

David Wood introduces the Government Geography Profession

Two and a half years ago a group of committed and passionate geographers – the Central Government Geographers Group chaired by Jon Pickstone – worked with the Cabinet Office and the Government Science and Engineering profession (GSE) to establish geography as a new sub-profession within GSE.

I was appointed in 2018 as the first head of the geography profession to establish and grow the profession within GSE with a vision for a high profile, proud and effective profession that attracts fresh talent and has a secure place at the heart of government decision making.

It's been a busy couple of years, during which time we've grown from a standing start to over 1,200 members across the public sector and put in place a number of initiatives to support our members, celebrated and promoted the importance of geography in the public sector and undertaken outreach activities to inspire the next generation of geographers – find out more at our new [website](#).

Today, Sir Ian Diamond, Head of the Analysis Function in Government (and UK's National Statistician) and Sir Patrick Vallance, Government Head of the Science and Engineering Profession (and Government's Chief Scientific Advisor) made an announcement on the future of the Analysis Function in Government, GSE and the [geography profession](#). Geography is a crucial part of the multi-disciplinary approach we will need to take within the Analysis Function to tackle the big issues faced by society. To support this, I'm very pleased to say that the Government Geography Profession will become a standalone profession within the Analysis Function and based at Cabinet Office with the [Geospatial Commission](#).

You can find out more about the [Analysis Function](#) and its vision to integrate analysis into decision making and delivery to help improve outcomes and the Geospatial Commission and its strategic goal to drive a demonstrable shift in the UK's geospatial capability through improved skills, resources, and better awareness, [understanding of the geospatial sector and its value](#).

Of course, we will continue to be an inclusive and welcoming profession and will continue to support all those in the public sector who consider themselves geographers, recognising that whilst a lot of us clearly align to the [Analysis Function](#), some of us are in wider roles across the public sector.

But this is just the start, there's a lot more that we want to do as a profession to support our members, set standards and work with other professions to embed geography at the heart of government decision making.

I would like to thank all those who have joined the profession and worked with us to help us realise our vision, including all those in GSE who we will continue to work with, and I look forward with the rest of the [geography](#)

[leadership team](#) to leading us into the next stage of our journey.

If you are a civil, crown or public servant, and a geographer find out more about our [benefits](#) and how to [join us](#) (answer 'Geography' to question 11).

If you're not a civil, crown or public servant, but would be interested in a role within one of our organisations and becoming part of the Government Geography Profession, please see our [jobs in government](#) page for more information.

[Geography in Government Awards 2018](#)

Advancing Geospatial Data Science

[WINNER] [OVERALL WINNER] Geography Spatial Analysts Team at the Office for National Statistics for work undertaken for the United Nations World Data Forum on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to provide a global metric for indicator 9.1.1, which measures the proportion of the rural population living within 2km of an all-season road (an important measure of connectivity and accessibility).

Michael Hodge at the ONS Data Science Campus working with the Welsh Government to develop a tool to estimate travel times, based on private and public transport, to effectively appraise public service accessibility which is critical to formulating and targeting policy and for delivering public services.

Mobileye Project Team at the Ordnance Survey for investigating whether data streams from an in-vehicle Advanced Driver Assistance Scheme could be re-used to reliably and repeatedly survey roadside features in near real-time without the need for any human intervention or processing.

Operational Delivery

[WINNER] Ben Payne at Natural England for a new evidence-based approach to conservation and licensing for the great crested newt that combines geospatial analysis with ecological knowledge. By reducing the need for survey, trapping and translocation of this protected species it cuts out costs, delays and developer/investor uncertainty in the planning process, and maximises the proportion of investment secured by licencing which is invested in habitat.

The Boundary Review Team at Reigate and Banstead Borough Council for supporting an electoral review by building on a statistical forecast of the 2023 electorate. The team developed a tool which used Ordnance Survey maps

and address data melded with electorate forecasts at property-level. The user is able to merge, edit and rename boundaries and get a real-time view of the impact upon the future voting population.

Sarah Taylor and Michael Knight at Natural England for developing the National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability Model and a range of spatial data products associated with it to provide maps of the areas where species and habitats are most likely to be vulnerable to climate change to support delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.

