

## Interim Progress Report

Interim Progress Report on implementing the Government's Response  
to the Power of Information Review (Cm7157)



**Making  
government  
work better**

# Interim Progress Report

In January 2007, the Government commissioned a review from Tom Steinberg and Ed Mayo to:

“explore new developments in the use and communication of citizen and State generated public information in the UK, and to present an analysis and recommendations to the Cabinet Office Minister as part of the Policy Review.”

The review was published on 07 June 2007 making a number of recommendations ([www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/power\\_information.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/power_information.pdf)). The Government published its response to the recommendations in a formal policy statement, Command Paper Cm7157 on 25 June 2007 ([www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/power\\_information\\_response.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/power_information_response.pdf)).

Steinberg and Mayo suggested that the Government report progress in December 2008. This document is an interim report of progress against specific recommendations made by Steinberg and Mayo up until mid-March 2008.

## Overarching Actions

The Power of Information recommendations are very broad and overlap with other areas of work. Government has taken several overarching actions for successful implementation and to avoid duplication:

1. The Central Office of Information (COI) has formed a strategic Delivery Coordination Group. This will ensure that implementation of recommendations in the Power of Information Review, Government Communications Group Social Media Review and National Audit Office (NAO) Report ‘Government on the Web III’ ([www.governmentontheweb.org/access\\_reports.asp](http://www.governmentontheweb.org/access_reports.asp)) are all coordinated in central government and avoid duplication.

The first six months of implementing the Review’s recommendations have revealed several generic obstacles:

- Organisations have had difficulty getting the right people into the right roles for social media.
- The effect of social media is at an early stage in the development of the economy as a whole. Skills are difficult to find and develop at this stage.
- In social media, moderators and leaders tend to emerge as a result of building reputations by social networking rather than being appointed. This is a challenge to hierarchical government organisations.

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A focus on networking government talent and seeking the best advice from outside government will in part overcome these obstacles.

2. The Power of Information Report describes new ways of communicating. This requires new skills and new networks of experts. COI is building a new network of 'Digital People' covering online issues across the public sector. One instance of this is a group on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/pages/London-United-Kingdom/Digital-People/6241959980](http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-United-Kingdom/Digital-People/6241959980)) and tools such as forums, wikis and blogs are also being developed to provide a more developed space for collaborative working. This network and others, anchored in social media, will enact guidance issued by COI.
3. To share social media best practice in the public, private and third sectors, the government supported a 'BarCamp' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BarCamp> <http://barcamp.org/BarcampUKGovweb>) initiated by the Ministry of Justice. The BarCamp discussed how to equip web experts across government to work with social media. Over 100 people attended the event, hosted at Google UK.

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Recommendation	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 1.</b> To improve service delivery and communication with the public, the Central Office of Information (COI), in partnership with the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), should coordinate the development of experimental partnerships between major departments and user-generated sites in key policy areas including parenting advice (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)), services for young people, and healthcare (Department of Health (DH)).</p>	<p>Partnerships between government organisations and tiny user-generated volunteer websites can be difficult for both. COI has met with volunteers and/or owners of several user-generated sites and managers of departmental websites in the areas listed in Recommendation 1, to understand needs and concerns from all perspectives. COI provides any necessary support to make these partnerships happen.</p> <p>Out of these investigations, COI has drawn the key learning points into principles that Government and potential partners need to know about each other if they are to partner online successfully. For example, government must learn not to smother potential partners by applying inappropriate procurement practices and ensure continuity of staff managing the relationship. If applied appropriately, these should allow partnerships to operate in a manner beneficial to all. COI has already approached four departments with a view to launching pilots in a second phase. These would occur in the areas listed in the Recommendation and are designed to test and demonstrate the principles. These approaches have been generally welcomed and if Phase 2 funding is available, the pilots could proceed in the coming months.</p> <p>Recommendation 14 on digital inclusion is captured as part of this work.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2.</b> To reduce unnecessary duplication of pre-existing user-generated sites, COI should update the guidelines for minimum website standards by December 2007; departments should be strongly advised to consult the operators and users of pre-existing user-generated sites before they build their own versions.</p>	<p>COI has updated guidelines on minimum standards for public sector websites, known as 'TG104' (<a href="http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/government_it/web_guidelines.aspx">www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/government_it/web_guidelines.aspx</a>). The guidelines have been issued for public consultation and the guidelines are expected to be published in April 2008.</p> <p>COI continues to advise and guide departments in investigating the use of user-generated sites and not to create new sites.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3.</b> Departments, monitored by COI, should research the scale and role of user-generated websites</p>	<p>Since the Power of Information Review, many commercial suppliers have begun to offer research into user-generated websites as a service. COI Media Monitoring Unit is reviewing and comparing such services to understand what research can be provided to departments. COI is also learning from departments who already do this well, such as the Home Office, and will issue advice as part of</p>

