

PAF (11)5th Meeting

21st September 2011

THE POSTCODE ADDRESS FILE

ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held at 13.00 on Thursday, 15th September 2011

At Google Offices

123 Buckingham Palace Road

London, SW1W 9SH

PRESENT

Ian Beesley	Chairman
Razia Ahamed	Google
Joel Curry	QAS
Tim Drye	Direct Marketing Association
Emma Gooderham	Allies Computing
Alan Halfacre	Mail Users' Association
David Heyes	Wigan BC
Terry Hiles	Capscan
Michael MacClancy	The DX Group
Ian McKay	Improvement Services (Scotland)
Ian Paterson	UK Mail
Martin Taylor	Royal Mail

Also in attendance

David Stubbs	ESL	item 6
Aurore Tellier	ESL	item 6
Steve Rooney	AMU	items 7-9
Scott Childes	AMU	items 7-9
Ian Evans	AMU	items 7-9

Apologies

Philip Groves	Postcomm
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1. MATTERS ARISING:

The CHAIRMAN reported that the merger of Postcomm and Ofcom would take effect from 19 September. He had been advised that Philip Groves would be moving to new responsibilities in Ofcom and that the Ofcom observer would likely be Steve Green (currently in the Customer Interest team).

ACTION: Philip Groves to confirm future arrangements for an Ofcom observer.

2. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Progress to deal with the threat to Royal Mail's retail and wholesale discounts for mail arising from a change in the Delivery Point suffix requirements had not made progress. The deadline for the surcharge imposition was 1 November. The Board felt that providing specific cases of how the change would damage the bulk mail business must be a priority before the change was implemented.

ACTION: Tim Drye to draft for the Chairman to write formally to complain about the proposed change and to seek its deferment.

The CHAIRMAN thanked PAB members for their action in reviewing communications with the market constituencies they represent. He now had sufficient information to report as necessary on the Postcomm recommendations in this area.

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the final sentence in the recent e-mail from the Chairman of Ofcom, which said that Ofcom looked forward to working with the PAB.

3. PAB CHARTER

Joel Curry introduced the draft charter proposed by the working group. The AMU had been shown the draft and had requested that its language be softened, especially in clauses 5-7, suggesting a PAB aim, "to educate, stimulate, innovate and encourage change in AMU processes." They had further suggested that the PAB should refer to working in partnership with the AMU. In discussion, the BOARD felt that cosmetic changes to items 5-7 of the draft could be accommodated but were not persuaded that it was the PAB's responsibility to educate the PAF market, nor that 'partnership' properly reflected the independence of the Board from AMU. In further discussion it was suggested that PAB might take a role in regulating Geoplace though it would not be politic to include such a thought for the present.

ACTION: Joel Curry to soften the draft without compromising the independence of the Board, nor to accept responsibilities that were properly those of the AMU. After circulation for written clearance, the CHAIRMAN would send the Charter to Ofcom, allowing sufficient time for them to endorse it, as appropriate. The Charter would then be promulgated and sent to the AMU for information.

4 INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2012/13

The CHAIRMAN reported that he had been briefed on the AMU memorandum P&L accounts for 2010/11. Because of the switch to Ofcom it would be unlikely that the AMU would be able to discuss the accounts with the regulator in the near future. Hence, he had requested that AMU inform Ofcom that they would share the accounts with the PAB on a formal basis in the near future.

The CHAIRMAN further reported that AMU had had a good year, with 'per click' revenues in particular buoyant. The profit for the year had been around £458,000 above the 10% regulatory allowance. It was unlikely that there would be any overspill of spending from the 2011/12 projects. Hence the Board should work on the basis of the full amount of the excess being available for investment in 2012/13.

