



# Laria News

local authorities research + intelligence association  
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## Learning from the MORI/LGA pilot

Ian McDonald, MORI

During the summer of 2000, MORI and the LGA piloted the "General Survey" element of the Best Value User Satisfaction Performance Indicators, following the guidance published by the DETR in spring 2000. Some key methodological issues and headline results are detailed below.

Although the guidance allowed for either an in-home or postal methodology for the general survey, we decided to pilot a postal approach, believing that the vast majority of local authorities would adopt this methodology. With a handful of exceptions this has proved to be the case. Of the 95 authorities for whom MORI is carrying out the general survey, only two – Hampshire and Birmingham – chose to carry out an in-home survey.

For the pilot exercise, MORI mailed an appropriate BVPI questionnaire to a sample of more than 8,000 adults in England, selected using random probability sampling, as stipulated by DETR. The initial questionnaire mail-out yielded a 20% response rate. A reminder questionnaire, sent only to those who had not responded, boosted the overall response rate to 36%: effectively the reminder had the same impact as the initial mail-out. The final response rate varied notably by authority type, reaching 39% in Shire England, compared with 22% in inner London.

postcard or further reminder questionnaire, including questions of particular local interest, including prize draws etc. On the other hand, the particular weather-related problems with the postal service as well as annual problems with the Christmas post may adversely affect response rates.

In the MORI/LGA pilot, as we often find with postal surveys, certain groups are less likely to respond. The sample under-represented men, working class people, ethnic minorities and in particular young people. Most notably, only 3% of the sample were aged 18-24, compared with 13% according to recent population estimates.

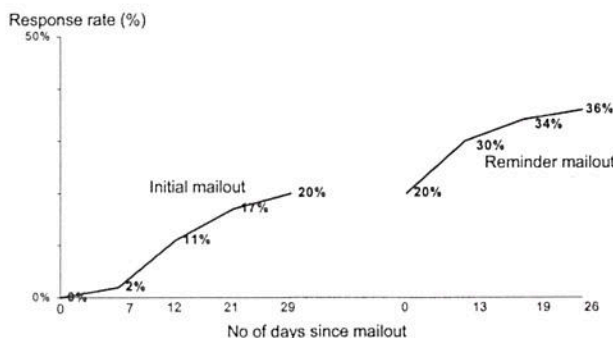
Sample Profile - Age



Base: all valid BVPI responses received (2,819)

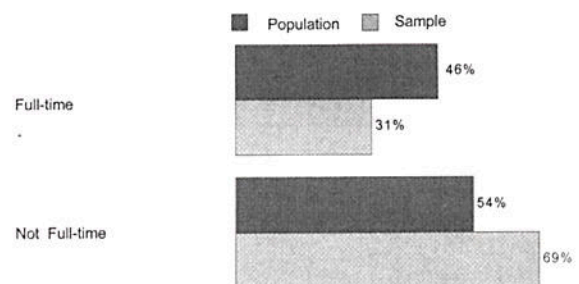
Source: MORI

Response Rates - Mailout + Reminder



Base: all BVPI responses received (2,964): mail-out (1,732) + reminder (1,232) Source: MORI

Sample Profile - Work Status



Base: all valid BVPI responses received (2,794)

Source: MORI

Response Rates - Mailout + Reminder



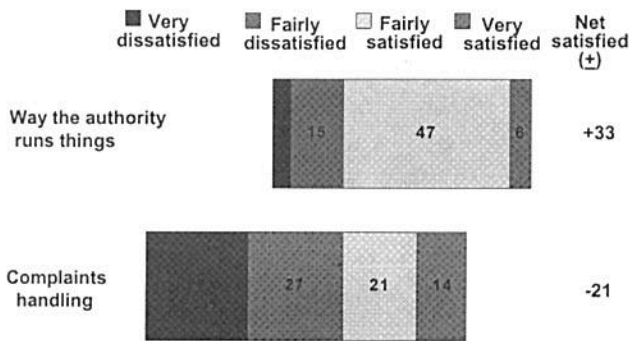
Base: all BVPI responses received (2,964): mail-out (1,732) + reminder (1,232) Source: MORI

It will also be interesting to compare the response rate of this national pilot study with those of individual authorities in Autumn 2000. There are a number of reasons why one would expect the latter to achieve higher response rates: issuing a reminder

In accordance with DETR guidance, and as is good research practice generally, we weighted the results of the pilot survey to the known profile of English adults. Firstly, we weighted the data in terms of the proportion of the population living in each type of local authority and secondly, by age, gender and work status within each authority type. This process, vital to correct for differential non-response among different groups, does mean that the survey results are subject to larger margins of error than would otherwise be the case. The overall design effect for the pilot survey is calculated at 1.8. Given the same design effect in a local survey, an authority would need to achieve a sample size of around 2,000 in order to report with a confidence interval of +3% rather than the 1,100 that is often quoted.

Below we detail overall results for some of the key user satisfaction BVPIs. Authorities may find it useful to benchmark themselves with results from this survey, prior to the DETR publishing results from all surveys in spring 2002.

## Corporate Health

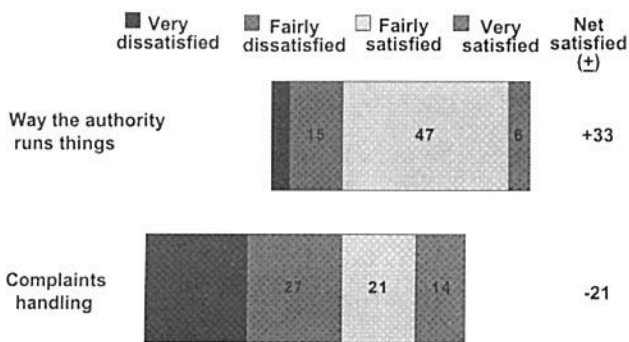


Base: All valid responses about local council/complainants who gave valid view Source: MORI

Just over half are satisfied with the way the authority is running things, while only a minority are actually critical. This result is very similar to an in-home random survey of the People's Panel MORI runs on behalf of the Cabinet Office earlier in 2000. As we often find, district councils are slightly better rated than London Boroughs and Metropolitan authorities.

Around one in four say they have contacted their local or County council to make a complaint within the last year. In inner London the proportion is as high as one in two. While these proportions seem very high, it is likely that many people will consider themselves 'complainants' if they 'phone to report a fairly minor problem such as a missed refuse collection: relatively few will be recorded as formal complainants by the authority. Over half of complainants are dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled. Previous MORI surveys for the Cabinet Office in 1994 and 1997 and the survey of Best Value pilots in 1998 show similar levels of dissatisfaction. Is local government making real progress in this key area or just treading water due to rising expectations?

## Transport

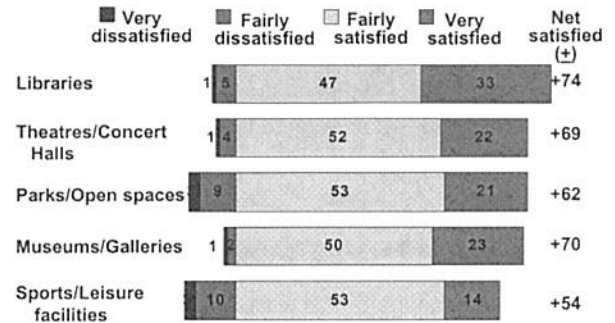


Base: All valid responses about local council/complainants who gave valid view Source: MORI

One in three people say they have seen public transport information provided by the Council within the last year. Those who have seen public transport information are generally favourable (58% satisfied vs 22% dissatisfied). Among the general public as a whole, however, including those who have not received information, opinion is divided evenly between those who are satisfied and dissatisfied with public transport information (38% vs 35%).

Half of bus users are satisfied with the service overall, compared with one quarter critical. Satisfaction is lower in London and highest in metropolitan and unitary authorities.

## Cultural and Recreation Facilities

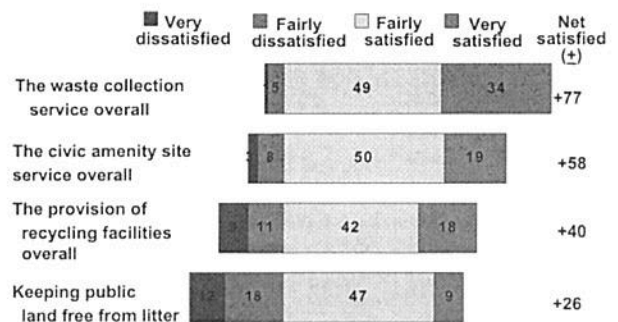


Base: All valid responses from users

Source: MORI

Most users are satisfied with a range of council-run facilities, and MORI often finds high ratings of cultural facilities both in its face-to-face surveys on behalf of individual authorities and national studies for central government. With the exception of sports and leisure facilities, satisfaction is higher with cultural and recreational activities among people aged 55+.

