



From mountain to sea

An Open Data Strategy for Aberdeenshire Council

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1 Introduction and Purpose

In the course of its day-to-day operations, Aberdeenshire Council creates, collects and uses a large amount of data. Some of that data is already made available externally – for example in the form of statutory public registers – however, it is now recognised that there are wider economic, social and environmental benefits from making such data more accessible and reusable by publishing it as *Open Data*.

The purpose of this Strategy is to outline the Council’s vision, objectives and implementation plan for Opening up its data, while also ensuring that effective safeguards to protect privacy are in place.

2 The Vision

In 2014 the Scottish Government Data Management Board set out a “[Data Vision for Scotland](#)” and following this lead Aberdeenshire Council proposes a vision in which:

- the key role of data to support and enhance public services is widely recognised throughout the Council;
- Aberdeenshire residents and service users are aware of, and can readily access, any *personal* data that is held about them by the Council;
- *non-personal* data held by Aberdeenshire Council is recognised as having wider benefits and the Council adopts an “open by default” approach so as to make such data readily accessible in open formats under suitable licences
- users of data published by the Council are engaged in ongoing dialogue to help ensure that data is being used effectively
- data quality is continuously improved through the promotion of best practices for ensuring accuracy and completeness in order to allow the data to be used with confidence

3 Definitions and the Wider Context

So what is Open Data? The [Open Data Institute](#) (ODI) defines Open Data as “data that anyone can access, use or share.” The ODI recognises a “Data Spectrum” as illustrated in Figure 1.

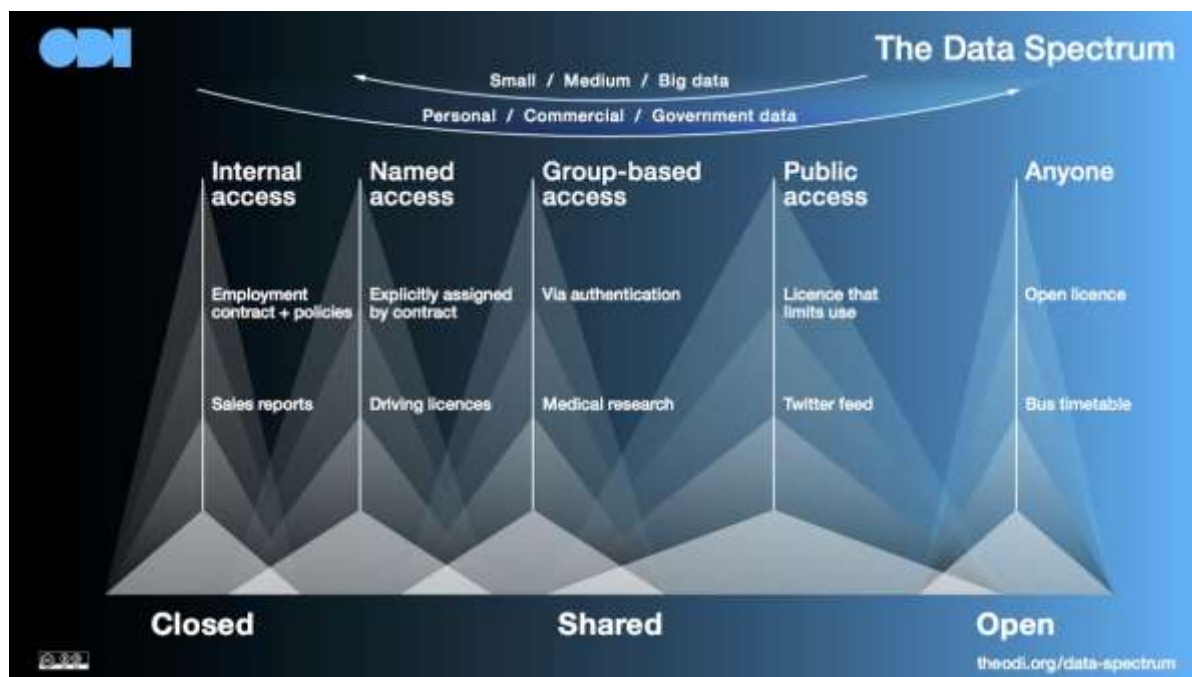


Figure 1 The Data Spectrum

Aberdeenshire Council holds information right across the data spectrum, however Open Data relates specifically to non-commercially sensitive and non-personal information. It is important to state that having an Open Data Strategy does not mean that *all* Council data will be made open. Sensitive Personal and commercial data will continue to be protected in accordance with relevant legislation and policies. The aim is to increase the amount of Council data that is Open rather than merely Shared.

