

# DCMS Consultation: Statement of Strategic Priorities for telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum and postal services

Response from Ordnance Survey

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### Do you agree with the Government's strategic priorities and desired policy outcomes for telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum and postal services?

Ordnance Survey (OS) broadly agrees with the Government's strategic priorities and desired policy outcomes for these sectors. We have drawn out the points below for consideration.

#### **Role of geospatial (location) data to help inform and improve service design/delivery**

Greater clarity is required about how the ambitions to achieve 15 million premises with gigabit connections by 2025 and nationwide by 2033, and the extension of mobile coverage to 95% of UK by 2022, are achieved. There is a fundamental need for a geospatial data to provide government, Ofcom and telecommunications providers with a 'single version of the truth', and this perhaps warrants greater prominence in the Statement of Strategic Priorities.

If the desired policy outcomes are to be achieved, geospatial information about physical and utility infrastructure and its related digital infrastructure must be made available to inform planning and decisions on delivery. Data sharing between providers and their competitors will be a fundamental enabler of a world-leading telecommunications sector; and in light of the competing forces, a 'mutual custodian' will be necessary to curate and federate a data system to support telecommunications infrastructure.

A 'mutual custodian' needs to be able to use authoritative geospatial data – creating 'a single version of the truth' – on which strategy and decisions may be based, and in order to evidence the baseline and progress. Ordnance Survey's geospatial data (through the Public Sector Mapping Agreement) underpins the current Universal Service Obligation and the Open Market Reviews. The 'outside-in' approach described in the Statement of Strategic Priorities is likely to require a similarly referenced geospatial data framework.

We also note that 'mutual custodians' are also being developed as an operational model by the Energy Data Taskforce (under the auspices of the Energy Systems Catapult) where key market sector objectives are being facilitated through better data management. This work includes the improvement of baseline performance indicators and better planning tools for future targets and better monitoring of progress. The Taskforce seeks to remove barriers to access of appropriate data by appropriate organisations: see <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/energy-data-taskforce> for more information.

The government's ambition is that the UK becomes a world leader in 5G mobile technology, with deployment to majority of the UK by 2027. It would be beneficial to refine what is meant by 'technology' in this instance, taking a view on 'how' that technology would be deployed. As set out above, there is a spatial consideration depending on the thing one wants to connect to, which is related to both spectrum management and deployment (how and where is best to deploy infrastructure), to prevent consumers falling into 'black spots'. Without this clarification, there is a risk that the UK fails to press an advantage.

## Innovation

We would suggest making an explicit statement on the relationship between telecommunications and ethics and innovation; drawing a direct line from Centre for Ethics and Innovation to Ofcom.

As with other parts of the UK economy, including government, there is competition for the best talent, especially in data science, engineering and analytics. There is a real need to consider the role of government to encourage and invest in skills and applied research as enablers for innovation.

## Does this document set out clearly the role of Ofcom in contributing to the Government's strategic priorities and desired outcomes?

OS suggests that the Statement of Strategic Priorities requires greater clarity in the following areas:

- How the market model is going to work; if the regulator is only enabled to regulate competition, there will need to be other aspects to consider, particularly in relation to the way funding will circulate, and the way data will circulate. On this latter point, there may be a dependence on the Government's forthcoming National Data Strategy.
- Ofcom's role and how it should work with the telecommunications companies and increasingly the other players who will come in to the market as 5G use cases develop.
- The Government's vision is for the UK to be a fully digitally enabled and connected society. To achieve this, we suggest it may be helpful for Ofcom to provide guidance on the prioritisation of these desired outcomes.

## About Ordnance Survey

Ordnance Survey (OS) is a government-owned limited company, the entire issued share capital of which is held by the Secretary of State for BEIS, who is represented on the OS Board by UKGI.

Ordnance Survey captures over 500 million features that collectively represent the British landscape, describing in detail entities from solar farms to signposts in its Master Map of Great Britain as part of its National Mapping Agency role. This geographic dataset maps every part of our ever-changing landscape from the Atlantic coast of the Outer Hebrides to street-level changes in the centre of the City of London.

We provide national and international services to governments and commercial organisations based on our knowledge, skills and understanding of location data and geography. OS is engaging in a variety of collaborations to help identify and define the emerging requirements of new systems, processes and business models to support our evolving Public Task.<sup>1</sup> These collaborations span the following topics:

- National strategies for digital infrastructure and asset management
- Infrastructure planning for 5G communications
- Smart city standards and business models
- Linking Internet of Things data feeds to a consistent mapping framework
- Internet of Things city-scale demonstrator (spanning mobility, health, environment and culture use cases)
- Data exchange for connected and autonomous vehicles
- Location privacy for connected and autonomous vehicles
- Data standards and frameworks for sub-surface assets
- Infrastructure interdependencies and resilience scenario modelling

The perspective and authority that we bring to these projects is derived from our operation at scale (that is, our continuous maintenance of the geospatial database for the whole of Britain, which includes making 20,000 database updates each day), and from our Public Task in supporting and underpinning all aspects of the UK's public sector.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/about/governance/public-task.html>