

AGI GIGateway™ Advisory Group Meeting

18th May 2005, 10:30am

AGI Offices, Block C, 4th Floor, Morelands, 5-23 Old Street, London, EV1V 9HL

MINUTES

Attendees

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Alan Smith (AS) | Office for National Statistics |
| Bruce Gittings (BG) | University of Edinburgh |
| Jamie Justham (JJ) | Dotted Eyes |
| Robert Mann (RM) | AGI - <i>Chair</i> |
| Lee West(LW) | AGI |
| Robert Turner (RT) | AGI- <i>Secretary</i> |
| Rob Walker (RW) | GI Standards Committee |
| Tony Black (TB) | Intelligent Addressing |
| Carol Hrynkiewicz (CH) | ODPM |
| Jerry Giles (JG) | British Geological Survey |
| Peat Allan (PA) | Ordnance Survey |

Apologies

| | |
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| Bob Barr | Manchester University |
| Geoff May | Ordnance Survey |

1. Review of Minutes and Actions from last meeting

Actions from the meeting held on 16 February were reviewed and the following points were noted:

GI Panel

The GI Panel has now met and had its inaugural meeting. They have agreed its Terms of Reference and agreed that a UK GI Strategy should be high on the agenda. The panel will meet quarterly with the next meeting in June. There is, however, some uncertainty over which minister it should report to.

ACTION: RM to circulate terms of Reference and membership.

Work with ESRI

RM to follow up with ESRI and other vendors the possibility of linking up their own metadata systems with gateway.

Advisory Group Membership

It was agreed that the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) should be invited to send a representative. This body has taken over from HMSO.

ACTION: RM to invite a representative.

JG asked the group to note that he represented the 7 NERC datacentres on the group and not just the BGS.

Report from User Survey

A second survey is now underway.

ACTION: Carried forward – LW will compile a report from both these surveys.

DEFRA

DEFRA are waiting to sort out their internal procedures and systems before getting involved with gigateway.

2. Operating Plan 2005-6

LW explained the background to this year's operating plan – the last under current NIMSA funding. This includes the change of focus to concentrate on key datasets.

The overall budget has dropped. There has been a reduction in the training budget as the MetaGenie training programme has been completed. The training sessions, although well received, suffered from being a "bottom-up" approach. This year's mission is to get the message to higher levels of the organisation.

PA suggested that the role of the advisory group should be looking further than the current operating plan, beyond discovery metadata, and to the service post March 2006.

RT mentioned the new EuroGeographics site, which might, in the long term, provide an alternative to gigateway. The URL for this is <http://gbs02.geotaskserver.com/eurogg/index.jsp>.

PA stressed that gigateway needed to focus on the tools required for publishing metadata, and how these could be improved.

JG stressed the need to influence managers. RM said that DEFRA was an example of an organisation that was taking a top-down approach to their metadata holdings. PA said that he had seen the DEFRA data catalogue and that it appeared to contain GEMINI elements plus extras. AS pointed out that commitment to gigateway doesn't happen by chance, but has to tie in with an organisation's plans to publish metadata. It requires forward-planning and thinking. BG asked AS what had held him back supplying records. AS replied that it was internal political problems and technical issues. BG stressed that we need to be developing tools to run local nodes to link to standard systems. JG said that the cost of that would be considerable and wouldn't overcome the cultural issue. BG said that we needed a collection of software and tools that is available to clip together, and suggested that BGS might have something suitable. JG said that BGS had a very old system that outputs the data in the formats of the portals that they wished to contribute to.

Tony Black asked whether this was a data or software issue. JG responded that

is primarily an issue of culture change citing the example of the IGGI Central Government node. When a notice went out to refresh details, only 11 datasets were received. He suggested that the e-Government Unit should mandate, and that it needed to get into a good governance policy.

TB thought that OPSI had a responsibility to ensure that an Information Asset Register was produced by all organisations.