Excellence in Geo-Visualisation and Cartography

[WINNER] Charley Glynn, Tim Martin, Oliver Snowden and Andrew Radburn at the Ordnance Survey for developing OS Open Zoomstack, the latest addition to the OS OpenData portfolio. It makes OS open data more accessible, customisable and easier to use by providing a single, customisable map of Great Britain to be used from national to local levels.

The DGC Task Team 8 at the Ministry of Defence for developing a country insight product, which is a country-wide situational awareness product providing foundation geospatial information about a range of key themes to provide context and understanding to Defence users. It consists of a geodatabase of fully attributed data which can be manipulated or incorporated with other datasets to support wider analysis and assessment activities.

The DGC and No 1 AIDU Air Teams at the Ministry of Defence for producing the first two Low Flying Charts to standardise the symbology across the 1:50,000, 1:250,000 and 1:500,000 scales to improve flight safety. Pilots and navigators now see standardised symbology across this range of air charts as they zoom in and out on their cockpit tablets, making the identification of obstructions and air space clearer.

Impact on Policy

[WINNER] Jamie O'Donnell at the Department for Transport for creating a key online interactive map of a proposed Major Road Network to feed into a government consultation which received over 1,000 web views in the first week alone. Jamie then developed an internal interactive mapping tool that a range of colleagues could use and access to support decision making and assess respondents' proposals on a segment by segment basis quickly and accurately.

Nick O'Rourke and ONS Geography Leadership team at the Office for National Statistics for developing the ONS Geospatial Hub for over 4,000 ONS members of staff. The Hub is improving the quality of ONS research and outputs through the greater insight gained from analysing the role of location in people's lives and environment and has brought producers and researchers together from across spectrum of social, health, economic and environmental statistics.

Mick Wyman at the Ministry of Defence for identifying the potential for a

bespoke very small-scale 3D perspective maps to provide MoD senior officers and Ministers with enhanced situational awareness for planning and policy purposes.

Contribution to the Profession

[WINNER] The DGC Learning and Development Team at the Ministry of Defence has been instrumental in formulating and redesigning the MoD Geospatial Analyst Function Competence Framework, rebranding and enhancing it to align with GSE Geography profession. The team also designed and ran the Geospatial Managers Development Programme, a tailored course, designed to support the growth of GSE Geography within MoD by delivering development and professionalisation interventions for staff across a range of grades.

Jack Whelan and Darren Scarlett at the Ministry of Defence for dedicating considerable personal time into teaching and inspiring the next generation of geographers at Comberton Village College through the ESRI Geo Mentoring Scheme.

Neil Peters at the Ministry of Defence for developing and sustaining an international network of experts engaged in spatial socio-cultural developments, promoting the contribution of the profession, geospatial information principles and analysis techniques in order to understand and respond to complex problems.

[Joint statement on the presidential elections in Belarus](#)

We, as friends of the Belarusian people and supporters of the sovereignty and independence of Belarus, welcome the progress achieved in our relations over the past few years. We have seen many positive developments between our countries and Belarus: the signing of the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with the EU and the doubling of its financial support; the decision to resume relations with the United States at ambassadorial level, the visit of the Secretary of State to Minsk, and the first shipment of U.S. oil; the increasing political dialogue with the EU and with its Member States bilaterally (e.g. visits at Presidential or PM level to EU Member States) or in the framework of the Eastern Partnership; the Commercial Dialogue with the UK; and the opening up of EIB and EBRD for loans. We reaffirm our commitment to continue this positive engagement with Belarus on the basis of shared values.

As Belarus begins the process of selecting its president, we urge the Belarusian authorities to take the measures necessary to hold a safe,

peaceful, free and fair election and to ensure fundamental freedoms.

We expect Belarus to invite officially OSCE/ODIHR observers in due time and urge the Belarusian authorities to demonstrate in deeds its willingness to make progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the previous OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Reports.

Noting in particular that the process of registration of candidates should be fair and transparent, we emphasize that no politically motivated restrictive measures should prevent potential candidates fulfilling the registration procedure.

Given that the elections are taking place in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, we strongly recommend the Belarusian authorities adopt the World Health Organization's recommendations of physical distancing to minimize the COVID-19 threat in a way which allows all candidates an equal chance to campaign and inform voters about what they stand for.

We also recall that a genuinely pluralistic composition of election commissions is key to promoting confidence in the election administration.

