

UK Public Sector Information Policy and On-Line Licensing

Jim Wretham

Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), United Kingdom

Good afternoon. I would like to start off by thanking the Academy for giving me this opportunity to tell you about the ways in which government information is licensed in the United Kingdom. I would particularly like to focus on the introduction of the on-line licence which was developed by HMSO.

Background

First of all, it may be helpful if I explained the legal basis of central government originated copyright material in the United Kingdom. All copyright material originated by central government is covered by Crown copyright which is defined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 as works:

Crown copyright

Made by Her Majesty or by an officer or servant of the Crown in the course of his duties

s163 Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

The central licensing and policy responsibility for Crown copyright rests with HMSO. There is, however, a range of other public sector bodies which falls outside the scope of the statutory definition of Crown copyright. Most of these organisations handle their own licensing. HMSO also arranges for the publication of legislation on its website.

Recent Policy Developments

The UK government completed a wide ranging review of the Knowledge Economy earlier this year. This resulted in the introduction of a series of key reforms with a view to improving access to government information and encouraging its reuse. The benefits of this approach were twofold:

Knowledge Economy Benefits

- Democratic: better informed citizens;
- Economic: growth of information industry through development of value added products and services.

Click-Use Licence

To encourage the reuse of government information we regarded it as essential to offer customers a streamlined and transparent licensing process. We therefore introduced an on-line licence known as the **Click-Use Licence**.

The way this operates is that we have published a set of licence terms on our website. Users read the terms and complete their details using a standard application form. At the point they *Click* to accept the terms of the licence and send their details to HMSO they are free to reuse a wide range of core government information.

What are the benefits of the Click-Use Licence?

- quick;
- transparent;
- one licence covers a wide range of material;
- easy to understand;
- it is fair;
- reuse is free (other than for data supply).

Since the **Click-Use Licence** was introduced in April of this year over 900 licences have been taken out. These have come from a wide range of users.

Range of Users

- Publishers;
- Manufacturing;
- Professionals (legal and financial);
- Libraries;
- Charities;
- Private Individuals;
- Local Authorities.

Conclusion

As for the future, we are looking at simplifying the licensing process for material not covered by the **Click-Use Licence**, notably value added material and material produced by other parts of the public sector.

9. The introduction of the **Click-Use Licence** represented a radical and progressive approach to the licensing of government information. It is in our view a model that others throughout the European Community could adapt.