

Press release: Chancellor to unlock hidden value of government data

The Chancellor has announced today a new Geospatial Commission to maximise the value of all UK government data linked to location, and to create jobs and growth in a modern economy.

Its first task will be to work with government and the Ordnance Survey by May 2018 to establish how to open up freely the OS MasterMap data to UK-based small businesses in particular.

The announcement is a further boost to the UK's status as a world leader in digital innovation and an example of how advances in technology can be used to foster economic growth, deliver outstanding public services and generate savings for citizens.

Location-aware technologies are revolutionising the economy. From navigating public transport to tracking supply chains and planning efficient delivery routes, the digital services built on GPS and the current mapping data have quietly become everyday parts of daily life and commerce.

Huge amounts of value have been created by the new services made possible using databases of geospatial information – maps, and the information linked to them like house prices or business addresses. This data, which government produces in the course of delivering public services and maintaining laws and regulations, can be used to stimulate innovation in the economy and drive the development of the UK's growing digital economy.

The new Geospatial Commission, supported by £40 million of new funding in each of the next two years, will drive the move to use this data more productively – unlocking up to £11 billion of extra value for the economy every year.

The new Commission will draw together HM Land Registry, the Ordnance Survey, the British Geological Survey, the Valuation Office Agency, the UK Hydrographic Office and the Coal Authority with a view to:

- improving the access to, links between, and quality of their data
- looking at making more geospatial data available for free and without restriction
- setting regulation and policy in relation to geospatial data created by the public sector
- holding individual bodies to account for delivery against the geospatial strategy
- providing strategic oversight and direction across Whitehall and public bodies who operate in this area

First Secretary of State, Damian Green, said:

“The UK leads the way in digital innovation, using it to drive productivity

and growth, and deliver the best public services to citizens. The UK has some of the best geospatial data in the world, much of it is held by public bodies, and the new Geospatial Commission will help Britain to turn this valuable government data into tangible benefits such as new jobs and savings.”

Saul Klein, Partner, LocalGlobe, said:

“The UK has been a world leader in the open data movement, which has already helped to spawn global success stories like Citymapper. Opening up geospatial data shows how committed the UK government is to being the best place in the world for startups and innovative companies to use data to build amazing new products and services.”

Professor Sir Nigel Shadbolt, Chairman of the Open Data Institute said:

“I’m delighted that the UK government is carrying through on the commitment in its manifesto to open up UK geospatial data. In particular, opening up the OS MasterMap will stimulate growth and investment in the UK economy, generate jobs and improve services. It will make it easier to find land for house-building, and enable the development of services that improve vital infrastructure.”