## Litter and Waste



Base: All valid responses

Source: MORI

Satisfaction is high with the waste collection service overall (83%). It is particularly high with the reliability of the waste collection (92%), but lower for the collection of bulky household waste (54% satisfied).

Civic amenity sites are well rated overall (69% satisfied), and most specific aspects of civic amenity sites are similarly well regarded. Inner London residents are much more critical than elsewhere in England.

Three in five are satisfied with the provision of recycling facilities overall and broadly the same proportion are satisfied with specific aspects of recycling facilities. Younger people aged 18-34 and, again, those living in inner London are more critical. Of all the environmental BVPIs, satisfaction is lowest with the authority's overall responsibility to keep land clear of litter and refuse. In total, three in ten are dissatisfied with this, falling to around two in ten in Shire England and rising to more than four in ten in inner London and metropolitan areas.

A full report from this pilot is available from MORI or the LGA. MORI will also carry out aggregate analysis of around 100 general

BVPI surveys we have carried out for individual clients to look for patterns of data by different sub-groups and areas.

## Technical Details

A systematic random sample of addresses was selected using the small Postal Address File. This was matched to the Electoral Register to produce a final sample of 8,330 named respondents. The overall response rate, following a reminder questionnaire, was 36%. Data are weighted to the known profile of the population. Fieldwork dates were 18 May - 21 July 2000.

## Further information

In the Spring, we will be sending all LARIA members details of our local authority data, aggregated across the 95 BVPI general surveys we have carried out. This will be looking at the emerging findings from this data, and will be produced well ahead of the main figures that the government will publish in 2002.

We will also shortly be publishing the aggregate data from the MORI/LGA pilot on the MORI website - for further information, please see the local government page at [www.mori.com](http://www.mori.com). Alternatively, email us at [local.government@mori.com](mailto:local.government@mori.com), and we will get back to you - or phone Ian McDonald or any of the Local Government team at MORI, on 020 7928 5955.

## LARIA Developments

This, the 65th edition, is the first LariaNews for members, whether they are Corporate, Full or Associate Members. It will also be the last for those who have not completed a membership application form. If you want to continue receiving this newsletter please ensure you return the form which is enclosed or is available on our website ([www.laria.gov.uk](http://www.laria.gov.uk)) or is available from the laria administrator (contact details on back page).

It is the last newsletter produced under the guidance of the LARIA Steering Group. Following the decisions made at the Special General Meeting in November the overall direction of LARIA will be guided by the LARIA Council of 20 Full Members. There will be election to the Council, election of Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary for two year terms of office. The work will be undertaken by the Activity Groups (Events, Publishing, External Relations, Education and Training, LARIA in Scotland, Administration and Policy). These developments will be introduced at our AGM in April 2001.

We will be developing our external relations role in the coming year. To support this we have produced an Annual Review to help describe our activities. This is available on our website.

## Laria News

We hope you like the new format of LariaNews introduced in the last edition. Please let us know what you think of the new design.

In this edition we have a range of topics covered in the articles. One is concerned with the forthcoming 2001 Census, which will be significant to all of us in local government research. Another article deals with the ongoing theme of User Satisfaction Best Value Surveys, in particular the MORI /LGA pilot general survey. We have an article on the Joined-Up-Geography Testbed project and two differing perspectives on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000.

Social Inclusion was the theme of the Laria in Scotland Conference and qualitative methods was the theme of the Beyond Statistics Seminar in Birmingham. These are both described in this newsletter. The 2001 Annual Conference in Bath looks as though it will be as interesting as previous years, so ensure you book a place early.

## Administration

After five years as LARIA's administrator Sue Gee left us to take up a full-time post. We shall miss the efficient way she has carried out the tasks and wish her good luck for the future. Graham Smith is now the Laria administrator and his contact details are on the back page.

## From the Chair



*Bryan Hall*

## The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000

Readers will be aware that the DETR's new index was published last year. Here we present two differing views of the new index from Professor Stephen Fothergill, Director of the Coalfields Communities Campaign and Rachel Leeser of the Greater London Authority.

If you have any opinions on this or any other issues in the newsletter please email the editor (address on back page).

### Steve Fothergill writes ...

The new Index of Deprivation may not be perfect but it's vast improvement on the old one. Some London boroughs complain that they've fallen down the rankings, but they cannot dispute that data fed into the new Index is substantially wider-ranging, more up-to-date, and more detailed.

Everyone accepts that parts of London have acute problems, but for London boroughs to occupy 13 out of the top 20 places in the old Index was at odds with the real geography of Britain. Let's not forget, this is the same London that boasts a GDP per head of nearly 150 per cent of the EU average, compared to less than 75 per cent in Merseyside or South Yorkshire. It's also the London that is supposed to be suffering a shortage of labour. Oh to be in the same predicament up North!

The old Index simply wasn't credible. It had a 'London and big-city' bias in its choice of indicators. In the northern shires we always dismissed it as fatally flawed.

I sat on John Prescott's Coalfields Task Force, which reported in 1998. One of the problems we identified was the failure of the old Index to reflect the nature of coalfield problems. Typically, in the coalfields the extensive joblessness is reflected less in claimant unemployment (which was in the Index) than in economic inactivity (which wasn't).

If there is a single statistical indicator that has tipped the new Index away from London towards places like the coalfields it is the long-overdue inclusion of data on inactivity, or more specially data on Incapacity Benefit claimants - more than two million non-employed men and women of working age, twice the total number of claimant unemployed. In the coalfields and other parts of the industrial North, vast numbers of the jobless have become 'parked' on Incapacity Benefit. It is right to include this as a measure of exclusion from work. But the health problems are real too, so it is right that Incapacity Benefit also figures as a measure of ill-health.

Depending on exactly which of the six new Indices you look at, the top 20 now includes about the same number of former coalfields as London boroughs. Several of the big northern cities are in there too. Intuitively, that seems about right.

Congratulations then to the Government for backing the Index produced by the Oxford-based research team, against the wishes of London authorities. It's just a shame that the Government then capitulated by offering 'transitional' support from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to seven authorities - four of them London boroughs - that would have qualified under the old Index but failed under the new one. Arguably, because the old Index was so badly flawed these authorities should never have been near the front of the queue in the first place.

Contact: natsec@ccc-alliance.demon.uk Tel: 01226 200768.

### Rachel Leeser writes ...

There is no easy way to 'measure' deprivation and the constraints on creating an Index of Deprivation to compare small areas across the whole of England, most notably in terms of available data, are considerable. The Greater London Authority (GLA) welcomes the wider scope of the DETR Indices of Deprivation 2000 and the use of more up to date figures and different domains. We recognise the valuable work of the Oxford Team in assessing and acquiring the range of data, which should have many applications outside the Indices.

However, the new Index's construction is highly complex, making it difficult for even the expert to understand fully. This 'black box' approach is not appropriate to the current demand for openness, accessibility and accountability in public decision making. Additionally, the data used to construct the Index has not been made available outside the DETR. As things stand, some of the data will never be released, making it impossible to check whether it is accurate or even reasonable. Compare this with the process for calculating the SSAs, where all data is supplied to local authorities for checking in advance.

The GLA, along with many other authorities and statisticians from a range of institutions, also remains concerned about statistical flaws in the methods used to construct the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Without the underlying data, it is impossible to check these fully, but it is clear that some statistical principles, as well as common-sense, have been disregarded in some sections. For example, assuming that all wards within a local authority have the same score on a particular indicator (as happens in the health and disability domain) and then using that indicator to distinguish between the wards is clearly absurd. Carrying out a factor analysis on just three input variables (as happens in the housing domain) is also highly questionable, particularly in view of the fact that less than half of the variance in the indicators is explained by the single factor which results. These are just two examples of a range of issues, which we believe have not been properly addressed in the construction and publication of this very important Index.

## The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 cont...

We are also concerned about the balance of domains used in the Index. While six domains were combined to create the Index, a further two, although proposed by the Oxford team and widely supported by the user community, were excluded, due to lack of robust data. While this may be true (although we have to question whether the data available was really less robust than some of the data incorporated), there have been no proposals to rectify this situation. There remain concerns about the use of the Geographical Access to Services domain, which employs some very questionable data, while not balancing this indicator with other measures of more urban aspects of deprivation.

