DfT Transport Sector Transparency Board - Minutes

Great Minster House, London 10:00-12:00, Friday 21st February 2014

Attendees: Steve Gooding, DG Roads, Traffic & Local, DfT (Chair) [SG]
             Prof. Jonathan Raper, CEO Placr [JR]
             Andrew Stott, Public Sector Transparency Board [AS]
             Nick Illsley, Transport Direct, DfT [NI]
             Krizstina Katona, Cabinet Office [KK]
(ITEM 4)   Chris Gibbard [CG], DfT

Apologies: Miles Gibson, No 10
             Tim Stamp, Statistics, DfT

1 - Introduction and Welcome

2 - National Information Infrastructure and Open Data Requests

1. KK talked the board through the presentation "National Information Infrastructure" (attached at Annex A.) The three overarching drivers were to open up data that could be of value to business and innovation; to ensure that organisations benefiting from public money were transparent; and to encourage Arms' Length Bodies to take greater responsibility.

Action: NI agreed to consider the impact of already released datasets in order to articulate the practical benefits of an open data approach, building on the recent APPSI presentation.

2. SG felt that the term "statutory basis" did not apply readily to the datasets held by the Department and instead understanding these via the "public task" requirement was more appropriate. JR felt that it may be easier to ask what datasets were held by government that did not fall under "public task."

3. AS raised a question about the scope of the ambition and whether datasets to which the policy requirement fell to the Department, but were actually compiled or held by a third party (i.e. Streetworks,) would be included.

4. JR felt that greater clarity was required on the issue of licencing.

5. SG said that the Department would have to carefully consider the impact of these measures when Network Rail returned to the government balance sheet.

6. AS raised concerns about datasets that were clearly in the "public task" but were currently traded.

7. JR raised an edge case, communicated to him by a frustrated developer, regarding the Scottish Traffic Commissioner.

Action: The Board agreed whilst acknowledging that the devolved administrations should be encouraged to adopt open data principles, the board should prioritise the datasets held by DfT.

8. JR said that a particular issue would be data with more than one departmental parent, such as Local Government transport. He continued that Cabinet Office would need to arbitrate in this instance and carefully manage inter departmental relationships.

Action: The board agreed that central leadership was required to collate gritting data (as had been the case on road works.) Steve Gooding to raise with ADEPT and speak to Mike Jackson (Director Transport Planning.)

9. Clarity was required about whether the National Air Traffic Service (NATS would be considered.)

Action: Further work to understand the position of NATS in relation to National Information Infrastructure.

10. KK thanked the group for their points.

Action: It was felt that a "first cut" should be attempted by April with the acknowledgement that this was an iterative process.

Action: Nick Illsley to ensure that the next update of the Department's Open Data Strategy includes the new version of the Asset Management system

3 - DVLA and VOSA data release consultation

11. NI said that a submission to Ministers was scheduled for w/c 24th February in relation to the consultation on the release of the bulk data set (with the more useful VRN and VIN numbers.) In short, we would be consulting about the provision of data for free that is now charged for – AS said that this would be an exciting step change.

12. NI tabled a draft of the consultation proposal. The consultation would run from April to June. He highlighted the following issues:
    - Potential identification of law enforcement "unmarked" cars
    - Information Commissioner's desire to see the response to the consultation before deciding on whether the data could be in anyway classified as personal.

4 - Bus Registration and Traffic Commissions Update

13. CG discussed progress on sharing bus operator data. Genuine progress had been made over the last six months and operators were beginning to provide data including the name of operator, licence number, route, origin and destination.

14. The original date for the release was the end of March, but this may prove to be more of a bulk upload. The challenge will be to ensure that this is a regular practice – and to overcome technical issues amongst smaller operators and entrenched positions amongst some of the larger players.

15. It will published in CSV format and shared via the data.gov website. It was clear that some guidance notes were required to explain the dataset, but it was a very useful source with a number of potential applications.

Action: JR stated that they had approach the catapults (Future Cities; Connected Digital Economy; Transport) to organise an innovation challenge fund to provide a software solution. JR to liaise with the catapults and update the Board.

5 - Minutes of 17th December and Matters Arising

16. Minutes approved with one amendment - Paragraph 6 should read [italics additional text]: "JR felt that this was evidence of 'single source' mentality that needed to be *challenged by making a case to the regulator for the availability of TYRELL data*."

A) Routing Guide

17. NI stated that he had assurance that a new routing guide would be made available in April. JR stated that it was important to engage the provider in the NII process to maintain momentum.

B) Additional Street Data

18. NI and AS discussed the position of Geoplace/Ordinance Survey to establish whether there were any outstanding actions from the central transparency meeting which could hold up progressing the data release.

Action: SG to write to Vanessa Lawrence by end of February (cc. to Cabinet Office.) JR stressed that this correspondence should emphasise that Ordinance Survey data is not included.

C) Tyrell

19. Baroness Kramer had met David Brown and discussed open data and transparency in relation to the rail network.

20. JR emphasised that during the recent weather disruption he had undertaken some analysis which suggested a large amount of cancellations did not make it from the TYRELL system to the central NR feeds. JR said that the lack of progress in allowing "many eyes" to examine this data had meant that this issue had been referred to the regulator. The Board noted that the issue had also received some recent press coverage.

Action: Steve Gooding to write to ORR

D) Traveline

21. JR said that Traveline SE had agreed that third parties could use their API. Public Sector bodies would get this for free, and private innovators would have to contribute to costs for scaling distribution (i.e. if server size doubled due to demand, they would contribute to this upgrade.) JR said this was a very welcome and practical solution. JR continued that regrettably this co-operative and pragmatic approach was not being replicated across other regions. The NW were proving particularly reluctant to share data.

Action: Steve Gooding to raise with contacts in Manchester.

6 - AOB

22. Nick Illsley tabled a list of Local Authority Data requests in response to the gritting issue that AS had raised regarding access to information on gritted roads. NI said this list be provided for future meetings. The Board felt that this would prove extremely useful.

23. JR continued that it would be good to set up a formal procedure to garner views of developers on the datasets of highest value.

Action: A formal call for agenda items to be communicated via the Transparency Board portal.

24. The board felt that it was important to understand the progress of the CAA following their appearance at the Board on (17th December 2013.)

Action: Nick Illsley to provide update in advance of the next meeting.

Date of Future Meeting – 25th April 2014