

An Electronic Town Meeting (ETM) on *"Making Open Data Real"*

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University of Ulster at Jordanstown

ETM - Instant Report



CabinetOffice



THE ELECTRONIC TOWN MEETING (ETM)	3
WHAT IS AN ELECTRONIC TOWN MEETING (ETM)?	3
THE MAIN FEATURES	3
CONTENTS OF THE ETM	4
INTRODUCTION – "MAKING OPEN DATA REAL"	4
ISSUES DISCUSSED	5
ETM AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS	6
DISCUSSION SESSION ONE THEMES	7
POLICY CHALLENGE 1 – AN ENHANCED RIGHT TO DATA	7
POLICY CHALLENGE 2 – SETTING OPEN DATA STANDARDS	7
POLICY CHALLENGE 3 – CORPORATE AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY	7
AN ENHANCED RIGHT TO DATA	8
<i>General Comments</i>	8
<i>Strengths</i>	9
<i>Weaknesses</i>	9
SETTING OPEN DATA STANDARDS	10
<i>General Comments</i>	10
<i>Weaknesses</i>	10
CORPORATE AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY	11
<i>General Comments</i>	11
<i>Strengths</i>	11
<i>Weaknesses</i>	11
DISCUSSION SESSION TWO THEMES	12
POLICY CHALLENGE 4 – MEANINGFUL OPEN DATA	12
POLICY CHALLENGE 5 – GOVERNMENT SETS THE EXAMPLE	12
POLICY CHALLENGE 6 – INNOVATION WITH OPEN DATA	12
MEANINGFUL OPEN DATA	13
<i>General Comments</i>	13
GOVERNMENT SETS THE EXAMPLE	14
<i>General Comments</i>	14
INNOVATION WITH OPEN DATA	15
<i>General Comments</i>	15
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND VOTING RESULTS	16
FOR MORE INFORMATION	20

The Electronic Town Meeting (ETM)

What is an Electronic Town Meeting (ETM)?

An Electronic Town Meeting is a form of participation in local government practiced in the U.S. region of New England since colonial times, when an entire community was invited by government officials to gather in a public place to formulate suggestions or provide feedback on policy actions.

In its modern version, the electronic Town Meeting (ETM), citizens can participate in debates and express themselves individually on the issues, all facilitated by the ETM software service solution.

The Main Features

The method combines the live aspect of small-scale discussion with ICT: on one hand it allows rapid transmission of work-group results to a plenary assembly; while on the other it permits surveys of individual participants' opinions through a polling system.

The e-TM consists of four different work steps, all aimed at facilitating the participants' discussion of the themes at issue:

- information and in-depth investigation, allowing the participants to gain confidence with the topics of discussion;
- discussion in small groups, allowing reciprocal listening and the confrontation between different perspectives;
- reflection, during which the results of group work are summarised and sent back to the whole assembly;
- polling step, in which participants are asked to individually answer questions generated during discussion.

Contents of the eTM

Introduction – *"Making Open Data Real"*

Information is power and by sharing it, we can deliver modern, personalised and sustainable public services. Transparency of data in the UK has already transformed our interaction with the private sector, particularly via the internet. From financial services and online banking, to travel booking and retailing, access to data has become a means to change the relationship we have with service providers and retailers: we have access to our personal data, we compare providers, we exercise choice and we share our feedback. Online banking was first launched thirteen years ago and now has more than 22m users in the UK. This is the kind of meaningful Information Revolution that we now seek in our public services.

For the public sector, Transparency and Open Data are about helping people find the right doctor for their needs, or the best teacher for their child, or helping a victim of crime track whether justice is done. It is about helping frontline professionals compare outcomes and improve them. It is about giving people access to their individual medical records so that they can manage their health better and make more informed decisions with their clinician. It is about giving people the data on local authority spending and delivery that they need to challenge the value of a service provided. Above all, it is about providing the data people need to make choices and to help improve public services.

Open Data may be the most powerful lever of 21st century public policy: it can make accountability real for citizens; it can improve outcomes and productivity in key services through informed comparison; it can transform social relationships – empowering individuals and communities; and it can drive dynamic economic growth.

A recent McKinsey report forecast that the benefit of public data assets to the European economy, if used effectively to drive innovation and enterprise, could be up to 250bn Euros.

