

Minutes of Meeting of Licensing Forum

24th September 2008

Office of Public Sector Information, London

Present:

Marcia Jackson	(Chair & Speaker)	Office of Public Sector Information
Chris Corbin	(Speaker)	ePSIplus
Amalie Kjaergaard	(Speaker)	National Archives
William Perrin	(Speaker)	Cabinet Office
Peter Fydler		British Film Institute
Gillian Dredge		British Geological Survey
Chris Luton		British Geological Survey
Robert Smith		British Geological Survey
Stephen Keightley		Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Carol Watts		Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Gavin Houtheusen		Central Office of Information
Lauren Hibberd		Companies House
Liz Lalley		Companies House
Helen Skelton		DWP Communications
Adrian Nuttall		Environment Agency
Roger Crocombe		Foreign & Commonwealth Office Services
Margaret Griffin		Foreign & Commonwealth Office Services
Rhoda Thomson		Foreign & Commonwealth Office Services
Sheila Walker		Home Office
David Humphries		Intellectual Property Office
Alison Draper		Land Registry
Alistair Wilkinson		Land Registry
Averil Fairley		MHRA
Frances Law		MHRA
Michael Robbins		Met Office
Beth Brook		Office of Public Sector Information
David Gordon		Office of Public Sector Information
Kirsty McLaughlin		Office of Public Sector Information
Tim Padfield		Office of Public Sector Information
John Williams		Office of Public Sector Information
Susan MacInnes		Registers of Scotland
Tony Dent		UK Hydrographic Office
Ian Evans		Welsh Assembly Government

Introductory session

- Marcia Jackson discussed the circumstances of the Office of Public Sector Information, who will soon be relocating to the Ministry of Justice's premises in Petty France, London.
- Given the large number of new organisations and individuals being represented at the event, delegates then gave brief introductions as to their responsibilities for licensing activity.

1. Developments in Public Sector Information (PSI) Re-use Across Europe

Chris Corbin, ePSIplus

- Chris started by establishing the time frame since the start of the *ePSIplus* Thematic Network, which has held regular meetings across the European Union. *ePSIplus* is funded under the eContentplus program and commenced work 21 months ago, and is funded for 30 months; therefore, will end at the end of February 2009. (http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/econtentplus/index_en.htm). The Thematic Network has structured its activities and meetings around 5 key themes (legal & regulation, public sector organisation, encouraging PSI re-use business, pricing impact and standards), with 3 events on each theme. These meetings are due to finish in November 2008.
- There has been some historical context to this, as *ePSIplus* have had predecessors funded under earlier EU funding streams whose responsibility was to monitor relevant developments across the EU with respect to PSI re-use. Raising awareness has also been part of the historical remit of these organisations and efforts.
- The meetings held by *ePSIplus* have been primarily considered economic aspects of PSI re-use, rather than any wider philosophical concerns. Each of the 5 themes was developed during the 3 meetings by considering different aspects pertinent to the theme, with the exception of pricing which has remained constant debate throughout. In addition to the EU-wide meetings, there have been a series of national meetings, although these have not all yet been completed. In general, it is the Member States, which have made less progress on re-use, which are still awaiting their national meeting.
- Using the information and views gathered from these events, *ePSIplus* is then charged with offering recommendations to the European Commission on behalf of stakeholders. The *ePSIplus* website (www.ePSIplus.net) has been established to collate all this material for public access.
- One of the work areas covered by *ePSIplus* is the monitoring of cross-border products and services especially within the high value sectors of geographic information, financial information, and meteorological information.
- The *ePSIplus* website visitor statistics suggest that there is great interest internationally on the matter. The web site has attracted visitors not just from across Europe, but also from Australia, China and the USA amongst other countries across the world.
- The process followed by *ePSIplus* involves several stages. Firstly, the transposition of the directive itself is tracked, followed by analysis of the implementation within each *Member State*. Then, the policies enacted by Governments are monitored, as are the policies adopted

by public sector information holders. Finally, the effect of these factors on re-users is appraised, and the roles of regulators are analysed.

