

Planning and Housing location data independent review published

Whether you are an individual searching for your new home, a developer preparing a planning application or a government official updating a local plan, planning and housing location data plays a critical role in addressing the national challenge of providing housing that meets different needs. We know that location data alone cannot tackle this, but data innovation across housing and planning could have the potential to help build more houses where people want them.

To help this the Geospatial Commission has today published an [independent Planning and Housing Review](#) to take stock of how relevant housing data is currently being accessed and used, and whether more can be done to unlock greater insights and economic value for the UK.

The report identifies where the challenges and opportunities are for better leveraging geospatial data and also outlines what current and forthcoming geospatial initiatives participants of the review were aware of. The cross sector (government, private and third sector) challenges highlighted in the review are related to findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability of data and data standards.

The review also highlights the challenges associated with upskilling, recruiting and retaining staff with the necessary Geographic Information Systems (GIS) experience, as well as programming and data science skills, especially among local authorities. Whilst it is acknowledged that these challenges vary across sectors due to different organisations' size, budget and the significance of geospatial data to the organisational objectives, the lack of geospatial skills and resources has a significant impact on the quality and accessibility of planning and housing data.

Overcoming the data issues evidenced in the review will require action by a wide range of organisations. No one organisation will solve these challenges working alone. However, by setting out the current landscape, we are now better able to identify key opportunity areas, and how we can collaborate across government and sectors to address them.

Thalia Baldwin, Geospatial Commission Director, said:

Location data is critically important to those operating within the planning and housing sectors. We have published this review of the housing location data landscape to help make it easier to understand what is happening in this complex area. The Geospatial Commission will be working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Homes England, HM Land Registry and across the housing and planning sector to consider our collective priorities for location data improvement.

Andrew Trigg, Director of Digital, Data and Technology at HM Land Registry added:

Maintaining and releasing land and property data is an important part of HM Land Registry's work, and we see first-hand the role this data plays in every aspect of our work, from supporting conveyancing to enabling new and emerging applications. This report recognises the value and potential of making data more easily available at both the local and national level, and HMLR supports efforts to make data more findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable. We're excited to continue our work to grow and enhance freely available data to further strengthen its impact on the wider economy.

Housing and local planning is an opportunity area identified in the [UK Geospatial Strategy](#) which was launched last year and this review builds on last year's release of [Unique Property and Street Reference Numbers](#) under the Open Government Licence to standardise referencing and sharing of address information about properties and streets across the public sector.

The Geospatial Commission has also brought together [housing, land and planning geospatial datasets](#) to signpost to more than 60 relevant open data sets and a list of over 300 planning and housing datasets.

You can read more about the review and the Commission's work on housing and planning on our [blog page](#).

[UKHO donates second-hand laptops to support students with remote learning](#)

Press release

As the pandemic highlights the need for greater access to online platforms to support children with their education, the UKHO provides laptops to Taunton Learning Partnership to help students with their learning.



The UKHO donates around 100 laptops to the Taunton Learning Partnership to support students with their learning.

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) continues to support the local community through the donation of surplus to requirement laptops to the Taunton Learning Partnership (TLP), which will repurpose the devices for students who do not have adequate IT resources to support remote learning during COVID-19.

As part of its ongoing efforts to support the local community, the UKHO is donating around 100 laptops to the Taunton Learning Partnership to support children with their learning, as many have been without sufficient resources since the outbreak of the pandemic last March.

TLP is a collaborative group of primary, secondary and special schools in Taunton and the surrounding area. All member schools are committed to supporting vulnerable children and families, while ensuring outstanding teaching and learning and striving for equity of provision and opportunity for all children from ages 0-19 years.

Katherine Hollinghurst, manager of TLP, said:

We're delighted that the UK Hydrographic Office chose to support us. Your generosity is very much appreciated, and the laptops will be a tremendous resource for supporting the home learning of many young people across schools in The Taunton Learning Partnership.

Commenting on the donation, Rear Admiral Peter Sparkes, Acting Chief Executive and National Hydrographer at the UKHO said:

We're committed to helping our local community, and supporting education. Beyond the pandemic and as lockdown eases, there are many families and students who will benefit greatly from having access to online resources in support of their learning. I'm very proud and grateful for the proactive, thoughtful and innovative approach that UKHO staff have taken to deliver this positive outcome.

UKHO continues to play its role in the community by supporting Taunton Learning Partnership and other local organisations. The UKHO's award winning STEM outreach programme continues to support and inspire the next generation into STEM careers. For 2021, staff at the UKHO are committed to raising funds for their nominated charity of the year, The Grand Appeal, which fundraises for the Bristol Children's Hospital to provide pioneering, life-saving equipment and research.

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[Photonics spin-out to defend against battlefield laser threats awarded funding](#)

Using research undertaken by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), Sentinel Photonics offers a unique range of laser detection and protection products. For the first time, protection from laser-based threats for dismounted soldiers is possible, potentially saving lives and improving survivability.

The technology detects and analyses invisible lasers used ahead of weapon systems to provide advance warning of attacks. Over time a bank of laser 'signatures' will be created that will identify and distinguish individual threat systems, enabling dismounted troops to take appropriate protective measures.