Open Data enables accountability; it improves outcomes and productivity in key services through informed comparison; it transforms social relationships – empowering individuals and communities; and it drives dynamic economic growth. Delivering Open Public Services, as described in the Open Public Services White Paper – and Open Data is key to that – is also about reducing the administrative burden on these services. Better data actually means less but higher quality data, and more openness means fewer Freedom of Information Act requests for this data and less red-tape.

The "Making Open Data Real" consultation document sets out proposals for embedding a culture of openness and transparency in public services. It sets out how one might create the "pull" (a right to data) and the "push" (a presumption of publication) that will underpin the further development of Open Government in the UK. Broadly speaking, Transparency is considered to be the goal and Open Data to be the tool.

The proposals are designed to promote a collaborative and wide-ranging discussion with partners in government, the wider public sector, and the broader user community. Following the consultation period and the conclusion of a full impact assessment, the Cabinet Office will revise proposals and publish a White Paper in the autumn bringing together input from the consultation and other initiatives outlined above and setting out the way forward.

Issues Discussed

The discussion was based on the UK Cabinet Office Public consultation document on 'Making Open Data Real'. The document's recommendations are based around six policy challenges, and these provided the focus for discussion on the day.



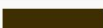

The six policy challenges were:

- An Enhanced Right to Data
- Setting Open Data Standards
- Corporate and Personal Responsibility
- Meaningful Open Data
- Government Sets the Example
- Innovation with Open Data



The event consisted of two main discussion sessions, with each session focusing on two themes from the list above.

ETM Audience Demographics






What age are you?

1	18-30		18 %
2	31-40		21 %
3	41-50		46 %
4	51-60		14 %
5	Over 60		0 %

Are you male or female?

1	Male		61 %
2	Female		29 %

What is your professional background?

1	Academia		29 %
2	Industry		18 %
3	Local Government		32 %
4	Central Government		7 %
5	Health		14 %

Where are you from?

1	UK		68 %
2	Ireland		32 %
3	Italy		0 %
4	Cyprus		0 %
5	Finland		0 %
6	Germany		0 %
7	USA		0 %

Discussion Session One Themes

Policy Challenge 1 – An Enhanced Right to Data

"The point of open information is not merely to expose the world but to change it...These days democratic openness means more than that citizens can vote at regular intervals in free and fair elections. They also expect to have access to government data."

- The Economist

1. How would we establish a stronger presumption in favour of publication than that which currently exists?
2. Is providing an independent body, such as the Information Commissioner, with enhanced powers and scope the most effective option for safeguarding a right to access and a right to data?
3. Are existing safeguards to protect personal data and privacy measures adequate to regulate the Open Data agenda?
4. What might the resource implications of an enhanced right to data be for those bodies within its scope? How do we ensure that any additional burden is proportionate to this aim?
5. How will we ensure that Open Data standards are embedded in new ICT contracts?

Policy Challenge 2 – Setting Open Data Standards

"Lack of common standards ...makes it excruciatingly time consuming to exploit the information."

**- Literature review for EFMC 2011 (European Federation for Medicinal Chemistry):
AstraZeneca, Royal Society of Chemistry, Pfizer UK and others**

1. What is the best way to achieve compliance on high and common standards to allow usability and interoperability?
2. Is there a role for government to establish consistent standards for collecting user experience across public services?
3. Should we consider a scheme for accreditation of information intermediaries, and if so how might that best work?

Policy Challenge 3 – Corporate and Personal Responsibility

"Without strong leadership, transparency of decision making and effective and intelligent accountability, trust can [sic] be abused and confidence damaged."

- Chair, Committee on Standards in Public Life

1. How would we ensure that public service providers in their day to day decision-making honour a commitment to Open Data, while respecting privacy and security considerations?
2. What could personal responsibility at Board-level do to ensure the right to data is being met include? Should the same person be responsible for ensuring that personal data is properly protected and that privacy issues are met?
3. Would we need to have a sanctions framework to enforce a right to data?
4. What other sectors would benefit from having a dedicated Sector Transparency Board?

