

**RTPI**

mediation of space · making of place

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Email response sent to: [inspire@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:inspire@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Dear Ian Greenwood,

**RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PAPER:** Draft Consultation on the Transposition of the INSPIRE Directive in the UK

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. The RTPI is a membership organisation representing over 22,000 spatial planners. It exists to advance the science and art of town planning for the benefit of the public.

This response has been formed following an internal consultation.

The INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe) Directive aims to improve the sharing of spatial information by public authorities, at local, regional, national and European levels, and to make such data more widely and consistently available to the public.

This agenda corresponds with a core requirement for the delivery of spatial planning reforms across the UK. The RTPI strongly supports the implementation of the UK Government's Location Strategy (published in November 2008 as *Place Matters: the Location Strategy for the United Kingdom* by the Communities and Local Government department).

The RTPI welcomes the formation of the Location Council to implement the requirements of the INSPIRE Directive and the related UK Spatial Data Infrastructure (UK SDI). It is essential that the needs of the spatial planning community at local, regional and national levels are fully reflected in the intended sub-group for the user community.

We are concerned that leadership of the agenda by Defra may marginalise spatial data issues that are critical to the development and management of the built environment and its relationship with the natural environment. We would therefore urge Defra to ensure the engagement of the spatial planning community in the implementation of the Location Strategy.

The data identified in the INSPIRE Directive is core to spatial planning, e.g. mapping and cadastral information, transport networks and protected sites, land cover, statistical units, land use, infrastructure, demography, risk zones and mineral resources.

Major issues for the spatial data and analysis underpinning development plan documents are underlined by ongoing planning reforms. These require development plan policies to be clearly supported by reliable evidence and strategic environmental assessment. They also increase challenges for effective engagement of other public authorities, local and regional partners and the public. The monitoring of spatial planning impacts is a critical element of the development process. Systems for data collection, maintenance, sharing and analysis have evolved on a largely ad hoc basis. In-house skills and arrangements for knowledge transfer are very variable.

As the Location Strategy stressed:

'The current situation:

- Imposes costs and inefficiency on a wide range of public sector bodies due to duplication of effort of collecting similar data and difficulties in sharing information
- Hampers the use and integration of accurate place-based information to inform policy development and the fair distribution of resources
- Impedes government strategies for improving services to the citizen...' (p12)

The RTPI strongly supports the conclusion of the Geographic Information Panel that UK spatial data needs require 'considerably more support'.

In this context, the Statutory Instruments proposed in this consultation will therefore need to support:

- A coherent metadata portal for all data used in spatial planning processes, including spatial monitoring, as part of the proposed information infrastructure;
- Clear protocols for the development, maintenance and networking of data used by all public authorities, including the creation of metadata, specifically to ensure compatibility, consistency of quality and the avoidance of duplication for data users across the public sector;
- A clear framework for the development and holding of spatial data by planning authorities;
- Clear responsibilities at all levels of government for the development, maintenance and sharing of spatial data;
- Clear regulation of the quality and sharing of spatial data by planning authorities and related public bodies (e.g. health authorities and environmental protection agencies).

The Atlantis project, which brings together generators and users of flood risk data, represents an important example and model for developing integrated spatial data systems that are central to spatial planning. However, given that planning authorities are responsible for strategic flood risk appraisal and its integration into land use policies, it is vital that this project is matched by initiatives to involve planners in the development of such data and in data-handling and sharing systems and procedures.

Planning authorities need statutory support for this information role. This will strengthen investment in technology, capacity and skills that can deliver the benefits identified in the Directive and the UK Location Strategy.

It would be helpful if the new Statutory Instruments clearly identify planning authorities as core stakeholders in the generation and management of spatial data.

The ownership and cost of data supporting spatial planning must be reviewed in the context of the Directive and the Location Strategy. Costs can represent a serious obstacle to the integration and development of spatial datasets and it is vital to explore how the public sector can obtain best value in terms of data commissioning and procurement. Examples raised by our members include concerns about the costs and restrictions on using geological information from British Geological Survey in developing and communicating mineral safeguarding policies and the costs of obtaining LIDAR information from the Environment Agency to inform a Green Infrastructure Study.

#### *Coordination with European spatial data*

In its role as the UK Contact Point for the European spatial research programme ESPON (European Observation Network on Territorial Development and Cohesion), the RTPI would also like to bring to your attention the ongoing development of the programme's database. Detailed information is available at

[http://www.espon.eu/mmp/online/website/content/programme/1455/2233/2238/2245/index\\_EN.html](http://www.espon.eu/mmp/online/website/content/programme/1455/2233/2238/2245/index_EN.html)

The outputs of this programme will become increasingly relevant and useful to the work of spatial planners at national, regional and local levels in the UK, as the research progresses over the next few years, and it is vital that it can be most effectively integrated at those levels.

If you require any further assistance, please contact Jenny Crawford, RTPI Head of Research on 0131 226 2086 or email [jenny.crawford@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:jenny.crawford@rtpi.org.uk) or Rhian Brimble, RTPI Network Manager on 01443 229852 or email [rhian.brimble@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:rhian.brimble@rtpi.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Thomson', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Matt Thomson  
Head of Policy and Practice