

THE POSTCODE ADDRESS FILE ADVISORY BOARD (PAB)

Minutes of meeting held at 13:00 on 19 October 2023

At the offices of GeoPlace, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

And by video conference

Present

Ian Beesley	Chairman
Nick Chapallaz	GeoPlace
Ian Paterson	Mail Competition Forum
Ron Wilkinson	Improvement Service, Scotland
Neil Haydock	Auctane

In attendance

Ian Evans	AMU
Tom Foyle	AMU

Attending by video link

Dan Cooper	Allies Computing
Rob Parker	CACI
Charles Neilson	Mail Competition Forum
Paul Cresswell	Experian

Apologies

Tim Drye	Direct Marketing Association
Paul Brough	Mail Users' Association
Stuart Watt	GB Group

Secretariat

Paul Roberts

1 Matters Arising

a. Link between PAF and Postcode Finder

The AMU reported that there had recently been a few instances of failure of the daily update of information on the Postcode Finder page and the reasons for this were currently being investigated.

ACTION: The Board requested an update on the investigation of the issues with Postcode Finder at the January 2024 PAB meeting.

b. AMU and RM Operations Service Level Agreement (SLA)

The AMU advised that due to other priorities for RM Operations, they had not yet been able to open discussions on development of a new SLA. As a result, AMU had decided to develop a strawman proposal for the new Agreement and requested the assistance of PAB to develop their proposal.

The PAB agreed to restart the PAB SLA working group, to help the AMU identify content for the new SLA, with the aim of the draft SLA content to be ready by the end of January 2024.

ACTION: The Secretary to invite PAB members to volunteer for the working group and then arrange dates for the working group to meet.

c. Business Names & Addressing

The AMU reported they had experienced the highest return rate for a 'business at residential' mailing during quarter 2 of 2023/24. Revised wording of the letter sent to customers had helped increase the response rate.

The PAB asked how usage of the Alias file was changing over time, and whether the information in the file was being best presented for potential users.

ACTION: PAB members were invited to provide views on usage of the Alias file data in Solutions and to suggest how to widen its usage.

d. Initiative to improve the accuracy of User Addressing

The Chairman had provided a suggestion on how to encourage PAF users to reduce addressing error rates through more frequent updating of their PAF file. The AMU supported the initiative, and it was agreed that communications for users would be prominently displayed on both the PAB and *PoweredbyPaf* websites.

ACTION: The Secretary to add messaging to the PAB website and work with the AMU to ensure the supporting data is updated regularly.

e. AMU response to the Chairman's letter following the January 2023 PAB meeting

The Board welcomed the AMU positive response to the Chairman's suggested addressing improvements letter (PAB(23)1) and requested that the AMU provide a further update once actions had been agreed and implementation was underway.

ACTION: The Board invited the AMU to provide a further update on actions at the April 2024 PAB meeting.

f. AMU Customer Contact Centre Report 2022/23

The Board welcomed sight of the report. The main point to note was that contact workload had switched to proactive work, mainly from increased work on assuring business names and addressing.

The Board asked what the main reasons were for customers contacting the contact centre team. The AMU advised that the main contact types were identifying address data not on PAF, requests for additions to PAF, address inaccuracies, Local Authority enquiries, and enquiries from developers.

2 Chairman's Update

The Chairman reported on a meeting he had held with members of the Ofcom postal-focused team on 6 September. A confidential record is being circulated separately.

3 PAF Awareness Campaign - Update

The AMU reported that the first of the RM Operational Work Time Listening and Learning (WTLL) sessions for all front-line staff, with specific inclusion of key messages on the importance of PAF quality, were scheduled to be deployed during week commencing 30 October. Two further sessions, specifically including key PAF messages, were scheduled at subsequent quarterly intervals, at which point communications would again be reviewed. Meanwhile the AMU were continuing with other channels of communication to front-line staff, including RMTV.

The PAB asked if the briefing material to be used by those leading the WTLL sessions was already written and would be assessed in the light of experience. The AMU advised that the overall structure of the briefing was in place, but detail could be changed depending on operational staff feedback.

The PAB further asked how feedback would be obtained on the WTLL sessions and suggested that the AMU might consider using a small panel of operational trainers to provide feedback on the feel of the sessions, points raised by participants and agreed actions.

ACTION: The Board invited the AMU to report back to the PAB on the first wave of WTLL engagement by mid- November.

