

UK Multi-Stakeholder Forum Readout

Wednesday 8th July 2026

Aims of the meeting

The aim of the UK Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Open Government (MSF) was to:

- Review implementation of the UK standalone Open Gov Commitment to build public dashboards for open contracting data;
- Consider the recommendations from the analysis of NAP7 initial evidence gathering phase about which themes are ready to move to co-creation or otherwise;
- Share updates from around the UK, including progress in developing the agenda for UK OGP Co-chairship.

Attendees

The forum operates under Chatham House Rule. There were a total of 32 attendees: 20 from government representatives and 12 from civil society. There were a further 33 apologies received: 16 from government and 17 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.

The Seventh National Action Plan (NAP7) Analysis of initial evidence gathering was shared ahead of the meeting to MSF invitees on 1st July. It details the analysis of the public call for evidence and internal government engagement which has been completed to assess the potential for government and civil society to collaborate in developing suitably ambitious open government commitments as part of NAP7. The document will be available in PDF format and published as part of [NAP7 Call for Evidence](#) on GOV.UK.

Welcome

The meeting was co-chaired by Matthew Clarke, Director, Civil Service Strategy Unit (CSSU) within Cabinet Office and Kevin Keith, Chair of the UK Open Government Civil Society Network (UK OGN).

Part 1: Review progress with the open contracting Open Gov Challenge commitment currently being implemented

Civil society and government leads provided updates on a UK standalone commitment.

UK standalone commitment on open contracting

The UK Government outlined its vision and progress for the Open Gov Challenge commitment '[build public dashboards for open contracting data](#)' to deliver dashboards and data applications that help contracting authorities, suppliers, and the public explore and interrogate public procurement data. Incorporating civil society feedback from the discovery phase, government is also developing an [enhanced search functionality](#), scheduled for release by the end of July 2026. Looking ahead, future releases will introduce interactive dashboards to track key indicators, including Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE) participation and levels of competition.

Representation from the Open Contracting Advisory Group was unable to attend and sent their apologies.

Part 2: Launch of NAP7 co-creation

Introduction and scene setting

CSSU outlined the coordination and implementation of NAP7 outreach. Jointly managed by CSSU and the UK OGN, the outreach phase launched following the February 2026 MSF. CSSU led the public idea-gathering process via GOV.UK Forms, inviting individuals, civil society organisations, and other bodies to suggest areas of focus.

The public call for evidence ran from 25 March to 25 May and resulted in 78 submissions comprising 139 ideas. UK OGN held information sessions, supported by CSSU, to guide civil society on crafting high-quality submissions. Concurrently, CSSU conducted internal government outreach to promote the NAP and identify priority policy areas.

Analysis of NAP7 initial evidence gathering

Each submitted idea was assigned to one or more categories based on its nature, and then grouped by theme and sub-theme. Many ideas spanned multiple themes.

To determine whether a specific theme could be developed into a formal commitment, each idea was assessed against three key criteria: (i) relevant to open government principles (transparency, accountability, participation), (ii) promotes ambitious open government reform, and (iii) capability and resources for government and civil society to work together.

CSSU explained that this assessment resulted in a series of recommendations for each theme, classified using the Red-Amber-Green-Grey (RAGG) status:

- (Green) Ready for co-creation - Government and civil society are ready to co-create a commitment;
- (Amber) Build Capability - Government and civil society should work together to get ready for co-creation, but aren't ready yet. This involves establishing the necessary conditions for successful collaboration (e.g. resource allocation or building a common understanding);

- (Red) Explore Further - There is possibly some potential for co-creation, but not enough evidence to justify building capability or co-creating at this time, and needs to be considered further;
- (Grey) Not for now - There is little or no potential for co-creation at this time.

CSSU noted that due to the broad scope of the ideas received, the depth of the initial analysis was constrained by time and resources. In some cases where there were a low number of ideas submitted for a sub-theme they may not yet have been tested with the relevant government team. Nevertheless, this approach is considered a sufficient initial step in developing NAP7.

Matt Clarke highlighted the new flexibility secured for developing NAP7 will allow commitments to be co-created through the life of the current Parliament. He emphasised development of each commitment will proceed at an individual pace, this initial phase is not the only opportunity to get involved, and stakeholders are welcome to engage further down the line.

