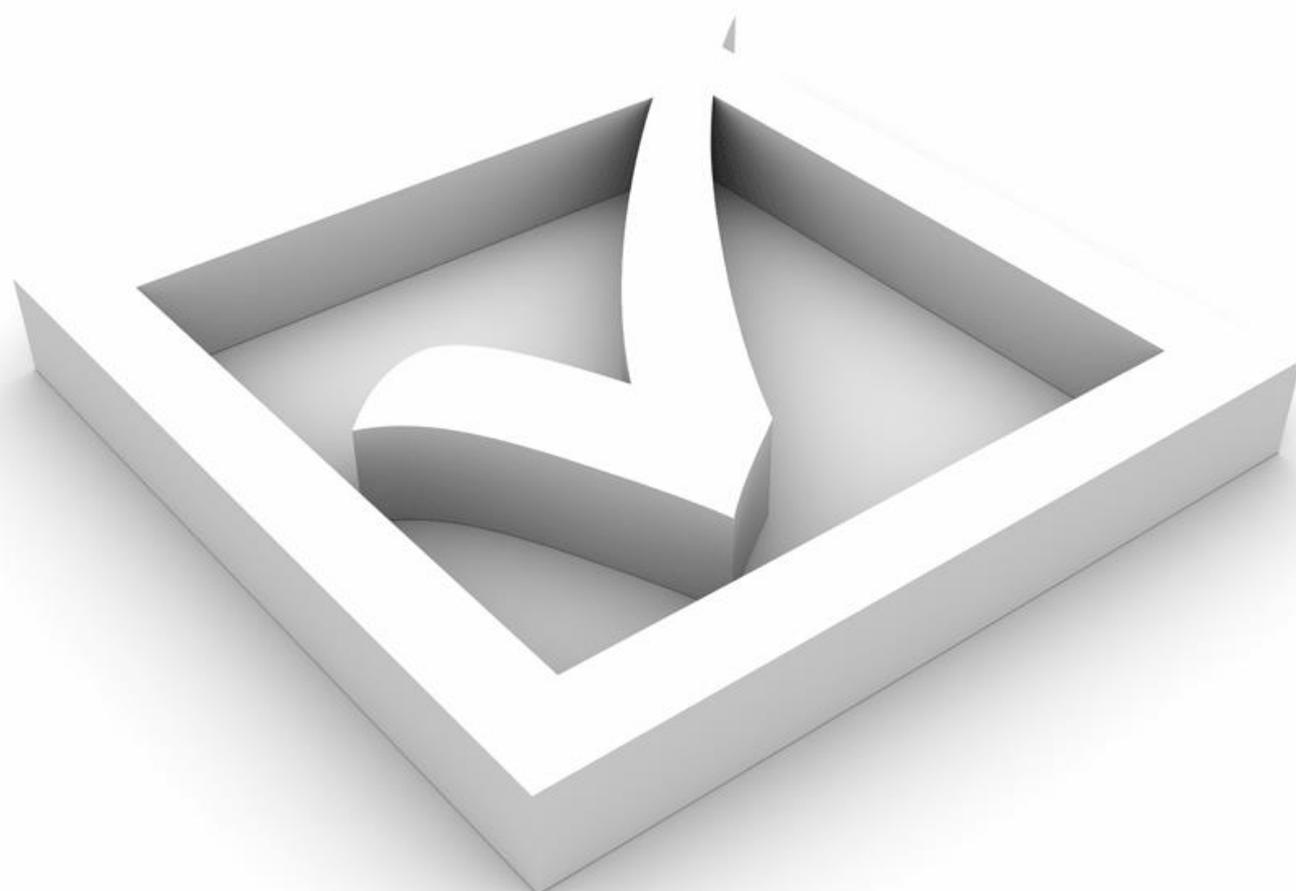


Information Fair Trader Scheme Report

Met Office

September 2013



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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Information Fair Trader Scheme

1. The Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS) is the best practice model for the public sector to demonstrate compliance with the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 (the PSI Regulations). IFTS ensures that re-users of public sector information can be confident that they will be treated reasonably and fairly by public sector information providers.
2. IFTS is also the mechanism by which the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) regulates, through the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), part of The National Archives, those Crown bodies with a delegation to administer their own licensing. As a Crown body, the Met Office falls into this category.

Previous verification

3. The Met Office was originally verified in November 2004 and then re-verified in November 2005, September 2007 and September 2010.