In the report for consultation on the methodology for the Index, it was stated that the weights chosen in combining the domains to an overall Index had little impact on the results. However, work since the consultation closed has shown that for some wards the weights are critical – resulting in movements of over two thousand ranks if a set of weights differing only a little is chosen rather than those used by DETR. While the wards ranked at the very top may show relatively little difference with variations in the weights, those lower down may do so.

This is crucial, particularly in view of the way the Index is being used in various funding programmes. One of the weakest aspects of the Index is the way in which the summary measures at local authority level have been constructed and used. The strength of the Index is in the creation of domains to look at different aspects of deprivation. However, only two of these domains have been constructed at local authority level. Almost all of the numerous funding programmes which have been announced by the Government and which use the Index of Multiple Deprivation as an element of determining eligibility to receive funds are calculated and delivered at a local authority level. This means that the individual domains are ignored and it is the summary measures (or in some cases only one or two of the summary measures) which are the determining factor. Even where the funding programme is aimed at ward level, the combined Index has still been used. Although this is not the way DETR and the Oxford team intended the Index to be used, it was entirely predictable that this would occur. The DETR needs to take responsibility for the ways in which its Indices are used.

The problem with producing any sort of combined index to perform a multitude of tasks is that it does none of them properly. There are undoubtedly problems in various parts of the country, needing a variety of solutions. Parts of inner cities, some old industrial towns, coalfield areas, and many rural areas all face problems of varying scales in different ways. It cannot be hoped that a single combined Index can provide the basis on which to make decisions about which areas require funding.

Contact: rachel.leeser@london.gov.uk

## 2001 Census Update

**Eileen Hows of the Greater London Authority describes the current state of play regarding the 2001 census.**

### Fieldwork

There is not long to go until the Census on 29th April 2001 and there is much activity currently going on in the field. Census Area Managers (CAMs) and Census District Managers (CDMs) should all be in post. Census Team Leaders and enumerators are being recruited between January and March this year.

The CDMs should have completed their district checks and reported on any new build or other anomalies that they have found. CAMs should be in touch with local authorities by now, making contact on a number of issues. These include accommodation for meetings / interviews / training courses and provision of interpreters.

There will be lots of community liaison work going on (if not contact Pat Mann at ONS). Questions from members of the public will

start coming in, and will continue throughout the Census process

### Consultation

The 3rd major round of consultation on the main output finished in November. This was followed by a discussion meeting attended by a small number of local authority representatives from around the country. We are now waiting for a response from ONS to all the comments made. Then there will be a further draft of the proposed tables – nearing final by this stage. There are a number of outstanding issues which include the ethnic group data proposed, and the communal establishment classification. We are awaiting something further on SWS (special workplace statistics) and SMS, (special migration statistics) after the workshops and initial proposals made last year.

Many things in the data will be much better than 1991 (for example 100% coding and the One Number Census) but some things are, as currently proposed, a lot worse (in particular no consistent data at ward level for the full ethnic group classification except the total number of people).

### Census Access Project

ONS has been awarded funding from the Government Invest to Save Budget for the Census Access Project (CAP). The aim of this project is to deliver some of the results of the 2001 Census in an unrestricted and user friendly way, and effectively 'free' throughout the public sector.

Conditions of use should be eased by the public availability of a certain amount of data. What data is to be included in CAP will then determine what additional data has to be bought. But local authorities should not, at this stage, expect all the 2001 Census data, or even that data included in the CAP, to be entirely free. The Local Government Association still has to find its share of the overall costs involved – and the data covered by the CAP will only be 'free' after this cost has been paid. It is still a possibility that the LGA will make a levy on all local authorities to pay for it. So you have been warned!

### Budget

The minimum level of data that is likely to be included in CAP is the Standard Tables at



ward level and above and the Census Area Statistics down to output area level. So local authorities should budget somehow for the extra things that might be needed – SWS, SMS, boundaries, some metadata (definitions, user guides etc), customised tables and so on (although it remains possible that some of these will be included in the CAP).

Local authorities should also plan for a contribution towards the LGA's share of the CAP, as mentioned in above. As a partner in the project the LGA has to contribute in the region of £175,000 to the costs. They are looking at how to fund this but in the meantime local authorities should assume that the LGA will have to levy all authorities. The cost of this might be in the region of £850 per 1000 population.

### Other outstanding issues

There are a number of outstanding issues which are still under discussion or awaiting proposals from ONS. These include the issue of boundary changes which will take effect in April 2002, before the Census data is released. This has been discussed at great length and local authority requirements for the majority of 2001 Census data to be based on the new boundaries is clear, with the proviso that some basic data is also needed on April 2001 boundaries. Later boundary changes throughout the decade also need to be taken account of.

There are a number of issues to be decided in connection with the One Number Census, particularly on 'borrowing strength' from similar areas for areas of high non-response, if ONS are not satisfied with the estimates by age and sex for any local authority area.

There is an issue about special output areas and whether they should be separate or whether people in them should just be included in the general population. The implication of this might be that a number of households might be included in an output area with a relatively large communal establishment population just because the automated geography system has a basic minimum number of households as its first major constraint.

One issue that has been resolved is that of the coding of occupation and industry. It had been announced that ONS were restricting the coding of the occupation and industry questions to people aged 16 to 64 who had been in work in the last 5 years. A compromise has been reached so that all people in employment aged 16 to 74 and all those aged 16 to 64 who have worked in the last five years will have their occupation and industry coded. Satisfactory resolution of this issue is due in no small part to the efforts of Jill Tuffnell (of Cambridgeshire CC), who wrote a very appropriate response to the ONS announcement.

### CLIP Census Sub Group and LACCG

A lot of work has been put in on all the above issues by local authority members of the CLIP Census Sub Group and others with a particular interest in specific issues. This effort will continue on behalf of local government. Even though most of the

above is from an England and Wales point of view Scotland is very well represented by its CLIP representatives, and much coordinating work is done by Jenny Boag of Falkirk Council. The LGA website lists contact details for all local authority representatives on the Census Sub Group.

A smaller group has also been set up (The Local Authority Census Coordinating Group) to discuss and progress Census issues in more detail. This group has a core of CLIP members and co-opts other local authority people on particular issues. The main message from all CLIP Census Sub Group and LACCG Members should now be to keep in touch because lots of things will be happening over the next year or two.

Eileen Howes, Greater London Authority  
Telephone 0208 7983 4657 or  
e-mail eileen.howes@london.gov.uk



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## Joined-Up-Geography Test bed (JUG-T)

### **Robert Barr of Manchester Geomatics describes the joined up Geography test-bed**

During the last year geo-referencing activity in the United Kingdom has accelerated due to a wide range of crosscutting initiatives that have collectively raised what have become known as the N-issues. These initiatives include NLUD (National land-use database), NLIS (National Land Information System), NLPG (National Land and Property Gazetteer), NSG (National Street Gazetteer), NIMSA (National Interest in Mapping Service Agreement), UKSGB (United Kingdom Standard Geographic Base) and DNF (Digital National Framework).

Different consortia of agencies support each initiative, each is targeting a different client community and each is either creating or exploiting different data sets. This is inevitable in such a complex field, and one that is being driven by political and commercial agendas. However such a plethora of projects inevitably leads to confusion, particularly for other organisations that have their own geo-spatial data, or need to handle such data on behalf of third parties. No single organisation involved in these initiatives is in a position to take a disinterested and independent view of how the large variety of data sets could be interrelated and quality checked against each other in a simple though robust geographical framework that could gain wide acceptance and widespread use.

The UK is not alone in such considerations. National Mapping and National Statistical agencies in many European countries, and in North America, are all implementing, or experimenting with geographical referencing frameworks in which Buildings, Street Segments and Blocks are playing a large part. The United Kingdom is unusual, however, in having failed, so far, to seriously consider the roles of these entities in a general-purpose scheme for geographical referencing.

### **JUG-T - A way forward**

Over the last two years Dr Robert Barr (Manchester University) and Christopher Roper (Landmark Information Group) have been proposing that there should be two fundamental anchors for the geo-referencing systems used in all of these initiatives and that these should be the 'building' and the 'block'.