- A meeting in Brussels (13th June 2008) saw the main points of the research drawn together, and submitted proposals for change to the EU Directive. The stakeholders present at the meeting accepted most of the draft *ePSIplus* Thematic Network recommendations.
- The Directive originally emerged from the Lisbon European Council of 2000, and has been evolving ever since. Progress on the PSI Directive is good when compared with other Directives for example that related to Data Protection.
- In terms of transposing the EU Directive in Member States, a variety of methods were used. In 67% of *Member States* introduced new laws, 22% amended existing laws and 11% felt that existing laws covered the matter and therefore required no legislative changes. The process was due for completion by July 2005, although only 10 of the (then) 25 Member States met this deadline. However, another 7 states had undertaken this work by April 2006, and now all 27 (including 2007 entrants Romania and Bulgaria) have transposed the Directive.
- The UK has often been quoted as a leading proponent of re-use, and has been at the forefront of licensing material. It has also had the best attendance record at EU Commission PSI Re-Use Group, although some have commented on the role of trading funds as a possible issue in the UK.
- *ePSIplus* has often argued that the policy on re-use can benefit both re-users and the holders of the public information assets with respect to sharing and managing the information.
- The MEPSIR study (Measuring European Public Sector Information Resources) claimed that €10-48 billion per year is generated by re-use activity. This is lower than that estimated by the earlier PIRA report. The OFT CUIP report also estimated a positive benefit that is not fully achieved in the UK. The European Commission is expected to publish the most recent economic survey that it commissioned in the near future. (The MICUS survey) Establishing whether actual growth in the market is as a result of the Directive is not clear-cut as other policies, initiatives, and changes of technology for example may also stimulate the market.
- January 2008 saw the launch of the PSI Alliance in Prague and the election of the Officers in June at their first Annual General meeting. The PSI Alliance is a pan European Association of private sector companies and Associations (for example the UK LOCUS Association) that re-use PSI that will raise awareness on both the benefits and issues that arise from the re-use of PSI. The PSI Alliance also aims to ensure that good practice is shared as widely as possible. <http://www.psialliance.eu/>
- Public sector information holders may also be involved in delivering information to global bodies as well as other EU *Member States*, which can lead to complexities (particularly with regards to fairness). International initiatives such as OneGeology (www.onegeology.org), led by the British Geological Survey also raise issues with respect to consistency with national policy and practice.
- The OECD has recently adopted recommendations on PSI re-use, and interestingly these have many similarities with the EU PSI Directive and UK PSI Regulations. The main

principles outlined by the OECD are more effective use of PSI and its potential to allow increased economic activity.

- Within the EU, the UK is the leading proponent of re-use; however, all countries have encountered significant problems with enforcement. Using objective, verifiable criteria, the UK is awarded a score of 15 by *ePSIplus*, although no *Member State* has scored on enforcement. The nearest country on the scorecard is the Republic of Ireland on 8, followed by Slovenia with 6; however, Slovenia has scored points in more areas (transposition, implementation and support) than Ireland, with the UK also awarded points on awareness.
- Activity in the UK is accelerating, but it is not alone in this respect. It would seem that the EU is experiencing a period of change in re-use, with other *Member States* also reporting greater levels of activity related to maximising the return on PSI through re-use.
- The next steps for the Directive are a matter of debate at present. Some have discussed strengthening the law, but this is unlikely and would be immensely time consuming. Better guidance for all parties and the simplification of licences may prove more fruitful, with action taken mainly taken by Member States. Much information across Europe is available without the need for licensing. The INSPIRE Directive may also have a positive impact with respect to implementing the PSI Directive as a number of the components of the PSI framework will be compulsory in the INSPIRE Directive – for example Data & information discovery and access portals.
- *ePSIplus* does not feel that the UK would need to revise its implementation as other EU *Member States* catch up with its level of progress. Many other EU nations are adopting similar aspects to that of the UK's policy, although not the model of trading funds.
- The PowerPoint presentation can be found on the *ePSIplus* website at http://www.ePSIplus.net/news/unlocking_the_potential_of_psi

2. The Knowledge Council

Amalie Kjaergaard, The National Archives

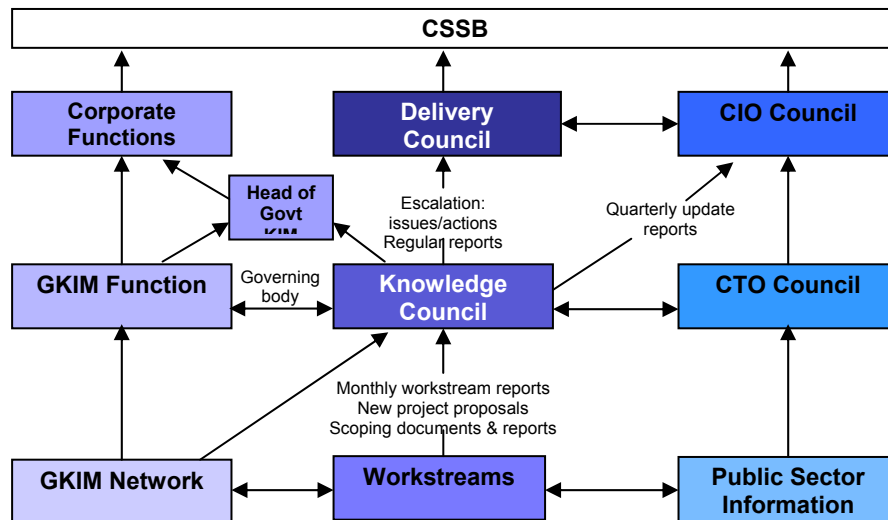
The Government Knowledge and Information Management Function

