

Licensing Forum, 4 June 2009
Companies House, Cardiff

Present:

Liz Lalley (<i>chair</i>)	Companies House
Mark Buckley (<i>speaking</i>)	Companies House
Arthur West (<i>speaking</i>)	Companies House
Carol Watts	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Stephen Keightley	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Rhian Doleman	DVLA
Michael Allen	DVLA
William Pope	DSA
Adrian Nuttall	Environment Agency
Margaret Fuller	Fire Service College
Susan Evans	Welsh Assembly Government
Jane Allen	Land Registry
Tim Padfield (<i>speaking</i>)	National Archives
Matthew Pearce	OPSI
John Williams (<i>speaking</i>)	OPSI
Robin Pudney (<i>speaking</i>)	Ordnance Survey
Charles Keegan,	Registers of Scotland
Muriel Adamson	UKHO
Tony Dent	UKHO

1. **Introduction** from Chair, Liz Lalley, Companies House
2. **Companies House an Overview**, Mark Buckley (MB), Companies House
 - a. Mark introduced the forum to the role and key responsibilities of Companies House:
 - i. Sole limited company Registry in GB soon to be UK wide with inclusion of NI
 - ii. Incorporate & dissolve limited companies
 - iii. Register, examine and store company information
 - iv. Make company information available to the public
 - b. Mark highlighted some key facts & figures on Companies House information management activities:

- i. Over 315,000,000 pages of company information are stored in the database.
- ii. A company document is ordered every 4 seconds
- iii. 42,100,000 hits are received monthly by their electronic services

3. Search Products, Customers and Channels, Arthur West, Companies House

- a. Arthur built on Mark's presentation with a breakdown of who Companies House's information customers are:
 - i. Agents and professionals are significant consumers
 - ii. Businesses themselves, who may be completing due diligence on current and potential business partners
 - iii. Warehouseurs – who store large amounts of data from numerous sources for analysis, such as credit reference agencies
 - iv. Wholesalers – whose focus is onward dissemination
 - v. Consumers – investigating companies and directors they may do business with
- b. Arthur discussed the channels by which company information is disseminated:
 - i. Highlighting the 80% year on year growth seen by the Companies House XML Gateway.
 - ii. The strong performance of bulk online services, such as download via FTP.
 - iii. The popularity of webcheck, which provides public access to Companies House information via a website
 - iv. Arthur also noted the decline of other formats, such as microfiche; and that some organisations acquired microfiche only to digitise it upon receipt– highlighting underlying dissatisfaction with older media among our search customers..
- c. In discussion with the forum Arthur described the varying levels of take up of electronic services.
 - i. Ranging from:
 - electronic requests to incorporate businesses becoming an industry standard (now at 93% e take-up)
 - to the low take up by finance professionals of online annual accounts filing (less than 20% of accounts are e-filed)

- d. Arthur also discussed current limitations of online services, Companies House having a very large range of forms not all of which are available online. Although electronic versions of all the most common forms are available online.

4. **Google Books**, Tim Padfield, The National Archives

- a. Tim described Google's original mission to make all information available online.
- b. This led to the now ubiquitous internet search engine, but much of the world's information remains held in analogue form.
- c. Google began to digitise the entire stock of major US holding libraries. With a view to making the digital copies available online.
- d. However the Bodleian Library was the sole UK library involved and it would allow only digitisation of out of copyright works.
- e. Google was sued in the US by industry bodies representing authors and writers.
- f. An out-of-court settlement was reached whereby Google would pay rights holders compensation for the scanning, and a royalty on profits made from onward use.
- g. Rights holders are free to opt-out and take separate action.
- h. As Google will control the digital copies of a very large portion of the world's books there are serious competition issues to address.
- i. Approval of the settlement has thus been delayed until October while the Justice Department investigates.
- j. No services under this settlement will be available anywhere outside the USA. What is available in the UK is a different product using short extracts from books as search results when searching for text strings. Google hopes to reach similar settlements elsewhere.

