

Public dialogue on location data ethics published

- Independent dialogue is one of the first on location data
- 85 members of the public gave their thoughts about location data use across four workshops
- Findings outlined will inform government guidance on location data ethics to be published next year

[The Geospatial Commission today publishes the findings of an independent public dialogue on location data ethics](#). The project was launched in March and co-funded by the Geospatial Commission and UK Research and Innovation's Sciencewise programme.

The dialogue is one of the UK's first on location data and was delivered by public engagement specialists Traverse and researchers from the Ada Lovelace Institute. Today's report provides evidence on public perceptions about location data use, offering valuable insights into what citizens believe are the key benefits and concerns.

The report will be launched at a [virtual event today](#) at 3pm hosted by The Alan Turing Institute, the national institute for data science and artificial intelligence. Cosmina Dorobantu, Deputy Programme Director for Public Policy at The Alan Turing Institute, will deliver the keynote speech at the event which will also feature a presentation by Traverse and Ada Lovelace, and a panel discussion with leading data experts.

Minister of State for the Cabinet Office, Lord True CBE said:

The evolution of the UK's geospatial ecosystem presents great opportunities to realise significant economic, social and environmental value. The public dialogue report underlines that as we seek to capitalise on these benefits we will always aim to do so in a way that carries the confidence of the public and addresses any concerns.

Independent Commissioner of the Geospatial Commission and Interim Chair of the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, Edwina Dunn OBE said:

This independent report on public attitudes about location data is one of the first of its kind and I look forward to exploring how it can help inform the Geospatial Commission's work on location data ethics. The findings will also play an important role in supporting the government's vital work to enable the trustworthy use of data and AI.

Tom Saunders, Head of Public Engagement, UKRI, said:

This timely independent dialogue will help inform the government's geospatial strategy, allowing the UK to unlock the power of location data for economic, social and environmental benefit while balancing individuals' concern over important ethical and privacy considerations. UKRI's Sciencewise programme helps policy-makers understand what the public really thinks, and ensures that experts, government and the public can design a better future together that works for everyone.

Location data powers our everyday lives, telling us about travel disruption, tracking deliveries, and helping us find the place we need to be. The widespread use of new technologies means that data about our lives, including location data, is available in increasing frequency, detail and accuracy, driving innovation and better services. So that we can continue to benefit from widespread use of location data, it is important that data is used in a way that mitigates concerns and retains public confidence.

This public dialogue opened a conversation with 85 members of the public from all four nations to gather evidence on public perceptions about location data use. The dialogue was supported by an independent and expert Oversight Group, which provided expert support and quality assurance from a diversity of perspectives.

The findings outlined in this report will influence the guidance on location data ethics that the Geospatial Commission intends to publish next year and help deliver the [UK Geospatial Strategy](#).

Members of the Oversight Group

- John Pullinger (Chair) and previously the UK's National Statistician
- Andy Gregory, Home Office
- Ben Lyons, Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation
- Charles Kennelly, Esri
- Chris Wroe, Telefónica UK
- David Leslie, The Alan Turing Institute
- Ellis Parry, Information Commissioner's Office (Later Matthew Rice)
- Jagdev Singh Virdee, Independent Consultant
- Jeni Tennison, Open Data Institute (Later Lisa Allen)
- Josh Berle, Mastercard
- Marcus Grazette, Privitar
- Mick Ridley, Global
- Phil Earl, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
- Philipa Sharma, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- Professor Shannon Vallor, Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI), University of Edinburgh
- Professor Yves-Alexandre de Montjoye, Imperial College London
- Renate Samson, Which?
- Simon Whitworth, UK Statistics Authority

- Sue Bateman, Government Digital Service
- Toby Wicks, UNICEF

Editor's note:

The Geospatial Commission is an expert committee that sets the UK's geospatial strategy and promotes the best use of geospatial data. Providing guidance on how to unlock value from sensitive location data while mitigating security, ethical and privacy risks is a key commitment of the UK Geospatial Strategy.

For further information, please contact us at geospatialcommission@cabinetoffice.gov.uk