An Enhanced Right to Data

General Comments

- There is a question about what data is relevant to the public. Also, how can government control the information?
- We establish stronger rights for individuals, businesses and others through legislative and regulatory systems. One problem is that of commercial and intellectual property (IP) associated with data and this provides reasons for not making data open.
- Often it is the case that even if you don't name people it is obvious that privacy and security are important - you should not be in a position to name people, however often even if you don't name people it is obvious who they are. In the area of enhanced rights to access data, we feel that the use of data must be licensed at the start of any project. i.e., there must be clear rules on how and why data would be used. This license can stay with the public service.
- There is a need for standards. But the use of inputting data in a standardised way is very hard to control.
- Regarding enhanced rights to data for public it is much better for public to be allowed to engage with the process. People use the FOI process, but it is being used by businesses acting in their own interest and not in the public interest.
- On the issue of how do you encourage public authorities to release information, we should be asking for what use the information will be used. If it is for commercial purposes, it should not be free.
- Take a policy decision based on the fact citizens expect that data should be shared and available.
- On all NEW data collection - ask is there any reason why this data shouldn't be shared. We must respect data protection as regards personal details contained within the raw data set. This must not be shared. Also there will be some commercial sensitive data from companies that would not be ideal to share openly. There needs to be a policy set up where someone sets up how and who can use the data.
- Is it not better to have the data out in the open but you must control the spin on the information? Raw data is so vast how do people get a meaning from it? People will find and interpret what they are interested in. 5 levels of publishing open data - for people to consume the data they will find short cuts.
- A license agreement such as the user acknowledging the stated terms and conditions on how the data will be used. This will protect the data and keeps the data still residing with the public service.
- FOI requests are publishable to all in Canada; often (Freedom of Information) FOI requests are similar often duplicated. Record the questions and answer and let it go public. On top of that there should be standards set up on how you publish information. FOI requests are expensive for organisations to collate. And yet public sector organisations should consider publishing these requests.
- Data standards are needed, with risk assessed for different levels of data. Also dedicated resources, planning and openness in the process were also described as important.

- Public service providers should only collect data if they intend to use this data, as they need to be aware that they have a responsibility for how they spend public monies. If the public service provider knows that there is potential to have data open for others to access then would be more careful in what is collected and how recorded.
- Lots of presumption that data should not be published to save embarrassment. Expenses that have to be published. Political data is useful for making politicians accountable. How about publishing commercial data?
- At start there must be a protocol that clearly outlines what data is collected and why. Publish all data in a report so that it is all available for others to analyse and interpret. This then also reduces how many times people come looking for information under freedom of information (FOI) act.
- There are more planning considerations for the use and reuse of data; if street and road powers are devolved to local administrations, then this data needs to be renewed and managed every day. There will be capacity issues. If data is gathered by tax payer, this goes to town hall level- we want access to this so that we can use it for our commercial businesses.
- There is a need for real openness in the consultation processes. There is a need for public ownership of the information. Need for meaningful conversation is two-way. US system of open information availability freely available. Privacy policies can change so tighter privacy laws required. Presumption for publication unless it breached data protection.
- Consultation around aggregated and specific data mining of that aggregated information. Human intervention needed to manage information availability.
- Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) are critical to the process. Pressure from SMEs to the legislative process is important.
- Privacy concern: Example 'Stem Cell Research' whereby a patient that was used in this research had the results revealed and it turned out that it was revealed without consent of the individual. So the issue of consent arose. (no solution was suggested but this concern was raised by a participant)
- There should be standards set up on how you publish information. People are looking at commercial quality in information.

Strengths

But how do we establish stronger rights for individuals? Legislation. There needs to be a cultural change for public authorities in addressing information management, which is different for example that funding and building roads.

Weaknesses

- Should one publish the mortality rates of surgeons, as this is information that is of importance and useful to citizens? The impact of this is that the surgeons would then be reluctant to take on more risky surgery.
- There is a need for material to be published. Large organisations have too much to do so they dump information and feel they can forget about it. Haphazard approach at present.
- There is licensing framework that exists for some products and data already. Today, some data is available freely and some data you have to pay for. What data can be made available?

