

developing such databases, users must ensure that they develop efficient electronic linkages to e-PIMS, after consulting OGC.

6. The Register of Surplus Public Sector Land (see [Government Accounting, Annex 24.1](#)) operated by English Partnerships, runs on e-PIMS technology. Direct links to it are available from within e-PIMS. The Register was established in 2003 following a Treasury and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Review to provide a central source of information on land owned (freeholds and 99 years or longer leases only) by central government bodies and their agencies. Any central government body proposing to dispose of its land should place it on the Register for a period of 40 working days before placing it on the open market, thus giving other central government bodies the opportunity to express an interest in it first.

7. Departments and public bodies should also note that there exists guidance on choosing locations for government business issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, HM Treasury and OGC in March 2005. The guidance, '[Choosing Locations for Government Business](#)', currently in draft format, will be formally promulgated later in 2005.

### **coverage of e-PIMS**

8. Users of e-PIMS should enter the core data for the properties they hold or use in the e-PIMS system. The basic principle is that users of e-PIMS should provide information about all the property they own or control. The data should cover:

- all office properties occupied or controlled by user bodies, both freehold and leasehold, and irrespective of whether the user of e-PIMS is actually using or occupying it;
- any properties occupied or run under PFI contracts (for these, less core data is required);
- all other properties they own or use, for example, hostels, laboratories and depots;
- surplus, sublet or vacant properties;
- undeveloped land;
- serviced or temporary offices where contractual or actual occupation exceeds 3 months; and
- all forward commitments, for example under an agreement for lease, from when the contractual commitment is made.

9. However, there are some exclusions from e-PIMS. Users need not enter information about:

- rent free properties provided by traders (such as information booths in public places or ports);
- operational railways and canals;
- operational public highways (but any adjoining land not subject to public rights should be included); and

- the Defence Estate (except for properties classed as Civil Estate)

10. There will also be scope for users of e-PIMS to agree with OGC that, in addition to the properties identified in paragraph 8, information about certain highly specialist properties need not be entered into e-PIMS provided that the owner or user has an adequate record of them. Examples include flood defences, pipelines, wayleaves and easements, for all of which there would be limited benefit in building and maintaining a central record. Any such exclusion from e-PIMS should be recorded in the relevant SLA.

### **using e-PIMS**

11. As soon as possible, but no later than 31 July 2005, each government body to which the requirement to use e-PIMS applies should provide OGC with contact details of someone in the organisation with responsibility for implementing their use of e-PIMS.

12. There is scope for flexibility about how these arrangements should work. For example:

- some bodies may find it convenient for their parent department to carry out their e-PIMS responsibilities on their behalf; and/or
- users of e-PIMS may engage a third party to carry out the tasks of data entry and maintenance on their behalf, for example, a contractor under an estate management contract.

13. When users of e-PIMS choose to take advantage of the options in paragraph 11, they should:

- agree the arrangements with OGC;
- reflect them in the relevant SLA;
- take account of them in any relevant agreements, for example, financial memoranda between the various bodies concerned; and
- be aware that they remain responsible for maintaining a full and accurate record of their own properties on e-PIMS.

14. Each user's SLA will set out the data to be held on e-PIMS and how it will be input. The core data fields, defined in the civil estate coordination agreement (CECA), are mandatory. Both new and existing users of e-PIMS will need to plan how to establish their complete databases, and should agree a programme of data entry with OGC. Where there is a large amount of data to be input, they should use programme management techniques to ensure the timetable is met. It is desirable to achieve assimilation of data reasonably quickly, and to avoid bunching of transfers close to the deadlines set out in the DAO letter.

15. Once the e-PIMS database is established, users will be responsible for keeping their data entries up to date. Users should include their e-PIMS data in their normal internal audit regimes, and should forward a copy of their internal audit report to OGC each year. New transactions and other changes should be

recorded no later than ten working days after they take place. Users may need to plan for resources, including trained staff, to enter, maintain and quality control their data to the standards set out in the relevant SLA. OGC will provide training at cost, and will be able to run bespoke courses for larger users. It will no longer be possible for users of e-PIMS to have read only access, where OGC enters data for departments, as this facility will be withdrawn completely before the end of 2005-06.

16. In addition to users internal audits, OGC will arrange an appropriate audit regime on a sample basis to be put in place before the end of the current financial year. This may be outsourced. It will cover all data held on e-PIMS, and will include completeness of coverage, accuracy and any electronic linkages. All users, and any agents used for data entry or transfer, must comply with the terms of this audit.

## **publication**

17. OGC plans an online publication scheme:

- for all non-sensitive properties on e-PIMS, OGC's public website will show high-level data only at the beginning of each financial year, together with contact details for the relevant departmental Freedom of Information focal point. Where further information is sought, OGC will then refer the case directly to the Freedom of Information focal point of the e-PIMS user for advice; and
- for properties classified by e-PIMS users as sensitive, there will be no access from the public website and information about these properties will only be visible to the relevant e-PIMS user and key OGC staff.