The use of buildings and blocks has been much debated in the setting of standards, such as BS7666 or the definition of the UKSGB. However these debates have almost all been theoretical. JUG-T is the first large-scale experiment to be carried out in the UK on how feasible it would be to build a block and buildings data framework. JUG-T is investigating how such a data framework would relate to other data sets, how such a framework would change over time and how it could be maintained.

### **Links to other initiatives**

Blocks are implicitly a part of the new Ordnance Survey Digital National Framework (DNF) as it will always be possible to build a block from the smaller units that will make up DNF.

Blocks are also closely related to the UK UKSGB. A large (though unknown) proportion of current boundaries, follow street centre lines, water features, railways, the coastline or other dominant linear features that will make up block boundaries. These features are also often the common part of different boundaries that are fully, or partially, coterminous. Investigating blocks will shed light on the way in which boundaries have actually been drawn in the past, as opposed to the theoretical rules to which boundaries should comply.

As the most common block boundary will be a street centre-line, blocks will be closely related to the NSG. Level 2 of NSG specifies the concept of an Elementary Street Unit (a section of street between intersections). The block data structure adds number ranges and a pointer to a list of named buildings to each side of an Elementary Street Unit. This directly links blocks to address and property gazetteers such as the NLPG, PAF, AddressPoint and the proposed National Buildings Dataset. While blocks, in themselves may not be particularly significant, their function as a means of sub-setting large address files, matching such files and checking them for consistency and completeness is likely to be particularly valuable. This is because any errors and, or, inconsistencies will be localised.

Blocks are also likely to be suitable as indexing containers for NLUD. While there is no existing, or theoretical, unit that can meet all the requirements of NLUD, blocks may provide a useful way of indexing land use data that breaks down the problem of locating land in different uses into manageable containers.

### **The proposal**

All the links to other initiatives mentioned above are theoretical. There are good reasons to believe that blocks may solve many problems that exist in the current common geo-referencing systems used in the United Kingdom, however there is a need for these suppositions to be tested experimentally. It is only by building a large enough test-bed, which covers a variety of environments, that it will be possible to say with any certainty whether the effort involved in building a national block geography is cost effective and justifiable.

The JUG-T project is constructing a buildings and blocks database for a major British City, nearby rural areas with different characteristics and a set of other areas for which DNF test data will be available. This will be represented both graphically in a GIS, and in a database. The database structure and the topological relationships will be modelled using the well-tried US TIGER model adapted to UK circumstances. The objective of the system would be to demonstrate how address-based information (BS7666 or postal) could be verified, related to buildings

## Joined-Up-Geography Test bed (JUG-T) cont...

and contained in the block structure and how other area-based geographies, such as land-use parcels, census or administrative boundaries, or the postcode system, relate to the block structure and can benefit from it.

The study began in September 2000 and will deliver a final report by the end of June 2001. We anticipate, that if the study proves itself to be useful and the test bed meets a real need for data producers to carry out experiments on their own data sets, then a follow on to the project proposed here may be arranged.

JUG-T is being sponsored by a number of organisations, including: **Landmark Information Group, Ordnance Survey, Royal Mail, Office for National Statistics, NGDF (National Geo-spatial Data Framework) and Hopewiser Ltd.**

The following organisations are also collaborative sponsors: **ESRI UK and the City of Manchester.**

For further details of JUG-T please contact: Dr Robert Barr - robert@mgeomatics.com, Rachel Cossey - rachel@mgeomatics.com or visit our web-site at [www.jug-t.org.uk](http://www.jug-t.org.uk)

### Definitions:

'Building' - a visible structure recorded on the Ordnance Survey Land-Line database, or identifiable from digital aerial photography such as the ortho-rectified Cities-In-View data from GeoInformation International or the aerial photographs from the Millennium Mapping Company).

'Street Segments' - a section of a street between intersections.

'Blocks' - an area entirely surrounded by connected street segments.

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## Consultation on new political structures

In the last edition of LariaNews, Debbie Wilson considered the implications of the Local Government Act, and outlined the requirements for local authorities to consult on proposals for new constitutions. By now, many local authorities will have completed or be in the middle of their consultation programmes.

For many of us, this will be the first time we have been involved in consultation on political management. The requirement to undertake a comprehensive programme of consultation with local government electors and other interested individuals and bodies has been something of a challenge for all of us, and Laria would like to hear about your experiences!

How have you approached the consultation in your local authority? Have you used existing consultation mechanisms or have you developed new ways of consulting to deal with this requirement? Have you found that some things have worked better than others? What have you learnt from the experience?

We would like to include an article in the next edition of LariaNews to summarise and describe the experience of local authorities. So please let us know how your council has approached the consultation – send contributions to the Editor (address on the back page).

## Laria In Scotland Annual Conference

**Jack Winchester, Norman Jamieson, Barbara Knowles, Maggie Bochel and Graham Atherton.**

This year's conference was held in Edinburgh on 30 November 2000 with the theme of "Keeping Social Inclusion on Track", which proved a popular topic attracting 62 delegates from a range of organisations both north and south of the border.

The day's proceedings were opened with a welcome to Edinburgh and presentation from Councillor Donald Anderson of Edinburgh City Council. Councillor Anderson gave the conference a case study of Edinburgh's approach to addressing social inclusion through a strategy of linking its economic plan of attracting commercial investment into the Capital in order to generate jobs linked to its locational and education (skills) initiatives. The success of this approach is borne out in the monitoring statistics which indicate reductions in unemployment rates in areas of high unemployment.

Richard Potter (standing in at short notice for Gillian Dollamore of the Cabinet Office Social Inclusion Unit) then presented "Towards Better Information on Social Inclusion" based on the English experience, which examined the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, regarding the lack of information on the scale of social exclusion; the Social Exclusion Unit's 18 Policy Action Teams (PAT18), which include the need for Better Information; what barriers exist; and that 14 out of the 20 PAT18 Recommendations have significant implications for ONS and the Government Statistical Service. A key recommendation is to establish Neighbourhood Statistics with a geographic referencing framework for future analysis and accessible to all partners, which has been almost unanimously supported. Richard mapped out the vision for a Neighbourhood Statistics Service in relation to a range of generic statistical domains and their sub-themes; who potential users of the Neighbourhood Statistics Service may be; what the potential benefits are; and, how it can be achieved highlighting geographic (grid) referencing by property as critical, but that it could take up to 10 years to develop fully.

Nicola Edge from the Scottish Executive's Central Research Unit followed Richard focussing on the role of research associated with the organisational structures set up to help address issues related to social inclusion. Nicola emphasised the need for developing a research focus on "exclusion" highlighting the need for better information and research into cross-cutting themes and excluded groups, such as issues relating to women, youth, old people and ethnic minorities. A programme for ethnic minorities research was explained and the need for better information, particularly new sources and types of information. Summing up, Nicola explained how the focus of the CRU's work has shifted with a shift in policy focus and the need to address the challenge to ensure research is well-planned, appropriate, robust and effective.

The morning's session was rounded off by Peter Whitehouse, from the Scottish Executive's Central Statistical Unit, who concentrated on the three areas of:- the need for the delivery of small area information; the disaggregation of data by gender, age, disability and ethnicity; and the social justice agenda. Peter highlighted the problems of obtaining useful information due to perceived problems with data confidentiality, incompatible IT formats, inability to merge datasets, legal obstacles and lack of priority etc, but that there is an increasing realisation that these



*Laria Delegates*

problems need to be overcome. Like Richard earlier, Peter emphasised the need for small area data that can be aggregated to various geographies and suggested what is required to take this approach forward in Scotland founding on the PAT18 conclusions. In particular, the need for joint working involving the Government, local government and the wider public service, utilising existing work as appropriate. The Scottish Executive will establish a Steering Group to oversee this initiative and ensure the various groups are brought together to address the production of consistent longterm solutions to a range of issues, based on the best evidence available.

The normally soporific post-lunch session was enlivened by Keith Fernie (University of Dundee) and Angus Erskine (University of Stirling) who shared their knowledge and experience of Monitoring Social Inclusion. Keith has the enviable dual role of working as a planning officer in the Planning and Transportation Department of Dundee City Council and managing the Social Partnership Monitoring and Evaluation Unit at the University of Dundee. From his work at the Geddes Centre for Planning Research he found that monitoring social inclusion meant monitoring the Partnerships in terms of:

- Measuring the experience – did the partners gel together,
- Measuring the process, and
- Measuring the outcomes in terms of social inclusion, economic inclusion, physical inclusion and political inclusion.