Ready for co-creation: Mainstreaming public participation

CSSU outlined NAP7 analysis and made a first recommendation that public participation should proceed to immediate co-creation due to evident strengths.

There is a government appetite for shifting how consultations are done and thinking about alternative methods from the status quo. This includes supporting civil servants to utilise new methods and building a public participation system fit for the future. There was wide interest received during the public call for evidence on public participation and the importance of engaging people outside government in making policy.

Ready for co-creation: Public participation on the rule of law

CSSU outlined NAP7 analysis and made a second recommendation that public participation on the rule of law could move to immediate co-creation.

Officials from the Attorney General Office explained the Rule of Law Unit has ambitions for piloting public participation methods and a strong eagerness to continue collaborating across Whitehall on areas of shared interest. Officials noted several initiatives including the launch of the [Ruleoflaw.campaign.gov.uk](https://ruleoflaw.campaign.gov.uk) website, Youth Ambassadors Programme, the unit's experimental partnerships with creative practitioners and the September launch of a "Rule of Law Futures Lab" to act as a proactive policy sandbox.

Breakout discussion on ready for co-creation

The interventions by UK government officials generated a wide range of views, ideas, and aspirations for further consideration:

Champion wider civil society engagement

Discussion focused on the importance of wide public participation to ensure civil society-government engagement is genuinely representative and cross-cutting:

- Questions were raised about how to balance broad public participation with deep, sector-specific expertise;
- There was strong interest to involve key partners from the very start rather than late in the process. This is framed as essential for maintaining the UK's credibility as OGP co-chair;
- Civil society stakeholders from specific domains (like anti-corruption) emphasised a need for clearer pathways for developing commitments.

Transparency in how decisions and commitments are made

The exact mechanics behind how recommendations and commitments have been chosen, evaluated and prioritised was discussed. Civil society requested:

- Further explanation is needed on why some topics meet the criteria whilst others didn't—especially those where civil society showed interest;
- Clarity is also needed on who contributed to the NAP7 outreach exercise, what they suggested, and whether the results represent genuinely new work with new resources, or something altogether different;
- Clarity on how the government assesses its own capability to collaborate effectively.

Practical steps for working together across government

There was a general sense of needing to work collaboratively, scale what is already happening and consider opportunities to showcase localised successes. Civil society noted that:

- Good work is already happening across government, but it is currently invisible to the public;
- Because work looks different across different regions, there is a call to map these variations to share best practices;
- The Greater Manchester Combined Authority '[participation playbook](#)' was highlighted as a practical tool that could be used across the whole system to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Fully formed and realistic

Participants considered the opportunities, risk and real-world implementation of the recommendations. Civil society noted:

- Raised concern that civil society is being asked to deliver goals that aren't quite fully formed yet;
- Suggested that there is a need to simplify NAP7 analysis recommendations, such as combining themes of 'open justice' with broader commitments on public participation on the rule of law;

- There must be clarity on whether recommendations to build capability are backed by fresh government funding or if charities are expected to absorb the workload.

Build capability: open contracting

CSSU outlined NAP7 analysis recommendations that the theme of 'open contracting' has strong potential but needs to further build capability before entering co-creation at a later date.

Officials from Government Commercial Function in the Cabinet Office explained the implementation of the UK standalone open gov commitment on open contracting will remain the immediate focus before co-creation of a seventh open contracting commitment later in the calendar year. Learning the lessons from its delivery and stakeholder engagement will be used to take stock of and plan for a commitment in the near future. Officials noted broader [procurement policy reforms](#), aimed at supporting the [modern Industrial Strategy](#) and strengthening economic resilience, which will help inform the scope of a future NAP commitment.

Build capability: open justice

CSSU outlined NAP7 analysis recommendations that the theme of 'open justice' also has strong potential but needs to further build capability before entering co-creation at a later date.