In discussion the BOARD identified a number of possible projects and confirmed that it would wish the AMU to set aside 10% of the surplus as a budget for PAB sponsored research. Possible AMU sponsored projects identified were:

- A study of alternative PAF maintenance processes;
- A study of the consequences of removing delivery point suffixes from PAF;
- A study of how the multi-occupancy file might be improved;
- A Zero Based Budget study to identify cost reduction opportunities in PAF validation;
- A study of the practicalities of direct remittance of PAF licence fees by end users;
- A study of the implications of enhancing the visible PAF postcode to include data point suffixes;
- A study of the consequences of removing Business names from the PAF file;
- A study of how the granularity of PAF could be improved;
- A study to find ways of improving the timeliness of PAF updates;
- A study of how switching charges for PAF to those originating the need for changes to the database could be brought about.
- A study to identify how a financial reserve could be created to finance selective price reductions and what the priorities for price reduction should be.

ACTION: The CHAIRMAN to discuss a potential work programme with the AMU and to report back to the PAB.

5 CABINET OFFICE CONSULTATIONS

The Board had a first discussion of the consultation documents issued by the Cabinet Office on the Public Data Corporation (PDC) and on 'Making Open Data Real.' In discussion it was argued that the underlying purpose of the consultations was unclear and that the PDC consultation, in particular, was unrealistic in expecting respondents to provide the research evidence that should underpin decisions. The open data document, with 27 consultative questions, was confusing.

It was agreed that the Board would prepare responses to both consultations for clearance by correspondence or, if the material was thin, as the basis for a nil return.

ACTION: The CHAIRMAN to draft responses for clearance by correspondence.

6 STUDY OF THE VALUE OF PAF

ESL gave a progress report on the study. Questionnaires were under preparation and the intention was to have a draft report by the end of October. In discussion it was suggested that the Irish decision to introduce a postcode might be a fruitful source of data but that a postal questionnaire approach would be difficult to manage. Board members were willing to talk in more detail to ESL about their customer base and the value it obtains from PAF. The growth of internet shopping and its reliance on postcode information for order completion should be included, as should the use of postcodes to ration public services such as admission to schools and access to the NHS.

ACTION: Tim Drye to provide ESL with contacts at the DMA and Board members willing to be interviewed by ESL to notify the Board Secretary.

7 AMU UPDATE

- Navigation licence – would go live in October. In discussion doubts were expressed about the pricing structure, notably the absence of a discount for up-front annual payment.
- Compliance Centre – AMU were about to launch User Testing. After advice from the Board the range of solutions providers to be included in the test would be increased to around 35. It was hoped to launch the centre in October. Terry Hiles had examined the proposed web tool on behalf of the Board, concluding that it would be helpful to those new to the area. The grouping of all licence material in one place was particularly welcome but the diagrams on the site were too superficial.

ACTION: AMU to note

- Public sector mapping agreement – Despite frequent contact with DCLG officials there had been no progress in solving the remaining issues around charges to Departments. Responsibility in Government had been moved to BIS, but with minimal staff continuity. BIS officials were inclined to go back to stage one, asking why the proposal was justified. AMU were regrouping their material to educate BIS officials.
- BFPO – The MOD were reluctant to allow information to be shared with the PAB and were still concerned about the disruption to Service mail that could occur if serving personnel started to use the postcode rather than the traditional BFPO numbers. As a result, the MOD had said that the scheme should not be launched in time for the Christmas peak of mail activity but AMU were hopeful of providing a BFPO add-on file for PAF (free of charge to PAF users) early in 2011.
The Board expressed dismay at the delay in what seemed to be a valuable improvement for Service personnel.

8. OPEN MEETING

Doubts were voiced about the attractiveness of a Rugby venue for the meeting, which had been booked for the Phoenix Center in London but had been usurped by senior Royal Mail executives.

The BOARD decided, with reluctance, that the unavailability of a London venue in November meant that it would be preferable to postpone the meeting until January at a suitable London site.

ACTION: The SECRETARY to find a suitable London site for a meeting in January 2012.

9. BUREAU LICENCE

The BOARD requested that AMU provide an update on the uptake of the licence and steps to enforce compliance with the Bureau Licence.

10. NEXT MEETING

16 November, venue to be confirmed.

[END]