



*The Future of the National  
Interest Mapping Services  
Agreement Beyond 2006*

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# The Future of the National Interest Mapping Services Agreement Beyond 2006

## 1 Introduction

The National Interest Mapping Services Agreement (“NIMSA”) funds mapping services which are in the national interest, but would not otherwise be provided by the market as they are not economically viable.

NIMSA was established in 1999 as a 7-year agreement between the Department for Communities and Local Government (“DCLG”) and Ordnance Survey (“OS”). As the agreement is due to expire, DCLG has considered the future of national interest funding and the conclusions of that review are presented here.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 The current agreement

NIMSA has funded non-economic mapping services which are in the national interest, according to three underpinning principles:

- (a) the public interest arising from the mapping of areas which would not otherwise be mapped if the decision was made on a purely commercial basis;
- (b) the benefits of having national consistency of content, currency, style and manner of mapping which is dictated by needs other than those of the local market; and
- (c) the inescapable requirement for the creation or maintenance of the underpinning infrastructure (notably the geodetic framework) which is widely used and where charging for use will either be inappropriate or impossible.

### 2.2 Achievements

DCLG considers that NIMSA has enabled the successful delivery of mapping services in the national interest since its inception. Particular highlights include:

- (a) support for the completion on time and to budget of a nationwide Positional Accuracy Improvement programme that now enables all users in both public and private sectors to take full advantage of the greater accuracy afforded by GPS technology; and
- (b) the delivery of mapping to a consistent standard across Great Britain as specified by Government to be in the national interest.

Further detail is provided in the NIMSA Annual Reports, which are available at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144581>.

## 3 The Government's Position

### 3.1 DCLG review

DCLG has given detailed consideration to the future of NIMSA, taking the following key issues into account:

- (a) the response to the public consultation which took place at the end of 2004 (published at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144581>);
- (b) the evolving GI market in the UK where a fast growing user base is demanding more sophisticated products and services from a wider range of suppliers; and
- (c) budgetary pressures within DCLG where support for national interest mapping activities has to be considered alongside other spending priorities.

### 3.2 Conclusions

DCLG considers that:

- (a) it is appropriate for some of the services which have been supported by NIMSA, to be procured directly by those public sector bodies who require them, either individually or collaboratively; and
- (b) it is appropriate for DCLG to continue supporting some national interest geographic activities but on a much smaller scale than previously.

DCLG has therefore decided that:

- (a) the current NIMSA arrangement with Ordnance Survey will be terminated with effect from December 31st 2006; and
- (b) DCLG will continue until further notice to support the operation of a national geospatial metadata service (currently known as gigateway).

In addition, DCLG will continue to fund the work of the GI Panel including the development of a GI Strategy for the United Kingdom.

### 3.3 Impacts on users

Ordnance Survey has already indicated to DCLG that they are willing to continue to provide a 'Mapping for Emergencies' helpline service and national interest coastal survey work. Ordnance Survey will separately be advising users of any impacts of the decisions made by DCLG.