Officials from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) thanked contributors to the NAP7 Call for Evidence on open justice, confirming all submissions were thoroughly reviewed and distributed to relevant teams. Core themes focused on improving data access, leveraging AI, and expanding public engagement. To ensure potential NAP7 commitment adds the most value, the MoJ is mapping these proposals against ongoing departmental initiatives, building on the [MoJ Call for Evidence](#) and the Judiciary-led Transparency and Open Justice Board. Other active projects include expanding the Courts and Tribunals Hearing (CaTH) service <https://www.court-tribunal-hearings.service.gov.uk/> for court listing data, providing free sentencing transcripts to victims of rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO), and extending court filming.

Officials noted that because open justice spans multiple policy and operational areas, further internal assessment is underway before formal recommendations are submitted to ministers. Updates will follow once this review phase concludes.

Breakout discussion on build capability

The interventions by UK government officials generated a wide range of views, ideas, and aspirations for further consideration.

Civil society-government co design in practice

Discussion focused on turning good intentions into real action:

- Participation is fundamental to open government, but commitments must be action-oriented. Key enablers are too often lumped together rather than clearly addressed;
- The definition of capability used for NAP7 analysis was challenged. Civil society noted that a key priority is building civil society's capacity for healthy co-design so the government can better meet public needs;
- Practical questions remain about where to begin co-creation, specifically regarding timelines, participating departments, target locations, and addressing past weaknesses in public participation.

Showing progress and keeping past momentum

The discussion focused on transparency of current work and learning from past action plans. Civil society highlighted that:

- Significant positive work is happening behind the scenes (e.g. around Rule of Law), but lack of public visibility limits its impact. Making existing efforts more transparent is essential;
- In areas like Open Contracting there is a need for future action plans (NAP7) to build directly on past commitments, preserving established relationships where civil society acts as a supportive and challenging partner.

Turning raw data into usable insights

Discussion focused on the behind-the-scenes work to make data useable, including the insights being used to create the procurement dashboards:

- Turning complex, new datasets into clear metrics and dashboards requires significant rigor and resource investment;
- Underlying data problems present major technical hurdles, such as varying publication standards across systems and policy areas like those associated with ensuring court or tribunal proceedings are conducted publicly and transparently;
- Participants noted that emerging tech and AI are viewed as key levers to improve data usability, engagement, and publicity provided these base-level data issues are resolved.

Open government opportunities across the UK and political changes

The focus of discussion was on navigating shifting political environments:

- Across the UK there is varied adoption of procurement legislation that leads to inconsistent data across UK nations. However, a clear willingness to collaborate exists;
- Recent UK parliamentary changes may leave key policy levers (such as procurement) in a temporary "wait-and-see" phase while political priorities settle.

Explore further

CSSU outlined the NAP7 analysis findings on which topics needed to be explored further. Five themes around anti-corruption and illicit finance, aid transparency, democratic participation, access to information and digital governance, and local transparency were highlighted as having some potential but needing further exploration.

It was highlighted that across these areas, there may be civil society capability or evidence of government capability for NAP co-creation however it was not quite at the level to advance to co-creation immediately.

It was pointed out that a contributing factor in some cases was the existence of activity stemming from previous civil society engagement or where work is already underway.

Participants were reminded that themes needing further exploration could be progressed alongside active co-creation.

Not for now

CSSU outlined the NAP7 analysis findings on which topics were not moving forward into co-creation or further exploration due to insufficient evidence of government or civil society capability at this time. The breadth of topics was noted.

CSSU emphasised that the new flexibility the UK government and others secured for developing the National Action Plan will allow commitments to be co-created throughout the current Parliament, this is not the only opportunity to get involved, and themes not yet recommended for co-creation could proceed if they reach a sufficient capability to do so.

Issues raised for follow-up

Kevin Keith invited participants to reflect on the NAP7 analysis' recommendations for 'explore further' and 'no further action'. Civil society contributors highlighted:

- While flexibility in the National Action Plan timeline is welcomed there was concern that without explicit milestones and clear decisional gateway dates, flexibility risks turning into strategic drift;
- The need for greater transparency from government regarding its capabilities, such as whether it is constrained by resources, staff capacity, or lack of political/ministerial backing;
- Civil society can actively assist by advocating at the ministerial level to help turn potential ideas into approved commitments;
- Civil society organisations are heavily resource-stretched. Identifying early on where there is no ministerial or departmental backing prevents civil society from wasting time on initiatives that will ultimately lead nowhere;
- Concerns about grouping access to information and digital governance into a single broad bucket.
- That the next MSF be used to discuss those themes where there is not clear agreement, as this is the benefit of such a forum;

- To consider the possibility for an interim MSF between now and October to agree next steps;
- Requested clarity on the exact windows and channels available to initiate discussions with specific government teams.

