

# OGP Global Summit Planning for UK OGN

29-31 May 2019, Ottawa (Canada)

This document contains guidance for members of the UK OGN on shared top line messages for communications purposes. It is being drafted in collaboration with Network members.

Please feel free to add any suggestions or edits in this document.

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**ACTION PLAN DUE TO BE PUBLISHED AT 10am on Tuesday 28 May 2019**

# 1. Assuming the UK has NOT published the national action plan

**THIS IS UNDER EMBARGO – NOT TO BE PUBLISHED WIDELY UNTIL  
14.00 BST 29 MAY 2019, DEPENDING ON WHETHER NAP IS PUBLISHED**

## a. Statement by UK OGN on the lack of a UK National Action Plan

The UK has been one of the leading participant countries in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) since it was launched in 2011. As first co-chair of the OGP, the UK secured the initiative's foundations and helped broaden its reach far beyond the original eight founding members to over 50 participating countries.

The commitments in previous UK open government action plans have raised the bar and set the pace for open government reform globally, encouraging other countries and jurisdictions to consider and introduce similar reforms.<sup>1</sup>

Developing and implementing these ambitious commitments however, relies on high-level political support that enables active, meaningful and ambitious collaboration between reformers inside government and civil society.

We have been concerned by the lack of visible high-level political support for the open government process in the UK over the last two years. While reformers in government and civil society have been engaged in the process, the last public engagement by a minister with the open government process was at the online launch of the public consultation of the action plan in September 2018. There was no ministerial engagement with Open Gov Week earlier this year, and this is the second consecutive Global OGP Summit without a published UK national action plan.

Our concerns are further compounded by backsliding in other areas of transparency, participation and accountability throughout government and UK institutions, outside the action plan process.

Although we appreciate the Government's negotiations with the European Union are a national priority, the lack of high-level political support for open government more generally is having a negative effect across institutions, whether it be;

- the growing percentage of Freedom of Information requests not granted access in full,<sup>2</sup>
- the Government's response to the ICO report 'Outsourcing Oversight showing it unwilling to act upon recommendations to expand the scope of Freedom of Information'<sup>3</sup>
- delays to fully publishing the latest government grants using approved standards<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example, by introducing a public register of beneficial owners of companies, developing a cross-government anti-corruption strategy, publishing aid funding, and, requiring UK-incorporated and UK-listed oil, gas and mining companies to publish their payments to governments in open data formats.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/charts/percentage-freedom-information-requests-granted-full-department>

<sup>3</sup> [http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0516/Letter\\_to\\_ICO\\_from\\_MfC.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0516/Letter_to_ICO_from_MfC.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/United-Kingdom\\_End-of-Term\\_Report\\_2016-2018\\_Comments.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/United-Kingdom_End-of-Term_Report_2016-2018_Comments.pdf)

- limited progress in opening up geospatial data (including through the commitments of the Geospatial Commission)<sup>5</sup>;
- the failure to meet performance targets for Verify (the flagship digital programme for government)<sup>6</sup>;
- the costs to the taxpayer of cancelled government contracts<sup>7</sup>;
- missing the risks and warnings about large contractors like Carillion<sup>8</sup>;

Concern about the Open Government Partnership process and the broader context was also reflected in the recently published Independent Reporting Mechanism End of Term Report. It highlighted concerns that the institutional change and political context has negatively impacted the level of completion of reforms in the 2016-18 National Action Plan.<sup>9</sup>

Fundamentally, the lack of high level political support has led to a significant delay in publishing the next national action plan which if not resolved, will lead the UK down a path of being declared an 'inactive' member of the OGP. Our position as an international leader on, and investor in, open government therefore risks being seriously undermined, along with our role in setting the agenda on a global stage and the Government's commitment to implementing domestic reform.

Meanwhile, the UK's devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales, and other participating countries are pushing forward with developing ambitious commitments in new areas, for example linking open government to inclusion and gender.

Our disappointment and frustration as expressed in this statement arise because in recent times, words and promises on the open government process have failed to result in public action by Government.

As civil society organisations, we will continue to work with citizens and all levels of government, through our projects and campaigns, to bring about more openness in the UK.

