

## AGI GIGateway Advisory Group / ODPM Meeting

07 January 2005, 10:30am

AGI Offices, Block C, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Morelands, 5-23 Old Street, London, EC1V 9HL

### MINUTES

#### Attendees

Tony Black (TB)	Intelligent Addressing
Lars Calvert (LC)	ODPM
Jamie Justham (JJ)	Dotted Eyes
Mark Linehan (ML)	AGI
Dave Lovell (DL)	Ordnance Survey
Geoff May (GM)	Ordnance Survey - <i>Chair</i>
Louise Scofield (LS)	AGI
Alan Smith (AS)	Office for National Statistics
Theresa Stabb (TS)	AGI - <i>Secretary</i>
Robert Turner (RT)	AGI
Rob Walker (RW)	GI Standards Committee
Philip White (PW)	ODPM

#### Apologies

Peat Allan (PA)	Ordnance Survey
Bob Barr (BB)	Manchester University
Jerry Giles (JG)	British Geological Survey
Bruce Gittings (BG)	University of Edinburgh

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## 1. Introduction

GM began by stating that there was no formal agenda for the meeting, although the overall aim was to give as much advice and guidance as possible on the targets contained within the current contract. GM added that although there had been excellent hard work by the team, concern had escalated regarding the targets set within the Service Operating Plan and confirmed that both Ordnance Survey (OS) and AGI had accepted the reality of this. GM suggested that rather than examining the targets for 2005, it would perhaps be better to take a longer term view through to 2006. GM also stated that the agenda today was not concerned with post 2006 but instead needed to focus on the best way to achieve goals leading up to this date. GM then asked attendees to make some opening comments. GM

## 2. Opening comments

JJ stated that he thought it was right that there should be measurable targets, although it has proved difficult to determine what exactly should be measured. JJ added that the service should be *worth* using and that it had indeed made huge strides in the past year. However he noted that it was hard to see exactly what the targets should be. JJ

AS echoed JJ's view regarding the concern over targets. AS stated that he was unsure if Glgateway was being measured against the correct targets and was worried about the emphasis placed upon the volume of data. AS also noted that although the Advisory Group performs a useful role, he was concerned that the vision it is trying to achieve has not been pushed fully. He added that in light of the explosion of GI data generated from the Pan-Government Agreement, Glgateway - as a potential source for such data – remained untapped. AS

TB felt that the Advisory Group should approach these issues from a strategic angle rather than one of 'day-to-day' targets. He reiterated Bruce Gitting's comments contained within his e-mail to the Advisory Group. TB also stated that a general infrastructure needs to be in place and that it remained important not to lose sight of the wider picture. TB

RT was concerned that while targets focused on the number of records, there is failure to examine whether these records are actually of any use to anyone. He also raised the problem of data that is out of date and noted that although there is a need to focus on quality rather than usefulness, this is hard to measure. RT

DL then stated that the original expectation was that an increase in metadata would increase the number of customers. DL suggested that the problem is that those who have the most metadata to provide have the least to gain from providing it and added that the following questions should be asked: Why should people use the service? How can they be encouraged to provide metadata? DL also stated that in view of the fact that this is likely to become a mandatory requirement throughout Europe, it was hoped that Glgateway would stand as a model for providing this. Although he felt that this is not the case presently, this is certainly something that Glgateway needs to strive towards. DL

RW raised the following questions for consideration: Who are the users? What are the user benefits? (RW noted that this had never been established) How do we ensure that the quality of records is acceptable? How do we encourage people to RW

contribute records?

ML highlighted the need to consider the service post-2006 (especially if this will be required by European law). ML noted that the targets set had seemed reasonable at the time and that interest was keen. He emphasised the need to ask why this interest did not convert into the provision of new metadata. ML

ML also stated that he was uncomfortable with a metadata service sitting under NIMSA. He suggested that such a service should cover the whole of the UK rather than just GB, and whether this should be contracted via OS. He added that, as sub-contractors, the onus has been on GIGateway to make decisions. Although this gives GIGateway freedom to determine its course of action, ML suggested that a further body may be required to establish an overall strategy for GIGateway as it currently seemed isolated.

