

THE POSTCODE ADDRESS FILE ADVISORY BOARD (PAB)

Minutes of meeting held at 11:30 on 16 January 2025

At the offices of Auctane, 200 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8XZ

And by video conference

Present

Ian Beesley	Chairman
Neil Haydock	Auctane
Richard Hartland	Data8
Nick Chapallaz	GeoPlace
Ian Paterson	Mail Competition Forum
Paul Brough	Mail Users' Association

In attendance

Ian Evans	AMU
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Attending by video link

Paul Cresswell (items 1 - 4.1)	Experian
Stuart Watt	GB Group
Ron Wilkinson	Improvement Service, Scotland

Apologies

Rob Parker	CACI
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Secretariat

Paul Roberts

1 New Meeting Format

THE CHAIRMAN outlined a meeting structure for 2025, aligning the main items of the agenda to the key priorities for the PAB for 2025:

- Market Developments
- AMU Engagement with RM Operations
- Service Level Agreement between the AMU and RM Operations
- Audit and Investigation Activity

Agenda topics would be tied to each of these areas.

THE BOARD approved this format for all 2025 meetings.

2 Chairman's Update

2.1 CWU Broadcast

THE BOARD watched an extract from a broadcast by the CWU General Secretary, Dave Ward, which was live streamed on YouTube on 18 December:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/cPUBVVRfj84?si=usQMoMIKGDtqnx5H&t=837>

Key elements relevant to the PAB were the CWU statements on the importance of quality, growing the Royal Mail (RM) business and ensuring that the business listens to front-line staff.

THE BOARD suggested that if PAF could be embedded as one of the enabling quality of service performance indicators this would appropriately reflect its importance to efficient mail sortation and delivery. THE BOARD also welcomed the emphasis on front-line staff feedback, and suggested this could be used to seek comments on updating PAF.

2.2 PAB Vacancies

THE CHAIRMAN advised he was in discussions with two potential new Board members, who had indicated firm declarations of interest in joining the Board. Three other individuals had also been suggested as potential members and would be followed up.

ACTION: THE CHAIRMAN to update the Board in due course.

THE BOARD re-emphasised the importance of resuming RM Operations membership of the PAB, at a senior RM level, as soon as possible, now that senior roles had been assigned.

3 Market Developments

3.1 PAF Licensing Trends 2023/24

THE AMU made a brief presentation on developments in PAF licensing between 2022/23 to 2023/24 and proposed moving the annual discussion to the July PAB meeting, which would enable more up to date information to be included.

THE BOARD noted the continued, but slowing, switch to payment by transactional use ('Pay per Click'), and Solutions Provider (SP) members commented that this movement appeared to be continuing into 2024/25, possibly linked to customers looking to have more flexible control of costs.

THE AMU further reported that, overall, PAF use remained fairly consistent between 2022/23 and 2023/24. However, a few more noticeable movements were highlighted, including that the overall number of organisations taking PAF had reduced for the second year in a row.

THE BOARD suggested that, notwithstanding difficulties in data classification, it was important to continue to analyse PAF usage by industry segment, as there could be changes reflecting the availability of addressing datasets.

ACTION: THE BOARD welcomed the AMU proposal to switch the annual review of market trends to July and requested that the analysis should include data on customer switching from part to full PAF use, or the reverse.

3.2 The Use of Client Relationship Management Resources

Because most End Users of PAF data use Solutions from SPs Discussion centred on the challenges for SPs in obtaining information about the reasons for customers cancelling with them. THE AMU advised that they had always worked closely with SPs to minimise the reporting burden on them, but recognized that it was becoming more important to understand the reasons for customers moving away from PAF.

ACTION: THE BOARD invited SP representatives to put forward ideas on how information on the reasons for End User cancellation of PAF use may best be gathered.

3.3 Geospatial Commission Conferences

THE AMU gave a brief update on their attendance at one of four conferences hosted by Ordnance Survey for the Geospatial Commission across the UK in late 2024.

NICK CHAPALLAZ advised that the main focus for the events was on (OS) products, with PAF being one component of those products.