Re-verification

4. Re-verification is important as organisations change and staff move on. It is also an opportunity for OPSI to ensure that the recommendations from the last verification have been given due consideration. The recommendations made after the September 2010 visit and the Met Office's progress in meeting them can be found in part five of this report.
5. The frequency of re-verification is based on several risk factors. These include the complexity of the system that is in place to license public sector information, how critical information trading is to the body in question, the standard of compliance with recommendations from the previous verification, and the degree of policy change that is envisaged. The Met Office is assessed as being medium risk against these criteria.

Licensing Activity at the Met Office

6. The overall approach of the Met Office to licensing and the split between its public and commercial tasks has not changed markedly since our last visit.
7. The Met Office derives a significant part of its revenue from its services into government, having been commissioned by Defra/DECC and the MoD to fulfil specific contracts in providing climate research to policy makers and defence-related weather forecasting. It is also funded to carry out the activities of the Public Weather Service (PWS). The remainder of its income comes from the bespoke commercial services that it provides to the private and public sectors, often in the form of tendered contracts.

8. The Met Office thinks of its markets in terms of business to academic – information provided for non-commercial research purposes (B2A); business to business (B2B); and business to consumer (B2C). Its licences are aligned to usage in the form of Internal Business Use, External Business Use, Non Commercial Research Use, Educational Use and Personal Use with a final licence type of Special for specific customers whose requirements do not fit with these.
9. Wholesale data is offered as part of a Europe-wide service, ECOMET, and the commercial arm of the Met Office pays an equivalent fee to that of its commercial competitors for the use of such data.

Overall Assessment

10. In this report we:

- Note that the fundamentals of the Met Office's approach have not changed in that it has a commercial task and a public task.
- Recommend that the Met Office builds on its internal research into its public task, re-examining whether work carried out for other government departments should continue to be commercial task.
- Comment on the new feature of the Met Office's public task activity, which has seen the establishment of an open data strategy within the Public Weather Service followed by the setting up of an open data portal with real time access to significant meteorological datasets.
- Note instances of good practice by the Met Office in the development of an open data strategy followed by effective implementation, and in its re-use of wholesale data on the equivalent basis to that of third parties.
- Suggest that the appointment of an open data advocate to the Public Weather Service Customer Group be considered.
- Are pleased to report that free datasets are available for download on Open Government Licence terms and are being actively used for commercial purposes.
- Make some observations about whether the datasets that are available for download should be accessible without registration and without fair usage limits and make a recommendation that the DataPoint user community be surveyed on these questions.
- Recommend that the Met Office advises OPSI of any licensing changes that result from its general review of its standard terms and conditions.

11. Based on the team's assessment, the Met Office is re-accredited to IFTS. It will be re-verified within the next 3 years.

12. Below is a summary table rating the Met Office's current position against the IFTS principles.

| | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|
| Maximisation |  | Good |
| Simplicity |  | Satisfactory |
| Fairness |  | Good |
| Transparency |  | Satisfactory |
| Challenge |  | Satisfactory |
| Innovation |  | Good |

PART TWO: ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE VERIFICATION TEAM

Methodology

13. The IFTS methodology consists of two elements, an IFTS Strategy¹ and a Performance Management Framework².

14. There are six IFTS principles:

- **Maximisation** – an obligation to allow others to re-use information.
- **Simplicity** – facilitating re-use through simple processes, policies and licence terms.
- **Fairness** – applying terms without any discrimination.
- **Transparency** – being clear and up front about the terms of re-use, and the policies around it.
- **Challenge** – ensuring that re-use is underpinned by a robust complaints process.
- **Innovation** – supporting the development of new and innovative forms of re-use.

15. Together with the principles and performance management framework, the verification team considers the organisation's governance and culture, risk management, re-use policies, licensing, pricing, and approach to customer experience and feedback.

Documentation Review

16. The Met Office provided documentation in support of the fair trading commitment of the organisation which was reviewed by the team prior to and following the onsite re-verification.

People and Practices

17. In order to see how people in the organisation work and how their work is impacted by the Information Fair Trader commitment, OPSI interviewed a range of staff from the Met Office at a number of levels who have an involvement in the policy or practice of information re-use.

Licence File Review

18. A sample of licensing files was examined. The licence file review provides evidence of adherence to corporate policy and the principles of IFTS in actual transactions.

¹ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/ifts-strategy.pdf>

² <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/ifts-performance-management-framework.pdf>

Website review

19. A review of the organisation's website has been carried out from the viewpoint of a potential re-user of information and is appended to this report.