ML urged the group not to lose sight of the recommendations contained within Les Rackham's report. He noted that the Government ought to want this service, especially to ensure that no duplication of data takes place. ML concluded by stating that the infrastructure was firmly in place and that it just remained to decide what needs to be done to make it a success.

LS echoed ML's point that the targets did seem realistic at the time of their creation. She added that this issue had provoked discussions on quality rather than quantity. LS felt that the situation remained frustrating as enthusiasm for the service is apparent. However, LS asked the following question: If IGGI was unable to set the standard for metadata, who could? LS

LC informed the group that although he was primarily coming from an ODPM perspective, he was also influenced by his role as Secretary of IGGI. LC stated that on the supply side, he felt that IGGI was part of the problem as some of the records are of dubious quality. LC added that although steps had been taken in the last couple of months to rectify this situation, this had resulted in a number of records being withdrawn from the site. LC emphasised that a 'trade-off' between quantity and quality is needed and suggested that the following questions should be asked: Why anyone would want to provide metadata if there is no money to be made? If benefits did exist, why hadn't more providers contributed? How easy is the actual process of contributing metadata? LC

Alternatively on the demand side, LC added that the following questions should also be asked: Who wants to use the service? Why go to GIGateway and not OS? What are the benefits of the service to users? As NIMSA Manager, LC expressed the need to ensure that the service is offering value for money and noted that he was required to produce a report in the next couple of months which would be difficult if GIGateway is not delivering. LC once again stressed the importance of value for money.

PW stated that it was necessary to assess performance against targets and added that some form of evaluation should be considered. He also stressed the need to encourage use of the service. With regard to the role of IGGI, PW emphasised that there is no strong management structure in place. He urged that they should be enabled to contribute fully to the GIGateway project and that the role of IGGI, as well as other organisations, should be examined. PW

In assessing these opening remarks, GM noted that none of the attendees had questioned the value of a metadata service. Instead the focus has concentrated on the issue of motivation for both data providers and users. GM emphasised that lack of motivation could explain why interest in the service had not been converted into action. He added that although it is correct to ask whether the GM

right things are being measured, there is still a need to look at performance and targets, including the issue of quantity and quality. GM suggested that this will help justify the continuation of the service post 2006. He also emphasised the importance, as ML had previously noted, of conducting an examination into NIMSA's role and the need for strategic direction.

ML noted that it is natural that AGI should provide advice but that perhaps this advice needs to be tied closer to the client rather than AGI as the sub-contractor. He added that he would like to see from clients an acceptance of the need to focus not on targets that are clearly unachievable within the next few months, but rather on those that relate to a longer-term view. GM agreed with this. ML

### *3. Government contribution to the service*

With reference to Les Rackham's report, GM asked the attendees whether it is appropriate to focus mainly on the public sector and whether they felt that this may be a beneficial area to explore. GM

TB agreed that Central Government is the correct place to start. However, he felt that people are confused about where to go and emphasised that a facility with rapid access to data was definitely needed. TB also added that the problem of initial enthusiasm which does not then translate into results formed a typical marketing scenario. He noted that Local Government is an important area to focus upon but that there may be a problem due to the fact that different Local Authorities operate in different ways. TB

AS felt that if GEMINI is not pushed as a standard via the Cabinet Office's e-Government Unit, there may be a problem due to the fact that AGI is doing this alone. AS stated that he was worried that, because of this, it may not have as much success. AS

ML echoed AS's comments. He pointed out that, at a recent meeting at the eGovernment Unit, he had been informed that the eGU did not have the resources to continue to maintain GEMINI and had requested that the AGI take it on. ML  
AS added that, with reference to GEMINI, although he felt that the goodwill was there, the resource issue is a problem and that he did not want to lose the opportunity to push GEMINI via AGI. AS