Setting Open Data Standards

General Comments

- Open information should not be limited by charges. Open to government but not to public e.g. ordinance survey maps. Release of data that is paid for but want to use for free. Self funding policies to be no longer required or sorted out. Same as building infrastructure e.g. student loans, toll roads. Retrieve the money over time. Ability of data commissioner to launch their own investigations. Presumption that everything could be published unless a reasonable exception. Catalogue of what data is available. Status of categories. No hidden or omitted areas, data audit.
- In setting standards - start off with a simple set of data that is shared which is gradually developed and expanded to include more data as new projects come on board. Government needs to establish standards. There is a big opportunity for SMEs here it is a good thing for business. Standards should say what data is available from the public service provider. Discussion on what format would this data be presented in e.g. machine readable OR lay language. They should include the cataloguing of the data that is available; and it should be available in suitable format for downloading. Standards should also specify the format that the data would be released in. Also the standards would identify some cost to cover accessing the data.
- Open data has to be a by-product of how you do your job. Open data needs to be embedded in the organisation and in the job. Existing standards should be used e.g., WC3.
- When data is reviewed: Who peer reviews and audits the data that is 'fit for purpose' and 'accurate'? Concern is that data can be skewed with various interpretations. How you interpret data is almost important as the raw data itself.
- If people start to make money from the information, there needs to be some mechanism for getting something back from the information that is gathered by the public sector.
- Standard should state the no liability concept or indemnity so that if the end-user misuses the data then they are responsible and not the public service provider. They should also have a disclaimer noting that the data is accurate as possible at time of entering. The consumer is driving the information they require. Public sector has to respond to this but often they do not want to release the data because people use it as a performance metric. Standards would create a level playing field for accessing data.
- It should be prerequisite for all of the data to be made in an electronic format. This is a big issue in healthcare as data is stored in paper form and electronic form.
- If you create a standard there has to be an industry or back office to measure if those standards are being adopted. Also, if government wants the public to use its services (such as riding the bus) it's in their interest to provide accurate timely information. Then companies including SMEs will develop apps to get that data to the public.

Weaknesses

- Accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, measurability - all ingredients of good standards. The data should be in a common, user friendly format - free from barriers for the population to interpret. When data will not be made available: There should be public transparency around why certain data is not available - explain the rationale for this.

Corporate and Personal Responsibility

General Comments

- If you start publishing the data you cannot stop. The provision of the information is important but it cannot be at the cost of the service provision. The number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests should reduce ultimately; as the data is now more readily available. There could be an open data regulator set up. Some argue that the person taking the lead should be the Information Technology officer should take responsibility for this process, while others disagree and say that this must be through senior civil servants! A culture shift needs to take place for this to happen with strong leadership.
- There needs to be an accurate and detailed audit trail. One idea is to tag performance around the metadata and follow up with freedom of information requests - this might be a solution for the healthcare sector. Dissenting comment to this is that professionals will not want performance information in the data.
- There should be some regular monitoring of this data and how it is made available, what level the data is presented at. There needs to be working groups set up to collate the data and centralise the data required. A catalogue of data set up by Council or at a local authority level. Each individual organisation should set up there on data set. In order to be able to manage the information that is public.
- People/organisations would like to be held to account in a non-invasive manner, without increasing unnecessarily increasing workloads. This can be gradually developed as more data becomes available and service providers become more exposed to sharing data.
- There are different layers of information that organisations need to make a call on what is available. The top layer should be available to the public, the second layer may be more commercial information and there may be a cost associated with this information and then there is a third layer which is sensitive information. Public authorities and organisations need to make a call on the different information types.
- Politicians (already) have access to data, journalists can acquire access, but it is about evening the playing field to the citizen - they can get this direct data and not a sanitized, skewed, political version.
- There should be accountability when data is offered in a digested way, without all the details, like headlines.
- Value added in the manipulation of the data. Provide more direct feedback loops to providers and users

Strengths

- Top level should support "Hearts and Minds". Need for continuity rather than depending on individual leader support for the lifetime of their leadership - Embedded in the way that business is done.
- Need for a way to make law making in this area agile and quickly updated. Any outsourcing should have rules built-in that the public has the right to access the data and its use reuse.

Weaknesses

- There is a mis-match between SME and Government when government is not included to update data continuously and the data becomes useless to SMEs purposes. Conversely there is concern about how SMEs will use data.

Discussion Session Two Themes

Policy Challenge 4 – Meaningful Open Data

"Once medical researchers start publishing their data, and depositing it in data archives, they will discover not only that it is painless, but that it affords huge advantages to medical science, and to patients present and future."

- Medical Research Scientist, New York (BMJ editorial)

1. How should public services make use of data inventories? What is the optimal way to develop and operate this?
2. How should data be prioritised for inclusion in an inventory? How is value to be established?
3. In what areas would you expect government to collect and publish data routinely?
4. What data is collected "unnecessarily"? How should these datasets be identified? Should collection be stopped?
5. Should the data that government releases always be of high quality? How do we define quality? To what extent should public service providers "polish" the data they publish, if at all?