5. **OS OpenSpace[®]**, Robin Pudney, Ordnance Survey

- a. Robin highlighted the growing importance of the OpenSpace service, particularly as part of the new OS business strategy.
- b. OpenSpace allows web developers to incorporate OS mapping into their sites using a javascript API. Access to OpenSpace data is also free of charge to developers.

- c. This helps to facilitate the development of innovative applications, e.g. plotting a walking route to download to a GPS enabled device or mapping the location of weather monitoring web cameras.
- d. As part of the revised OS business strategy the terms and conditions, content and service quality of OpenSpace are being reviewed.
- e. Licensing:
 - i. Developer licences will allow inclusion of advertising
 - ii. Charities & not-for-profits are less likely to need to move to commercial licences;
 - iii. Minimum royalty charges for commercial licences will be reduced – to zero for 2 years with commercial users paying only for the data they use. Minimum royalties will be £1000 thereafter, or for OS Master Map Topographical.
- f. Commercial users will be licensed under the current suite of specific use contracts until new licences become available in April 2010.
- g. Content:
 - i. Administrative boundary data now included in service.
- h. Service quality:
 - i. The strict daily quotas on quantities of mapping information available through the service are being replaced with a more flexible 'fair use' policy.
 - ii. OpenSpace Pro will have service guarantees.

6. **New IFTS Strategy**, John Williams, Office of Public Sector Information

- a. John introduced the new IFTS strategy and performance management framework to the forum, and explained the reasons behind the revision.
- b. There having been significant policy developments since the launch of IFTS in 2002, including:
 - i. OFT's Commercial Use of Public Information report;
 - ii. The Power of Information Review & Taskforce;
 - iii. The Trading Funds Assessment undertaken by the Shareholder Executive.
- c. OPSI has also gained a significant amount of practical experience from running the IFTS programme, and this required formal incorporation.

- d. Three new principles were introduced:
 - i. Maximisation – a presumption that all government information should open to re-use and that re-use should be encouraged;
 - ii. Simplicity – simple licences and licensing processes;
 - iii. Innovation – public sector information, and the licences for it, should be available in forms which facilitate innovation.
- e. The three original principles of transparency fairness and challenge were retained.
- f. Feedback from IFTS members was summarised:
 - i. a generally positive reception for the new principles;
 - ii. an acknowledgment that IFTS needed to be updated.
- g. Some particular issues raised in the feedback included:
 - i. Whether scope was being broadened to encompass information management/data sharing. John explained that the wording was revisited as this perception was not intended;
 - ii. Whether the revised IFTS process could prove more bureaucratic. John responded that the new performance management framework should not entail an increased workload for members, but that it would provide greater clarity and consistency when OPSI reported;
 - iii. The performance management framework endorsed a separated upstream/downstream business model. There was a query that where a member's business did not conform to this model it could be difficult for them to achieve a top rating on the relevant indicators. John confirmed that OPSI saw the separated upstream/downstream model as an effective means of demonstrating fairness and would continue to reflect this in the performance management framework;
 - iv. Consistency of drafting and establishing differences between the performance ratings. John agreed the need to ensure there were clear differences between the ratings for each performance indicator;
 - v. Terminology. John noted that the term 'granularity' would be revised as members had commented that it was unclear. Also, that 'feedback' rather than 'complaints' should be elicited from customers.
- h. John agreed to respond individually to those who had provided feedback on the strategy and performance management framework.
- i. It was noted that the revised [IFTS strategy](#) and [performance management framework](#) were available on the OPSI website.

7. Arrangements for **next forum**:

- a. Matthew Pearce reminded the attendees that the next forum was due to be hosted by the **Environment Agency** at the Thames Barrier facility in London on **21 September**.
- b. The attendees were asked if there were any particular subjects which they would like discussed. There were a number of helpful suggestions including:
 - i. Electronic licensing;
 - ii. The process of taking infringements through court;
 - iii. ICO's view on data sharing between govt. depts;
 - iv. OS' new business strategy;
 - v. OPSI's plans to move to non-transactional licensing.