Licence review

20. The core licence templates have remained unchanged since our last visit. OPSI has asked to see the new developer licence that Met Office is looking at instituting when a draft is ready for analysis.

Complaints process

21. The customer complaints process has been considered by the team. An organisation's complaints process, both policy and practice, indicates how committed an organisation is to meeting customer needs.

Assistance provided by the Met Office

22. The team appreciates the co-operation and assistance of staff from the Met Office prior to our visit and while we were on site.

Re-verification Dates

23. The re-verification took place on the following dates:

24-26 September 2013

The re-verification team consisted of two OPSI Standards Managers and the Head of Standards.

PART THREE: KEY CHANGES

24. The intention of an IFTS re-verification is to focus on changes since the previous verification.
25. In September 2010, which was when OPSI last visited the Met Office, The National Archives produced the Open Government Licence, which has since been widely adopted.
26. Since our visit, the Public Weather Service Customer Group has developed an open data strategy and the Met Office has launched a free data download service which uses Open Government Licence terms.
27. In 2011, the Met Office became a Trading Fund within BIS, moving from MoD.
28. It also became a member of the Public Data Group which was set up to build on the capabilities and existing best practice of its membership – Met Office, Ordnance Survey, Companies House and Land Registry, seeking to support growth in the UK economy.
29. In June 2013, the amended PSI Directive was adopted and will be transposed in the UK within two years. The basis under which public sector bodies can charge above marginal cost will need to be considered.

PART FOUR: HIGHLIGHTS/AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Maximisation

30. It is important that IFTS member organisations provide a variety of use and re-use channels and minimise the barriers to re-use. This will typically involve making some data available for free in the interest of promoting wider social and economic benefits.
31. The Met Office has made excellent progress in identifying requirements for the provision of more open data. Initially, the Public Weather Service Customer Group took the lead in establishing a specific data release milestone. This took the form of two stages. First, definition of open data, a review of the risks and benefits, and confirmation of current release capability. Second, establishing the parameters for subsequent data releases.
32. The Met Office then undertook practical delivery in the form of developing and launching Met Office DataPoint.
33. This development, from initiating the strategy through to the practical delivery of the tools, is an instance of **good practice**.
34. There has been a significant expansion in the range of data made available for re-use and there is now a major volume of data which can be readily browsed and downloaded by third party developers.
35. Data available includes five day forecasts for over 5000 locations and now constitutes the majority of data that can be viewed on the Met Office public website. Re-users can also access text forecasts and map layers which include radar and satellite imagery.
36. The numbers of requests to Met Office DataPoint were numbered in the thousands to begin with, but now run to over 10 million a month.
37. Of the user base that has been surveyed, 20% envisage using the data to develop commercial applications and there have already been iPhone apps and web applications launched. Admittedly, these are for what might be seen as niche markets by comparison with the established government and industrial customers that the Met Office supplies. However, the development by third parties of paid for services to communities of interest in activities like rowing and astronomy still demonstrates that there is a demand for the data and it is being actively re-used.
38. The Met Office is working hard to establish the user and technical requirements of the consumers of DataPoint and is supporting the transit of major volumes of data. As such, it does not seem unreasonable at this stage in the site's development to require users to register for the site and to apply fair usage terms. Re-use of the data itself is on Open Government Licence terms. However, the Met Office should survey the user community as to the impact of requiring registration and applying a fair usage policy.

39. **Recommendation** The Met Office to survey the DataPoint user community as to the impact of requiring registration and applying a fair usage policy.

Simplicity

40. As stated in our previous report, the Met Office has a relatively simple model for licensing information with contracts falling into three categories: business to academic, business to business and business to consumer.
41. Its provision of free for end use data is on Open Government Licence terms, together with fair usage requirements.
42. Contracts are entered into for direct information provision on a competed or non-competed basis and business activities are broken down into readily understood categories.
43. Agreements with other public sector bodies are documented via memoranda of understanding and service level agreements.
44. The guidance that the Met Office supplies to its front line staff continues to be practical and easy to understand so that practitioners are in possession of the key principles, while always having the option of calling on more specialised assistance if required. Account managers are generally able to process standard contracts for their sector themselves.
45. The Met Office's main suite of licences has not changed. It is, however, conducting a general review of its standards terms and conditions. The scope of this review includes the Trial or Evaluation licences that it offers as a mechanism for allowing customers to "try before they buy".
46. **Recommendation** The Met Office should advise OPSI of any licensing changes that result from its general review of its standard terms and conditions.