Policy Challenge 5 – Government Sets the Example

"Three basic principles govern my work. First, data is a public good and therefore should be out there. Second that if it is available by Freedom of Information then citizens or residents shouldn't have to go through any bureaucratic nightmares to get it, and [third] that we should have a presumption of openness – extremely important in restoring public confidence in public institutions..."

- Director of Digital Projects, Greater London Authority

1. How should government approach the release of existing data for policy and research purposes: should this be held in a central portal or held on departmental portals?
2. What factors should inform prioritisation of datasets for publication, at national, local or sector level?
3. Which is more important: for government to prioritise publishing a broader set of data, or existing data at a more detailed level?

Policy Challenge 6 – Innovation with Open Data

"If people put data on the web – government data, scientific data, community data, whatever it is – it will be used by other people to do wonderful things in ways they would never have imagined. The cry of 'raw data now' has spread around the world."

- Sir Tim Berners-Lee OM, KBE, FRS, FEng, FRSA

1. Is there a role for government to stimulate innovation in the use of Open Data? If so, what is the best way to achieve this?

Meaningful Open Data

General Comments

- We need to start with existing data and ensure that it is continued to be collected properly and then published. However, we also need to make sure that what is being collected and published has meaning and is of value to a broad range of people. What is meaningful for one person may not be meaningful for another. To help achieve, this, people need to be asked what they want rather than making an assumption of what they need. Can people who already access the data need to educate people on how to access the data? However, much discussion around how meaningful and the time to do this, who would make it meaningful and why. Another perspective is to just focus on releasing core data and not interpreting it.
- It's "better to release more data than you may think is useful" is one philosophy. This perspective is of including no filters on the data; do not limit innovation in how it is potentially used by others. Consideration needs to be given to the cost of generating the information and relate this to what people need to know. Different stakeholders have different needs. A feedback mechanism would allow you to know if the data is useful or not. This could then guide what data is used or looked at. What is released should be defined by the community's interests, perhaps represented by a consortium of stakeholders from business and citizens.
- While the term "Meaningful" is in the eye of the beholder, what is released should be defined by the community's interests, perhaps represented by a consortium of stakeholders from business and citizens.
- Meaningful for SMEs and companies in general will be what can you monetize; for everyone else it is public interest.
- In terms of data collection, it should be part and parcel of why you are collecting the data in the first place. You should gather data as a by-product of a specific process or project. Intermediaries and/or data commissioners need to make the decision on what should be published. Collection and publishing is covered by data protection legislation. Collection of data must be done using a system which allows electronic access and ease of availability for interpretation of this data. For example, paper collected data is not easy to use or collate. The quality of the data is a key consideration. It needs to be publishable and clean in order for people to base their decision on. Also, this core raw data should be immutable.
- There is a significant overhead in publishing ALL data, which would be a massive undertaking. Priorities should be set, but who decides which? And who decides what is sensitive and not appropriate to publish? In other words, who is the gatekeeper?
- Public must know what data is available via a catalogue. Otherwise they won't know it exists and won't be able to make use of it. It is very difficult to comment on the usefulness of the data as public service providers will not always know how it is used, or how some will mash up data sets into one larger data set.
- Find out what data we hold and catalogue. Make priorities, basis for selection: finding out needs of users. Ask for suggestions on what to release and their priority. Publishing should cover everything because you do not know what is useful until someone finds a use for it. Once data is out there is also the law of unintended consequences.

- There is an issue around what data is collected unnecessarily? A lot of duplicated effort exists especially in local government. Perhaps enterprises can be set up to manage, clean and operate the data. But "this must be managed at government level". The data that should be collected could be collected more efficiently by putting appropriate infrastructure and technology in place.
- Business case for cost/benefit with providing the information. Release information about current issues - prioritise up to date information. There is an opportunity for open data released early or incomplete asking users to offer solutions.

