

Minutes of meeting of Output Area Classification User Group (OACUG) Steering Group.

13/05/2010, 2pm, Fellows Room, Royal Statistical Society (RSS), 12 Errol Street, London, EC1Y 8LX

1. Welcome by Chair (Alex Singleton), Attendance, Apologies.

Attendees: Alexander Singleton (AS); Daniel Lewis (DJL); Daniel Vickers (DV); Stephen Richards (SR); John Fisher (JF); Alistair Edwardes (AE); Tony Duckenfield (TD); Martin Callingham (MC); Daryll Lloyd (DLd)

Apologies: Keith Dugmore; Martin Robson; Chris Denham; Gesche Schmid (GS); Henry Burroughs; Alan Lewis; Stephen Bond (SB); Oliver Duke-Williams; Sheila Quan (SQ).

2. Agree Minutes from Previous Meeting

Everyone is happy with the published minutes from the previous meeting in January. Two actions arise from this:

AS to follow up with GS regarding the ONS printing out large versions of the OAC Classification for Local Authorities.

DJL to talk to JF regarding the colour palette that Local Futures use for representing OAC and to create a document for the OACUG website supporting these colour choices as a standardised set for OAC.

3. News

DV discusses an event on "Local and Regional Intelligence" (LARI) in the West Midlands in which **AS**, **DV**, **AE** and **SB** presented OAC-related material. They, as part of a wider discussion identified the following areas that we need to address in helping people understand OAC:

- User confidence when using OAC relative to commercial software or data.
- Fundamental misunderstanding of the differences between a tool (i.e. software), a classification (i.e. OAC, Mosaic, Acorn etc.) and Data (i.e. counts of x by area).
 - Thus, there was a lot of 'buy-in' for commercial packages which combine tool and classification with a consultancy service.
- The upshot was that users often want a commercial type 'system', but for free. Although some discussion that 'free' is not the issue per se, but that some sort of tool or level of support is needed to entice new users.
- It was seen as an important time to capture these people, as the Government will explicitly be spending less on consultancy and hence contracts will be coming to an end over the next few years. These users will still require citizen insight services and OAC is a free and open choice.

JF, in connection with this discussion, sought to highlight the following points as useful pointers to Local Authorities when discussing OAC.

- OAC is highly beneficial given that it is 'non-license constrained'.

- This means that different services should easily be able to share data coded by OAC in a way that has previously been prohibited by individual commercial contracts.
- In terms of the efficiency orientated "Total Place" agenda this means that OAC is an opportunity for a 'common currency'.
- For this to work we need to work a bit harder on usability and descriptive elements of classifications, for instance the descriptions, pen portraits etc.

Action for All: We need more case studies for the website that demonstrate the real benefits of OAC.

AS to add material from the West Midlands presentations to the website.

AE reports that there is general interest in the DCLG regarding the use of OAC.

DLd reports that he is using OAC in the Department for Transport as part of a project looking at where it would be effective to spend money on electric cars.

TD reports that he and **SQ** put an article in GeoConnexion which discusses work including both OAC and MOSAIC under the banner: The value of Geodemographics in a Recession. Link: http://www.geoconnexion.com/uploads/geodemographics_v8i2.pdf

DJL to put a link to this article (as above) on the OACUG website for reference.

DJL reports the outcome to date on census consultation undertaken by **CD**. Submissions have been made for the general and geography consultations and acknowledged, although no further correspondence has been entered into. The consultations are available on the website in the news feed. **CD** notes that a specific application will not be made to GROS (regarding Scottish Output) as the ONS is working closely with them, and output is unlikely to vary significantly.

In a note from **CD**, it is noted that the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat Government might consider altering the census, but this is widely decried as impossible by the group as funding is already in place for data collection, although it is noted that we will have to monitor the situation regarding dissemination.

JF highlights an event that took place at Local Futures that dealt with how to get institutions to work together and the opportunities for OAC. He reiterates the need for some proper case studies. He wonders whether it would be possible to get OAC-coded data for the Place Survey and notes that Robert Radburn at City University has a lot of this data.

AS demonstrates a new piece of software that he has created. It takes advantage of the newly free Ordnance Survey data and allows users to input a list of postcodes and attach the OAC values. Currently it does not cover Northern Ireland.

AS to sort out the license for this software so that it can go onto the OACUG website and begin being used.

MC asks who is going to be responsible for updating the software, **AS** responds that it is easy to package a new edition when the postcode file is updated as you simply delete the old file and insert the new one in the appropriate directory.

AS concedes there are a few things he needs to check out for future editions of this software, including the postcode-OA look up table that the Ordnance Survey promised as part of the free data deal, and its accuracy against NSPD. He also wants to check out usability of the product, such as whether adding basic graphical outputs (i.e. charts) would be useful.

DJL demonstrates the new way in which case studies are handled by the OACUG website, and will handle any further additions to the case studies if people forward them to him.

DJL to update contacts information on the OACUG Website.

AS and **MC** discuss the creation of a 'Grand Index' as a way of imbuing the current OAC area profiles with more value, and providing a richer and clearer picture for descriptive portraits of the data. Inputs could include: Food and Expenditure Survey, and the Wealth Survey. **MC** notes that the key difficulty in setting this up is in getting hold of data, and recommends getting 3-4 data holders with an interest in having data index by OAC.

AS to follow up on potential for a Grand Index

DJL to attempt to get National Travel Survey (NTS) data coded by OAC.

AE to look into the Citizenship Survey coded by OAC

4. OACUG Event

The OACUG conference will take place on the afternoon of the 6th of September in the RSS lecture Theatre.

There is some interest in targeting the conference at **Efficiency Savings With OAC** for a Local Authority audience.

AS to sketch out an outline of what the conference will involve.

DJL to arrange a User Group Meeting for the morning of the conference day.