

## Transparency Board Minutes

19.07.11

### TRANSPARENCY BOARD

#### Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July at the Cabinet Office:

<b>Transparency Board Members:</b>	<b>Officials (regular attendees):</b>
Francis Maude (Chair)	Kitty von Bertele (Cabinet Office)
Professor Nigel Shadbolt (joined in the second half)	Will Cavendish (Cabinet Office)
Tom Steinberg	Cass Chideock (Cabinet Office)
Andrew Stott	Zoe Hoyal (Cabinet Office, secretariat)
	Tim Kelsey (Cabinet Office)
	Peter Lawrence (Cabinet Office)
	Irene Loh (Cabinet Office)
	Lord McNally (Minister of Justice)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Jane Sigley (Ministry of Justice)
Sir Tim Berners-Lee	
Rachel Fentem (No 10)	<b>Presenters:</b>
Dr Rufus Pollock	Charlie Ewen (Meteorological Office)
Anna Reid (Cabinet Office)	Sarah Jackson (Meteorological Office)
Rohan Silva (No 10)	John Hirst (Meteorological Office)

### Welcome and Introductions

The MCO Chair welcomed all attendees, and noted apologies.

He revisited the huge amount of activity in the recent weeks on Transparency including the PM's letter to Cabinet Ministers on transparency and open data, published on 7 July, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/letter-to-cabinet-ministers-on-transparency-and-open-data/>

and planned Open Data consultation on the transparency strategy and data policy of the Public Data Corporation (PDC), and thanked all involved. He was keen to explore how these initiatives might be used to create an unstoppable momentum for transparency in government.

### Strategy projects overview and update

Tim Kelsey outlined the progress to date on plans to implement the PM's letter on transparency, the Open Data consultation, Public Data Corporation consultation and the Growth Review. In discussion the following points were made:

#### **PM letter implementation**

- The Board noted that the PM's announcement on transparency received good coverage, and the open data community interpreted this as the UK continuing to move forward.
- The Board said that in areas where there is slower progress, there would be a need to take steps to unblock barriers or encourage delivery.
- Tim explained that a spreadsheet will be circulated by the Transparency Team to the Transparency Board tracking progress in implementing the PM's Letter commitments from September.

#### **Open Data Consultation and Consultation on Data Policy for a Public Data Corporation (PDC)**

- Tim outlined that the Transparency strategy was presented to the Public Expenditure Committee (Efficiency and Reform) on 18 July. The strategy draft document will be updated with comments following PEX(ER) and drafting to be agreed with HM Treasury, Ministry of Justice and Department for Transport before publication.
- PDC consultation document was also going through departmental clearance and a consultation will be run over the summer.
- Tim was keen to harness the contribution of the Transparency Board to support stakeholder engagement during the consultation on Transparency strategy. Transparency team to share stakeholder engagement plans with the Transparency Board.
- The Board supported the open data policy aims, but noted there would be some risks and barriers to overcome in practice such as IT contracts that do not support open data, or the introduction of new charges for data not previously released.

- The Board also noted that EU Commissioner Viviane Reding is currently producing an EU paper on data protection that could make it harder for public services to release data, and would support any efforts to manage policy conflicts. MoJ is leading on contact with Commissioner Reding, and would share briefing to date with the Board. The Board also noted that EU Commission Neelie Kroes is accelerating the review of the Reuse of PSI Directive in the context of opening up more data.
- Tim updated that the privacy review report is being updated following confirmation of the new commitments in the PM Letter. When finalised, we plan to publish the report during summer.

### **Growth Review**

- Tim updated that five industry user groups have been initiated to harness contributions and ideas from industry on the potential uses of data to boost economic growth at which members of the Board were welcome to attend. These are Health and Life Sciences; Population Data Mining and Risk Profiling; Public Service Information Management; Consumer Technologies; and Media.
- AS reported that Lloyds of London had hosted a good exhibition and seminar on the opportunities for the use of public data in risk and insurance (<https://ktn.innovateuk.org/web/data-fair-an-expose-of-valuable-data>); they could have an interest and a contribution to make. Contacts would be forwarded to the Transparency Team.

**Action:** Transparency Team to circulate the spreadsheet tracking progress in implementing the PM Letter commitments from September to the Transparency Board.

**Due:** September

**Action:** Transparency Team to share stakeholder engagement plans for the Open Data Consultation with the Transparency Board.

**Due:** September

**Action:** MoJ to share briefing on EU work with the Transparency Team to understand areas of conflicting data policy.

**Due:** August

**Action:** MCO requested to see the published accounts of the entities forming the PDC to understand the extent to which charging for data is a key part of their income streams.