*Laria Delegates relax*

## Laria In Scotland Annual Conference cont...

In a thought provoking way he defined social inclusion as the obverse of social exclusion –

'exclusion is experienced by individuals and families because of a huge range of difficulties....certain groups are particularly at risk, and that various economic and social pressures result in concentrations of excluded people in particular areas'.

'inclusion is experienced by individuals and families because of a huge range of life chances... certain groups are particularly benefiting, and that various economic and social opportunities result in a spread of included people across most geographical areas.

Angus Erskine from Stirling gave his experience of thematic Social Inclusion Partnerships on young people from work in the Highlands and Perth and Kinross – two of Scotland's most picturesque rural areas. From a different perspective from Keith he re-emphasised the need and value of monitoring the effectiveness of the purpose, process and outcomes of all the efforts invested in reducing Social inclusion.

### WORKSHOPS:

Using Citizens Panels to Monitor Social Inclusion:-

After Andra Laird of George Street Research provided an overview of different area-based Social Inclusion Partnership data collection methods and core indicators used, the workshop considered in detail the main strengths and limitations of citizens' panels. Key benefits included the tracking of changes over time, higher response rates and longer-term cost savings. Weaknesses included the attrition of the panel over time and possible unrepresentativeness of the panel or the response sample. Ways of minimising these difficulties were discussed, such as the use of randomly sampled "control groups". The advantages and disadvantages of self-completion surveys and door-to-door and telephone interviewing were also considered. Emphasis was given to the importance of two-way feedback between researchers and researched to maintain commitment of panels.

### Index of Deprivation- UK and Scottish:-

Gillian Raab of Napier University provided a comprehensive survey of the types of indices that had been prepared in the past; the factors measured and the reasons for producing indices. She highlighted the technical and statistical problems of producing an index and finally gave a quick resume of the Index 2000 commissioned by the DETR. David Blair provided background

information about the Welsh equivalent to Index 2000; the weighting of the domain scores; how data was combined and the uses of the Index since publication in August 2000. The workshop then considered in smaller groups, what should be included if a similar index for Scotland were commissioned and in particular the area unit; the dimensions to be measured and what other domains should be addressed. It was concluded that a flexible geography was needed based on output areas from the Census should be the basic building block; dimensions should be people centred rather than service based and that "soft" data that would provide quality to the Index should be included.

### Investigating Social Inclusion in Rural Areas:-

Both Lynn Watkins of the Scottish Executive and Polly Chapman of Highland Council led a workshop which was based around consideration of the Social Justice milestones. Participants were asked to consider and discuss the relevance of the milestones to rural Scotland and to highlight particular rural issues not adequately covered by the existing milestones. On the basis of the discussion the group were asked to identify key recommendations for the Scottish National Rural Partnership for taking forward monitoring of rural social exclusion. The group recognised the importance of, and need for, a core set of indicators but recommended the development of separate urban and rural milestones in addition to the core set. Other recommendations included the need for a standard definition of rural Scotland and the importance of developing alternatives to area based definitions of social exclusion.



## Beyond Statistics

More and more qualitative research is being carried out or commissioned by local authorities these days, but there is much to learn in terms of roles, techniques, applications, and lessons from past experience.

This one-day seminar, organised by Laria and entitled "Beyond Statistics: The Role of Qualitative Research in the New Local Government Agenda", provided an opportunity to study good practice principles and current practice. The seminar was held in Birmingham on 29 September 2000.

The Chair for the day, Alan Hedges, is one of the country's most experienced social researchers, so it was useful to have Alan holding the event together, and summarising the key points to emerge.

Michael Hughes of Inlogov set the scene with a presentation covering the main drivers of consultation in the current policy context, what constitutes effective consultation, and some recommendations based on a combination of academic studies, consultancy projects, and Michael's own experience as a (Birmingham) resident.

The next presenter, Paul Vittles of RBA Research, is one of the country's leading experts in this field. Paul has written widely on the strategic use of qualitative research in local government, but he is also a leading practitioner, having moderated more than 1000 focus groups. Paul was able to draw from his knowledge and experience in taking those attending through good practice principles, common pitfalls, what qualitative research is, what it is not, and some sample case studies to illustrate key points.

In the final presentation of the morning, Fiona Henderson of Barnsley Council went through the key findings from an award-winning qualitative research study. This study looked at the reasons why Barnsley residents do not vote in elections, and what can be done to encourage greater participation. There were lessons from the results themselves, but also from the methodology applied.

There were three afternoon workshop sessions, and those attending the seminar could choose which workshop to attend. Paul Carroll of Dundee Council headed up a workshop focusing on benchmarking techniques. This was appreciated by those attending, and it may be that Laria needs to run a separate event on different benchmarking techniques at some point in the future, as interest in this topic grows.

Sheila Bennett of Bromley Council ran a workshop that took participants through a case study illustrating how Bromley Council had used its Citizens' Panel to undertake an appropriate mix of qualitative and quantitative research to try and get a full understanding of the views of its residents. In-depth interviews, focus groups, deliberative workshops, etc had been used to examine topics like how the Council communicates with residents, and what the priorities should be when drawing up the Council's budget.

Paul Vittles was the lead facilitator for the third workshop, which looked in more detail at focus groups and citizens' juries. Paul stimulated discussion and offered advice around the practical application of these particular techniques.

A final question and answer session tidied up a few loose ends.

The event appeared to send most participants away with a much greater understanding of the role of qualitative research and the practical application of particular techniques. As with other Laria events, those attending welcomed the chance to network and share experiences with their contemporaries, as well as hear from the 'experts'.



## Regard UK social science research

### Alison Parker, Regard

#### Introduction

Regard is a Web-based database that helps users locate and explore the research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the UK's largest independent funding agency for research into social and economic issues. The database currently holds over 68,000 records, dating back to the early eighties and is updated weekly, ensuring that the very latest research is included. Regard is publicly and freely available at [www.regard.ac.uk](http://www.regard.ac.uk).

You can search Regard to find information on:

- Research project details: researchers, institutions, a summary of the research and links to projects
- Web sites where available
- Outputs: books, journal articles, conference papers, datasets, software etc.

- Research findings reports - added when a project has finished

This article will update you on the latest developments at Regard, which include our redesigned web site and our first national social science conference.

#### Regard redesign

Regard actively seeks feedback from its users and as a result, several areas for development were identified. In September 2000 the Regard Web site was re-launched, based on this feedback. Particular attention was paid to the way users can search Regard and we now offer a variety of search options:

- Simple keyword searching using the basic search
- Advanced search options to build a more detailed query and to limit your search to specific fields within Regard
- Browse the index of personal names to find all records for a particular researcher

- Accessing the latest research only. Search the database using project start/end dates and publication dates. If required, you can refine your search by also using keywords to build up a search such as: "Show me research projects ending this year that are about social exclusion"

- Browsing the ESRC research centres and programmes. Research centres are national focal points for social science research where academics can collaborate on long-term projects. Centres are normally funded for a period of ten years. Research programmes are typically groups of 15-20 independent but related projects designed to address medium to long-term social and economic issues, always drawing on the skills of a variety of disciplines and research teams. Our browsing menu allows you to see all records for individual research centres and programmes and we also provide links to their Web sites

## Regard UK social science research cont...

We have also introduced an optional login facility to allow users to manage their searches and results. Once you login you are able to:

- Track all the searches you do in the current and previous month on Regard
- Use your records in-tray. The in-tray acts as a holding area for records of particular interest to you, which you may want to print out or email to yourself

Most users find Regard easy to use, but extensive help is available from our Web site. A help desk is also available by emailing [regard-help@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:regard-help@bristol.ac.uk) or telephoning 0117 928 7078.

### Regard conference

To coincide with the re-launch of Regard, we held our first national social science conference. 'Future Social Science Research: Support, Strategy and Direction' was held on September 14th 2000 at the University of Bristol.

The conference set out to examine the new challenges facing social science researchers

and to identify appropriate strategies to meet those challenges. The conference was opened by: Dr. Gordon Marshall, Chief Executive, Economic and Social Research Council and keynote presentations were given by:

Professor Roger Jowell, Director, National Centre for Social Research  
 Dr. Helen Roberts, Head of Research and Development, Barnardo's  
 Professor Ken Young, Professor of Politics, Queen Mary and Westfield College and Director of the ESRC Centre for Evidence-Based Policy and Practice

The parallel sessions focused on two themes: the role of technologies in influencing research and the views of research users on the role of social science research in the future. Speakers included:

Roger Sykes, Head of Research, Local Government Association  
 Melanie Wright, Director of User Services, The Data Archive  
 Dr. Sally Wyatt, ESRC Virtual Society? Programme, University of East London and University of Amsterdam

Gillian Dollamore, Research Co-ordinator, Social Exclusion Unit, Cabinet Office

Presentations from the speakers and photographs of the event are now available from our Web site at (<http://www.regard.ac.uk/conference/>). We are also in negotiations with a publisher about a follow up discussion book. We will update the Web site with more news, as it becomes available.