Infographic showing how the novel laser warner detects and identifies multiple threats.

This disruptive technology not only offers a step change in size, weight, power, and cost, but also enhanced detection capabilities against laser threats on the battlefield.

This capability has attracted the attention of the UK Government and has resulted in 2 successful applications for development contract funding from the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA).

Hetti Barkworth-Nanton, Sentinel's Chief Executive Officer, said:

I would like to thank DASA for their support. These two grants, totalling £232,000, will help Sentinel accelerate its product development programme and will see demonstrator products in the

hands of our end users by the end of the year. By the end of the summer, I'm also pleased to announce that we will be seeking to launch a Venture Funding round and would welcome preliminary discussions with interested parties.

A wide range of military and homeland security users will soon benefit from the assurance of having agile, next generation laser detection and protection in place. In addition to dismounted operators, a wide variety of land, sea and air platforms could be equipped with this capability.

Sentinel's first product will be a novel camera-based Laser Event Recorder (LER) to detect both pulsed and continuous wave (CW) lasers. In due course it also plans to develop a range of optical filters to provide protection against laser threats to complement the LER detection capability.

Sean Tipper, Sentinel's Chief Technology Officer, said:

I have been working in the electro-optics field at Dstl for more than 5 years and am excited to continue this journey as part of Sentinel Photonics. The cutting-edge work undertaken at Dstl to not only reduce the Size, Weight and Power (SWaP) of these technologies but also create entirely new capabilities and overcome existing limitations, is what makes Sentinel's products unique and will help to prevent loss of life and improve mission effectiveness.

Sentinel Photonics was established in 2019 by [Ploughshare Innovations](#), the technology transfer office of Dstl. Ploughshare commercialises innovations from across UK Government by either licensing to industry or creating spin-out companies. Sentinel Photonics is its latest novel spin-out and interested parties are invited to contact us about future seed round investment opportunities. For more information about Sentinel's products visit <http://sentinelphotonics.co.uk>

[Inspection Report Published: An inspection of the work of Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, and UK Visas and Immigration to identify, investigate, disrupt and prosecute](#)

perpetrators of modern slavery and human trafficking

In 2017, ICIBI reported on the identification and treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery (PVoMS) by Border Force, following this up in 2018 with a re-inspection to check on progress made in implementing ICIBI's recommendations.

Following discussions with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner about where a further inspection might add most value, between October 2019 and April 2020 ICIBI examined the work being done by Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration to identify, investigate, disrupt and prosecute the perpetrators of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT).

The inspection found that while operational activity overall had increased since the Modern Slavery Strategy was launched in 2014, the work of the Home Office's three Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) operational directorates, and that of the wider Home Office, remained siloed and disjointed, with little evidence of a plan to address this.

BICS had had some success in focusing frontline staff on the identification and safeguarding of victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which was reflected in increased numbers of NRM referrals. It needed to build on this, particularly at the border, where the numbers were still low. But, it was not doing enough to combat the criminals who perpetrate, enable and exploit MSHT, and opportunities to do so were being missed.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 16 September 2020 and published on 4 March 2021 (24 weeks). It contained three recommendations, which together looked to reset the BICS response to MSHT. They stressed the importance of creating a clearer, more coherent set of roles, responsibilities and objectives for BICS, and also of ensuring that the Home Office Serious Organised Crime Group (SOCG), which held the departmental lead for MSHT, was more closely engaged with BICS regarding the latter's efforts to tackle MSHT. Two of the recommendations were accepted and the third "partially accepted".

In addition, the report repeated a recommendation from 'An inspection of the Home Office's response to in-country clandestine arrivals ('lorry drops')' regarding a fundamental review of the criminal investigation and prosecution capabilities and capacity of BICS.

In November 2020, the Home Office "partially accepted" this recommendation, but declined to carry out a fundamental review. Instead, it would take ICIBI's findings fully into account alongside the findings of the independent review of Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) led by Sir Craig Mackey QPM, which had reported to the Home Secretary in February 2020, and about which it would provide details "in due course".

The Home Office's latest response simply quotes its previous statement. It is unclear what progress it has made in the intervening four months. While the necessary improvements in capabilities and capacity will take time to implement, it would have been more encouraging to see reference to some specific actions and deadlines.

UN Human Rights Council 46: UK statement for the Interactive Dialogue with the with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief

Thank you, Madam President,

We remain deeply concerned about the scale of abuses and violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief: no one should suffer because of their conscience.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his work over the past five years, and look forward to engaging with him on his report on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, as well as on Christian persecution and other forms of discrimination.

The United Kingdom is home to many thriving religions and beliefs. We reject all forms of intolerance and hate. Internationally, we are concerned by the societal impacts of the pandemic including rising hate speech, misinformation and conspiracy theories which target minority faith communities in different countries.

We are also concerned about actions of governments such as Sri Lanka, where the government's mandatory cremation policy for those deceased due to Covid-19 has impacted Muslim and Christian minorities in particular. We hope this practice will soon cease and we are ready to provide technical support and evidence to counter misinformation.

This year, we will continue to assess the pandemic's impact on human rights.

What steps can we, the international community, take to ensure it does not fuel further global intolerance towards religious and belief minorities?

Thank you.