Amalie provided an overview of the following two interrelated topics:

An overview of the Government KIM Function

Information matters – the soon to be published Government KIM Strategy developed by The Knowledge Council

The Governance



The Government KIM Function

Just as with other corporate functions, such as HR, IT and legal, the aim of the KIM function is to promote the skills needed by the profession and includes improving the standard of KIM across government by:

- raising the profile and importance of KIM
- supporting the development of individuals working in KIM roles
e.g. Records Managers, FoI professionals and Librarians
- creating a stronger community of practice across government

Natalie Ceeney is the Chief Executive of The National Archives is the Head of the KIM Function and Head of Profession.

Government KIM Network

The aims are

- To communicate the work of the Knowledge Council
- To provide a stronger professional lead in government, in the same way as other major functions, such as, Legal
- Bring together KIM professionals, activities and services
- Collaborate and align with other Government Functions

The Government KIM Function Team

- Supports the Head of Government KIM Function
- Provides the secretariat for Knowledge Council
- Facilitates the sharing of best practice.

The GKIMN Wiki

The GKIMN Wiki is a new online community for KIM practitioners which aims to:

- To bring together KIM practitioners to collaborate, share expertise and best practice within a secure environment
- As well as the professional bodies and expert groups who are already taking forward key work in the KIM space to form a community under a single, shared agenda
- Thereby ensuring that initiatives are complementary, and that key messages can be cascaded throughout government at all levels

The Government Knowledge Council

Established in 2007, the Council supports both the Government's Service Transformation Programme and the Transformational Government Strategy by bringing about the more effective and efficient use of government knowledge and information needed to deliver better public services.

- The Council consists of senior leaders in KIM across government departments including representatives of the Chief Information Officers Council and the Chief Technology Officers Council. The Chair is Andrew Stott, Deputy Chief Information Officer for Government
 - It is sponsored by Jonathan Stephens, DCMS Permanent Secretary
- The full Knowledge Council meets quarterly. Workstreams have also been established to deliver specific targets - these meet on a more regular basis.

What the Knowledge Council is doing

- We are professionalising Knowledge and Information Management
- Making knowledge & information as much a part of our culture and procedures as HR, Finance or Health & Safety
- Ensuring everyone understands the opportunities and the risks that apply to their organisation
- Creating the right capability to support the management of our information
- Building the management of knowledge & information into governance and accountability structures. Make managing them 'part of the day job'

The Government KIM Strategy

What we are trying to achieve with the Strategy - Up until now there has been no systematic way to share good practice in KIM widely across government. The Strategy has been developed to address this and to create a culture which supports strong KIM.

Why now? - Because of rapid changes in technology, government faces continually evolving challenges in managing the information it creates and receives.

This Strategy helps government develop the frameworks, tools and culture to seize emerging opportunities and meet the challenges to deliver effective public services while protecting individuals' privacy.

What does success look like? - Success is when KIM is systematically recognised as a strategic function across all government departments and its principles are embedded from board level downwards.

The publication of the Strategy is the first step in a long and sustained process, delivering an effective KIM framework which ensures that we can meet the challenges and opportunities in a fast-changing world. This will not happen overnight.

A detailed action plan for implementing the recommendations of this strategy will be developed by the Knowledge Council in 2009. However, much of the work has already started, and many of the actions are already being taken forward.

