

**ORDNANCE SURVEY NORTHERN IRELAND**

**(OSNI)**

**RESPONSE TO NORTHERN IRELAND MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION  
MEASURE 2004: CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

**October 2004**

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## **OSNI's Response to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004: Consultation Document**

### **General Comments**

Geographic information covers an enormous range, including the distribution of natural resources, the incidence of pollutants, physical infrastructure, such as roads, buildings, utilities and transport, and patterns of land use, health, employment, housing and voting patterns.<sup>1</sup>

Collaborative working and the use of geographic information can be combined to good effect through the deployment of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Indeed, Northern Ireland is at the forefront of public sector GI developments in the United Kingdom, being the first region to develop a Geographic Information Strategy – MOSAIC.

A key aspect of MOSAIC is that co-ordinating GI policy in Northern Ireland will realise benefits in a number of key sectors, including the statistics sector. The provision of reliable statistical information is essential for the development and provision of services across both public, private and community sectors. Statistical information is used to help formulate and then monitor the impact of new government policies. Major cross-government policies that have benefited from the use of geographic based statistical information include New Targeting Social Need (NTSN), Equality and “Investing for Health”. In addition, Social Inclusion inspired policies demand information on groups of people or geographic areas that have the greatest need in society.

Geographic Information Systems have the potential to integrate various datasets using a common reference frame, to monitor and analyse data trends, and to make this data available through the development of an Internet presence.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Environment (1987), “Handling Geographic Information: Report to the Secretary of State for the Environment of the Committee into the Handling of Geographic Information”, Chairman: Lord Chorley.P.7.

As part of the implementation of MOSAIC, a Statistics Sectoral Group has been established. The group may wish to discuss how it can facilitate the development of GI datasets and systems to support the implementation of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004.

### **Super Output Areas**

In the interest of ‘joined up government’ and co-terminus boundaries both territorial and administrative, OSNI are encouraged to note that the document states that Output Areas (OAs) have been defined to nest within the electoral wards, as defined by the Boundary Commission review undertaken in 1992. Similarly, Super Output Areas (SOAs) will be built from Output Areas but still constrained by ward boundaries. Less encouraging is the mention in Annex A of the need to split ward where population numbers are outside the stated threshold, as this could have a negative impact on the maintenance of the Output Areas and Super Output Areas.

There are a number of questions relating to the SOA’s.

- How are the boundaries determined, when not constrained by ward boundaries?
- Who is responsible for drawing these and creating the definitive map (paper or digital)?
- How will the database be maintained when ward boundaries are redrawn?

These are matters that we believe OSNI must be consulted on for a number of reasons, firstly in terms of its statutory responsibility to maintain administrative and other boundaries of Northern Ireland, but also in terms of the interest in Mosaic and the wider geographic community. The most logical route for consultation is through the Mosaic Sectoral Group. We wish to encourage NISRA to ensure they participate fully in this work and ensure that appropriate mechanisms are put in place to create, maintain, and update SOAs.

The announcement from the Review of Public Administration (RPA) team and the implications for all administrative boundaries should be taken account of to ensure, where possible, that government departments, agencies and local government act coherently and in proper sequence.

### **Mosaic Key Datasets**

Part of the Mosaic Sectoral Group activity includes a project to identify key datasets. We consider the Super Output Area as a key dataset, and are very much encouraged by NISRA's support for Mosaic, and are ready to support NISRA in ensuring the SOA's are considered as key by the whole GI community.

### **Geographical Access to Services**

This measure will be reliant upon two key datasets:

- Roads, and specifically road centre lines.
- Addresses – linked to location and identifiable services.

It is unclear from your proposal whether you will use spatial data from official sources. NISRA should use roads as mapped by OSNI, and distances should be measured using OSNI information, preferably using an agreed process and methodology (we are happy to advise you). Addresses must be based on the Pointer Address database.

### **ONSI Contributors:**

Mick Cory  
Crawford McIlveen