

**Professor David Rhind CBE**

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Michael Wills MP  
Minister of State for Justice  
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14 January 2010

Dear Minister,

**Update on APPSI's Annual Seminar**

This is a note to update you on pertinent issues and recommendations arising at APPSI's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar held on 10 December 2009.

Early in the day, APPSI took the opportunity to discuss the new policy developments emerging from the *Smarter Government* white paper issued that week. The key points made during the discussion are attached to this letter at Annex A.

The presentations attracted keen interest and stimulated valuable discussion round the table. Jon Kingsbury from the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) gave a presentation on the six new IPR frameworks released on 30 November 2009 for public sector organisations to test on their next digital media project. Mr. Kingsbury argued that of all six Frameworks, the most profound is Framework 6 as the wider economic savings from its use could be huge. Framework 6 states that: *'The Public Organisation commissions bespoke technology with the explicit goal of making it open-source – i.e. with non-existent copyright restrictions.'* APPSI will monitor the outcome of this pilot.

Mark Houghton from the Environment Agency (EA) gave a presentation on how the EA makes money from PSI. Mr. Houghton asserted that the EA is now firmly engaged with the information agenda and has recently improved the way it manages IPR issues and third party IPRs for both its public and private sector clients. However, he admitted there is now some instability resulting from the recent government announcements in the *Smarter Government* white paper. The model for providing access to and permitting re-use of public sector information is manifestly evolving rapidly and the Agency needs clarity to move forward.

There was also a presentation on certain aspects of the 2011 Census for England and Wales by Glen Watson and Alistair Calder from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). They described in detail the preparation work for the £480m 2011 Census, much of which has involved perhaps the largest 'mash up' yet carried out in government - the checking of addresses and amalgamating existing address sources in order to develop one integrated and accurate address list that provides the best value for money (ensuring that at least 99% of valid addresses are on the list and less than 1% of duplicate forms being sent to households). One member commented that the cost of the addressing work done by ONS (£12 million) – in addition to that incurred by Ordnance Survey (OS) and the local government community in building their own address databases - is good value for money. The enhanced address file can be reused within ONS and will also be used to enhance the OS and local government address lists used as inputs to the ONS process.

Carol Tullo and Michael Jennings, APPSI's Local Government Representative, gave a joint presentation on PSI re-use in local authorities and the NHS. They made clear that local authorities and the NHS are faced with a number of challenges that prevent the effective re-use of PSI. Both are facing greater demands for services and a falling income. Although the economic downturn provides a focus for greater efficiencies, it actually reduces the immediate potential financial return from exploitation of PSI (especially in the light of recent policy developments). Mr. Jennings proposed the following recommendations for central government to embed PSI re-use as a mainstream operation in local authorities and the NHS. Central government needs to:

- establish one information re-use policy and one business model across the whole public sector;
- provide focused leadership and support to both local authorities and NHS trusts;
- involve local government and the NHS in policy development as well as implementation on re-use; and
- ensure that local authorities and trusts have a fair return or at least a transition path to marginal cost or nil return (if that is to be the model across the whole of the public sector) which reflects the workload and implications.

Mr. Jennings' experience of local and also central government is unrivalled. Carol Tullo and I have independently proposed to Professor Nigel Shadbolt that he becomes a member of the latter's local government data panel as part of the *Making Public Data Public* initiative.

APPSI's representatives from the devolved administrations gave presentations on PSI re-use in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. All three speakers said that there is a lack of knowledge, understanding and interest about PSI in the devolved departments and the wider public sectors in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The speakers therefore put forward a series of recommendations in order to foster better awareness and understanding of PSI re-use in the devolved administrations.

Given this, it seems sensible that I write to Ministers in the devolved administrations to highlight the issues raised and to explore with their officers the following recommendations suggested by our devolved representative members:

- that we hold PSI promotional events in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (subject to the availability of modest resources).
- That we seek to remove the legislative barriers that prevent the effective access and re-use of PSI – e.g. amending the Data Protection Act to encourage data sharing within and between bodies and keeping the momentum going in the implementation of INSPIRE.
- That we publish case studies around the issues, problems and solutions relating to PSI re-use in order to encourage buy-in.