If you would like to know more about Regard please contact us at:

Regard  
 Institute for Learning & Research  
 Technology  
 University of Bristol, 8-10 Berkeley Square,  
 Bristol, BS8 1HH  
 Email: [regard@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:regard@bristol.ac.uk)  
 Tel: 0117 928 7194  
 Fax: 0117 928 7112

Regard is publicly available without subscription at: [www.regard.ac.uk](http://www.regard.ac.uk)

## Local Authority R & I News

We are always keen to hear your news. This is one of the main ways of finding what is going on in the R&I community.

### Bradford Council

Population and household forecasting for districts, wards, and ethnic groups. Bradford Council has developed their demographic forecasting software to be of use to other councils. Based on Excel to build on users' existing spreadsheet skills, POGROUP and HOUSEGROUP are robust research tools. They will allow replication of government forecasts for a District or Districts. The user can extend the forecasts to smaller areas or to ethnic groups.

Flexible tabular and graphical output can be further edited in the user's own documents. The package is designed for a technical user who needs to test the impact of different assumptions on demographic forecasts, and provide the output in policy documents. The POGROUP package was reported in the LARIA conference 2000 proceedings and is in use by fifteen councils to date. The

household forecasting package has now been developed, with support and guidance from Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire and Derbyshire councils. Further details are inserted in this issue of LariaNews and are available from the contact below.

Contact: Beverley Nuttall or Ludi Simpson,  
 01274-754793,  
 Research and Consultation Unit,  
 Policy and Executive Support,  
 Bradford Council.  
[Beverley.nuttall@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:Beverley.nuttall@bradford.gov.uk)

### Bristol City Council

Bristol City Council has established an independent Democracy Commission to review the state of local democracy in the city and to make recommendations on its future political management arrangements. The Commission will be taking evidence from ordinary Bristolians, councillors, officers, representative of local interest groups and other experts and plans to report in March. It comprises ten people

drawn from a wide cross section of people within the city and is chaired by Paul Burton of the University of Bristol, who is also a member of LARIA.

Contact: Paul Burton -  
[paul.burton@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:paul.burton@bristol.ac.uk)

### Halton Borough Council BVPI Corporate Survey

During the summer, in the lead up to the BVPI Corporate Health Survey in September, and when DETR advice about the use or non-use of panels seemed to fluctuate almost weekly, Halton made the conscious decision to try to get something positive for its own purposes out of the exercise.

Halton decided to run the survey twice, once through its panel Halton 2000 and secondly with a 2500 sample from the electoral roll. Halton's panel has been running longer than most, (it has just passed its sixth anniversary) and because it doesn't have a big list of reserves to renew

## Local Authority R & I News cont...

the panel regularly, it was felt that it could be suffering from the "conditioning" often associated with long membership of a panel. So the decision was made to test this hypothesis by running the two surveys side by side, but ensuring that there was no overlap. The sample survey for the DETR PI purposes, and the panel survey to compare the results and determine whether, and if so by how much, Halton's panel is conditioned.

As LariaNews goes to press, the results of the sample survey are still being analysed. It received a 52% response rate after two reminders. The panel survey was slightly higher at 56% after one reminder, but not perhaps as great a difference as one might have expected.

First indications show though that the net satisfaction range is higher through the panel, indicating that Halton will have to think long and hard about its future use.

### Periodic Ward Boundary Review

Despite having undertaken a Boundary Review in 1997 as part of the LGR preparations for unitary status, Halton was a bit taken aback to receive notification that it had to carry out a further review just three years later. This time around though it's the periodic electoral review that is due, last done in 1986, which is the correct time period for a regular review.

The population changes in just 3 years warrant proposals to amend the boundaries of 14 out of the Borough's current 21 wards, which if accepted, will be introduced at just about the same time as the 2001 census results are published, but on the existing ward boundaries!!

For information on both these items  
Contact Richard Stevens –  
Richard.Stevens@halton-borough.gov.uk  
Tel: 0151 424 2061 ext.1022

### Highland Council Information Audit / Data Protection Questionnaire

The council will soon be undertaking a comprehensive questionnaire survey of all services to ascertain who holds what in terms of data sets and databases. The aim is to cover all such sources of data, and will serve the dual purpose of assessing the council's position and future action required in relation to the new Data Protection Act, and updating the Information Audit which

was carried out in 1997. The questionnaire will be administered via e-mail or the web wherever possible and will be overseen by service information co-ordinators.

The Data Protection Act 1998 is now in force and the Information Audit / DP questionnaire will help to inform the council's notification to the Data Protection Commission by June 2001 as well as start the process of Service's managing the information resource in line with data protection requirements and principles. Employee and managers guides to the Data Protection Act are being prepared for circulation in the next few weeks.

The Data group of the Wellbeing Alliance has committed itself to updating the Information Audit for all Wellbeing Alliance agencies. This is one of a number of activities it is undertaking as part of developing an Information Strategy for the partner agencies. The development of a strategy is partly in response to a recent report from Audit Scotland ('Common data, Common sense' - see [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications)) which details the need for councils (and ultimately associated agencies) to streamline what data are held in order to avoid duplication, reduce overheads, ease customer access, and ensure legislation requirements are met and that current information is being used. The report sees an Information Audit as being the first step in tackling these issues.

Contacts: Stuart Brownlee/ Leo Wildi/  
Peter Sandford/ Sharon Wares/ Polly  
Chapman tel: 01463-702046 /2735 /2054  
/2106 /2507

### Kirklees Council

Two new Research Officers have joined Kirklees Council to help and support Services to develop quality consultation, particularly in relation to Best Value Reviews. Jo White and Amanda Stevens joined the Council in October and are already working on a number of Best Value Reviews.

### Co-ordinating Consultation

Along with all other councils, Kirklees has been looking at its overall approach to consultation and community engagement and how this can be best co-ordinated. As a result we have published a 'Corporate Community Engagement Framework and Action Plan' and established a corporate

group to manage consultation activity across the council. We have also launched a number of initiatives:

- We have published a guide to research and consultation techniques 'Viewfinder' and circulated this widely to staff
- We publish a quarterly newsletter 'Viewfinder News' which contains details of all the consultation and community engagement exercises planned in that quarter
- We are developing an annual plan for consultation and community engagement which will identify all the major projects planned across the council and which will be agreed by Councillors.
- We are developing a data base which will contain details of all the consultation projects that have taken place, and ultimately this will be available on the Council's internal intranet.
- We have established regular meetings with partner agencies in Kirklees to share information on planned consultation exercises, develop shared training and so on.
- We have developed internal training courses on designing a consultation exercise, using focus groups, and using surveys, and are developing courses on participative approaches
- We hold regular 'Community Engagement Forums' at lunchtimes to allow staff from different services to learn about different techniques and find out what other people have done. These forums are open to people from our partner agencies as well as Council staff. Recent topics have included a presentation from the local Health Authority about a consultation exercise they undertook, discussions with Councillors about their role in consultation and presentations on various research and consultation techniques.

### Kirklees Talkback

The Council's Citizens Panel has been established since 1994 and has covered a wide range of topics. Recent surveys have covered the tourism in Kirklees, Council opening hours, local elections, Taxis and Private Hire cars, New Political Structures, the Council's Budget, Local Area Structures and Children and Family Services.



## Local Authority R & I News cont...

### Employee Talkback

The Council also has a panel of staff who complete regular feedback questionnaires. Recent topics included training and development, complaints and awareness of council policies and initiatives.

Consultation on New Political Arrangements and Local Area Committees Kirklees has been looking at developing a system of local area committees across the district. At the same time we, along with all other councils, we are looking at the options for new political structures. We need the views of local people on both issues and so have decided to consult on the issues together.

A number of different methods are being used including information in our Citizens newsletter 'Community News' (with a tear off reply slip), a consultation paper that is being distributed widely to local groups and organisations, surveys of panel members and staff, focus groups and public meetings in the areas targeted for local area committees.

