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## CHRISTOPHER GUTTERIDGE RESPONSE (VIA E-MAIL)

Hi. I've just filled in the PDC survey. As I'm new to replying to consultations, I didn't realise there would be questions so I had prepared a short article about government data. I've replied to the survey now, but I figure I might as well send you my article in the open it will be useful or interesting.

Thanks,

Christopher Gutteridge, Linked Open Data Architect for the University of Southampton <http://data.southampton.ac.uk/>

My article:

FROM:

<http://blogs.ecs.soton.ac.uk/data/2011/10/17/response-to-the-public-data-consultation/>

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In brief: I believe the UK government should provide all public data with a license which allows free reuse (OGL), in formats which make it easy to work with, and identifiers which allow diverse data to be joined together in new ways. This will increase the wealth of all citizens and visitors to the UK. It will enable people in the UK to make better choices, and live better lives. The work begun by data.gov.uk makes me proud to be British and enables new kinds of benefits unprecedented in human history.

My name is Chrstopher Gutteridge. I am the Linked Data Architect for the University of Southampton. If it wasn't for data.gov.uk this job title wouldn't even exist!

I run the Open Data Service for the University of Southampton <<http://data.southampton.ac.uk/>>. This service was inspired by the UK government project, and has proved beneficial to our organisation with very positive support and feedback from as diverse sources as the Dept. V.C. for Education (Debra Humphis) and the head of our Catering services! By providing easy, open and joined-up access to information from the diverse parts of our organisation it means we improve the experience for our staff, students and visitors. The most beneficial tool using our data, to date, is a map of the university amenities <<http://opendatamap.ecs.soton.ac.uk/>> was not produced by our paid staff but by one our research students, who was keen to find a way to contribute.

I believe similar benfits and opportunities exist at the national and international level.

There's two real benefits to the nation. The first is transparency. Allowing anybody to write tools using government data on things like crime, health, education, and other factors about quality of life or services is great – it helps people make informed decisions.

What is also a huge national asset is the fact that we've begun to publish catalogs of things in the UK, like postcodes, transport stops, postboxes, schools, parks, roads, etc. I see this as the digital equivalent of standardising UK plug sockets and domestic mains electricity.

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If there's a central way to identify, say, a road then any organisation from Google & Apple down to someone collecting a list of pot holes, they can all use the same code to identify the road. This allows organisations, or citizens, to later join up information from diverse sources to provide new value from existing databases. This is amazing and has so much potential. Not doing this is like allowing every train company to use a different train track gauge.

To use my own work as an example of how powerful this is. I collate information from University Catering on their coffee shops, from the timetable office on what teaching rooms we have, from our buildings and estates dept. on the ID Number, name, architect & year of construction, from the disability office on the disabled access, and so forth. None of these departments need to talk to each other, but because all the other departments publish data using the building code number defined by buildings and estates I'm able to, very easily, join these up to create a far more useful resource:  
<<http://data.southampton.ac.uk/building/85.html>>

I'm very concerned that people might start having to pay to access this data. This will exclude the growing community who create computer and phone applications out of interest and enthusiasm and desire to make something to help people. It will exclude small companies, who can't afford the risk.

I believe that unrestricted access, under the Open Government License, to all government and council data will make this a better country to live in for everyone.

Charging for government data would be like starting charging people to produce devices which use standard UK mains voltage – a regressive step which I believe would do more harm than could ever be matched by the income generated.

I have used Linked Open Data to make the University of Southampton a better place. Please continue to do the same for the UK, Europe and the World.

Christopher Gutteridge – University of Southampton –

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