

ANNEX A – Prime Minister’s letter to Cabinet Ministers dated 29th May 2010

PM TO CABINET MINISTERS

TRANSPARENCY

Dear Secretary of State

Greater transparency across Government is at the heart of our shared commitment to enable the public to hold politicians and public bodies to account; to reduce the deficit and deliver better value for money in public spending; and to realise significant economic benefits by enabling businesses and non-profit organisations to build innovative applications and websites using public data.

The Government must set new standards for transparency, and our Coalition Programme for government sets out a number of specific commitments. The Government’s initial transparency commitments are set out below, alongside deadlines for publication. Limited exemptions on national security and personal privacy grounds will be permitted.

Central government spending transparency

- Historic COINS spending data to be published online in June 2010.
- All new central government ICT contracts to be published online from July 2010.
- All new central government tender documents for contracts over £10,000 to be published on a single website from September 2010, with this information to be made available to the public free of charge.
- New items of central government spending over £25,000 to be published online from November 2010.
- All new central government contracts to be published in full from January 2011.
- All UK international development spending over £25,000 to be published online from January 2011.

Local government spending transparency

- New items of local government spending over £500 to be published on a council-by-council basis from January 2011.
- New local government contracts and tender documents for expenditure over £500 to be published in full from January 2011.

Other key government datasets

- Crime data to be published at a level that allows the public to see what is happening on their streets from January 2011.
- Names, grades, job titles and annual pay rates for most Senior Civil Servants with salaries above £150,000 to be published in June 2010.
- Names, grades, job titles and annual pay rates for most Senior Civil Servants and NDPB officials with salaries higher than the lowest permissible in Pay Band 1 of the Senior Civil Service pay scale to be published from September 2010.
- Organograms for central government departments and agencies that include all staff positions to be published in a common format from October 2010.

Given the importance of this agenda, the Deputy Prime Minister and I would be grateful if departments would take immediate action to meet this timetable for data transparency, and to ensure that any data published is made available in an open format so that it can be re-used by third parties. From July 2010, government departments and agencies should ensure that any information published includes the underlying data in an open standardised format.

Of course, the release of the datasets specified in the Coalition Programme is just the beginning of the transparency process. In advance of introducing any necessary legislation to effect our Right to Data proposals, public requests to departments for the release of government datasets should be handled in line with the principles underpinning those proposals: a presumption in favour of transparency, with all published data licensed for free reuse.

To oversee the implementation of our transparency commitments, a Public Sector Transparency Board will be established in the Cabinet Office, which will be chaired by the Minister for the Cabinet Office Francis Maude. Board representation will include a mix of external experts and data users, and public sector data specialists; members will include Tom Steinberg, one of the UK's leading experts on data transparency. The Board will provide support to departments as they deliver on the Government's transparency commitments set out in this letter. The Board will also be responsible for setting open data standards across the public sector, publishing further datasets on the basis of public demand, and – in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice – will further develop the Right to Data and advise on its implementation.

I look forward to welcoming rapid progress on this agenda in the coming weeks.

I am copying this letter to Sir Gus O'Donnell.

ANNEX B – Transparency Board Terms of Reference

The Transparency Board will advise the Minister for the Cabinet Office and, through him, the Prime Minister and the Government on transparency and open data, including:

- supporting and challenging Departments and Non Departmental Public Bodies in their implementation of the Government's transparency and open data agenda
- extending the transparency and open data agenda to local government and to the rest of the public services, including public transport
- establishing clear principles for transparency and setting open standards, policies and licences for data release across the public services
- developing the legal Right to Data (in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice)
- driving the publication of further public datasets on the basis of public demand and of economic and social benefit
- defining 'public task' for trading activities
- overseeing the work to further develop and consolidate data.gov.uk as the single online point of access for all UK public service datasets
- promoting the development and application of open, linked data standards for public data generally, including the development of appropriate skills and capabilities within the public services.

In doing so the Board will:

- Engage with developers, open data experts and business to ensure that they have a strong voice in how the Transparency agenda is implemented.
- Engage with the leading experts internationally working on public data and standards, and to promote international liaison and global standards setting.
- Work as necessary with others in Government with interests in data including the National Statistician, the Government CIO, the Location Council and the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information.

ANNEX C – Public Data Principles (currently on data.gov.uk for consultation)

Working definition of “Public Data”

"Public Data" is the objective, factual, non-personal data on which public services run and are assessed, and on which policy decisions are based, or which is collected or generated in the course of public service delivery.

Draft Public Data Principles

Public data policy and practice will be clearly driven by the public and businesses who want and use the data, including what data is released when and in what form – and in addition to the legal Right To Data itself this overriding principle should apply to the implementation of all the other principles.

Public data will be published in reusable, machine-readable form – publication alone is only part of transparency – the data needs to be reusable, and to make it reusable it needs to be machine-readable. At the moment a lot of Government information is locked into PDFs or other unprocessable formats.

Public data will be released under the same open licence which enables free reuse, including commercial reuse - all data should be under the same easy to understand licence. Data released under the Freedom of Information Act or the new Right to Data should be automatically released under that licence.

Public data will be available and easy to find through a single easy to use online access point (<http://www.data.gov.uk/>) – the public sector has a myriad of different websites, and search does not work well across them. It's important to have a well-known single point where people can find the data.

Public data will be published using open standards, and following relevant recommendations of the World Wide Web Consortium. Open, standardised formats are essential. However to increase reusability and the ability to compare data it also means openness and standardisation of the content as well as the format.

Public data underlying the Government's own websites will be published in reusable form for others to use – anything published on Government websites should be available as data for others to reuse. Public bodies should not require people to come to their websites to obtain information.

Public data will be timely and fine grained – Data will be released as quickly as possible after its collection and in as fine a detail as is possible. Speed may mean that the first release may have inaccuracies; more accurate versions will be released when available.

Release data quickly, and then re-publish it in linked data form – Linked data standards allow the most powerful and easiest re-use of data. However most existing internal public sector data is not in linked data form. Rather than delay any release of the data, our recommendation is to release it 'as is' as soon as possible, and then work to convert it to a better format.

Public data will be freely available to use in any lawful way – raw public data should be available without registration, although for API-based services a developer key may be needed. Applications should be able to use the data in any lawful way without having to inform or obtain the permission of the public body concerned.

Public bodies should actively encourage the re-use of their public data – in addition to publishing the data itself, public bodies should provide information and support to enable it to be reused easily and effectively. The Government should also encourage and assist those using public data to share knowledge and applications, and should work with business to help grow new, innovative uses of data and to generate economic benefit.

Public bodies should maintain and publish inventories of their data holdings – accurate and up-to-date records of data collected and held, including their format, accuracy and availability.