### National Land and Property Gazetteer

The National Land and Property Gazetteer is a project to produce a comprehensive land and property address database for the United Kingdom using the Ordnance Survey AddressPoint file and a number of local authority data sets (e.g. the Electoral Roll, the Council Tax Register etc.) As a corporate unit with expertise using geographic information systems (GIS), the R&I Unit is a logical place to organise the production of the Kirklees Land and Property Gazetteer. The finished gazetteer, using address data sets from services right across Kirklees, will retain a key index field from each of the contributing service data sets. This, we hope, will establish a link between service records that can be exploited to meet the targets for e-government and integrated service delivery.

### Crime Audit

We are beginning to collect data for the next Crime Audit, which will guide the process towards updating the district's Community Safety Strategy next year. With the co-operation of West Yorkshire Police, the local health authority and services within Kirklees Council, a range of data sets

will be mined to help describe patterns of crime and disorder throughout the area.

### Ward Member Toolkit

The changing role of Councillors and a greater focus on devolving council decision-making has led to the need for more and better information for Ward Members. The R&I Unit has helped to create Ward Toolkits for Kirklees Members which contain a wide variety of statistical data about individual wards. Information about council services and other local agencies, explaining how these organisations work and containing key contact names, is also included

### Ward Profiles and Kirklees Fact Sheets

An annual description of Kirklees is produced by the Research Unit in a handy loose-leafed format of thirteen A4 sheets. These Fact Sheets cover topics such as: demographics, the environment, housing, social and economic characteristics. Ward Profiles contain similar information, but aggregated by wards. Work on updating the 1998 Ward Profiles is under way which will satisfy the majority of the ward information requirements until the release of data from the forthcoming Census of Population.

For information on any of the above contact Debbie Wilson on (01484 221759)  
e-mail: [debbie.wilson@kirkleesmc.gov.uk](mailto:debbie.wilson@kirkleesmc.gov.uk)

### Northamptonshire County Council

As part of the restructuring of the council, following the arrival of a new Chief Executive, a Research & Information Team is being re-established within the Chief Executive's Office. This represents recognition that a dedicated research and information capacity is vital to a modern council, following a period when such activity was barely able to operate beyond a minimal service.

The work programme of the team is still to be planned in detail, but is likely to include the corporate lead on :

- Social and demographic statistics (including population and client group estimation and forecasting; deprivation and neighbourhood/area statistics; Census etc);
- GIS development

- Consultation (including the council's annual public opinion survey and Citizen's Panel)

There will also be a programme of research projects and the team will work closely with a new Performance Team, which will take the lead on performance information and indicators.

In the short-term, the focus of the R&I Team's work is likely to be on developing key information sets for the council's website, the refinement of area profiles, a project to bring together client information to support the new Connexions service and updating the council's consultation framework and programme.

For further information contact:  
John Jenkins 01604-236034  
e-mail: [jjenkins@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:jjenkins@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

### Worcestershire County Council County Economic Assessment

The Worcestershire Economic Assessment is produced annually by the Research & Intelligence Unit at Worcestershire County Council, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire & Worcestershire. This year's Assessment (2000-01) will be published in December, 2000.

The Assessment provides an analysis of current trends and developments in Worcestershire's economy, with the primary aim of aiding those involved in decision-making and policy-formation. In this year's Assessment, readers will find: - information concerning the general characteristics of Worcestershire, including the population of its districts, the infrastructure, and the structure of its local government; population, employment and earnings; housing and land availability; education and training; the economy; agencies, partnerships and initiatives.

The publication also includes a list of contacts from the district councils, whom readers may approach with any queries relating to specific areas in the county.

### County Economic Summary

The Research & Intelligence Unit produce the County Economic Summary during the middle of each month. It is compiled, and released, on the day that the Office for National Statistics releases its monthly

## Local Authority R & I News cont...

unemployment figures, thus, providing the reader with the most up-to-date data for the county. Data contained in the Summary includes: - unemployment for the local authority districts, the county, the region, the country, urban centres, travel-to-work areas; destination of claimants leaving the unemployment count; unfilled vacancies by job centre; unemployment by sought and usual occupation; usual occupation of unemployment-related benefit claimants; vacancies by industry; vacancies by occupation. Additionally, each Summary provides the reader with an overview of the previous month's UK and local economic news.

Periodic economic data is also included in the Summary, which may consist of, for example: - the Halifax House Price Index; the main findings of the West Midlands Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire Quarterly Economic Surveys; an overview of the previous few months' European news.

Contact: Elena Greaves

### Citizens Panel

One of the largest surveys we complete is the Citizens Panel carried out every six months. The panel consists of around 1800 randomly selected residents in the County

who agreed to join the panel and complete the questionnaires sent to them. The survey results are intended to reflect the overall views of residents in the county.

In May 2000 panelists were sent an eight page questionnaire consisting of thirty-two questions covering Street Lighting, Traffic Lights, Lifelong Learning, the Library Service, Sustainability, Health Improvement and About You.

The intention of the Citizens Panel Survey is to find out what people really think about County Council Services. The results are closely related to Best Value Performance. A response rate of 58% was achieved in the May 2000 survey and the responses to each question analysed and presented in an overall report. In order to raise response rates a cash prize is offered as an incentive to respond.

The most recent Citizens Panel survey was mailed out in October 2000, with it was sent a short summary of results for the May 2000 questionnaire. All questions in this particular survey were set by the DETR and covered - Litter and Refuse, Civic Amenity Sites, Public Transport, Cultural and Recreational Activities, Overall satisfaction with County Council departments and satisfaction with the Authority as a whole. This survey was compulsory throughout all

County Councils in England. Results will be compared between authorities and performance tracked every three years when the same questions will be repeated.

The current response rate for the October survey stands at 81% boosted by two reminders sent to panelists who had not yet returned their questionnaires. The analysis stage of the October survey is about to begin, results are expected at the end of December.

Contact: Anna Sansom – Research Officer

## News From Elsewhere

### Local Authorities Research Council Initiative (LARCI)

LARCI now has its own website on [www.nerc.ack.uk/industry-gateway/larci/index.htm](http://www.nerc.ack.uk/industry-gateway/larci/index.htm) providing links to the websites of member research councils (ESRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC) as well as information about LARCI activities and publications. The latest ESRC newsletter Social Sciences (on [www.esrc.ac.uk](http://www.esrc.ac.uk)) sets out the ESRC's thematic priorities covering: economic performance and development; environment and human behaviour; governance and citizenship; social stability and exclusion; knowledge, communication and learning; and work and organisations; and lifecourse, lifestyles and health.

### Local Government Association

The LGA has recently published research on elections the 21st Century model and on partnerships with health – a survey of local authorities. Executive summaries of can be found on the LGA website at [www.lga.gov.uk/research/index](http://www.lga.gov.uk/research/index).

The electoral research considers the experience of the 32 authorities that ran a total of 38 pilot schemes at the May 2000 local elections and evaluates their success or failure according to a number of criteria.

The partnerships with health research details the results of a survey which aimed to demonstrate the range of partnership work already underway between the NHS and local authorities as well as that planned.

## LARIA Events

### 2001 Conference – University of Bath 9-11 April 2001

#### PLANNING WITH COMMUNITIES Partnerships, Consultation, Looking Forward Together

##### Programme

##### Monday 9 April 2001

11.00	Registration and Coffee
12.00	Lunch
13.30	Plenary: Strategic Partnerships - Community Planning and Neighbourhood Renewal: Prof Murray Stewart (University of the West of England)
14.50	LARIA: Bryan Hall (LARIA Chair)
15.10	Tea/Coffee
15.30	Plenary: Case Study on Community Planning: Jaqui Ball (Arun District Council) and Kieran Stigant (West Sussex County Council)
16.40	Break
16.45	Plenary: Community Planning - How Authorities Are Getting Prepared: Roger Sykes (Local Government Association)
17.50	Break
18.30	Reception
19.30	Dinner

##### Tuesday 10 April 2001

	Stream 1	Stream 2
9.00	2025 Visioning: Wendy Pontin (Norfolk County Council)	Joined-up Information Systems: David Onions (Worcestershire County Council)
10.15	Coffee/tea	
10.35	Consultation with Hard-to-Reach Groups: Debbie Lee Chan (ORC International)	The 2001 Census: Current Output Proposals and Dissemination Arrangements: Philip Rees (University of Leeds)
11.50	Break	
11.55	Workshop on Consultation: Michael Soper (Cambridgeshire County Council)	National/Subnational Ethnic Group Projections: John Haskey (Office for National Statistics)
13.10	Lunch	
14.15	Regional Observatories / Intelligence Units: David Meechan (Trent Public Health Observatory)	Research and Local Advice and Information Strategies: Alison Linfield (Legal Services Commission)
15.30	Tea/coffee	
15.50	Plenary: Best Value in Research for Local Government – the Cambridgeshire Experience: Jill Tuffnell (Cambridgeshire County Council)	
16.55	Plenary: Consultation on Modernisation: Nicola Lloyd (Oxford City Council) and Carol Riddington (MVA)	
17.45	Break	
19.00	Civic Reception (Bath and Somerset Council) at Roman Baths	
20.00	Dinner in Pump Room	