<p>in their areas, with a view to either terminating government services that are no longer required, or modifying them to complement citizen-led endeavours.</p>	<p>the social media guidance in April 2008.</p> <p>By the end of 2008, guidance will be added to the TG104 Web Guidelines on what action a department should take if research work uncovers the potential for duplication of existing, user generated material (see Recommendation 2 on TG104).</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4.</b> To encourage innovation in the re-use of information by non-commercial users, UK trading funds should, in consultation with OPSI, examine the introduction of non-commercial re-use licences, along the lines of those pioneered by the BBC's Backstage project and Google Maps.</p>	<p>Detailed discussions with the five main Trading Funds are being arranged to take forward Recommendation 4, building on the current experience of the Ordnance Survey experiment (set out in Recommendation 5).</p> <p>Many Trading Funds have already developed non-commercial licences. The Office of Public Sector Information's 'Information Fair Trader Scheme' (<a href="http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ifts/index.htm">www.opsi.gov.uk/ifts/index.htm</a>) has a verification process that examines all trading fund licences. OPSI is writing to each Trading Fund Chief Executive offering support and guidance for examining further non-commercial licences.</p> <p>OPSI has reviewed BBC Backstage and Google Maps, to inform debate about approaches to non-commercial licensing and inform the guidance. OPSI suggests that Trading Funds consider the introduction of a free or low cost share-alike licence, to encourage innovation and potentially seed new business, without destabilising existing commercial models.</p> <p>The overall outcomes of these discussions and follow-up actions are expected to be clear by the December 2008 reporting deadline.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5.</b> To promote innovation, Ordnance Survey should, by the end of December 2007, launch its Open Space project to allow non-commercial experimentation with mapping data.</p>	<p>Ordnance Survey (OS) has embraced the challenge laid down by the Power of Information Review by launching a closed test version of OS OpenSpace on 14 December 2007 and opened the service to the public on 31 January 2008 (<a href="http://openspace.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/">http://openspace.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/</a>).</p> <p>Ordnance Survey delivered a new Application Programming Interface (API), a new set of licensing terms and a community support website to enable new 'mash up' applications to be built.</p> <p>OS OpenSpace includes the free use of a range of Ordnance Survey data from an outline of Great Britain to 1:50 000 scale colour maps and place name searches. A closed Alpha release to a selected group of web developers on 14 December was launched with a hands-on 'hack day' for developers to develop their own applications. The results of the event enabled an open-to-all Alpha release on 31 January 2008, and the launch of the final OS OpenSpace website complete with community forum. The OS OpenSpace Beta was launched successfully on 14 March.</p> <p>OS OpenSpace is intended for non-commercial experimental use, but with the expectation that some users will successfully migrate to commercial exploitation of the results, forming trading relationships with Ordnance Survey or its Licensed Partners as providers of their location data.</p>

