

# Multi-Stakeholder Forum Readout

Wednesday 3rd December 2025

## Aim of the meeting

The aim of this UK Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF) was to relaunch the forum after a 17-month hiatus. The meeting reviewed the status of the [Sixth National Action Plan for Open Government \(NAP6\)](#), heard updates from across the UK, and held a break-out discussion on aspirations for the UK's year as co-chair of the [Open Government Partnership \(OGP\)](#). [Chris Ward MP](#), Parliamentary Secretary for Cabinet Office, joined the meeting as the minister leading on the domestic aspects of open government and took part in a Q&A session regarding his thoughts and ambitions for the year ahead.

## Attendees

There were a total of 37 attendees of which 21 were government representatives and 16 from civil society. There were a further 7 apologies received, 4 from government and 3 from civil society.

## Slide deck

A comprehensive slide-deck was used to facilitate this meeting, which contains a substantial amount of information which will not be duplicated in the read-out. The slide-deck is available in PDF format. Links to documents that were published shortly after the meeting have been included in the readout.

## Welcome

The meeting was co-chaired by Matthew Clarke, Director, Civil Service Strategy Unit (CSSU) within Cabinet Office and Kevin Keith, Chair of [UK Open Government Civil Society Network](#) (UK OGN). Matthew and Kevin welcomed attendees back to the restart of the MSF.

## Part 1: NAP6 commitment monitoring and building capability

Civil society and government leads provided updates on NAP6 commitments and efforts to build capability.

### Commitment 1: Open contracting

The success of the Open Contracting Advisory Group which leads on this commitment is testament to the maturity of civil society-government collaboration. These efforts have been recognised through winning an Open Gov Award at the OGP Global Summit earlier this year for their Open Gov Challenge commitment on [public dashboards for open contracting data](#).

This commitment builds upon the foundations laid in the open contracting commitment in NAP6.

Government reflected that civil society engagement and challenge have enhanced the primary and secondary legislation process related to transforming public procurement. They reported on establishing a legal framework with the final parts of commencement taking place before the end of the financial year and the launch of a digital platform based on global open contracting data standards. Government noted the June 2025 [Public Procurement: Growing British industry, jobs and skills](#) consultation that invited feedback on proposals to extend public procurement legislation has concluded. Civil society paid tribute to efforts made by government colleagues. They noted the promotion of data use through new dashboards, the inclusion of other members from civil society, and strengthening governance mechanisms like the Procurement Review Unit as key areas for future focus. Other reflections included a shared desire to strengthen civil society-government capacity building and training offered by government.

## Commitment 2: International aid transparency

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has completed 11 of 14 commitment milestones and are on track to deliver 12 by the end of the year. FCDO was rated as 'very good' and as the best-performing foreign ministry worldwide in the Aid Transparency Index 2024, and has supported other government departments through an Aid Transparency Review of ODA-spending Government Departments. Two milestones remain incomplete: updating of country development partnership summaries and the offer of in-country training to civil society. This is due to capacity issues and delays in the roll out of in-person training to civil society teams. Future ambitions include working with other government departments to implement recommendations of the 2025 Aid Transparency Review, further improvements to FCDO data quality, and using AI to appraise published transparency data.

Civil society noted the [2024 Aid Transparency Index](#) saw several improvements on the previous assessment across all departments and looked forward to working with officials on UK Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) strategy moving forward. Changes to UK NAP6 civil society engagement were also explained following the closure of the UK based non-profit Development Initiatives. Civil society welcomed progress made against a number of UK NAP 6 commitment milestones, in particular around data quality. There was concern about upcoming changes to the UK's ODA budget following reductions to funding first announced in February 2025 and reiterated their commitment to work with government as part of the 2025 UK Aid Transparency Review.

## Commitment 3: Engagement on anti-corruption

Government expressed gratitude for the support received from civil society colleagues and noted an announcement on the publication of the [UK Anti-Corruption Strategy](#) is imminent. They reflected on the importance of civil society-government collaboration but also the very challenging global environment in which they operated. Government reiterated that UK commitment to anti-corruption doesn't stop at publication of the strategy and will continue into the implementation phase to ensure commitments are monitored. Civil society

welcomed sustained civil society-government engagement over the last 18 months. Highlights included development of UK Anti-Corruption Strategy and the government's proactive role in engaging the UK Anti-Corruption Coalition ahead of the next Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, known as CoSP, due to take place from 15-19 December in Dohar, Qatar.

