

## Geographical Information Topic Group

6<sup>th</sup> October 2010

Minutes



West Midlands  
Regional  
Observatory

[www.wmro.org](http://www.wmro.org)

### 1. Welcome, apologies and Introductions

#### Attendees

Diane Edwards (DE) West Midlands Cancer Intelligence Unit (Chair)

Rob Ellis (RE)	Environment Agency
Michelle Haynes	CENTRO
Brian Higgs (BH)	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Russell Hornsey (RH)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Mark Hudson (MH)	Government Office West Midlands
Angela Johnson (AJ)	West Midlands Fire Service
Oliver Nicholls (ON)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Graham Smith (GS)	Staffordshire University
Stephanie Sear (SS)	Shropshire Council
Christopher Styche (CS)	Black Country Consortium
Sharon Walton (SW)	West Midlands Public Health Observatory

Evette Jayatilake (EJ) West Midlands Regional Observatory (Secretary)

#### Apologies

Katy Bregazzi (KB)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Claire Edwards (CE)	Natural England
Shona Frost (SF)	Staffordshire County Council
Russell Hornsey (RH)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Rosie Paskins (RP)	West Midlands Regional Observatory

A welcome was given to SW from the West Midlands Public Health Observatory.

### 2. Approval of minutes and matters arising from last meeting

The actions from the last meeting were discussed and approved.

- Due to WMRO budget being put on hold, the visualising data event has been put on hold.

### 3. The future of the Observatory

- ON gave an update on the future of the West Midlands Regional Observatory, mentioning that core funding from AWM will cease March 2011 and it possible that employees will be deployed into areas of AWM and ultimately made redundant
- The planning assumption of AWM's Chief Executive, Mick Laverty, is that only about 25 members of staff will be employed by AWM in September 2011.
- RP has held a series of meetings with Local Authorities and partners trying to establish what work would be useful to Local Enterprise Partnerships. Key areas keen to retain are skills research, economic inclusion research, the annual state of the West Midlands report, the Policy Assessment Model (PAM), and the RDIN network.
- RP mentioned that two proposals were taken to the Observatory Board meeting on the 16/09/10. As a result of that, a preferred bidder has been selected, which may give some Observatory staff the opportunity to carry on.
- AWM will now put in place a process to take this forward, including a prospectus to be sent to other potential bidders. This will then be presented to the AWM Board at the end of October for decision.
- It was also mentioned that RP will be leaving WMRO on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, taking early retirement with Stephen Howarth acting up as Chief Executive
- It was announced that WMRO staff are to move to AWM as from the 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

### 4. Discussion on the future of the Network

The group discussed the future of the network. ON and DE presented a series of questions to see if it was worthwhile carrying on with the group in some form. Below are responses to the questions raised:

#### 1. *Do you see a future for the data & intelligence network?*

- It was felt that the network groups, especially the Geographical Information topic group, are a valuable source of communication as it provides valuable information and is a good basis to form contacts locally. There is nothing else like it in the region.
- It was mentioned that if the network is to continue, then the network needs to change. Existing members of the group need to be considered and the network needs to follow the new agenda. The group needs to align what it does in order to make the group work.
- It was felt that the network could continue to work as long as people find value in it and that the correct people are approached.
- It was mentioned that the ELF group said that they felt it was difficult to know how to continue at the moment. They did see a case but was unsure on how to bring it forward.
- The Environment group agreed not to meet face to face for the time being, but to keep the group going and occasionally meet by phone conference to keep up

to date. The Environment group also talked in terms of continuing into the future, setting something up on a social media, such as LinkedIn.

**2. *If the GI group wants a network to continue, is there a capacity in your organisation to hold a meeting if WMRO was disbanded? How would it be done?***

- It was mentioned that group members could look at taking it in turns to host and chair the meetings at their own offices.
- It was suggested that the network could continue by setting up a virtual social network, such as a LinkedIn group, as well as meeting face to face. If a social network was made available, then there would also be a need for someone to facilitate this.
- As long as people are willing, it is possible that group members could host meetings. It is possible small groups will be formed around the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) that members attend depending on where people are located / work.
- GS advised suggested not to make the group too local. It would still be beneficial to view at the larger strategic scale. GS interested how the University could support the research.
- A virtual market place is a way to get business and bring together the topic group. Although it was mentioned that bringing together a virtual network was possible, there was a mixed response for the group to continue meeting in a more traditional setting.
- The network itself is very valuable. It was felt that it would be a good opportunity to demonstrate the value of the GI group if the group could facilitate the transition to reduced budgets in the least painful way.

**3. *How do we take forward a virtual talking group?***

- It is important that if a virtual network was set up that the right people with the correct expertise are approached.
- *Initially, maybe a virtual network could be setup following the spending review to discuss what the group wants to focus on and when to meet.*
- *There is a concern that not all people will be able to view a virtual network due to IT security issues, but that this shouldn't be a reason in itself not to progress.*

**Action**

- *ON to organise the next meeting\*.*

**4. How do we maintain what is currently online?**

The resource catalogue is a resource on the WMRO website which produces 4000 - 5000 research resources that are relevant to policy makers and researchers in the West Midlands.

As WMRO are no longer able to maintain it after January 2011, WMRO is looking at archiving the catalogue into an open data spreadsheet, putting it on the website so that it is accessible as a huge excel spreadsheet, but also for any open data digital media specialists who can use the data to make an application.

The existing resource catalogue structure will be used for the Observatories own research.

The Observatory has contacted the National Archives who will archive our website at some point in time. Due to the reduced capacity of Observatory staff, it has been considered a good exercise to get the catalogue up to date, archive it and put it online so that it is ready for anyone to use.

## 5. Topic Group news

- SW advised that as part of the association of public health observatories, a technical briefing paper around GIS will be made available in the forthcoming weeks.
- MH advised that in CENTRO, they are looking at releasing some of their data in accordance with the government's Open Data initiative.

## 6. AOB

- *ON to look at re-focusing the agenda for a future group meeting*
- *It was suggested that the group meets before Christmas. ON / EJ to look at arranging a meeting after the 20<sup>th</sup> October following the spending review, possibly looking at how CSR has affected each organisation\*.*

*\*likely to be 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011*