

Advisory Group paper AG (08) 10 - 2011 Census Output Consultation: Update

Output Consultation

The ONS is leading the UK Census Offices in a six month pilot of an e-consultation website which is focussing on Census outputs. The website was set up with the help of the Hansard Society as part of a digital dialogues initiative they are running with funding from the Ministry of Justice. It was launched at the end of February 2008.

This UK wide Census Output Consultation website complements an on-line survey of output requirements for the 2011 Census which was launched at the same time and is open for 12 weeks. The survey asks for user views and priorities on high level output issues such as access, dissemination and metadata.

(There will be further consultations on the detail of output content at a later stage).

The website contains three elements; a blog, a forum, and an output wiki. The blog is viewable to all with no sign-up necessary for participation. The idea of the blog is to give census data users the opportunity to expand on themes raised in the online survey, to raise any other output themes they consider to be particularly important and to discuss these with other census users from across the user communities and with representatives from the UK Census Offices. Current themes and discussion threads on the blog include more “joined-up” access to UK Census data, the potential for flexible user-defined output and data feeds. Forthcoming themes include differential access, statistical disclosure control and UK level outputs.

User contributions to both the survey and the blog will help us better understand requirements and priorities for output and will help us to target our resources to try and meet these. We can't promise to meet all user expectations but we want user views to inform the development of our overall output strategy.

The forum involves a small number of invited users, largely selected from the Census Advisory Groups, in order that the Census Offices can assess the feasibility of using on-line forums for wider user engagement. The forum enables topics to be discussed in more detail than the blog and users to introduce their own topics for discussion. The wiki is a prototype census metadata store prepared collaboratively, with contributions from forum members, in a wikipedia type way. It is viewable to all, so everyone will be able to watch it develop over time.

Users were alerted to the consultation via the ONS Census News and by an email shot to all known users using a combination of UK Census Offices databases, alerts on the 3 Census Offices' web pages and links from the NeSS and NOMIS websites

We are 5 weeks into the consultation and have already had 1041 unique visitors to the site since launch and received over 380 completed questionnaires. This looks promising and we are pleased with the response so far however we would like as wide a response as possible. If you haven't already taken part in the consultation we would encourage you to do so by visiting the UK Census Outputs Consultation website at www.ukcensusoutputs.net, completing the on-line survey (linked to the site) and contributing to the blog.

In addition to canvassing the views of known census user groups we would like to encourage a "grass roots user" response to the consultation both through individual completion of the survey and contributions to the blog. We would therefore be grateful for the assistance of CAG members in cascading this initiative to members of your own particular census user communities and encouraging their participation.

One of the greatest potential benefits of the blog is the opportunity it affords, not only to include a wide membership of each census community in discussion of issues, but also to discuss issues across the different census user communities; communities which potentially have different views and priorities.

Findings from the survey will be informed by discussions on the website, with the results reviewed, evaluated, and released via a report to be published on the website later in 2008.

We look forward to hearing your views.

APRIL 2008