## Commitment 4: UN Convention Against Corruption

Government reported on positive engagement with civil society partners, including the UK Anti-Corruption Coalition as part of the UK's commitment to promote transparency and inclusiveness of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) country review mechanism. Government affirmed the priority of driving conversation and ambition for improving reform of the country review mechanisms. Civil society emphasised the importance of making the UNCAC review mechanism more inclusive, accountable and transparent and welcomed the successful inclusion of UK civil society in the UK government's engagement on this area of reform.

## NAP6 “building capacity”

### Digital governance

Government reported on ensuring the transparent, trustworthy, and responsible adoption of AI through the [Responsible AI Advisory Panel](#) established by Government Digital Service (GDS), which will include views from across the public sector, industry, academia and civil society, and report directly to the responsible minister. They also confirmed that the [Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard \(ATRS\)](#) is now mandatory for government departments and arms-length bodies that provide public or frontline services with 105 ATRS records published to date, and noted civil society's instrumental role in the standard's development. Civil society welcomed the expansion of ATRS, including its use by local government.

### Freedom of Information

Government reflected on the challenge of limited civil society-government capacity to build on the good work started in the [Fifth UK National Action Plan](#) (NAP5), which included the establishment of an Information Rights User Group and a seminar about Cabinet Office records. Civil society reflected on their desire to see this brought back to life and the importance of bringing FOI subject matters together, referring to the FOI Reform Bill in Scotland, the lack of FOI data in local government and the need for proactive publication.

### Beneficial Ownership

The government will publish a response to the [public consultation on the Transparency of Land Ownership Involving Trusts](#) in due course. We will continue to engage closely with stakeholders on our approach to trust transparency.

## Open Justice

Publication of the government response to the [2023 open justice call for evidence](#) is public. Four key themes were identified: the importance of consistency across courts/jurisdictions, embedding principles as the justice system digitalises, the need for reliable and accessible data, and ensuring appropriate safeguards when implementing open justice policies. A follow up question on whether an open justice working group would be established for future civil society-government collaboration was asked. Government agreed to take away the suggestion for further thought.

## Government Transparency returns

The previous government's aspiration for a database regarding integrity data was unfunded and subsequently not progressed. However, this government is keeping lobbying policy under review and this includes how we publish some of our integrity data. Nonetheless, in the meantime we have made significant improvements in publishing [integrity data](#) - the new monthly register of ministers' gifts and hospitality has a 100% publication rate across all departments since its introduction in January, and the quarterly data publication rate % now sits in the high 80s (up from the mid-70s).

## Open government collaboration

UK government, devolved governments, GMCA, and Glasgow have been meeting bi-monthly and plan to convert this into a quarterly meeting, including civil society leads from those governments. This new quarterly meeting aims to improve coordination in the run-up to the co-chair year and during the next national action plan co-creation, starting in early 2026.

## Part 2: CO Minister Chris Ward MP

Minister Chris Ward MP joined for part 2 of the MSF as the new minister responsible for the domestic elements of open government. He was welcomed by the co-chairs, with Kevin Keith noting the importance of political leadership for the open government agenda.

Kevin asked what the minister's take was on the open government agenda given the global challenges we all face.

Minister Ward noted it was particularly important for this government to reassert political leadership on this agenda given the threats from abroad and internally, including from technology, and that it is more important than ever to uphold our principles. This includes the Nolan Principles and working to restore trust in our system of government. As an example, the Prime Minister (PM) has published a new [ministerial code](#) which places these principles front and centre as a demonstration of his commitment. Minister Ward was looking to support the MSF as much as he could and work with his FCDO colleague Minister Elmore who is responsible for the international aspects. He noted the government has made a good start in many related areas of policy but there is more to do.

Kevin Keith noted one of the PM's early speeches talking about the importance of building trust, as well as a strong focus on delivery. He noted that the UK OGN is working hard

across networks, nations and regions to encourage diverse representation and lived experience into this policy co-creation process. He asked how the minister could help assist in improving collaboration across government departments during both the NAP co-creation process and the co-chairing of OGP.