Therefore, we call on the UK Government to

- Publish the fourth UK open government national action plan without further delay;
- Set out a high level political commitment to open government reform, and
- Work closely with civil society to make UK Government and institutions more open, transparent, participatory and accountable.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-to-unlock-hidden-value-of-government-data>

<sup>6</sup>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news-parliament-2017/accessing-public-services-through-verify-report-published-17-19/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/may/01/chris-grayling-cancels-ferry-contracts-at-extra-50m-cost-to-taxpayers-brexit>

<sup>8</sup>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news-parliament-2017/carillion-risk-assessments-report-published-17-19/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/united-kingdom-end-of-term-report-2016-2018-year-2>

## b. Signatory Organisations to above Statement

(please add before 5pm GMT Tuesday 28 May 2019)

Open Government Network Cymru  
Northern Ireland Open Government Network  
Open Government Network Scotland  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
Transition Edinburgh  
Corruption Watch UK  
Open Data Manchester CIC  
Publish What You Pay UK  
Practical Participation  
360Giving  
Involve  
Open Contracting Partnership  
The Women's Budget Group  
mySociety  
Electoral Reform Society  
NCVO  
Transparency International UK  
Open Data Institute  
The Democratic Society  
Natural Resource Governance Institute

## c. Top Line Messages

- Previously, the UK has implemented important domestic reform and provided global leadership on open government
- Civil society is **extremely disappointed that UK Government has not published the NAP**
- Civil society is **concerned by the lack of political leadership** on the open government reform agenda in the UK
- Civil society is **supportive of the work of civil servants** who have been trying to advance the NAP as much as possible despite the lack of political leadership
- Civil society is **concerned by the impact of Brexit on advancing open government reform**— at a time when understanding decisions made by government and maintaining trust is important, we are seeing institutions become more secretive (e.g. see time and responses to FOI requests)

## d. UK OGN Communications planning

**Audience:** UK and global civil society, OGP Summit attendees, key UK politicians, UK media

**Outputs:** OGN Twitter, Network members Twitter/other social media, blogpost with OGN Statement, planted OGN media article.

**See above 'top lines' for UK OGN messaging**

**Hashtags:** #OGPCanada

The OGN twitter will be largely used to live tweet from Summit events. There will be some preplanned tweeting in relation to the statement.

**Suggested tweets:**

We are disappointed and frustrated to be attending a second @opengovpart summit with no national action plan. When will ministers break the impasse and publish it? [Link to [statement](#)] #OGPCanada

We call on UK Gov to publish the 4th #opengov national action plan, set out a high level political commitment to #opengovernment reform, & work closely with civil society to make UK institutions more open, transparent, participatory & accountable. [Link to [statement](#)] #OGPCanada

We're concerned by lack of visible high level political support for the #opengovernment process in the UK over the last 2yrs. Brexit is also blocking capacity for reform in other areas of transparency, participation & accountability. [Link to [statement](#)] #OGPCanada

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## 2. Assuming the UK DOES publish the NAP before the Summit

a. Statement by UK OGN (assuming action plan is published before the Summit)

**THIS IS UNDER EMBARGO - NOT TO BE PUBLISHED WIDELY UNTIL 14.00**

**BST 29 MAY 2019, DEPENDING ON WHETHER NAP IS PUBLISHED**

The UK has been one of the leading participant countries in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) since it was launched in 2011. As first co-chair of the OGP, the UK secured the initiative's foundations and helped broaden its reach far beyond the original eight founding members to over 50 participating countries.

The commitments in previous UK open government action plans have raised the bar and set the pace for open government reform globally, encouraging other countries and jurisdictions to consider and introduce similar reforms.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, we welcome the publishing of the UK's 2019-21 Open Government National Action Plan. We look forward to working with reformers inside government to implement this plan and continue developing the open government agenda.

However, developing and implementing ambitious commitments relies on high-level political support that enables active, meaningful and ambitious collaboration between reformers inside government and civil society.

We have been concerned by the lack of visible high-level political support for the open government process in the UK over the last two years. While reformers in government and civil society have been engaged in the process, **and the responsible government minister, Margot James MP, Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries, has written a positive foreword to the plan, we have been otherwise disappointed by the lack of ministerial engagement since September 2018.**

Our concerns are further compounded by developments in other areas of transparency, participation and accountability throughout government and UK institutions.

Although we appreciate the Government's negotiations with the European Union are a national priority, the lack of high-level political support for open government more generally is having a negative effect across institutions, whether it be;

- the growing percentage of Freedom of Information requests not granted access in full,<sup>11</sup>
- the Government's response to the ICO report 'Outsourcing Oversight' showing it is unwilling to act upon recommendations to expand the scope of Freedom of Information<sup>12</sup>
- delays to fully publishing the latest government grants using approved standards<sup>13</sup>
- limited progress in opening up geospatial data (including through the commitments of the Geospatial Commission),<sup>14</sup>
- the failure to meet performance targets for Verify (the flagship digital programme for government)<sup>15</sup>,
- the costs to the taxpayer of cancelled government contracts<sup>16</sup>,
- missing the risks and warnings about large contractors like Carillion<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For example, by introducing a public register of beneficial owners of companies, developing a cross-government anti-corruption strategy, publishing aid funding, and, requiring UK-incorporated and UK-listed oil, gas and mining companies to publish their payments to governments in open data formats.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/charts/percentage-freedom-information-requests-granted-full-department>