Fairness

47. As stated in the previous report, on the commercial side of its activities the Met Office offers a full end product, often on a competed, tendered basis. As such, its primary function in the commercial sphere is not the provision of "vanilla" data, but the supply of a product range which can be tailored to customer requirements. Such activity sits outside its public task as currently defined and the Met Office is careful to ensure that it observes the requirements of competition law and it provides its staff with comprehensive guidance on this.
48. The Met Office re-uses its own data, from its forecasting model and observational information, on a wholesale basis. It pays a fee for this data equivalent to that which a third party would be subject to. This is an equitable arrangement, an instance of **good practice**.

49. The wholesale licensing files were the ones that we reviewed a sample of on this visit. This review exercise indicated that licences are issued on a standardised basis. Furthermore, the Met Office has recently carried out its own exercise to cross-check that the licences it has issued over the last couple of years correspond to the datasets ordered and the price list for the relevant datasets.

Transparency

50. One element of transparency is for an organisation to be clear on where its public task responsibilities lie in relation to the information it collects and disseminates.
51. Carrying forward our recommendations on this matter from the previous report, we are pleased to see that an exercise was initiated to audit datasets and products that and classify them according to public task or commercial task. However, we regret that this exercise was not taken forward into a full review.
52. Set against, this the Met Office does have a clearly understandable public task vehicle, the Public Weather Service, and a well constituted Customer Group which steers that vehicle.
53. The recent initiative to develop a data release strategy and to follow up on it with the launch of Met Office DataPoint could lead to a shifting of the boundary between public task and commercial task. Data which was previously harder to obtain and process is now available as open data. As such, it might be opportune to consider appointing an open data advocate to the Public Weather Service Customer Group.
54. **Recommendation** Appointment of an open data advocate to the Public Weather Service Customer Group to be considered.
55. A new feature of the public task/commercial task debate is that DataPoint datasets, which are rich in features and downloadable in real time, provide a platform for commercial activity which could over time affect the Met Office's established portfolio of commercial offerings. However, the original questions on this issue remain valid: Should data produced in the course of serving government customers continue to be part of the commercial task of the Met Office? Alternatively, should some of the outputs be classed as public task and come within the remit of the Public Weather Service or be published by the commissioning department itself?
56. **Recommendation** The Met Office should complete the public task/commercial task review that it initiated some time ago and publish a summary of the results on its website.

Challenge

57. The Met Office has well established complaint handling and customer care procedures. Query and complaint handling staff that we spoke to

were aware that should there be a challenge to the Met Office's licensing policies, they had a contact in the legal department to refer to.

58. OPSI has received no complaints about the Met Office since our last visit.

Innovation

59. As stated elsewhere in this report, the Met Office has made major strides in supporting innovation through its DataPoint facility. This means that as well as servicing the requirements of data.gov.uk and furnishing that site with the appropriate links and metadata, it has taken things to a further level in offering real time open data in considerable volume and with support to application developers.

60. The DataPoint website has an area which showcases applications that have been built on the DataPoint data and this is a very useful facility for innovators.

61. The Met Office also runs hack days which have proved to be popular.

62. It is also worth noting that the Met Office was an early entrant to the field of app development among government bodies and that its own app has considerable reach. This enables it to remain one of the UK's most widely recognised public bodies.

PART FIVE: PROGRESS

Recommendations from previous verification and if they have been met.

| Principle | Ref | Recommendation | Priority | Action Taken | Status |
|--------------|-----|--|----------|---|-----------------|
| Maximisation | 33 | We recommend that the Met Office reviews the data that is currently made available in static formats with a view to making it more readily re-usable. | M | Significant quantities of data that was previously only available in static formats is now provided dynamically in machine readable format. | Complete |
| Simplicity | 41 | We recommend that the Met Office considers the points made in the Licence Review. It should review whether its terms for unregistered re-use could be further simplified with more material being made available under the Open Government Licence. | M | The Met Office has considered the points made and now offers a large amount of data under the OGL. It continues to require registration for most of the data. | Complete |
| Transparency | 56 | We recommend that Public Weather Service Customer Group publishes a summary of its key indicators and Met Office performance against these. | M | Key information is in the PWSCG annual report which is published on the Met Office website. | Complete |
| | 58 | We recommend that the Met Office conducts a review of its public task in consultation with its Public Weather Service Customer Group and government business customers and that it subsequently publishes a full statement of its public task including the rationale for its scope. | H | An initial audit was carried out to identify datasets that were public task or commercial task, but this was not taken through to full review. | Carried Forward |