Minister Ward noted that the PM takes the matter of trust in government seriously and made an early statement on the steps of Downing Street about accountability and transparency as part of the role of public service in government. He has responsibilities for Constitution and Union as well as EU relations, which will be of benefit both domestically and internationally, helping Cabinet Office to work closely in support of FCDO who are leading on co-chairing OGP. He stressed the importance of working closely with civil society to reap the benefit of listening to each other, including as part of the next NAP.

Kevin spoke about civil society's ambitions for the next NAP process and asked the minister to consider writing to his colleagues about their department's involvement in the next NAP.

Minister Ward agreed to take away the idea and write-back to the group with his thoughts. He noted the Cabinet Office's role in coordinating and pulling together efforts across government, and the importance of political leadership in enabling officials to do that well. He also noted that there is a responsibility on all parts of government to promote open government, going beyond individual ministers and departments.

Kevin emphasised that open government is the foundation of a fairer society and that whilst it may appear abstract, it ultimately has a positive impact on people's lives.

Minister Ward expressed support for regular meetings of the MSF, supported by both official level engagement and perhaps agreeing a mechanism to signal if there's a problem to ministers.

Kevin asserted the open government agenda was increasingly relevant and asked the minister about his ambition to raise the agenda's profile. Kevin noted the last time the UK co-chaired the OGP, the then PM talked of a 'transparency revolution' and said the current challenge is one of transparency restoration. He stated that civil society is eager to work with government to achieve this and make the next NAP as ambitious as possible.

Minister Ward stated government is also eager, given the acute moment of threat we are in, and the importance of protecting open government principles. He noted it has been 25 years since a Labour government introduced the Freedom of Information Act, which clearly underpins many elements of transparency. He noted that the task at hand is how we modernise our approach in a radically different world where the internet and AI have and continue to change the flow of information.

Minister Ward emphasised the importance of the open government agenda to Cabinet Office, FCDO and other parts of government, importance of returning to regular MSF meetings, and making progress in different areas of policy.

## Part 3: Updates across all levels of government and civil society

Members from civil society and government provided open government updates.

### UK Open Government Civil Society Network

Kevin Keith defined the [UK OGN](#) as a network of individuals and civil society organisations championing open government, focused on broadening and deepening inclusion, promoting scrutiny, and advocating for reform. Kevin noted that the network successfully obtained a grant from [OGP's Helen Derbyshire Fund for Civil Society](#) and employed a contractor to support delivery.

### Civil Service Strategy Unit

The impact of machinery of government changes on meetings of the MSFs were explained, noting that the open government team has moved to the Civil Service Strategy Unit in April 2025. Matt Donnelly explained the delayed publication of government [NAP5 implementation](#) and [NAP6 co-creation](#) self-assessments are due imminently. Learning from NAP5 and NAP6, effort has been invested in leading a review of OGP's rules for national action plans, with proposals now in a mature state and due for consideration by OGP's governing bodies in the coming weeks.

### Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

In addition to what was said in the slidedeck, FCDO supports bringing as many countries as possible into the global democratic fold whilst maintaining standards and ensuring commitment to principles and value of open government.

### Northern Ireland

The following was relayed from the Northern Ireland Department of Finance, who could not make the meeting. The Minister responsible for the Department of Finance (DoF), Northern Ireland, is seeking to secure the Executive's support for Northern Ireland's membership of OGP Local, which had not been previously secured.

There was concern from civil society that this had already been secured and questioned this development, whilst reiterating their support for genuine collaboration with government, and noting the potential for Northern Ireland to benefit from the refresh of the open government agenda.

### Scotland

The [Scottish Government Open Government Action Plan 2021 to 2025](#) has concluded. It set out commitment across five areas: fiscal openness and transparency; participation in health and social care reforms; developing a civil society climate panel; ethical use of data and digital tech; and broader developments improving participation. The 2026-2030 Scottish Action Plan is now in co-production, which will run throughout the next parliament and has been commissioned to SCDC. The themes identified are trust and transparency,

participation, ethical use of data, tech and information along with anti-corruption; the latter will build on the UK anti-corruption plan.

It was also noted that Scotland continues to work with the Nordic+group of OGP countries – one of the pieces of work from that group has been to consider proactive publication standards which will be taken forward with OECD and OGP as a specific workstream. Scotland's Open Gov Challenge commitment to [create a public AI register for Scotland](#) won commendation at the OGP Global Summit hosted in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain.

