

[Geospatial Commission outlines actions to boost UK's geospatial ecosystem](#)

Today the Geospatial Commission has published its [‘Enhancing the UK’s Geospatial Ecosystem’](#) report. This report outlines the actions needed to nurture the growing UK geospatial economy and realise the vision set out in the [UK’s Geospatial Strategy](#). The recommendations are based on the findings of an independent research study by Frontier Economics into the state of the location data market in the UK, also published today.

Use of location data, also known as geospatial data, is growing across many sectors and industries. Businesses can and do use location data as both a foundational building block, such as in the housing and transport sectors, and within cutting edge technology and data science techniques, such as in the financial services and marketing industries.

The Geospatial Commission’s recommendations focus on three key areas: improving data access; maintaining public trust and driving business adoption. Success requires a whole system and collaborative approach, with action required across the public sector to overcome the barriers and embrace the breadth of opportunities that better geospatial data provides.

Sir Andrew Dilnot, Geospatial Commission Chair, said

Data about location is increasingly valuable to businesses throughout the UK economy, and it is important that the right conditions are in place to support its efficient access, trusted use and swift adoption. The Geospatial Commission has outlined key recommendations and actions, and looks forward to working with key partners across the public sector, to ensure that these conditions are enabled.

I am grateful to Frontier Economics for their thoughtful and rigorous analysis of the UK’s geospatial data market, which takes a unique approach to identifying the full impact of geospatial data throughout the UK economy and is the main basis for the Geospatial Commission’s recommendations.

Background

The Geospatial Commission has published its [‘Enhancing the UK’s Geospatial Ecosystem’](#) report. It outlines areas for action to nurture the growing UK geospatial economy, and is based on the findings of an independent research study by Frontier Economics into the state of the location data market in the UK, also published today.

The report highlights the following three areas and six recommendations that require action now to secure the full potential of location data to the UK:

Improving access to location data – Data holders should consider the public good as a main rationale when making decisions about access to location data.

Action 1: The Geospatial Commission will include the objective that ‘data holders consider the public good in decisions about access to location data’ in its forthcoming guidelines for measuring the value of location data, and for the ethical use of location data and technology in both the private and public sector.

Action 2: Competition regulators, including a future Digital Markets Unit and organisations within the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum, should consider the potential public good arising from the sharing and reuse of location data when evolving their regulatory approach for unlocking competition in digital markets.

Maintaining public trust in how location data is used – There should be an informed public discourse considering the benefits arising from use of location data and the potential risks to individual privacy.

Action 3: The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) should provide further clarity on the distinction between personal and non-personal location data.

Action 4: The Geospatial Commission will lead an informed public discourse about the benefits and risks of new applications of location data, starting with a new programme of deliberative public engagement.

Driving location data adoption – Organisations should recognise the additional value that location data can deliver for their business.

Action 5: The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) should further incorporate location data capability as an essential component of their programmes for increasing growth, innovation and productivity within the UK economy.

Action 6: The Government Commercial Function should embed provisions within appropriate government contracts and spend approvals to require valuable location data, generated either directly or as a by-product of the provision of other goods and services, to be retained and made available for appropriate reuse by the government.

Frontier Economics and the Geospatial Commission are grateful to Sir Edward Troup, Sir Ian Diamond, Tera Allas CBE, Amelia Fletcher CBE and John Pullinger CB for their comments as part of the Market Study Expert Panel.