<sup>12</sup> [http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0516/Letter\\_to\\_ICO\\_from\\_MfC.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0516/Letter_to_ICO_from_MfC.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/United-Kingdom\\_End-of-Term\\_Report\\_2016-2018\\_Comments.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/United-Kingdom_End-of-Term_Report_2016-2018_Comments.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-to-unlock-hidden-value-of-government-data>

<sup>15</sup>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news-parliament-2017/accelerating-public-services-through-verify-report-published-17-19/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/may/01/chris-grayling-cancels-ferry-contracts-at-extra-50m-cost-to-taxpayers-brexite>

<sup>17</sup>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news-parliament-2017/carillion-risk-assessments-report-published-17-19/>

Concern about the Open Government Partnership process and the broader context was also reflected in the recently published Independent Reporting Mechanism End-of-Term Report. It highlighted concerns that the institutional change and political context has negatively impacted the level of completion of reforms in the 2016-18 National Action Plan.<sup>18</sup>

The UK is at risk of undermining its position as an international leader on, and investor in, open government, along with its role in setting the agenda on a global stage and the Government's commitment to implementing domestic reform.

Our disappointment and frustration as expressed in this statement arise because in recent times, words and promises on the open government process have failed to result in public action by Government.

As civil society organisations, we will continue to work with citizens and all levels of government, through our projects and campaigns, to bring about more openness in the UK.

Now that the UK National Action Plan has been published we call on the UK Government to fully deliver all eight commitments in the 2019-21 Open Government National Action Plan, set out a high-level political commitment to open government reform moving forward, and work closely with civil society to make UK Government and institutions more open, transparent, participatory and accountable.

The UK Open Government Civil Society Network  
Open Government Network Cymru  
Northern Ireland Open Government Network  
Open Government Network Scotland  
Involve  
The Democratic Society  
Electoral Reform Society  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
Open Data Institute  
Practical Participation  
The Women's Budget Group  
Open Data Manchester CIC  
National Council for Voluntary Organisations  
Open Contracting Partnership  
Publish What You Pay UK  
360Giving  
Transition Edinburgh

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/united-kingdom-end-of-term-report-2016-2018-year-2>

## b. Top Line Messages

- Previously, the UK has implemented important domestic reform and provided global leadership on open government
- Civil society **welcomes the publishing** of the NAP
- Civil society is **disappointed with the delay** to publishing the NAP
- Civil society is **concerned by the lack of political leadership** on the open government reform agenda in the UK
- Civil society is **supportive of the work of civil servants** who have been trying to advance the NAP as much as possible despite the lack of political leadership
- Civil society is **concerned by the impact of Brexit on advancing open government reform**, at a time when understanding decisions made by government and maintaining trust is important, we are seeing institutions become more secretive (see time and responses to FOI requests)

## c. UK OGN Communications planning

**Audience:** UK and global civil society, OGP Summit attendees, key UK politicians, UK media

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**See above 'top lines' for UK OGN messaging**

**Hashtags:** #OGPCanada

The OGN twitter will be largely used to live tweet from Summit events. There will be some preplanned tweeting in relation to the statement.

### **Suggested tweets:**

We welcome the UK #opengov national action plan, but need high-level support to enable active, meaningful and ambitious collaboration between reformers inside government and civil society.  
<https://www.opengovernment.org.uk/statement-by-uk-open-government-network-at-ogpcanada>  
#OGPCanada

The UK has finally published its #opengov national action plan, but we're still concerned by lack of high-level political support for open gov in the UK over the last 2yrs. UK needs to set out a high-level political commitment to #opengov reform!  
<https://www.opengovernment.org.uk/statement-by-uk-open-government-network-at-ogpcanada>

We call on UK Gov to set out a high-level political commitment to #opengovernment reform, & work closely with civil society to make UK institutions more open, transparent, participatory & accountable.  
<https://www.opengovernment.org.uk/statement-by-uk-open-government-network-at-ogpcanada>  
#OGPCanada



As civil society organisations, we will continue to work with citizens and all levels of government, through our projects and campaigns, to bring about a more openness in the UK. Will the UK Gov join us on the journey?

<https://www.opengovernment.org.uk/statement-by-uk-open-government-network-at-ogpcanada>  
#OGPCanada

### 3. Links to articles published by members/others

(please add links)

<https://medium.com/@Morchickit/from-enthusiasm-to-stagnation-the-tale-of-two-countries-ahead-of-the-ogp19-summit-85da318a3312>

(<https://www.opengovernment.org.uk/2019/05/14/uk-irm-researcher-reflects-on-the-uk-end-of-term-report-for-2016-18-nap/>)