4 Why should Aberdeenshire Council do this?

There are four main reasons why the Council should deliver more Open Data:

1. **To comply with existing EU, UK and Scottish legislation**, including:
 - [INSPIRE \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009](#)
 - [Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015](#)
 - [Freedom of Information Scotland Act 2002](#) (FOISA)
 - [Data Protection Act 1998](#) (DPA)
 - [Environmental Information \(Scotland\) Regulations 2004](#) (EIRs)
2. **To improve the accountability and transparency of public services.** If the Council makes more of its data open, this helps its customers and service users learn about and understand their local area. This increased transparency can also stimulate people to be more involved with and contribute to improving these services.

3. **To improve delivery of public services.** Open data is designed to be more accessible to encourage re-use by third parties, for example in the form of computer/smartphone apps that target specific use-cases. In this way, open data helps drive innovation and better ways of working, not only in the community at large, but within the Council itself.
4. **To comply with the Council's 5 year Digital Strategy – Innovate Aberdeenshire**

[Innovate Aberdeenshire](#) is the Council's 5-year digital strategy which defines how technology and digital services can support delivery of the Council's vision and enable improvements in service delivery and efficiency. "Our Information" is one of the 4 themes of the digital strategy and aims to ensure that the Council's information...

- is accurate, joined-up and secure to support integrated, efficient service delivery and enable partnership working;
- is managed effectively and stored efficiently to reduce processing and storage costs;
- is available as Open Data whenever possible, allowing information to be used, re-used and shared by all;
- is widely available and used to improve decision making

5 Principles

In 2013 the G8 members signed an Open Data Charter, which set out 5 Strategic Principles to support the release of data. These principles are:

- **Open Data by Default** – Opening up of public data should be part of normal business processes.
- **Quality and Quantity** – Open Data will be described by *metadata* to inform users about its quality and content.
- **Usable by All** - Data should be made available in formats that encourage re-use, with an open licence. Data will be made available free, with defined exceptions.
- **Releasing Data for Improved Governance** – Release of data which can support better public services and better inform and engage citizens.
- **Releasing Data for Innovation** – Promote the re-use of data for new products and services, both commercial and non-commercial, for the wider benefit of society.

6 The 5 Star Schema

Under the Scottish Government Open Data Strategy all public authorities should be aiming to release their data by 2017 in a format that meets the 3 star standard as defined in the [5 Star deployment scheme](#) for Open Data. To meet the 3 star standard the data must be available online, in non-proprietary machine readable format, with an open license permitting re-use.

7 Making it Happen – an Action Plan for Delivering Open Data

Aberdeenshire Council will adopt the 5 Open Data Principles above and make use of the Scottish Government [Open Data resource pack](#) to assist with the following programme of work:

- An **Open data publication plan** will identify what Council data will be made open, where, when and in what format it will be available. The plan will be a “living” document with the initial version available during December 2017
- **Data owners** will **assess the quality** of their data and take actions to ensure that it is accurate, current and comprehensive. For “live” datasets this will be an ongoing process rather than a one-off exercise. Data users will be able to report data errors and omissions;
- **Metadata** for each Open dataset being provided will be collated and published in order that users can easily discover the existence of Open data and learn about its content;
- ICT will ensure that data owners throughout the Council have access to appropriate **tools and technical support** to release data in formats that meet the universally recognised **3 star standard**. This is defined as structured, non-proprietary, machine-readable data formats such as CSV (comma separated values) and Extensible Mark-up Language (XML).
- The Council will seek to **engage with potential and actual users** of Open data to help identify and prioritise datasets to be released as Open data, and seek feedback from data users to help improve data quality and relevance. It is expected that this will be done via surveys and forms on the Council website.
- Wherever possible, the Council will use the [Open Government Licence \(OGL\)](#) for publishing Open data. Users
- **The Council will seek to make its Open Data available free-of-charge.** There may be a small number of exceptions where a charge is made e.g. to cover analysis or processing but in all cases any charging mechanisms will be transparent to users.

Corporate coordination and management of the Council’s Open Data programme will be led by the ICT Service and subject to oversight by the Digital Aberdeenshire Group. The ICT Service will provide leadership, technical support and guidance to assist data owners and custodians across the Council to establish and confirm that individual data sets can be released as Open Data in accordance with the Publication Plan.

The Open Data section of the [Aberdeenshire Council website](#) will be enhanced to provide more information on the Council’s Open Data programme and also provide a mechanism for user engagement.

Open Data will be made available on [data.gov.uk](#). Data that is in a spatial form will also be published on the [Improvement Service Spatial Hub](#).

Progress on the Open Data publication plan will be reviewed during Q2 2018 and reported to the Digital Aberdeenshire Group

8 Appendix A – Open Data Programme Roadmap

Activity	Target Completion Date	Responsibility
Open Data Strategy approval and publication	October 2017	Digital Aberdeenshire Group
Open Data Publication Plan approval and publication	November 2017	Digital Aberdeenshire Group
Open Data Strategy and publication plan awareness for Data owners	November 2017	ICT
Metadata collation and QA	Q1 2018	Data Owners
Open Data Publication	Q2 2018	Data Owners
Programme Review	Q3 2018	Digital Aberdeenshire Group