4 Measuring the Success of the PAF awareness Campaign

The Chairman had circulated a paper containing suggestions on how the AMU might measure success of the awareness campaign. Specifically:

- Assess the overall number of changes in the first, second and third months after the workforce coaching starts and compare with the same period in 2022 and 2020 as an overall percentage of delivery points.
- Monitor when each Delivery Office carries out the training and measure as in (bullet 1) against the expected number of changes for that DO based on the best/average performing DOs of a comparable nature.
- Identify Delivery Offices covered in recent DQM audits before the campaign started and use these results as a baseline. Identify those DOs that either have had the campaign or specifically target a sample of these DOs to receive the campaign. Rerun a DQM audit in these DO catchment areas, post campaign, to determine quality and compare with the baseline to gauge the improvement.
- Make Delivery Offices with lower response rates than expected a target for early coaching and monitor the change in the subsequent number of reported changes/ PAF quality before and after the engagement campaign.

ACTION: The Board invited the AMU to respond to the PAB suggestions by mid-November and specifically to include detail of the measurements being used to measure campaign success.

5 PAF P&L 2022/23

The Board discussed the PAF P&L for 2022/23. Revenue levels were lower than 2021/22, due in part to an adjustment relating to over-reporting in the prior year, as well as generally lower levels of use from a slowdown in economic activity.

Costs were broadly comparable with the previous year, with increases arising from pay awards partly offset by efficiency gains and reduced payments in some areas because of days lost to industrial action across RM.

The Board noted that the element of RM overhead costs allocated to PAF had increased in 2022/23 compared to the preceding year and continues to fluctuate from year to year.

The Board commented that although days lost to direct industrial action in Operations had not been charged to PAF the action itself might have resulted in less PAF assurance work in the days immediately afterwards.

The PAF P&L summary is at [Annex A](#)

ACTION: For future annual reports, the Board invited the AMU to show profit and cost levels both with and before the AMU contribution to wider RM overhead charges

6 Developer Licence

Discussion of this item was deferred.

ACTION: The Board invited the AMU to submit a report on Developer Licence use and trends by the end of November.

7 Quarterly Data Quality Update

The AMU shared a brief presentation of key qualitative themes emerging from recent field research.

The analysis suggested that:

- Data and results reflected the increased emphasis on business name and address accuracy.
- The AMU were possibly better at adding new addresses to PAF, than identifying and removing ones that needed deleting from the file.

The Board welcomed the extra analysis provided and recommended that, where possible, the AMU should make specific examples and images from the DQM reports part of the PAF awareness campaign.

Given the high quality of information gathered by field audits, the Board recommended that the number of postcode areas considered each quarter should be augmented.

Issues and themes from the DQM audits could also inform the campaign to draw end users' attention to the importance of up-to-date information.

ACTION: The Board invited the AMU to share the next quarterly research report as soon as it became available.

8 Joint Working Between AMU and GeoPlace

The AMU and Nick Chapallaz reported on two joint projects: one looking at local authority and PAF/NYB data on new build properties, the other at improving matches between PAF data and the National Address Gazetteer.

ACTION: The Board invited GeoPlace and the AMU to give an update on progress at a future PAB meeting.

9 RM Representation on the PAB

The Board expressed regret that Royal Mail had still not proposed a suitable replacement after the reorganization that had resulted in the withdrawal of Steve Goodsell from Board membership.

10 PAB Meeting at an RM Office in 2024

The Board suggested that for the PAB to improve its understanding of the issues and possibilities for RM Operations regarding PAF quality, it would be useful to hold a PAB meeting during 2024 at a RM Operational office which would enable discussion of the data generated at sortation about address failures.

ACTION: The Board invited the AMU to investigate options and report back.

11 Next Meeting

18 January 2024, 11:30 – 13:30. In-person venue: Auctane, 200 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8XZ

Published P&L – FY22/23

Regulatory income statement for products specified by Ofcom to be published

	52 weeks ended 26 March 2023		52 weeks ended 27 March 2022	
	Network Access £m	PAF £m	Network Access £m	PAF £m
Revenue	1,520	33	1,489	35
Operating costs	(1,658)	(30)	(1,567)	(29)
People costs	(1,303)	(23)	(1,221)	(23)
Depreciation and amortisation	(73)	(1)	(66)	(1)
Other operating costs	(282)	(6)	(280)	(5)
Operating (loss)/profit before transformation costs	(138)	3	(78)	6
Transformation costs	(18)	(1)	(39)	(2)
Financeability EBIT	(156)	2	(117)	4
Financeability EBIT as % of total revenues	(10.3)%	6.0% ^a	(7.9)%	10.4% ^a
Volumes (million items)	5,120	-	5,387	-

^a The Financeability EBIT margin for Postcode Address File (PAF) reflects the calculated result prior to rounding adjustments.



£m	22/23	21/22
Revenue	32,658	34,635
Op. Costs	(29,751)	(28,977)
Op. Profit before	2,907	5,658
Transformation	(957)	(2,041)
Op. Profit after	1,950	3,617
Op. Margin after	6.0%	10.4%