Part 3: Updates from across all levels of government and civil society, including progress in developing the agenda for UK OGP Co-chairship

Members from civil society and government provided open government updates.

UK Open Government Civil Society Network

Kevin Keith noted UK OGN involvement in the outreach phase for the development of the NAP7 which included holding information sessions, supported by CSSU, for civil society to provide information on the NAP and guidance on how to make a good submission. He reiterated the unprecedented interest, quality, quantity and diversity of submissions received. Kevin also noted the recent conversation between UK civil society and OGP civil society co-chair Laura Neuman of the Carter Center as very constructive and ongoing.

Cabinet Office, Civil Service Strategy Unit

Alqayam Meghji from the Cabinet Office noted the Open Government team based in the Civil Service Strategy Unit (CSSU) had grown in number to include himself and other colleagues. He also highlighted the team's involvement as part of OECD's Public Governance Committee (PGC) as well as the [2026 OECD Global Forum on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy](#), its focus on the Government unstuck agenda, and the opportunity for civil society and government attendance.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office | Update on UK OGP Co-Chair planning

Stefan Kossoff from FCDO set out ongoing preparations ahead of the UK taking on the co-chairship of OGP in the Autumn - an important opportunity for UK leadership on democracy and open government at a time of international geopolitical upheaval. He set out the UK's provisional co-chairship thematic policy priorities which center on safeguarding democracy, protecting civic space, and tackling international governance threats. The three priority areas are: civic space and public participation; information integrity, data, and digital governance; and tackling corruption and illicit finance. He also set out OGP's unique role as an enabling platform for open government reforms, and objectives around strengthening the Partnership. Finally, he highlighted key international moments during the co-chair year including UNGA in September, the Illicit Finance Summit in December, and the UK's G7 and G20 presidencies in 2027.

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Department of Finance could not make the meeting. Representation from the Northern Ireland Open Government Network noted the limited interaction with the

Northern Ireland Executive despite requests from civil society, and the future of Northern Ireland's OGP local membership remains unresolved. They reiterated their support for genuine collaboration and clarity regarding the opportunity for commitments from the devolved nations as part of the UK Action Plan. A dedicated follow-up discussion was suggested to improve this situation.

Scotland

The 2026-2030 Scottish Action Plan is being co-created and four major themes have been identified: trust and transparency, anti-corruption, ethical use of data and digital technology, and participation. Work to understand the views of stakeholders and the public on trust in government and how this insight can feed into these themes has recently been completed in collaboration with civil society representatives through Scottish Community Development Centre.

Representation from Scotland Open Government Network was unable to attend and sent their apologies.

Wales

Representatives from the Welsh Government and Wales Open Government Network were unable to attend and sent their apologies, but it is understood they were due to meet with each other and the MSF was eager for an update following the Welsh Government elections.

Glasgow City Council

Representatives from Glasgow City Council and Glasgow civil society could not make the meeting, but the MSF was eager for an update on recent progress.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

The first GMCA Action Plan 2025-2028 was published in October 2025. Its focus is on open data and includes the commitment to co-create an open data policy framework to enable partners across the region to be consistent in the data made open to the public in terms of quality, accessibility and where it is hosted. Two rounds of engagement workshops have been completed so far with a final round planned for October. Following the release of the analysis of NAP7 initial evidence gathering exercise GMCA will look to consider links to the [Greater Manchester information strategy](#) and other ongoing pieces of national work.

Thank you and next steps

Matt Clarke agreed on the need for government to provide greater clarity on next steps for the NAP including how the analysis will be used and the forward program of work. Concern about the status of the access to information and digital governance themes was noted.

Kevin Keith and Matthew Clarke thanked everyone for their enthusiastic and frank contributions, including those reporting back from breakout rooms, and noted the level of engagement by civil society.