An interesting point emerging from one of the events was that a large addressing data user had had difficulty accessing parts of PAF within the OS AddressBase product, and that AMU will be discussing this with the OS to ensure optimum PAF usability for PSL Members within the AddressBase solution.

THE BOARD took note of the feedback.

4 AMU Engagement with RM Operations

4.1 Delivery Office reporting of amendments needed in PAF

THE AMU shared a presentation which demonstrated an improvement in the frequency of reporting by DOs in the latter part of 2024, following the AMU's increased engagement with frontline colleagues responsible for submitting changes and improved regular reporting to Regional Operations Directors.

THE BOARD welcomed the progress in this area and asked if the AMU were monitoring whether initial performance improvement was being sustained at office, area, and regional levels. Further, there was a need to accelerate the pace of improvement, as reporting had not yet recovered from the impact of Covid-19.

THE AMU advised that, in the majority of cases, improved office performance was being sustained. However, changes to operational priorities could affect the reporting processes and that, in some cases, operational roles had lapsed. The importance of ensuring adequate staffing of Route Manager Champions and the monitoring of reporting frequency was being emphasised in sessions with Regional Operations Directors.

In discussion, PAB Members argued that a new Service Level Agreement between the AMU and RM Operations was urgently needed and should include a firm link between the cost allocated to the AMU accounts in respect of RM operations for updating PAF and DO performance in this area.

In addition, it was noted that a trial of the effect of possible USO changes affecting second class mail would be starting shortly. THE BOARD felt that it would be important for the trials to assess the potential effect on PAF change reporting and the scope for devoting increased effort to reporting addressing changes.

4.2 Performance Measures

THE AMU advised that work on quantifying the correlation between PAF accuracy and the requirement for manual sortation would be re-started in the coming quarter. A further update on progress would be given at the April 2025 PAB meeting.

5 Service Level Agreement Between the AMU and RM Operations

5.1 AMU response to draft SLA and Forcefield Analysis

THE AMU confirmed they had reviewed the PAB-generated forcefield analysis and agreed with the existing positive and negative influences. Some of the obstacles lay outside their direct control but others, such as the establishment of senior operational ownership of a new SLA, were a key priority in which they were investing significant attention.

THE BOARD expressed concern that delays in considering the draft SLA it had proposed to the AMU risked losing the initiative in bringing about a revised agreement which would better support PAF quality.

ACTION: It was proposed that the Chairman and AMU should meet to agree priority action to review the SLA content and the use of the forcefield analysis to identify steps to improve the climate for introduction of a new SLA.

6 Audit & Investigation Activity

6.1 Identifying the Severity of Licence Non-compliance

THE AMU confirmed that further to requests from the PAB they had worked with DQM and developed a severity matrix to improve the reporting of licence non-compliance, and reporting on this basis was expected to be completed and implemented from Q1 2025/26.

THE BOARD commented that, although the majority of existing instances of non-compliance were of low impact, it would be important to identify high impact issues quickly and also to watch for areas where multiple instances of the same lower impact issue were identified.

6.2 Unlicensed Usage of PAF

THE BOARD stressed that they wholly supported the time and investment made by the AMU in pursuing any unlicensed use of PAF.

6.3 Quarterly Data Quality Update

THE AMU advised that the Q36 quality report would be ready during w/c 20 January, and this would be shared with the Board members once available.

6.4 AMU & GeoPlace Joint Working Project

Building on successful outputs from the trial conducted, including a high number of new PAF changes identified, the AMU and GeoPlace were currently evaluating options for increasing the sharing of data.

One constraint was that the level of resource required to assure the four Local Authority (LA) areas involved in the trial, when scaled up to cover all LAs, would be difficult to resource. Options involving extending the trial and potential alternatives to existing processes were being considered.

ACTION: The next steps were expected to be confirmed by the end of February, to be shared with the PAB at that point.

7 Next Meeting

17 April 2024, 13:00 – 15:30. Venue: Experian, Cardinal Place, 6th Floor, 80 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 5JL

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