## Wales

The Welsh Government focus is on delivery of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act which includes principles of involvement, transparency and collaboration and would look to align with the UK government where possible. The establishment of the [Office for Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) was also noted.

## Glasgow City Council

Civil society and government officials were unable to attend and sent their apologies.

## Greater Manchester Combined Authority

The first [GMCA Action Plan 2025-2028](#) was published in October 2025. It sets out commitments on open data in recognition that opening up more data enables not only greater transparency for citizens and civil society but also creates greater opportunities for collaboration and innovative problem solving. GMCA civil society partners were acknowledged and it was noted that future ambitions include the development of a policy framework to bring cohesion on open data publishing across the Greater Manchester region.

## Part 4: Breakout discussion on aspirations for UK OGP Co-Chair year

### Introduction

Stefan Kossoff outlined the UK's approach to developing a co-chair vision through a combination of international and domestic engagement with governments and civil society, and the breakout sessions were a next step in wider domestic engagement. The session generated a wide range of views, ideas and aspirations for further consideration.

### Ways of working

There was a general sense of excitement and enthusiasm, but a clear view that the UK has to "walk-the-walk" on open government. It was noted this excitement should be used to harness existing efforts and drive positive outcomes and impact.

It was queried whether this was going to be a 'whole of government effort', and how the UK Government would work with the nations, regions and local government. The idea of co-creation touch-points between UK civil society and the co-chairs was suggested, as was

the use of learning circles inspired by the experience of OGP local members to share experiences and expertise. Ensuring ministerial join-up was seen as key to providing necessary political will.

Support for civil society was raised, both in the form of financial support and to convene meaningfully with them. Ensuring equitable opportunities to be involved rather than just the usual voices was noted as key to role-modelling collaboration, and could revitalise government and civil society partnerships in the UK and abroad.

## Themes and capability

A range of policy areas were highlighted in ensuring the UK's 'own house is in order' alongside engaging international partners.

Policy areas mentioned that are in the current UK NAP as commitments of for building capability included:

- Procurement and open contracting were noted as a particular well-known strength within OGP.
- The UK's efforts on aid transparency could be capitalised on to make transparency a routine part of work and not an extra, with potential benefits from open source software at home and abroad, opening the door to global aid transparency dashboards.
- Taking next steps with freedom of information to progress with technological change and ensuring current codes of practice are up-to-date, whilst celebrating 25 years of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We could also capitalise on the OGP civil society co-chair's background in freedom of information.
- Building on progress around integrity data to develop central integrity dashboards, and considering reforms to lobbying which could be informed by this.
- Building on past efforts around digital governance to promote effective and principled approaches, enabling transparency, such as through data standards that enable easier use and interoperability, and next steps on algorithmic transparency.
- Building on past efforts and UK global leadership around beneficial ownership to promote effective ownership registers and join up other transparency efforts.

Beyond policy areas in the current UK NAPs, suggestions included:

- Democratic resilience, democratic backsliding, the protection of civic space and tackling misinformation and disinformation were seen as key challenges.
- Resurrecting the inclusion of environmental commitments, given the UK's leading role in many other initiatives and in helping other countries.

## Working in a complex space

Given the range of other multilateral and domestic efforts underway, timing with these was seen as critical, avoiding competing with each other, and instead being complementary. The UK's chairship of the G20 in 2027 and the Illicit Finance Summits were cited as examples.

Clarity on what co-chairing meant in practice was discussed including how government and civil society can most usefully contribute, and the partnership between UK government and

OGP Civil Society Co-chair [Laura Neuman](#). Discussion also focused on the feasibility of events typically associated with Co-Chairing and there concerns that attempting to host an OGP Global Summit might distract from the potential for other efforts including domestic progress on UK National Action Plan commitments. Alongside this, a strong handover from the current co-chairs was emphasised to ensure an appropriate level of continuity and progress.

### Broad aspiration

There was a call to be bold and speed up progress, taking pragmatic steps in making meaningful progress. It was noted that trust is hard to earn, and that the time to invest is now.

### Thank you and next steps

Participants were reminded that the [terms of reference for the UK MSF](#) should be reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant. Comments were invited by 12th January for future review in January ahead of the next MSF.

Kevin Keith and Matthew Clarke thanked everyone for their contributions, civil society engagement, and government conveners and noted the positivity about the resumption of the MSF and enthusiasm for the future.