| | | | | | |
|------------|----|---|---|--|-----------------|
| | 59 | The public task review should consider whether some of the publicly-funded activities and/or data outputs that currently sit outside the Met Office's public task should be brought within it. | H | As stated above, the public task review was initiated, but not completed. | Carried Forward |
| Innovation | 65 | The Met Office should update OPSI on progress in enhancing the Invent web pages at the end of the financial year. | M | The Invent pages have been superseded as the primary way of showcasing data by Met Office DataPoint. | Complete |
| | 68 | The Met Office should build on its engagement with the data.gov.uk initiative, looking at increasing the number of links back from data.gov.uk to the free at the point of use data that it offers. | M | The Met Office now fully services the requirements of data.gov.uk and has moved beyond data.gov.uk's minimum requirements through the release of Met Office DataPoint. | Complete |

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This is a summary of the recommended actions to:

- remedy the weaknesses identified; and
- strengthen the commitment to information fair trading.

| Principle | Ref | Recommendation | Priority |
|--------------|-----|--|----------|
| Maximisation | 38 | The Met Office to survey the DataPoint user community as to the impact of requiring registration and applying a fair usage policy. | M |
| Simplicity | 46 | The Met Office should advise OPSI of any licensing changes that result from its general review of its standard terms and conditions. | M |
| Transparency | 54 | Appointment of an open data advocate to the Public Weather Service Customer Group to be considered. | M |
| | 56 | The Met Office should complete the public task/commercial task review that it initiated some time ago and publish a summary of the results on its website. | H |

APPENDIX 2: IFTS WEBSITE ASSESSMENT

Organisation: Met Office

Questionnaire Part 1: Transparent Processes

This section considers the transparency of the processes and terms under which a Public Sector Body (PSB) licenses information.

Licences

1. Are the PSB's licences available online?

Yes, for freely re-usable data

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/legal>

and

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/datapoint/support/terms-conditions>

Information about chargeable licences is available from its Contact Centre <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/contact> and by clicking on the "Services" tab of its website <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/services>

2. How standardised are the PSB's licences?

The licences for freely re-usable data are highly standardised. For chargeable licences, a standardised approach is indicated by confirmation that concessions granted to not-for-profits will be applied equally to applicants for re-use which is comparable.

3. Are the purposes of different licences and their intended audiences explained?

Yes

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/legal>

4. Are any exceptions given? Are they explained/justified?

Yes, for research and not-for-profit purposes.

5. Would the licences harmonise with those offered by other relevant PSI providers?

Yes, in those instances where the data is licensed under the Open Government Licence terms which is the case for DataPoint

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/datapoint/support/terms-conditions>

Other policy issues

6. Is there a complaints process? Is it explained? Is it online?

There is full contact information <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/contact> , but there does not appear to be a published complaints process. However, the legal page clearly cites the Met Office's responsibility to adhere to the PSI Regulations and its IFTS commitment confirms that unhindered access will be given to OPSI should there be a complaint.

7. Is there a charging policy? Is it online?

Yes, the rationale for charging is outlined:

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/legal/pricing-policy>

8. Does the PSB flag its membership of IFTS?

Yes <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/legal/fair-trader>

9. Does it explain its IFTS obligations?

See above.

10. Does the PSB have other feedback mechanisms?

Yes, its Contact Centre <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/contact> which has a feedback form <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/feedback>

Questionnaire Part 2: Information Availability

This section focuses on the online availability of public sector information held by the IFTS member.

11. Does the PSB make any of its information assets accessible by the web?

Yes, through DataPoint

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/datapoint>

12. How significant a portion of the PSB's information assets are available via the web?

A major proportion of its public task data

[http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/datapoint/search?keyword=*](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/datapoint/search?keyword=)

13. Do methods used to implement web access represent good practice, taking into account the nature of the assets in question?

Yes, in terms of delivery system and data formats. Registration is required and there is fair usage policy, but these are in place to capture user requirements and to manage server capacity.

14. How does the PSB make discovery of its offline assets possible? Does it have an Information Asset Register or other catalogue?

It does not have an Information Asset Register, but its portfolio of DataPoint products is fully searchable

[http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/datapoint/search?keyword=*](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/datapoint/search?keyword=)

15. Does the PSB supply provenance information for the datasets it offers, that is information about the quality, collection methods, publication frequency etc?

Yes