

THE POSTCODE ADDRESS FILE ADVISORY BOARD (PAB)

Minutes of meeting held at 13:00 on 20 April 2023

By video conference

Present

Ian Beesley	Chairman
Neil Haydock	Auctane
Paul Cresswell	Experian
Paul Brough	Mail Users' Association
Nick Chapallaz	GeoPlace
Ian Paterson	Mail Competition Forum
Charles Neilson	Mail Competition Forum
Stuart Watt	GB Group
Rob Parker	CACI
Dan Cooper	Allies Computing
Steve Goodsell	Royal Mail Group
Paul Roberts	Board Secretary

In attendance

Ian Evans	AMU
Kim Winter	AMU

Apologies

Ron Wilkinson	Improvement Service, Scotland
Tim Drye	Direct Marketing Association

## 1 RM Industrial Relations Position

The Board enquired about the current status of the ongoing industrial action within Royal Mail given the impact on PAF deliverables. The AMU reported that RMG and the Communication Workers Union (CWU) had reached a negotiators agreement, which was now scheduled to be put to CWU members.

## 2 Pre-reading Materials – Comments & Questions

### a. AMU & RM Ops joint working

Board Members commented that they were encouraged by the latest news that an agreement may be reached that could avoid further Industrial Action within RM Ops. It is hoped that this would enable progress on delivering against the AMU/ RM Ops SLA for 2023/24, the development of a new SLA for 2024/25 and further development of AMU requirements in the future specification of RM PDAs.

The Board understood that the current SLA mechanism would be carried over for 2023/24. It recommended that, for a new SLA for 2024/25, variable payment levels based on performance should be part of the agreement.

Steve Goodsell advised that regular monthly meetings between RM Ops and the AMU would likely resume once operations were stable, and that these would include discussions on the SLA (existing and future) and AMU requirements for PDAs.

**ACTION:** The Board invited the AMU to update further on progress prior to the July PAB meeting.

### b. The Link Between PAF & Postcode Finder

The Board asked whether the AMU held regular meetings with third party suppliers and customers to understand any issues with access to addresses and to develop improved data feed mechanisms. The AMU reported they were developing a regular meeting schedule with their suppliers and with internal customers to monitor and improve how the data feed mechanisms are working.

In discussion the AMU and some Board members advised that different solutions providers and their customers used different elements within PAF. Not all solutions (including a trend to web-based solutions) required using all fields from PAF.

**ACTION:** The Board invited the AMU to produce a further update on progress prior to the October PAB meeting.

### 3 Chairman's Update

The Chairman showed a billboard advertisement from HSBC (below) indicating an account offering for people with no permanent address, highlighting that people with no fixed address were increasingly being offered solutions across industry sectors.



The Chairman had attended the 2023 Metapack conference on 'mail and parcel delivery', held on 7 February, which had attracted around 400 delegates and had 36 exhibitors/speakers (including mail operators and location co-ordinates developers). Key takeaways from the conference included:

- The importance of Royal Mail monitoring and improving the quality of addresses that fail the sortation stage within its processes
- A growing importance of allowing recipients to choose where and when delivery takes place, including locations other than the stated delivery address given at the time of ordering on-line
- An increasing emphasis on timed delivery estimates when ordering on-line
- A continuing focus in the delivery industry on reducing overall delivery costs.

During discussion it was noted that similar themes had been voiced at earlier conferences, illustrating an evolving market rather than disruptive market movement.

The Board discussed whether PAF end users should be encouraged more strongly to build in daily PAF updates into their use of PAF. The AMU explained that they already encouraged all customers to take daily updates, but that this was not thought necessary by all customers. The solution provider representatives confirmed that their experience was similar.

The Board nevertheless felt that market forces reflecting changing recipient delivery requirements would be most likely to drive future use of the most up-to-date versions of PAF.

### 4 Improvements in the accuracy of business names in PAF

The AMU reported on the use of Business Rates data as an additional feed to improve the accuracy of business names and addresses. To date, the AMU had analysed business rates data for four postcode areas and had found limited identification of

additional or more accurate data for PAF. The AMU further observed that this was a similar result to when they had started using Companies House data. In the latter case, the usefulness of the analysis had increased over time as analysis had become more targeted.

The AMU explained that they would continue to analyse Business Rates data until a point where they felt that they had enough data to be confident whether the extra effort was justified. The AMU also reported that during a recent meeting with DQM, it had been confirmed that the matching process with other sources used by DQM yielded comparable results to the AMU analysis of Companies House data.

The Board welcomed the AMU activities to improve the accuracy of business names on PAF and stressed the importance of developing an overall measure of business name accuracy, thus linking activity to outcomes.