	<p>The team have worked with a wide range of stakeholders, including OPSI, members of the online mash-up community, and existing Ordnance Survey business partners. The key challenge has been to balance the need to offer the greatest possible degree of flexibility and access for developers, against the demand to protect the revenue streams of existing Ordnance Survey Licensed Partners.</p> <p>The most difficult feature has therefore been the development of an acceptable licensing approach that promotes experimentation whilst maintaining a fair market for all. Uniquely, Ordnance Survey Licensed Partners also now have terms to offer an equivalent free experimentation platform, stimulating even greater use of data and engagement of the wider business community.</p> <p>Overall the project is projected to cost Ordnance Survey around £330,000 for initial delivery with ongoing running costs thereafter. Ordnance Survey also expects some slight revenue impacts caused by limited substitution of existing offerings and the need to offer current Partners equivalent free usage of data for experimentation platforms, which they may currently pay for.</p> <p>Ordnance Survey is pleased with the results and, based on feedback received so far from stakeholder consultation, is optimistic that OS OpenSpace will be useful and well received and represents a very significant step in growing the use of geographic information in Great Britain. Ordnance Survey will report to Ministers in CLG and the Cabinet Office on a monthly basis on how OS OpenSpace is being used by developers.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6.</b> To promote innovative use of public sector information, the Department for Transport, with the support of the Chief Scientific Adviser's Committee, should complete the partially undertaken scoping and costing of a 'data mashing laboratory' and advise the Cabinet Committee of Science and Innovation on appropriate next steps.</p>	<p>The Department for Transport's Data Grand Challenge (<a href="http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/scienceresearch/csa/datagrandchallenge">http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/scienceresearch/csa/datagrandchallenge</a>) sought to realise benefits of data, both within and outside of Government. There was a particular focus on real time data. Work by the Department in 2006 considering a 'data mashing laboratory' pointed to an 'experimental environment for developing innovative information services' to tackle the challenges facing the development of new information services, such as fragmented delivery chains, uncertain business models and the high up-front costs of prototypes.</p> <p>The solution, termed an 'information incubator', would encourage wider experimentation with data, and help persuade users and owners of data to collaborate and undertake more innovative projects. The incubator would achieve this by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A secure environment providing mediated access to federated datasets;</li> <li>- Experimental tools to enable development of appropriate technical and business models; and</li> <li>- A centre of expertise to support development of data applications from conception to prototyping and business case development.</li> </ul> <p>Work to prove the concept of the incubator is currently underway by a consortium comprising Cambridge University, Lockheed Martin, Deloitte, and Thales, working alongside Transport Direct (<a href="http://www.transportdirect.info">www.transportdirect.info</a>), Southampton University, Ordnance Survey and others. This pilot project aims to demonstrate the potential benefits of an incubator facility. It will demonstrate this through developing a specific prototype information service and providing exemplar technical and business models for operating a commercial incubator facility.</p>

	Public funding for the project is £300,000 and is excellent value for money with the consortium members investing their resources at much reduced rates. Work is due to be complete by April 2008 and results will be published on completion around May 2008.
<p><b>Recommendation 7.</b> To improve understanding, effective usage and take-up of government services, COI should examine options for more self-help fora for public services and publish guidance for departments on how and when to set up such fora by December 2007.</p>	The Central Office of Information is examining the use of self-help forums as part of its wider guidance on the use of social media. The guidance has been prepared and is undergoing a final expert review before publication in April 2008.
<p><b>Recommendation 8.</b> To improve government's responsiveness to demand for public sector information, by July 2008 OPSI should create a web-based channel to gather and assess requests for publication of public sector information.</p>	<p>The Government has engaged with the community interested in using such a channel. Michael Wills MP, Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, met the 'Free Our Data Campaign', founders Charles Arthur and Michael Cross in July 2007. He invited them to work with the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) to set up the re-use request channel. OPSI have had discussions with 'Free Our Data' and other stakeholders on how to deliver the channel, including planning events to engage the re-user community.</p> <p>In September 2007 OPSI launched an online discussion forum to engage re-users with the web channel initiative (<a href="http://www.opsi.gov.uk/forums/forums/forum.asp?forumid=8">www.opsi.gov.uk/forums/forums/forum.asp?forumid=8</a>). Over 70 messages have been posted, from requests for specific types of public sector information to be made available in more useable way, through to comments about the new request web channel and what features it ought to have. From this activity OPSI envisage the channel containing both 'requests' from re-users and 'offers' from government and the wider public sector. Where 'offers' are possible, information assets could be made available for re-use if there was interest.</p> <p>OPSI held three events in January 2008 to engage re-users with the development of the re-use request web channel. Tom Steinberg and Michael Cross were amongst those who attended BarcampPOIR8 (<a href="http://barcamp.org/BarCampPOIR8">http://barcamp.org/BarCampPOIR8</a>), an open event held to design the new service. Advertised through the 'blogosphere', this was reported positively by The Guardian ("<i>No one in government IT will have done this before</i>" <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/jan/17/freeourdata">www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/jan/17/freeourdata</a>).</p> <p>OPSI has engaged the academic re-use community, holding an event with JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) on 18 January 2008. This event was well attended by those interested in re-using public sector information for research purposes. A joint event with Intellect (the UK trade association for IT, telecoms and electronics industries) was held to engage business. Key players from the IT industry attended and gave their views about the new service. The feedback from all three events has been positive, with those involved really shaping how the new service will work.</p> <p>£70,000 has been allocated to this work up until the end of March 2008. Overall completion is expected by July 2008.</p>