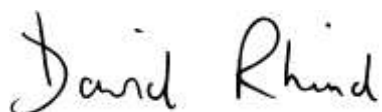
Finally, Carol Tullo gave a summary of EU and UK PSI policy, picking up on the earlier discussion on the recent PSI policy developments emerging from the *Smarter Government* white paper. She said that over the past year, the PSI agenda has gained considerable momentum with the volume of reports, initiatives and announcements that have all shown how PSI can facilitate new and flexible ways of delivering services, drive innovation and encourage greater social interaction in communities. Her time-line diagram of the information landscape clearly illustrated the progress that is being made across a broad front; and the convincing arguments have been made for the economic, social and cultural benefits that will emerge from making public information available for re-use.

All the APPSI seminar presentations can be accessed on the APPSI website at: <http://www.appsi.gov.uk/2009/12/10/APPSIs6thAnnualSeminar>. The minutes of the meeting are being finalised and as soon as they are posted on the APPSI website, the APPSI Secretariat will inform your office.

On a broader front, we are of course following developments in the Trading Fund futures (particularly in regard to Ordnance Survey and the Meteorological Office) and will shortly be meeting the Shareholder Executive again. We are in the throes of assembling an APPSI response to the Ordnance Survey consultation and will be discussing a draft at our next APPSI meeting in good time to submit it before the end of the consultation.

If you wish to follow-up any of the points made in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Professor David Rhind CBE  
Chair of APPSI

cc. Carol Tullo, Director of OPSI, part of The National Archives

## Annex A

The following key points were made by APPSI members during the discussion on the new policy developments emerging from the *Smarter Government* white paper:

- The Government has set out simple top level announcements but the challenge now is to work out in detail how to implement and embed the new policies. It is not yet clear which datasets will be made available, how this will be done and how this initiative will be funded free of charge (either through the tax payer or through cross-subsidy from direct charges on other products).
- One member questioned whether the government should find out what people do with the data that is made available for 'free' and how much demand there is for the data – before progressing with fundamental change.
- There is a need to clarify how the information suppliers operating under the new policies will be regulated and controlled.
- It was argued that the *Making public data public* initiative has highlighted the need to give the public reassurance that checks have been made on websites for the quality and accuracy of their data. There is perhaps a need to benchmark and quality control public data. The alternative view – that metadata should be made available but, after that, the principle should be 'user beware'.
- There are lots of small businesses with existing contracts for re-use of PSI that will have to reconsider their position, as there are likely to be some distortions in the existing market resulting from the proposed policy changes.
- 'One size does not fit all', as public sector organisations - including the Trading Funds - operate with different business models. The announcements regarding Ordnance Survey and the Met Office are likely to have an impact on the other Trading Funds.
- There is an implication that the Re-use of Public Sector Regulations will need to be revised to take into account the new policy changes.
- In contrast to the principles underlying *Making public data public* there is a strong sense in the Operational Efficiency Programme that the government wants to operate in a more commercial way in order to achieve greater revenues and efficiency savings.
- It seemed unlikely to some members that all the details will be worked out before April 2010 but it is clear that when the data sets are released they still need to be maintained so the cost of doing so needs to be factored into any funding. Given the financial constraints, members feared that there is likely to be a difference in the datasets that are available today and how they will look like in 18 months.

- It is important to test the release of datasets under Creative Commons licensing.
- There is little knowledge at present of public sector information re-use within the Welsh Assembly. Possible ways of enhancing awareness were discussed.
- The *Making public data public* initiative is likely to maintain its pace as there is cross-party interest in freeing up data.
- Government needs to work out its priorities for *maintaining PSI at all costs* – in effect defining a national information infrastructure in a manner analogous to the national infrastructure projects.<sup>1</sup>
- It was **agreed** that APPSI should consider the advice it would like to give government in light of the recent announcements.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Planning/ThePlanningSystem/DG\\_181981](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Planning/ThePlanningSystem/DG_181981).