

ADVISORY BOARD

THE POSTCODE ADDRESS FILE

MINUTES of the meeting held at 13.00 on Wednesday, 27 May 2009

At Intellect Meeting Rooms, 10-12 Russell Square House, Russell Square, London, WC1.

PRESENT

Ian Beesley	Chairman
Kelly Allison	Google
David Carter	GB Group
Jan Challis	Royal Mail
Tim Drye	Direct Marketing Association
Emma Gooderham	Allies Computing
Alan Halfacre	Mail Users' Association
David Heyes	Wigan BC
Terry Hiles	Capscan
Stuart Johnston	QAS
Iain McKay	DNAS
Guy Mucklow	Postcodeanywhere
Ian Paterson	UK Mail
Mike Tamlin	DHL

Also in attendance:

Miranda Dodd	AMU
Richard Allen	Power of Information Task Force Item 4
Andrew Devin	ONS Item 4
John Batchelor	AMU Item 4

Apologies

Nick Dyson	Central Government
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1. MATTERS ARISING:

The Chairman informed the Board that the secretary, Gail Chichester Constable, had resigned for personal reasons.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

The Chairman suggested that the Board prepare its thoughts on the EU INSPIRE initiative even though the formal consultation period had ended.

The Board considered the current state of the market. It had been recently reported by Postcomm and Royal Mail that there had been a 5.5% reduction in postal volumes in 2008, and a prediction of reductions of up to 10% per annum over next 2 years. However, the Chairman had received no further submissions from solutions providers about rebates since the last meeting of the Board. Solution Providers indicated that in the United States the signs were not promising and that in the United Kingdom anecdotally there appeared to be increased scrutiny of projects, delays in timing and some consolidation of activities by postal clients. As might be expected there was a lot more price sensitivity around.

3. LICENCE WORKING GROUP REPORT:

The Board recorded its appreciation and thanks for the work of the Licence Working Group and a brief discussion focused on its report (PAF(09)24) that had been previously circulated. It was acknowledged that considerable progress had been made and also that genuine attempts had been made by the AMU to address outstanding issues. There were, however, still three main areas of concern: (a) control of database cleansing; (b) data creation; (c) the definition of closed user groups. Other issues of concern were that Bureau Licence boundaries were unclear and solutions providers felt exposed over their responsibility to recover Bureau fees. During a brief discussion some concerns were raised about open ended 'per-click' pricing. It was still unclear what information would be circulated about licence extensions to cover possible delays and also whether a public sector licence would be introduced.

AMU responded to the Working Group report, first by recording its appreciation of the detailed and constructive contribution made. AMU were disappointed that the Board still felt there were serious issues to be dealt with although they understood the position taken. AMU acknowledged that changes made in their position following the last Board meeting had not yet been reflected in the drafting of the legal clauses and this needed to be rectified urgently. They were providing time for further work with the Royal Mail legal team and would delay implementation appropriately. Implementation of all licence elements, Postzon, Bureau and Generic, would then all happen together, in the New Year.

The Board raised concerns about seeming pressures that AMU were put under from other parts of Royal Mail in the drafting and development of the licences. On the basis of progress so far with the legal draftsmen the Board were uneasy about the ability of AMU to meet its new suggested timings and as a result it was felt important for AMU to keep the whole market aware of developments.

4. PAF QUALITY:

Andrew Devin, who had been responsible for the development of the Office of National Statistics National Address File for use in the Census 2011, reported on the lessons . The work had meant very detailed assessment of national addressing sources and PAF had been found to be generally sound though improvements were possible. The main lessons for PAF were seen as:

1. To use standardised numbering and nomenclature for properties. Regulations stipulate that this should be driven by the local authority but in a number of cases PAF had been found to follow alternative descriptions.
2. AMU should look to incentivise the transfer of local intelligence held by the delivery personnel onto the PAF file.
3. There was a need to improve the classification of addresses.
4. It was recognised that the current update process involved an approximate 3 – 6 month lag from a change on the ground to information on the database. It was thought that a process of investment in improving historic data, perhaps by comparison with utilities, would be worthwhile.
5. Commercial organisations had little interest in mail delivery points, and were more interested in the location of people. This should be taken into account when considering how to encode different types of location, particularly multi-occupancy addresses.

Richard Allen, the chairman of The Power of Information Task Force, described its report to Cabinet Office Ministers about how data can be developed and illustrated innovative uses of geographic data which had been submitted as part of the Government's "showusabetterway" competition for uses of digital data . He identified that the Postcode is an important key in many of these applications and forecast that the regulatory environment around Postcode based data would change dramatically in a short period. This might be triggered by the presence of a National Address Register originally created for the Census but would also be stimulated by the Government Digital Engagement initiative. The current licencing of geographical and address data in England and Wales had been found to be excessively complex, disjointed and inconsistent and thus a barrier to many different services. Scotland had been recognised as having made more progress on the common licencing of general data, including OS and PAF.

The Board requested that the presentation be made available for display on its website as a pointer to strategic issues which the PAF market should be addressing.

AMU gave a presentation of their own perspectives on quality within PAF (PAF(09)22). AMU had strong aspirations to develop further the quality of the file. Particularly with the opportunity to optimise the 5000 changes per day that are made to the file. There were definite indications of

progress in relations with Royal Mail UK Operations. A service level agreement was in place, complaints had shown a steady reduction and the rate of reported changes to the file had increased. There had been significant investment in the Customer Service centre at Doxford and error rate checking and new spot checks had been introduced. The SLA with RM Operations for verification of delivery points and the SLA with Doxford for management of changes to the file had introduced a sliding scale of payments/penalites to improve performance. The investment in a new SAP system, including wider automation of operations should lead to further quality improvements as dataset builds were automated.

The Board asked AMU to reflect on three recent issues, Jersey infill/ plus other islands, Highlands, Scotland and UDPRN definitions. It was unclear on what processes existed within AMU to manage the system and to identify issues before customer/SP identified them and it asked the AMU to provide a detailed statement of the quality management system.

It was agreed that a Quality Working Group of the Board should be set up - this would follow on the work previously conducted within PUG (Postcode Users Group). The Chairman would canvass expressions of interest to take part in the Working Group.

5 .POSTAL SERVICES BILL:

The Board was updated on the progress of the proposed Postal Services Bil, particularly over issues around the transfer of responsibility from Postcomm to OFCOM. OFCOM were understood to be planning a market review prior to making any changes affecting PAF and this might last up to two years. It was unclear what the status of the Board would be during the review stage and beyond and the Board felt that it should make OFCOM aware of its activities. The Board invited the Chairmen to make contact wit the chairman of OFCOM as appropriate.

6. REVIEW OF BOARD MEMEBERSHIP

The second anniversary of the Board would arrive in the summer. Members had been appointed for two years and the Chairman gave notice that he would initiate a review of membership with AMU and Postcomm/OFCOM in the near future

7.NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for the end of July (subsequently fixed for 23 July) at a location to be confirmed. It was expected that the text of the licence would have been frozen by then, after further consultation with the Working Group.

[END]