### *4. Targets, quality and the use of core data sets*

GM returned to the issue of targets and stated that although targets were designed to achieve critical mass, concentration on quality rather than quantity has led to a reduction in data. GM added that the stark reality is that data contribution is not a priority of providers and the question remained as to how to motivate them. GM

ML pointed out that critical mass is not just about numbers. ML

AS noted that in order to sort out records on the IGGI node, a reduction in the number of records was necessary. He added that although there are additional records that could be put up, it was perhaps better to wait until others have been reorganized before adding more. AS

AS stated that although he wanted to encourage people to use Glgateway as the access point to data, he had received many enquiries that Glgateway would not

be able to help. AS felt that this inability to recommend the service to potential users is problematic and that a cumulative effect is needed to increase use, as well as keeping only quality data records.

GM asked the attendees if they agreed that strategic direction from Government is the critical success factor. GM

ML agreed that a lead from Government was called for across the whole GI industry, but that currently Government seemed to lack the will to do this. ML

ML noted that, further to the last Advisory Group meeting, steps should be taken to ensure that core UK geographical metadata sets are listed as metadata on GIGateway. While he acknowledged that there may be problems in agreeing exactly which data should be included, ML urged that this would be a good place to start. This would give a basis for targets and determine who should be contacted within the industry. ML added that once this core data was in place, the addition of further data would follow and that the problem outlined by AS of being unable to recommend potential users to GIGateway would begin to be resolved.

GM asked if around a dozen sets was a realistic number and ML agreed that this is manageable. GM suggested INSPIRE as a starting point. GM

AS identified the need to look at possible scenarios and questions with a view to finding out the sort of queries that GIGateway should be able to answer. He agreed that it would be ideal to use the core data sets that people want as a start to improving the service. AS

GM asked TB whether he saw Local Authorities as being part of these core data providers and TB agreed. TB also felt that looking at Inspire would help determine specific themes for Local Government data. GM TB

RW stated that what really matters is finding out who the service is being provided for and also emphasised the need to look at core data sets at a higher level. RW added that case studies of users would be beneficial and also urged the importance of data sets on a national level that could be applied, for instance, to areas such as disaster planning (RW used the Foot and Mouth crisis as an example). He added that the implications of having - or indeed *not* having - such data should be examined. RW

RW also suggested that data should be inspected to find out which part of it was useful. Using BGS as an example, RW stated that because the data is used internally, BGS has a vested interest in ensuring data is of the highest quality and fully up-to-date.

GM noted that the discussion had moved from core organisations to the issue of thematic data and then on to possible applications that would require thematic data to be supplied by such organisations. GM

At this point, DL stated that he did not think that this represented a valid approach. He suggested that although conceptual applications used to determine data is useful, this approach would perhaps not allow the full identification of users. DL

##### *5. Refining data and seeking commitment from providers*

JJ asked the group to focus on what it *is* about spatial metadata that is in the JJ

national interest. He suggested that although one of the roles of spatial metadata may be getting the GEMINI standard implemented, the service itself is the vision. In order to focus on this, JJ noted that it may be better to strip down the service now and then seek commitment to store data for, perhaps, one year. After this period has lapsed, the data would be removed if not kept up to a certain level of quality.

GM noted that this approach would entail that the commitment to store data lies with the service provider and that, without reaching a particular quality, such data could not go on to the service. He asked if this proposal was too radical. GM

ML replied that out-of-date information may still be of use, so he would not go as far as JJ had suggested. However, despite this, some 'stamp of quality' was clearly needed. ML

GM reiterated the need to define a list of thematic data supplied by key government organisations and to seek a high level of commitment regarding such data. AS added that strategic backing for GIGateway is needed from core AS organisations.