Media freedom and the right of peaceful assembly are essential to legitimate elections. Journalists must be able to report freely and unhindered. Citizens must be allowed to peacefully express their opinions. This is why we are also concerned regarding the recent detentions of peaceful protesters and imprisonments of journalists.

We recall that tangible steps taken by Belarus to respect universal fundamental freedoms, rule of law and human rights will remain key for the shaping of our future policy towards Belarus. A safe, peaceful, free and fair election, untainted by malign external influence and respecting fundamental freedoms, will foster democratic development in Belarus, reinforce its sovereignty and independence, and pave the way for greater cooperation with our countries and economic prosperity for the Belarusian people.

[Defence Secretary addresses members of the Royal College of Defence Studies](#)

News story

The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP addressed members of the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS) on Leadership in the Strategic Environment (LSE).



Royal College of Defence Studies crest. MOD Crown Copyright.

The Defence Secretary gave a talk yesterday on LSE, which is a prominent theme underpinning the entire course, as a part of RCDS' wider Strategic Leadership module. In attendance were more than 100 members from 52 nations, as well as members of the Defence Industry.

The Defence Secretary's address highlighted the importance of a close relationship which exists between leadership and strategy. It offered an opportunity for members to develop a better understanding of how being an effective strategic leader is informed first by the development of effective strategy.

Commandant RCDS Rear Admiral John Kingwell said:

We were delighted to welcome the Defence Secretary to speak to RCDS yesterday. As a world-leading College for post-graduate international strategic studies and strategic leadership, our course members valued hearing the Defence Secretary's thoughts and ideas as they prepare to take on strategic leadership roles, both in the UK and abroad.

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[Investment of up to £6m in new listing technology to benefit court users](#)

Press release

An investment of up to £6m in new software will give a better picture of capacity across the estate, meaning cases are more likely to be heard on

time.



- new software, worth millions of pounds, will bring scheduling and listing activity into a single tool
- court and tribunal users will benefit from reduced delays and a more reliable system
- the move marks a significant step in the HMCTS reform programme

Scheduling and listing is currently managed using a variety of systems from paper-based files to tools based on Outlook diaries.

The new software will increase the quality of service offered to the public and legal professionals. It will support better use of hearing spaces; reduce administrative tasks so that skilled staff can focus on the more complex areas of hearing management; and provide greater confidence that hearings will proceed when scheduled.

Courts Minister, Chris Philp MP, said:

This is a significant step towards achieving our goal of bringing the courts and tribunal service into the 21st century.

Listing administration can take up a huge amount of time for our hardworking staff and this investment will support them to focus on important work helping all court and tribunal users.

This contract is part of a series of steps HMCTS is undertaking to modernise and improve the experience of all those using courts and tribunal buildings.

Other steps to modernise the courts and tribunals include:

- a new in-court system that records the result of cases digitally and instantly;
- a pilot of a new digital system providing shared case information in criminal cases to the police, Crown Prosecution Service, courts and lawyers; and,
- online services covering divorce, probate, civil money claims and social security appeals which have been used by more than 300,000 people with user satisfaction rates over 80%.

McGirr Technologies has been appointed to deliver the changes following a competitive process. It will be implemented in a select few courts initially, with the aim of rolling it out across all courts and tribunals.

We will begin tests and installation in a small number of courts over the next 9 months, after which we will set out plans to roll the technology out nationally.

Peter Nanayakara, Chief Executive of McGirr said:

We are delighted to have been awarded this contract and to be working with HMCTS as it delivers on its reform plans.

This contract will allow HMCTS to modernise how it administers cases and we're looking forward to working together to improve the experience for all court and tribunal users in England and Wales.

Notes to editors:

- scheduling and listing is the judicial function that enables cases to be heard in courts and tribunals
- it is administered by HMCTS with careful consideration of the needs of members of the public, judicial availability and resources
- decisions on how and when hearings are listed are made by a judge
- this contract is part of the £1bn HMCTS reform programme, which will increase access to justice by introducing 21st century technology, online services and digital working to the courts and tribunals system.
- the contract is initially for £3.2m over two years with the option to extend for a further two years, bringing the total up to £6m

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1. 4 June 2020

Added translation

2. 4 June 2020

Added translation