

# Smarter Government initiative

Prime Minister, Gordon Brown recently released an in-depth document, Putting the Frontline First: smarter government, which outlines GBP3bn of government savings over the next three years. Amongst a range of proposals, surveying and mapping, addressing information and geographic information are mentioned in several instances. Attention is specially drawn towards public access to government datasets and the role of agencies such as Ordnance Survey and Land Registry.

To quote 'in order to drive 'transparency, effective government and innovation' the report mentions 'radically opening up data and public information ... including Ordnance Survey Mapping ... and making them free for re-use'. The report also underlines the Digital Britain initiative which was the subject of the keynote speech at the recent RICS Telecoms annual conference.

The document also includes a forward plan which states that government will: 'Consult on and release valuable public sector datasets - including mapping and postcode, Public Weather Service, detailed government expenditure, various transport and health datasets' and to 'Enable a single point of access for government held data through data.gov.uk'.

This latest Cabinet Office release follows on the earlier announcement about Ordnance Survey by the Prime Minister on the 17th November and further highlights the central role that mapping and geo datasets play in government information policy.

RICS welcomes this release and looks forward to further clarity on issues such as what free mapping datasets are being targeted, what is meant by 'freely available data', what are the implications for related government agencies and how will the 'definitive' addressing dataset come into existence after so many false starts. RICS is also concerned that the re engineering of the Ordnance Survey business model as launched in early 2009 has not been taken into consideration and what effects this new document will have on the already formed Location Council.

RICS will monitor all these developments and intends to place a full and active part in the pending consultation on Ordnance Survey. This will run between mid December 2009 and early March 2010.