DL stressed that the current discussion was dealing only with medium and long-term issues and that problems with the service could not wait that long. DL

PW emphasised the importance of considering that people will look at what is currently happening with the service and then decide to commit on the basis of that, rather than on the basis of future plans. While agreeing on the need for a commitment to publish data, PW also noted the problem of deciding who to approach. PW

ML replied that this should not be too difficult to determine as this would amount to perhaps only a dozen or so organisations. ML

AS noted that there are 216 signatures to the Pan Government Agreement, so a big enough user base already exists for GIGateway at a Central Government level. AS

## 6. Summing Up

GM asked the group to sum up the discussion. GM

JJ began by noting that big problems obviously exist with the service but that it would be reassuring to take away a sense of direction in solving them. He stated that the group had 'zeroed-in' on the public sector as both providers and users and that they had also considered whether Local Authorities could be a part of this. JJ noted that, as there is a strong desire within Local Authorities to collect metadata, this could be a positive direction. JJ hoped that a mechanism could exist to allow GIGateway to push for a moral obligation towards the upkeep of data. JJ

AS stated that the opportunity to carry this out under the Pan-Government Agreement is interesting and that it would not be unreasonable to suggest some commitment. AS stressed the need to acknowledge that there is indeed a problem with the service and that he felt that this had been achieved. AS added that he was encouraged by the vision put forward for the service. He also felt that the idea of a reduced amount of data that is of high quality would provide the starting point for an ambitious service. AS

TB added that he also felt encouraged by the discussion and that he was pleased TB

that the emphasis had been placed towards the Government side of things. TB stressed that he would not like this emphasis to be concentrated only on Central Government but that Local Government should be included as well. TB was also concerned over the issue of GEMINI and felt that responsibility for this needs clarification. TB stated that, overall, he was happy that a solid infrastructure is in place which can be successfully built upon.

RT added that he was pleased that the issue of what *kind* of data should be on the site had been raised. RT

DL stated that OS is keen for GIGateway to reflect on the issues that had been discussed. OS will draft a Plan with input from the GIGateway team, and the latter will then propose a budget to support achievement of the Plan. He stressed the requirement to articulate a plan that covered more than just the next 15 months and also suggested that there may be a need to link the provision of a metadata service with the Public Records Act. DL also added that the question of funding for metadata provision from Northern Ireland needs to be resolved. DL

RW suggested that GIGateway should not be seen as a 'stand-alone' service and that it should be linked to other initiatives at the web site level. RW stressed that the key message had to be quality and that an examination is needed into how this may be assessed. RW

ML identified a key role for GIGateway in ensuring the success of the Pan-Government Agreement. ML also asked LC when the results of the NIMSA consultation would be received. LC replied that the consultation was completed at the end of November and that they had received around 300 responses. LC added that the final report is due at the end of January and will be published towards the end of February/March together with views on what should happen next. ML

TB suggested that there should be representation from the client at the next Advisory Group meeting and it was agreed that both OS and ODPM representatives will be invited to attend all future meetings. LC

LS stated that she was also encouraged by the meeting and emphasised that if the team are given direction and commitment, the issue of quality can be worked upon. LS felt however that quantity, in terms of data and users, will continue to be an issue and that overall, people need to be compelled to provide metadata to the service. LS

LC stated that he was optimistic about the direction of GIGateway, although he felt that the credibility of the service is dependant upon quality of data. LC added that it is vital to focus upon what the user wants from the service but that it was also necessary to be realistic concerning what exactly can be achieved over the next 15 months. LC

PW added that he felt it was a 'tall order' to involve Local Authorities and also suggested contacting the Government Office Information network. PW

Finally GM thanked all attendees for their contributions and said that an updated Service Operating Plan covering the period through to March 2006 was the immediate tangible deliverable. He stressed the importance of the Advisory Group contributing to this and suggested that the Plan should be regularly reviewed rather than being 'cast in concrete'. GM

TB asked whose responsibility it would be to produce this and ML stated that OS will produce a draft to which AGI will attach a proposed budget. Following initial TB  
ML

approval by OS the overall package will then be submitted to NIMSA Review Group for final sign off.

In closing the meeting, GM acknowledged that the targets contained within the current 2004-5 Operating Plan are no longer realistic or valid and need to be re-defined. GM