	<p>Work on this recommendation has led to a joint initiative by OPSI and the University of Southampton to launch a publicly available research space for public sector information using semantic web technology, by end July 2008.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9.</b> By Budget 2008, government should commission and publish an independent review of the costs and benefits of the current trading fund charging model for the re-use of public sector information, including the role of the five largest trading funds, the balance of direct versus downstream economic revenue, and the impact on the quality of public sector information.</p>	<p>HM Treasury and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) commissioned Cambridge University to undertake a study into the different models for charging for and defining public sector information. This is has been publicly released <a href="http://www.berr.gov.uk/bbf/competition/market-studies/public-information/page39978.html">www.berr.gov.uk/bbf/competition/market-studies/public-information/page39978.html</a></p> <p>Going forward, the Government will look closely at the public sector information held by trading funds to distinguish more clearly what is required by Government for public tasks, ensuring this information is made available as widely as possible for use in actual and potential downstream markets. In the lead up to the next spending review, it will also ensure that it is priced appropriately. The underlying principle will be that information collected for public purposes will be made available at a price that balances the need for access while ensuring customers pay a fair contribution to the cost of collecting this information in the long-term.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 10.</b> To ensure the most appropriate supply of information for re-use, government should consistently apply its policy of marginal cost pricing for 'raw' information to all public bodies, including trading funds, except where the published economic analysis in recommendation 9 shows this does not serve the interests of UK citizens.</p>	<p>See response to Recommendation 9.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11.</b> To improve the supply of government information for re-use, the Better Regulation Executive should promote publication of regulatory information, and should work with OPSI to encourage publication in open formats and under licences permitting re-use.</p>	<p><u>Consumer information</u> The Government accepted the recommendations in full in its response in November 2007.</p> <p>In November 2007 the Better Regulation Executive (BRE) published, in conjunction with the National Consumer Council, a report <a href="http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/reform/next_steps/too_much/">http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/reform/next_steps/too_much/</a> to Government on maximising the positive impact of regulated information and set out a number of recommendations for Government to exploit the power of regulated information, including recommendations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider the legislation under which Government and regulators gather compliance data with a view to determining where</li> </ul>



- restrictions exist on the publication of this data;
- Commission research to develop concrete proposals of how information requirements might be presented over the internet; and
  - Work in partnership with consumer groups to develop a scheme to incentivise policy-makers and businesses to provide innovative approaches to communicating with consumers.

The Better Regulation Executive and National Consumer Council also published in November a guide for policy-makers on using regulated information effectively. The guide includes advice for policy-makers on using online information, reputational information and on making regulatory information easily accessible to all consumers ([http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/documents/next\\_steps/warning/regulated\\_information.pdf](http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/documents/next_steps/warning/regulated_information.pdf)).

This work will feed into the current BERR review of the Consumer Protection Regime, which is due to report in Spring 2008.

#### Regulators' Compliance Code

The Regulators' Compliance Code ([http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/reform/enforcement\\_concordat/](http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/reform/enforcement_concordat/)) and its related listing order were given Parliamentary approval on 27 November 2007. The Code includes provisions which relevant regulators must have regard to, both for publication of information about regulators' activities and performance, and also information and advice on legal requirements.

Specifically Section 9 of the Code contains provisions for regulators to publish clear standards and targets for their service and performance. Standards should include regulatory outcomes; costs to regulated entities of regulatory interventions; and perceptions of regulated entities and others of proportionality and effectiveness of regulatory approaches and costs. Section 5 of the Code has provisions regarding the provision and communication of information and advice to duty holders on legal requirements.

#### Hampton implementation review framework

The BRE and the NAO have designed a framework to assess how national regulators are complying with the principles set out in the 2005 Hampton Report "Reducing Administrative Burdens: Effective Inspection and Enforcement". The framework can be found at [www.nao.org.uk/publications/workinprogress/HIR\\_Guidance\\_31May07.pdf](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/workinprogress/HIR_Guidance_31May07.pdf).

Subsequently, five regulators have been reviewed - Health & Safety Executive, Office of Fair Trading, Environment Agency, Food Standards Agency and Financial Services Authority. As part of the wider review framework, each review report will comment on the overall transparency of each regulator. In each case, BRE has considered the transparency of the risk assessment process and the publication and accessibility of performance measures and advice. BRE has also looked at how regulators involve and consult stakeholders as part of decision making. Review reports will be published early in 2008.

#### Advice to business and voluntary sector organisations on regulation

The Next Steps on Regulatory Reform Report ([http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/reform/next\\_steps/](http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/reform/next_steps/)), published in July 2007, committed government to improving the quality of information on regulation.

The Government committed to:

- Improve the Government's performance in producing good quality and timely guidance for complying with regulation which has an impact on business; and
- For the next Common Commencement Date in October 2007, to pilot a new approach to providing businesses with information on regulatory change - including production of a summary document to highlight the most important changes.