## LARIA Events cont...

Wednesday 11 April 2001

Stream 1

Stream 2

9.00	Crime and Disorder Joint Arrangements: Nicky Poole and Gill Brigden (Leicestershire County Council)	Government Social Research Network: Richard Bartholomew (DfEE)
9.50	New Deal for Communities: Jon Bright (DETR)	The Neighbourhood Statistics Service - plans for a national partnership for local data Dev Virdee (Office for National Statistics) and Malcolm Brown (Cornwall County Council)
10.40	Tea/Coffee	
11.00	Plenary: Being a 'Good' Linda Watts (Bath Council: & NE Somerset Council)	
11.50	Plenary: LGA Futures Doug Jones (Local Toolkit: Government Association)	
13.00	Lunch (Optional)	
14.00	LARIA AGM	

Cost: From £200 for full three days (other options available). Discounts are available for LARIA Corporate Members.

Venue: The University of Bath is situated on the outskirts of Bath.

Booking: A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter or can be obtained from: Graham Smith, LARIA Administrator and Events Organiser, tel:01642 316576 Email: GSmith8815@aol.com or lariaoffice@aol.com

Last year's Conference was fully subscribed so please book early to avoid disappointment.

## BENEFITS DATA SEMINAR

Tuesday 20 March 2001

Regents College, London

9.30	Registration and Coffee
10.00	Welcome and Introduction from Chair: Roger Sykes (Local Government Association)
10.20	DSS Benefits Data – What is Available: Nigel Brough (DSS)
11.15	Tea/Coffee
11.35	Index of Deprivation 2000: Angela Ruotolo (DETR)
12.30	Lunch
13.30	Who Qualifies for What Benefits? Nigel Godfrey (Derbyshire County Council)
14.30	Mapping Benefits Data: Chris Mitchell (Fife Council)
15.15	Tea/Coffee
15.35	Sally Wright (Leeds City Council) Using Information to Make a Difference - a case study
16.20	Summing Up
16.30	Close

Cost: £135 for full day including lunch. Discounts are available for LARIA Corporate Members.

Venue: Regents College is situated in Regents Park in Central London.

Booking: A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter or can be obtained from: Graham Smith, LARIA Administrator and Events Organiser, tel:01642 316576 Email: GSmith8815@aol.com or lariaoffice@aol.com

## Noticeboard

### ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY SOCIAL STATISTICS SECTION

Tuesday 20 March 2001, at 5:00pm - 6:30pm (Tea 4:30pm) at Royal Statistical Society, 12 Errol Street, London EC1Y 8OX (Barbican and Moorgate are the nearest underground stations)

A migration model for assessing the likely impact of alternative policy scenarios

Tony Champion – University of Newcastle  
 Phil Rees – University of Leeds  
 Stewart Fotheringham – University of Newcastle  
 Glen Bramley – Edinburgh College of Art

Details are presented of an initial migration policy model developed for the DETR by a research team drawn from Newcastle University, Leeds University, Edinburgh College of Art and Greater London Authority. The model has been designed to enable the investigation of the first-round quantitative impacts of alternative economic and policy scenarios on gross flows of population between 100 areas in the UK. The model comprises three stages. The first stage is the model for predicting the level of out-migration from the areas for 14 subgroups (7 age groups x gender), with determinant variables calibrated by regression

analysis. The second, calibrated using spatial interaction modelling, is the model for predicting the distribution of the outflows from each origin to each of the other areas. The third stage consists of the migration prediction and user interface, which allows users to input alternative values for the determinant variables in the models chosen to represent alternative conditions. The predicted migration flows are compared with the baseline predictions to assess the effect of the selected scenario, with the results viewable via tables, maps and other graphics.

The presentation will outline the thinking that went into model development, describe the characteristics of the final version of the initial policy model, display the results of some experimental scenarios. It will also discuss the steps needed for the fuller assessment of the robustness of the model and suggest ideas for further enhancement, notably in order to assist in the preparation of DETR's household projections.

**ALL WELCOME.**

**THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE MEETING**

Further details from the RSS ([rss@rss.org.uk](mailto:rss@rss.org.uk) or phone 020 7638 8998)

## Captioncompetition

The last newsletter carried this paragraph and readers were asked to suggest witty captions

### The editorial group judged the following to be the winning entries:

"On reflection, Charles deeply regretted offering to take part in this particular people's panel."

**Alan Cole, R&I Group, County Planning Department, Hampshire County Council**

"The England Rugby League World Cup team present their intimidating alternative to New Zealand's haka"

**Derek West, Corporate Policy Unit, Sheffield City Council**

"The Photo Opportunity Sub-Group of the Re-invigorating Democracy Committee hit on the splendid idea of getting Presiding Officers to dance about dressed up as ballot papers duly marked with the required 'X' whilst wielding super-length distinctly non-stubby pencils as an extra incentive potential voters"

**Phil Ellis, North West Leicestershire Council**



### This edition's caption competition shows

'...a photo of Paul Vittles enjoying a break from the Beyond Statistics Event in Birmingham. Your suggestions should be emailed to the editor by 29th March 2001. The winning captions will be printed in the next edition.

If you have any suggestions for future caption competitions post them to Rachel Cossey at the address on the backpage or email them to [rachel@mgeomatics.com](mailto:rachel@mgeomatics.com).'

## Guide to Contributors

The newsletter editorial group positively encourages and welcomes all relevant contributions - articles, news items, or reports about the work of Research and Intelligence Units and the work of other organisations/agencies involved in research and policy analysis activities. Details of relevant courses, conferences and services will also be published.

The aim is to make the newsletter of interest and benefit to as wide range of research practitioners as possible, from those more involved in complex statistical analysis to those more involved in social qualitative research. It is important, therefore, that all contributions are as user-friendly and jargon-free as possible. Explanation of any acronyms used is particularly important. All researchers will then be able to understand and appreciate the work being undertaken in different research fields.

We also seek to make the newsletter visually appealing by incorporating cartoons, graphics, pictures, etc. into the text. So please consider these when submitting your contribution.

Provision of copy by email (email address on back page) to the editor in Microsoft Word or compatible documents is preferable, although disks may also be sent to the editor (address on back page).

## Next Issue

### June 2001

Copy should be sent to the LariaNews editor (address on back page) to arrive by 29th March 2001.

### Future Copy Deadlines

### October 2001

Copy should be sent to the LariaNews editor (address on back page) to arrive by 13th July 2001.

## Your Advert in this space

1/4 page advert costs £75.00

1/2 page advert costs £150.00

a full page advert costs £300.00

A4 inserts cost £400.00

To arrange any of the above contact LariaNews editor, Rachel Cossey  
Tel: (0161 276 8390), Email: [rachel.cossey@hotmail.com](mailto:rachel.cossey@hotmail.com).

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily of their employing organisation or of LARIA.  
Readers are advised to ascertain for themselves that courses, conferences or services advertised are appropriate for their needs.

**LARIA** was established in 1974 to promote the role and practice of research within the field of local government and provide a supportive network for those conducting or commissioning research.

There are three forms of LARIA membership - full membership and associate membership for individuals and corporate membership for organisations. Currently LARIA is managed by a steering group (details below), but from April 2001 it will be run by a Council, mainly elected by the full members.

LARIA is registered as a Specially Authorised Society under the Friendly Societies Act 1974. Its activities are of interest to all people working on Research and Intelligence activities for Local Authorities or allied fields, and depends upon active participation of such people to promote, maintain and develop professional practices.

LARIA in Scotland (LiS) has its own constitution and steering group, whose chairperson and secretary are also on the LARIA UK steering group. It plans workshops, and other events, and is developing networking at a Scottish level.

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**ADVERTISING**

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**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

LARIA wishes to encourage participation in its Steering Group, its events and its other activities. It aims to remove barriers to participation associated with race, gender, disability and sexuality. It expects delegates and contributors to help in achieving this aim.