**Due:** July

### **International update**

- Tim updated on the steering group meeting of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) held in Washington on 11-12 July. He considered the UK is seen as leading the way in promoting open data, noting that other countries especially the United States have made strong progress on promoting accountability through transparency. The OGP is currently engaging with 30 governments, and potentially up to 60, gathering speed from September 2011.
- The Transparency team will continue implementation planning over the summer, ready for the next concentrated phase of work when OGP formally launches in September.
- The Board welcomed the progress made and made the following points to extend the current reach of the work:
  - Countries in receipt of aid should be encouraged to meet open data transparency standards.
  - Open Government Partnership might consider commissioning input from the Open Knowledge Foundation in the light of their recent Transparency Benchmarking work.

**Action:** A meeting between MCO, DFID and FCO to be arranged to explore how foreign aid funding framework could be used to ensure increased Transparency in recipient countries.

**Due:** September

**Sector Board update**

- Tim updated that there is a commitment in the PM Letter to develop sector transparency boards, for Health, Crime and Justice, Transport, Education and Welfare.
- The proposal is for a Transparency Board member to provide advice, support and challenge to these boards. The Board noted the potentially significant contribution having a 'sector champion' could make to progress in each area.
- MCO would write shortly to ministers in these departments to invite their support for implementation.
- It was noted that Crime and Justice already plan to establish sector panels, so a discussion to align assumptions and how they work would be needed.
- In passing, the Board also noted that:
  - The issue on Postcode Address File (PAF) is outstanding, and needs to be followed up.
  - Metrics on contracts available and contracts signed are not routinely updated on Contract Finder.
  - They would like to be updated on the work to progress the business unique identifiers and asked that data users such as OpenCorporates were involved in the design and implementation of these identifiers.

**Action:** Cabinet Office Transparency Team to follow up the issue on Postcode Address File (PAF).

**Due:** September

**Action:** Contract Finder: the number of contracts signed and within which departments

**Due:** As soon as possible

**Action:** Transparency Board to be updated on the position of work relating to business unique identifiers, as a commitment in the recent PM Letter.

**Due:** September

## **Met Office**

John Hirst, CEO of the Met Office presented to the Board about the Met Office and on the work to date to release data.

The Board thanked the Met Office for the presentation and for the work done to deliver Transparency. In discussion the following points were made:

- The Met Office said that it makes lots of data available for reuse at marginal cost, charging for the cost of converting the data into reusable formats and for dissemination. However, these data are most suited to commercial weather companies who use the data to provide their own weather services in competition with the Met Office.
- The Board said that the output and other key data from the Public Weather Service – which was funded directly by the taxpayer – should be made freely available as reusable data. The Board said that it was hard to find and access the data the Met Office makes available for free and it was not clear that existing commitments in the Smarter Government White Paper to release weather forecasts as data for free download and reuse had been fully met. By contrast other public weather services made basic weather forecasts readily available for reuse - for instance the Australian Bureau of Meteorology releases a downloadable file of 5-day forecasts for key Australian towns and cities several times a day. The Met Office stated that it does provide downloadable observation and forecast data but acknowledged that these could be easier to find.
- The Met Office currently requires people to register and login to download these data. The Met Office explained that this is done to ensure users can be kept up to date with any changes to the data or disruptions to service. The Board stated that registration for access

goes against the Public Data Principles. Whilst the Met Office might encourage users to subscribe to email updates they should not make registration or login a condition of access to open data.

- The Board noted it was important to deliver open data using the most cost-effective solutions. For instance the Ordnance Survey had made large, popular datasets available for download cheaply by using commercial cloud storage.
- The Board requested Met Office outline their programme to put more data out under Open Government Licence, by providing the timescales and costs for making site specific forecasts for 5,000 UK sites, updated every hour, available to 3 websites (mirrors) which will then reflect the information across the web.
- Met Office said that it welcomed engagement from Transparency Board members to explore their current approach to delivery, and is keen to consider scope and suggestions for improvement.

MCO concluded that the public weather service would be the focus: ensuring that its data is freely available for reuse.

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**Due:** September

**Action:** Met Office to outline their programme to put more data out under Open Government Licence.

**Due:** to be confirmed

### Transparency Board forward plan

Tim explained there was a need for extensive engagement during the summer period to support the consultation on transparency strategy and PDC data

policy. He welcomed the contribution of Transparency Board members as ambassadors for the open data agenda on the national and international stage. The Transparency team would also consider if there was scope and opportunity to hold an informal working session with the Transparency Board again before their next formal meeting on 6 September.

**AOB**

There were no other matters arising.