The Board enquired whether the second version of the 'business at residential address' letter issued by the AMU (which contained a stronger encouragement for the recipient to respond) had generated an increased response rate. The AMU confirmed the response rate was much higher on the second version of the letter.

The main reasons given by respondents for not wanting PAF to show a business name associated with a residential address that had been identified from Companies House were:

- a) the business no longer being at the address,
- b) the business being maintained at the address only for Companies House registration purposes, and
- c) the business having been declared bankrupt.

Given the increased response rate, the AMU said that the next mailing in the same 'encourage response' format would cover a larger volume of addresses than in the immediate past.

**ACTION:** the Board requested that the AMU change the number scaling shown on the business names data provided to the PAB.

## **5 PAF Awareness Programme**

Further to previous Board discussions on the campaign to ensure key PAF quality messages were communicated with, and understood by, RM Operations staff. The AMU shared a brief presentation which outlined what had been done so far:

- A PAF education video broadcast on the internal RMTV service
- A centre spread article in the latest edition of the RM *Courier* newspaper
- Workplace coaching sessions in Delivery offices, highlighting the importance of PAF accuracy.

Initial feedback from Operations colleagues (mostly received from front-line staff) had been positive and had pointed to the need to encourage an increased level of awareness of the Ops role in maintaining address data accuracy.

Next steps in the campaign are:

- A structured awareness and 'what needs to be done' programme across six work time learning sessions for RM Operations teams over the course of the next year, to include beginning and end questionnaires on PAF awareness to assess prior and post discussion understanding.
- An awareness and instructive campaign on Workplace (the internal business version of Facebook)
- Further videos reinforcing the messages on PAF quality.

The Board commended the AMU for driving the campaign and expressed the hope that in the coming quarters the effect of the campaign on improvements to PAF data accuracy would become evident.

A summary of campaign next steps is at Annex A

## **6 Quarterly Data Quality Update**

The AMU shared a brief presentation of key themes emerging from the latest data quality field work. PAF address quality had improved over the latest three quarters, though it was still too early to say whether accuracy had returned to pre-Covid levels.

DQM feedback suggested that there was potentially an over reliance on Local Authority validation of data in PAF addresses and this was being investigated by the AMU. In discussion it was pointed out that it may be a different department in different local authorities that deals with confirming addresses, and it was important to know the correct routes within each local authority

## **7 Not Yet Built (NYB) to PAF Measurements**

The AMU gave a presentation to show steps that had been taken to speed up the recording of newly occupied addresses in PAF. Four sources were used: Local Authorities (raising council tax bills), information received directly from new residents, site developers' reports of properties sold and occupied and direct information from RM Operations colleagues delivering mail.

Previously, the AMU had funneled information from the first three sources to RM Operations for validation. This delayed transferring a property from the NYB file to the main PAF. The process had now been changed so that information received from any of the sources will result in an address being transferred promptly onto the main PAF. The result was that all changes were now live on PAF within three days of notification, a significant reduction in average timescales from the previous process.

A slide outlining the revised process is at Annex B.

The AMU also reported that they were reviewing how long addresses should be automatically kept on the NYB file given that some notified addresses were subsequently abandoned.

## **8 Public Sector Licence (PSL)**

The AMU reported that a five-year extension to the PSL (to the end of March 2028) had been agreed and signed. The agreement covered PAF, NYB and Multiple Residence (MR) data. The Agreement allows for price inflation over its term, to avoid the longer-term Agreement creating a potential disparity between the cost of use for Public Sector and Private Sector organisations. The Board welcomed the news, highlighting that the longer duration of the agreement was good news for both Solution Providers and users.

The AMU also advised that they had agreed to create a budget to further enhance promotion of PSL benefits to the PSL community, working as appropriate in tandem with other stakeholders.

**Action:** The Board invited the AMU to review usage of the Developer Licence at a future PAB meeting in 2023.

## **9 OUTSTANDING RESPONSE**

The Chairman reminded the AMU that they had not yet responded to his letter of 5 January with suggested initiatives in support of improving the accuracy and currency of residential addressing.

**ACTION:** The Board invited the AMU to provide a response to the Chairman's letter at their earliest convenience.

## **10 Next Meeting**

19 July 2023, 13:00 – 15:30, at the offices of Experian, Victoria Street, SW1, London, and by video conference.

## PAF Awareness Campaign - What is Next?

### 1. WTLL

Intro to PAF and it's benefits to Ops. What do you know?

Four things to look out for on your rounds and reportpart 1

Four things to look out for on your rounds and reportpart 2

Why is an accurate PAF important to the wider UK?

Route Manager– our key supply line

Questionnaire to measure success of campaign

### 2. @Workplace

### 3. Further videos



## Annex B – Not Yet Built to PAF