Government Sets the Example

General Comments

- We have to somehow break down barriers to help the public understand the breadth and nature of the work of the public service providers - possibly continue with corporate publications. And provide a list of the cases and their progress updates. We need to take care that reports or making available this information does not increase workloads of staff.
- A legislative framework will be needed to overcome the aversion of public officials to sharing 'unpalatable' information. There will be new EU drivers for the UK with respect to open data and UK authorities will have to react to that.
- There are multiple decision points on a continuum from low risk to high risk of sensitivity of information.
- Demand will influence the prioritisation of data sets for the public good. New projects should have a tracking number which can be traced easily and has a regular update on it on work progress. Having the project work visible open all the time and allowing real time tracking ensures that you are working honestly; helping public to see what you are doing, and what is a priority at that time, and what is waiting. There is a need to use an internal communication system that can easily communicate between departments and publication sector of this data.
- Who is driving open and transparency - is it the papers or the public - who is behind the open agenda. Who decides what it is? Discussion around culture of not being used to share openly. Possibly a culture of keeping hidden and working on your own and only showcasing final product. Perhaps learning needs to be done and much support to enable this open sharing of information.
- On prioritization; if there was a process whereby data could be published, that was able to establish the demands and benefits, then this would be extremely useful.
- Public bodies are already under pressure to deliver existing services, without additional resources this would not be possible. Include people qualified in informatics. A structure approach and additional resources are essential. If releasing for policy or research purposes the underpinning information should be released so that not only the policy but the underpinning assumptions can be evaluated or tested. Example could be common infrastructure for distribution, but smaller organisations still own it but could outsource the distribution





Innovation with Open Data

General Comments

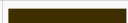

- To what extent is there a role for government to stimulate enterprise and market making in the use of Open Data? It can be argued that the government should make the information available so that businesses can develop. We see this as an opportunity for someone else to develop an enterprise in using this data / promote the use of the data as a potential growth for someone else. This suggests the public sector should stay out of it and not waste public resources.
- The Government could offer incentives, that is, if you use open data, you may get a tax break. If the data is open and reliable the entrepreneurs will come running, using for example, competitions and incentives for socially useful apps based in public information. May need some initial seed funding to pump prime. A contrasting view is that the government should have a structure in place to protect its investment.
- There should be a more advanced data service that government can sell to commercial companies, if one can classify open data and more advanced data, perhaps adding value. The government can be responsible for getting accurate data and the public or companies can use their own skill set to develop the data into something useful. And businesses to develop apps and advertisements around the app. But it needs to be ensured that the information is accurate.
- There is confusion about who actually owns the data. In many sectors this can be across a number of representative bodies.
- The government should run information days to let people know what data they have available and perhaps show case a couple of examples on how the data could be used. Get the word out to the developers and business sector to let them know that this data is now available. Entrepreneurs could then use open data for innovative use and sell the license/services back to government. If open data is considered a public service then this is helping to stimulate innovation.
- Government role is to enable and provide the information. Stimulation fund to encourage use of open data. Promote revelations of scandals to promote the usefulness of data.
- Communication should be done using normal communication channels, such as e-newsletter, magazine, mention at existing meetings, etc. We should not spend large amount of budget on this but rather to filter this information out there using normal ongoing systems. Release this information availability as you release other new information. The data can be used to identify feasibility of projects and new product and service development
- It would be useful if there was more planning and, for example, central government announcements to tell public that this data will be coming online.

Discussion Questions and Voting Results


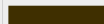


It will be necessary to allocate additional resources to improve access to government data.

1	Strongly agree		42 %
2	Agree		29 %
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4 %
4	Disagree		25 %
5	Strongly disagree		0 %





There is a role for government to establish consistent Open Data standards across the public sector.

1	Strongly agree		64 %
2	Agree		32 %
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4 %
4	Disagree		0 %
5	Strongly disagree		0 %



There should be a sanctions framework to enforce a right to data.

1	Strongly agree		21 %
2	Agree		54 %
3	Neither agree nor disagree		21 %
4	Disagree		4 %
5	Strongly disagree		0 %

Data must always be of high quality before it can be released.

1	Strongly agree		17 %
2	Agree		4 %
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4 %
4	Disagree		38 %
5	Strongly disagree		38 %

It is more important to publish broader data than existing data at a more detailed level.

1	Strongly agree		21 %
2	Agree		8 %
3	Neither agree nor disagree		50 %
4	Disagree		21 %
5	Strongly disagree		0 %

There is a role for government to stimulate innovation and enterprise in the use of Open Data.

1	Strongly agree		42 %
2	Agree		46 %
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4 %
4	Disagree		8 %
5	Strongly disagree		0 %







For More Information

- The consultation document can be downloaded here: <https://update.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/open-data-consultation.pdf>
- The consultation document can be viewed online here: <http://data.gov.uk/opendataconsultation>