3. The 'Power of Information' Review

William Perrin, Cabinet Office

- William started by outlining the aims of the 'Power of Information' (PoI) study. Essentially, it was to look at both sides of the processes involved in re-using information and knowledge to benefit society and commerce. The citizen side involves mutual support for other users, data manipulation and innovative ideas. Meanwhile, the supply side in the UK is one of the world's largest publishers of information, and can experiment at a low cost and with low risk.
- The 'Power of Information' dates back to 2007, when Tom Steinberg and Ed Mayo were commissioned to research developments in the area of 'Web 2.0' innovation. The original report (www.opsi.gov.uk/advice/poi/power-of-information-review.pdf) received support from Government, and in 2008 Tom Watson was given responsibility for a Task Force reviewing progress. Mr Watson is also a noted 'Web 2.0' enthusiast, having been the first Minister to host a blog, and there has been a concerted effort to push forward the information agenda.
- The Task Force draws its members from the Civil Service and external organisations. For example, as well as Tom Steinberg, Tom Loosemore from the BBC and Sally Russell (founder of netmums, www.netmums.com) are part of the panel.
- As well as receiving and re-using official data, users are also now contributing their own information, despite the fact that they are not being reimbursed for this effort. This has led some proponents of such networking sites to label them as a 'simple form of altruism', drawing comparisons with the Rochdale Co-operative of the 19th Century (<http://archive.co-op.ac.uk/pioneers.htm>). The information held by these online forums is non-exclusive and readily consumable for new users.
- The amount of traffic generated by these sites is also increasing. Mumsnet (www.mumsnet.com) receives 20,000 posts per day, whilst the Student Room (www.thestudentroom.co.uk) became sufficiently popular to force the BBC website to abandon their efforts to establish an online forum for University students. The Student Room is a user-generated site, which now has a bank of 12,000,000 posts drawn from its 200,000 members. In addition, this has proven to be a very cheap site to maintain, with costs having been only around £10,000.
- In addition, Rightsnet (www.rightsnet.org.uk) allows professionals in welfare provision to share advice and legal knowledge quickly and effectively. At present, William Perrin is making a major effort to ensure that as many Revenue & Customs and DWP workers are using this facility as possible.
- On the supply side, there has been a great deal of innovation in terms of presenting their information in new and more usable formats. The third sector is also proving very helpful here with good work and helpful input into the process. One prominent area of development has been crime mapping, which was discussed by all parties in early 2008. After resolving the question of combining postcode data and information on police response, the subsequent 'datamash' gave information on changing levels of crime in geographical areas.
- There have also been major improvements in heuristic text; these are essentially template sentences or phrases which can then have data or facts inserted, speeding up the process of presenting compiled data as statements. One website which uses heuristic text is theyworkforyou (www.theyworkforyou.com) in order to tell users how their MP voted on key issues such as Iraq, student fees and ID cards (amongst other services). The site,

established by Tom Steinberg, took 52,000 coding hours to set up, but can now update itself automatically by using Hansard.

- The site farmsubsidy.org (www.farmsubsidy.org), set up by Richard Pope and Danish volunteers, has gathered a range of information (some under the Freedom of Information Act). The campaigns run by the users have had such effect that the European Union is now requesting that member states should change their practices in line with points made by the site.
- In addition, Listen to Taxman (www.listentotaxman.com) has installed an analogue programme allowing its user to make tax calculations.
- Many of these revolutionary applications have been based on 'datamashing'. Given that this process is possible using a £300 laptop and technical expertise, it has encouraged innovation by individuals without access to major resources. However, on the supply side, such processes do require Government to sacrifice some of their control over their information resources. As part of this, the 'Show Us a Better Way' (www.showusabetterway.com) has been asking citizens for their ideas on useful ideas for compiling and processing PSI, offering prizes to the best suggestions to enable them to create the site. There have been over 400 entries so far, and indeed interest has been so great that at least one other £20,000 reward will be on offer. The Sunday Times had a full page article on the competition, highlighting many key examples of ideas being gathered (http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/the_web/article4692454.ece).
- The Department for Children, Schools and Families have also opened up their data on schools, all on the basis of one request on their website. This increasing willingness of Government to hand over their material for re-use has led to gigabytes (possibly terabytes) of electronic information now being open for public use; NHS Choices have also shared their data with citizens.
- The publishing model which is emerging involves allowing third party access and giving users an application programming interface (API) so they can use the material on offer. Once choice and competition is added to the system, then it soon seems to give rise to a proliferation of applications. This work, and the changes in policy, are proving to have implications for trading funds, which are forming part of the on-going Shareholder Executive discussions with the Treasury.
- During supplementary questions, the guidance on social media given by Government to Civil Servants arose. William felt that these essentially amounted to re-iterating the Civil Service Code with some additional points based on common sense in using IT. One example of this in action was the work of the Pension Service, who corrected some inaccuracies on Rightsnet.

4. Arrangements for the next meeting

It was decided by delegates that the Met Office (Exeter) would make the most convenient location for the next meeting. The Licensing Forum will take place in late January or early February, and potential delegates will be notified.

David Gordon OPSI

14th October 2008