Since the publication of the Next Steps Report, a substantially improved package of information was produced for the October Common Commencement Date and further improvements will be made for the next Common Commencement Date in April 2008.

The Better Regulation Executive is working to develop a Code of Practice on Good Guidance on Regulations. This will set the standards which businesses and third sector organisations can expect from guidance from government. A draft Code is available for public consultation until 31 March (<http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/reviewing%5Fregulation/guidance/>).

#### Simplification plans

The second tranche of simplification plans are currently being finalised, so it is too early to provide an update here. Plans will be published on the 11th of December 2008.

#### Publication of information in open formats and under licences permitting re-use

Regulatory information published by Crown bodies for which OPSI is the licensing authority is generally available under the terms of an online Click-Use Public Sector Information (PSI) Licence (<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/click-use/index.htm>), an open licence which allows free, commercial and non-commercial re-use, on a non-exclusive world wide basis. A number of popular mash-up sites ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup\\_%28web\\_application\\_hybrid%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup_%28web_application_hybrid%29)) use this Click-Use licence. Where Crown bodies trade in their information, OPSI's Information Fair Trade Scheme ensures there is transparency and fairness with respect to this information trading activity.

To encourage publication of public sector information under licences permitting re-use, OPSI has developed model, open licences for local authorities and NHS trusts. Alternatively, such public bodies can also mandate their material to fall under the remit of the open PSI Licence. OPSI makes no charge for this service. OPSI has developed SOAP web services for Click-Use, which has the potential to enable other public sector bodies to issue PSI Click-Use Licences from their own website.

Regulatory information is often published in semi-structured forms. To address the open formats issue OPSI has commissioned an innovative project with statutory notices placed in the London Gazette. It is aiming to publish transport, environment and planning notices using semantic mark-up, which makes the information easier to re-use and yield value from. The Gazettes' notices in an open format are due to go online in May 2008.

<p><b>Recommendation 12.</b> To ensure that OPSI can regulate the public sector information market effectively, government should review the fit between OPSI's functions and funding, and recommend options that will ensure it is fit for purpose.</p>	<p>These issues will be considered in conjunction with the Government's examination of public sector information as outlined in Recommendation 9.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 13.</b> To maximise the potential value of civil servants' input into online fora, by autumn 2007 the Cabinet Office Propriety and Ethics and Government Communications teams should together clarify how civil servants should respond to citizens seeking government advice and guidance online.</p>	<p>Cabinet Office Propriety &amp; Ethics has prepared a draft code of conduct for Civil Servants using social networking forums which will undergo official clearance in March 2008.</p> <p>Achieving the aims of this Recommendation requires more than a code of conduct. Awareness needs to be raised about this new medium. A cross-departmental communication strategy to make target audiences (policy, press, internal communications and marketing) aware and familiar with the opportunities and challenges of using social media is currently under preparation and will be presented for approval mid-March. The centerpiece of this will be a complete set of guidelines on social media use for press officers, internal communications professions, social marketers and policy officials wishing to engage with stakeholders and the public.</p> <p>Awareness raising efforts have begun, with presentations about the Power of Information to key stakeholder groups inside government and the public sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Review has been presented and endorsed by Directors of Communication, Heads of Marketing and Heads of News;</li> <li>- A presentation to the Heads of Internal Communication took place at the end of November;</li> <li>- The Review was published on Government Communication Network (GCN) website in September 2007, making it available to over 4,000 communications professionals and policy makers;</li> <li>- A social networking forum has also been established on GCN to stimulate discussion and share best practice; and</li> <li>- Evidence of a more strategic approach is being collected and shared through these awareness raising activities.</li> </ul> <p>COI is setting up a new forum connecting all those working in and for digital media – the Digital People network – over the first three months of 2008 as part of Service Transformation delivery; Social Media will have its own sub-group.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 14.</b> The Digital Inclusion Team should explore the potential for promoting digital and social inclusion through the partnerships</p>	<p>Work on this recommendation is being pursued under Recommendation 1.</p>

<p>proposed in Recommendation 1 and report to the Domestic Affairs Sub-Committee on Public Engagement and the Delivery of Services Committee (DA(PED)), in line with Recommendation 15.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 15.</b> The Minister for the Cabinet Office, in conjunction with OPSI, should report to DA(PED) by December 2007 on departments' plans for implementing these recommendations, and by December 2008 on progress and results.</p>	<p>Given the interest in this work, and the good progress being made, the Government did not wish to wait until December 2008 before reporting publicly. This interim report in part fulfils this obligation. This report was cleared by the relevant Cabinet Committee.</p>