BG said that we need to do what we can to challenge suppliers' excuses for not supplying metadata. For example, providing a GEMINI input screen within ESRI GIS systems. AS agreed saying that if organisations found a problem, metadata creation would be the first thing that would be cut.

JG suggested getting together with other similar portals, such as the higher and further education portals to lobby with the same message. PA suggested that organisations with a "clean bill of health" to lobby on behalf of the metadata community. AS said that it was difficult to show a good example. "The house is there, but there is no one at home!" People are expecting gigateway already to be doing what we hope it should do.

ACTION: LW to collate list of other portals

TB pointed out that the last thing the local government community wanted was more software. They want systems where they can output data in a consistent format. The changes should then be propagated to a national service. BG said that the snag with this is that it requires more sophisticated additions, and is not short term.

JG gave the example of the Association of geotechnical and geo-environmental engineers. They maintain a format mandated within their community. It is maintained by a small software developer. This shows how this can be self perpetuating when a community needs it for good governance.

RM stated that there was £38K of funds unallocated in the NGDF bank account, which needed to be spent this year. BG suggested this could be used to enable an organisation to show a real benefit, and to hold them up as an example to others.

JG suggested taking the SAP approach. This is an IT company that markets to company boards not the IT people – thus encouraging culture change from the top down.

RW pointed out that we lack a strong business case. We need strong case studies such as BGS. JJ supported this, but with an additional purpose. He was concerned that there was no identified source of funding, and it could provide hard evidence.

RM summarised the debate as follows:

1. get to the budget holder/board room
2. How do we address technical issues?
3. Liaison with other portals and GIS vendors

PA said that we shouldn't get too hung up on the creation of metadata, but it was the ability to use it that would lead to success. JG agreed, saying that it was important to have best-practice standards for abstracts. RW agreed that there needed to be examples to go with the GEMINI standard, as currently it was impossible to work out what the dataset was from the abstract.

ACTION: LW to document key parts of an abstract, with examples

3. Confirmation of UK's key national dataset providers

LW presented the proposed list of key national dataset providers. AS pointed out that ONS currently harvests a lot of GI from other government departments (e.g. Department of Health). RW stressed that we needed "Quick wins" and we needed to get it put up quickly – the issue was how to do it, not identifying the providers. BG was worried that some organisations will not be quick.

ACTION: team to get information into gigateway as quickly as possible

4. Criteria for gigateway approved records

LW presented the list of proposed quality assurance standards. He has sampled some records against the standards. There was some discussion about how these should be identified and displayed. JG suggested contacting the data holders rather than going for a big technological solution.

RW said that he didn't think that the criteria went far enough – the guidelines should say what is or is not valid and what should be checked, with examples. He suggested a news item to publicise the guidelines and "gold star" winners. BG favoured a technical solution, allowing users to send feedback on records.

ACTION: LW and RT to improve guidelines

5. NIMSA Consultation update

RM reported that the results of the NIMSA consultation should be published by the end of the month. But renegotiating NIMSA would coincide with the Pan-government agreement renegotiation. The AGI had suggested that the gigateway contract should be extended for 1 year as there was very little time to hand over to ODPM. There was general agreement that the contract should be continued. TB asked whether ODPM realise that everything could stop on 1st April

RM stressed that that handover plans need to be in place and will be developed.

ACTION: RM to make formal representations on behalf of gigateway. He will circulate plans to wind up the service and draft a letter from the Advisory Group.

6. GI Panel Update

RM gave a short update on the GI Panel. The Panel has had an initial meeting at which participants discussed how the panel would run and agreed a scoping study on a UK GI Strategy. This could be another hook to hang an ongoing gigateway. TB asked if the minutes were available and whether the panel had a budget. RM replied that the minutes should be made public and the panel had a budget of around £30 000.

7. Date of Next Meeting

This will be on September 7th at 10:30 at AGI Offices.