

Organisation (if applicable):

GeoPlace

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Additional comments:

GeoPlace LLP, a Limited Liability Partnership joint venture between the Local Government Association (LGA) and Ordnance Survey, commenced operations on the 1st April 2011, to provide one definitive and authoritative source of accurate spatial address and street data. The LLP is owned within the public sector, with the data being available for use by the whole of the public sector and beyond. GeoPlace achieves delivery of the National Address Gazetteer (NAG) by bringing together data from councils, Ordnance Survey and from the Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF) and combining this with other address data from the Valuation Office Agency.

Rather than respond to the individual questions as part of this consultation, GeoPlace are providing a general response expanding on the value we bring in improving addressing data across the UK.

To provide some context about the scale of the work GeoPlace do, we receive; validate and 'health check' over 6,000 update files per month from 512 councils in England and Wales. The majority of these are received on a daily basis, and they contain over 2 million modified records.

Councils are established by law as the definitive source of address and street information, through their statutory responsibility to name streets, to number properties. Councils attribute a Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) to each of these addresses. GeoPlace links this information to data from Royal Mail's Postcode Address File and to the Valuation Office Agency Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates lists. GeoPlace also works with councils to resolve and link any data that cannot be automatically linked and also includes addresses and their unique number - the TOID (which links directly to their large scale mapping) from Ordnance Survey.

Ordnance Survey disseminates the spatial addresses from the National Address Gazetteer database to users as the AddressBase™ range of products. Coverage of AddressBase data also includes Scottish data through agreement with the Improvement Service for Scotland, who coordinate collation of Scottish councils' address data.

In addition to the 29 million postal addresses produced by Royal Mail in the Postcode Address File, the AddressBase products also contain nearly 6 million addresses which do not appear in the Royal Mail Data, since this only includes postal delivery addresses. These include subdivisions of properties as e.g.: apartments, and also locations which do not carry a postal address such as Electricity Sub-Stations, Church Halls and Sewage farms. Together, this information provides what is the most complete, single definitive register of its kind in the world.

We continue to work on improving process and look for efficiencies in our operations.

GeoPlace is currently in discussions with Royal Mail to establish the optimum process for the interchanges of information between councils, GeoPlace and Royal Mail, to ensure consistency and efficiency in the addressing process. While the councils are the source of new addresses, these are passed to Royal Mail, in separate process to that of the NAG, who allocate the Post Code. Arguably these new addresses become part of PAF, which is then re-matched in the NAG to be included in the AddressBase products. Variations in how Royal Mail interpret addresses for mail delivery purposes and Royal Mail's process for data collection through mail delivery staff, causes a degree of divergence between council data and PAF which requires GeoPlace and councils to resolve problematic records. In our view this process is inefficient for local government and the addressing process in general. Ultimately, the NAG processes put in place, and the data created through GeoPlace, underpin improvements and efficiencies in service delivery within the public sector, and this data is beginning to support major activities in the commercial sector. However, inefficiencies in the process between local government and Royal Mail AMU, and resulting divergence of PAF from source address data has an impact on these efficiencies and effective service delivery. Paragraph 3.7 of the consultation suggests that Land Registry initiates the addressing process. Whilst Land Registry may record a description of a development for registration purposes, the formal creation of a street name and property number is the statutory responsibility of councils. In general, this information is passed to Royal Mail, and a variety of formats (paper, email, spread sheet) and also to a number of other interested bodies, by way of consultation over the proposed address. Subject to the consultation, the council issues a street naming and numbering notice (often paper or electronic document) to formally notify Royal Mail and others of this new address. The new address will also be included within the council's Local Land and Property Gazetteer that will update the National Address Gazetteer from which the AddressBase products are created.

There has been much debate in local government regarding the volume of data sent by councils and 'accepted' by PAF (ie qualifying for the 'pound;1 payment). Where PAF does not use the formal address provided by the council (either at the creation of the address, or where a property owner unofficially notifies Royal Mail of a change of property name without going through the street naming and numbering process), we have identified that divergence in the data happens which causes problems for address data users and the public. Managing a separate street naming and numbering data flow independently to the gazetteer process, results in unstandardized data being provided to Royal Mail and requires local government to manage multiple address related processes. There are opportunities to create some efficiency in the existing processes by streamlining the data flows around the more sophisticated gazetteer process.

Para 3.25 of the consultation comments on the suitability of other available address datasets that could replace PAF. We would like to state that of the 29 million records in Royal Mails Postcode Address File, the AddressBase base products hold 99% of the relevant postal addresses linked to the address description provided by local government. It is clear that improvements can be made to the existing process of address management, and whilst cost savings could be found, we are unclear how significant cost reduction can be made without a significant re-organisation of the addressing process.

Question 3.1: We welcome views from stakeholders on whether the setting of quality targets for PAF would be constructive. If so, would stakeholders find the publication of achievement against those targets helpful? Please state why:

Question 6.1: Do stakeholders agree with our analysis of the options for cost recovery against the principles of cost causation, and our proposal on cost recovery? Please give reasons for your response:

Question 7.1: Do stakeholders agree with our proposed approach to the terms on which PAF is made available, and our guidance on those terms? Please give reasons for your response: