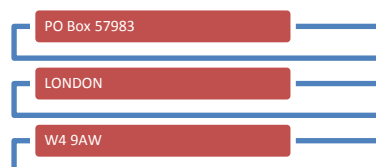
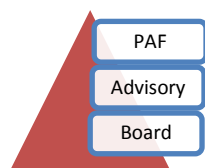


## THE POSTCODE ADDRESS FILE

## ADVISORY BOARD

## Board Strategy Document



*Independent advice on the Postcode Address File*

6 NOVEMBER 2014

*Dear Steve*

As you know, the PAB has been considering how the PAF file should develop over the next 2-3 years and what are the Board's priorities for action. We think that these can be grouped under the following six headings. The most urgent and the most important is quality of data. Only by investing in the quality of postcode data can the spectacular success of the PAF file be maintained in the face of competition from other data sources and Open Data; and only by continuing to direct attention to quality will growing new uses of the data such as in anti-fraud be properly supported.

1 QUALITY Let us find a way of indicating for each postcode (a) when the addresses it contains were last validated by Royal Mail; (b) when they were last validated independently and (c) the overall accuracy of the postcode derived from the independent validation. This need not be on the face of the file but could be an optional addition in the form of a look-up table.

We have already provided comments (under NDA conditions) on the quality aspects of the SLA with RM operations and look forward to seeing the SLA develop accordingly. We support the investment planned for external audit of PAF quality but also further believe that the AMU should invest in field staff who can validate the information that Operations are returning as changes to PAF.

In addition, two specific areas of PAF management would pay dividends from particular and focussed attention: (a) business names, where changes appear to be slow to materialise on PAF and the delay causes unnecessary hassle to users of bulk mail and to businesses receiving mail; (b) the speed of updating PAF for newly occupied household premises which it seems to us, from a reading of the SLA with Operations, can be delayed by up to 13 weeks – though there appears to be no measurement of the delay and we believe that this should be a key indicator about the management of PAF.

We wonder whether more use could be made of the information collected from redirections (particularly to new properties), mis-delivered mail and undelivered mail.

**2 EASE OF USE** The development of a portal to sign up to the 2015 Licence and to the PSL are important initiatives that we fully support. But it should be made easier for the public to report addressing changes through a portal on a rebranded AMU website (see below) perhaps distinguishing between reports from public bodies, private organisations such as businesses or charities, and individual citizens.

**3 IMPROVE AWARENESS** We suggest re-branding the AMU, which is a misnomer anyway since it does not allocate addresses. We doubt if the public recognise the title and we do not think that the website ‘poweredbyPAF’ is a good name. Our suggestion would be to rename the AMU the National Postcode Centre or National Postcode Authority and to rename the website accordingly. We would hope that Royal Mail’s existing machinery for the monitoring of its brand could also monitor, from time to time, the recognition by the public of the new name for the AMU.

We support the further development of DVDs and online media promoting PAF (perhaps with associated non-regulated files such as MR, NYB and JB both for internal Royal Mail awareness and for external customers. So far the focus has been on accuracy in sending mail; there is a mirror image in the benefits of addressing accuracy for the receivers of mail.

**4 MARKET DEVELOPMENT** For 2015 we shall pay special attention to the live operation of the 2015 Licence and the widening of eligibility for the PSL. It will be important to monitor not just the take up of both but also to gather case study material on the benefits derived by different users and, of course, any problems encountered. The PAB may conduct a market survey of SPs during the latter part of 2015 to ascertain how smoothly the switch to the 2015 licence has been.

Some of the remaining public sector bodies such the Ordnance Survey and the Land Registry may be commercialised in whole or in part in future years and this may provide a means of developing alliances of value.

5 PRICING Having set the relative prices of the various options for taking PAF for the 2015 Licence we would not expect there to be price increases during the operation of those licences unless justified by quality improvements or unavoidable cost increases. Where possible we would expect cost increases to be absorbed by productivity gains in the costs of maintenance and we would consider any suggestions for price change in the light of the circumstances of the time.

6 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY Having left the public sector Royal Mail is neither eligible to join The National Archives' Information Fair Trade Scheme, nor is it covered by the draft APPSI principles for when public sector information holders transfer to the private sector. However, we urge the AMU to consider how it can contribute to Royal Mail's corporate social responsibility programme by further developing initiatives beyond the developer licence, the public sector licence for PAF and the concessions for micro-businesses and small charities. We would hope that a means could be devised of supporting the Government's Open Data initiative without jeopardising the quality or the commercial viability of the PAF file.

Yours sincerely



Ian Beesley

Chairman, PAF Advisory Board