



JLAF20

Additional Item B6 – Ordnance Survey Free

Consultation by the Department of Communities and Local Government: "Policy options for geographic information from Ordnance Survey". The 91 page consultation document is very involved, but responses are summarised under 12 questions. The consultation is open until the 17th March 2010, but the JLAF only discovered it's existence recently. The Deputy Chairman has considered the consultation and proposes the following response.

Draft JLAF Response:

Policy Options for Geographic Information from Ordnance Survey

The Joint Local Access Forum for Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire is a statutory body set up to advise its Local Authorities on matters relating to access to the outdoors. We are composed of representatives from user interests, landed interests and others who wish to promote access to the outdoors. We are, therefore, keenly interested in accurate and affordable mapping which not only facilitates access but reduces confusion for those wishing to enjoy urban and rural environments responsibly.

Our responses to your questions are as follows:

1. What are your views or comments on the policy drivers for this consultation?

It is apparent that the ready availability of maps to the general public and organisations, like our own, who are championing access to the outdoors would make it much easier for them to communicate with Local Authorities and thus help to ensure that appropriate policies are in place. To take a couple of simple examples: How do you indicate to the Highway Authority which stile on which public right of way needs attention without marking it on a map? Or, indeed, which Local Authority should one be contacting without access to boundary mapping. Such knowledge of our surroundings is necessary if we are all to be able to play a part in the community.

2. What are your views on how the market for geographic information has evolved recently and is likely to develop over the next 5- 10 years?

Our members, like the general public, have seen what modern mapping techniques can achieve either through using satellite navigation devices or seeing the mapping overlays available to our Local Authorities. This technology is tantalisingly within reach and yet denied to us by pricing or copyright structures. There is no doubt that the demand for such products will expand very considerably over the next 5 – 10years.

3. What are your views on the appropriate pricing model for OS products and services?

Any pricing model should have regard to outcomes at the level of the retail consumer.

4. What are your views and comments on public sector information regulation and policy, and the concepts of public task and good governance as they apply to OS?

We would ask for simplicity and transparency so that the public and voluntary organisations can see what is being done in their name and how that might affect outcomes.

5. What are your views and comments on the products under consideration for release for free re-use and the rationale for their inclusion?

We welcome the proposed list of products that would be available free. Outdoor activities such as walking, cycling and horse riding are heavily dependent on the 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 series. Currently the cost, and difficulty of use of large sheets discourages access to the outdoors while downloading an appropriate map would greatly facilitate access and safety. There is a special consideration within built-up areas where we newcomers to walking and to some extent the disabled will continue to need appropriate street mapping.

We recommend the addition of four further datasets to the list:

1. **1:10000 Colour Raster Mapping.** (in addition to the Street View mapping included). This is the mapping the Councils use for Access Land and other on-site notice boards, as it has particularly clarity for users not familiar with mapping legends. It is also useful in urban areas.
2. **Contour Data.** This is very useful for outdoors access use, and for 3d mapping applications, so that users can visualise the gradients of a route. This is particularly useful for disabled users.
3. **OS Grid Reference data.** This should be provided for free use, to maintain it as a recognised standard and promote its use in orientation, location and search.
4. *The Ordnance Survey should also consider providing access to a **single national Public Rights of Way dataset**, as used on 1:25000 mapping, including data on other public access (including Access Land, promoted routes, cycle routes and permissive routes).*

6. How much do you think government should commit to funding the free production set? How might this be achieved?

The payback to the economy is significantly in excess of the marginal cost of funding the free production set. The Government should, therefore, fully commit to the project.

7. What are your views on how free data from Ordnance Survey should be delivered?

We strongly support the ideas being considered for the public to view and download mapping. A web based Application Programming Interface (API) service whereby the public can manipulate and add their own value to maps is particularly exciting. The vast growth in apps for mobile phones is an indication of the innovation that would be encouraged by the availability of the data.

Whilst an API hosted by the Ordnance Survey (such as the current product at OS Openspace) is probably necessary, it is very limiting and new public access to digital OS mapping should not be limited to this. It is important that OS data (particularly raster mapping from 1:10k up to 1:250k scales) is made available to be used openly on all platforms, including existing APIs, websites, GPS devices and phones. This would be particularly relevant in our interest to increase use of paths, so we can easily overlay routes on a variety of services already in use by the public. Therefore, we particularly support a download service that uses a variety of common data formats.

8. What are your views on the impact OS Free will have on the market?

There will be a considerable uptake of the online offer leading to a tailing off of hard copy available through retail outlets. When the level drops to a point where retailers find stocking unattractive the current range of maps should be made available on request much as special maps can currently be ordered. There will always be a residual need for large sheet hard copy.

Those who do not have the facility to download and print their own maps should have the facility to do this through libraries or other community centres.

9. What are your comments on the proposal for a single National Address Register and suggestions for mechanisms to deliver it?

We do not have a view on this subject.

10. What are your views on the options outlined in this consultation?

Option 2 promises more and better access to mapping and derived products. However we note that Option 3 would provide "Ordnance Survey Free" which is the key to better access to the outdoors by the general public.

11. What will be the balance of impact of these proposals on your costs and revenues?

We are not a local authority, though we do advise local authorities in our area. Whilst we are not in a position to comment on the financial impact of the proposals, we understand that with these proposals, the local authorities in our area would be able to share data with partners and publicise their network of public rights of way more readily, in order to increase the use of paths by the public.

12. Will these proposals have any impact on race, gender or disability equalities?

Yes. They facilitate all sorts of opportunities for people not currently accessing the outdoors some of the obstructions to which are impacted by race and disability.