



Met Office data policy – POLOS

Introduction

This paper sets out the principles by which the Met Office trades in data (including information, software, etc.) In particular, it states that the Met Office:

- **Protects and exploits its Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)**, to ensure that it can operate in a commercial environment. All information generated or owned by the Met Office is subject to Crown copyright protection;
- **Observes the Information Fair Trading principles of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO)¹ of openness², transparency, fairness, compliance and challenge;**
- **Licenses the use of information rather than selling the information;**
- **Operates within legal constraints, including competition law, by not participating in any anti-competitive behaviour and not subsidising commercial activities from public funds;**
- **Seeks to make a profit through commercial activity and ensures a level playing field with its competitors.**

Charging principles are contained in a separate [Met Office Pricing Policy](#).

In addition, it sets out the principles by which the Met Office licences the use of data / information to help achieve its top level objectives. In particular to contribute to the following aspects of those objectives:

- make more weather information freely available to the public;
- increasingly make our basic data and information readily available to encourage growth in the private sector weather markets;
- demonstrate open and fair competition in the UK and Europe;
- act in a way that is transparent and compliant with Government legislation.

Legislative constraints and international framework

The Met Office is subject to a range of legislative and regulatory measures, including the Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Information Regulations and the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations. Like any other UK-based organisation, the Met Office is subject to UK and EC Competition Law and complies with the Competition Act – further information can be found in the [Met Office Pricing Policy](#). A framework for the exchange and licensing of data is provided by the [World Meteorological Organization \(WMO\)](#) and [The Economic Interest Grouping of the National Meteorological Services of the European Economic Area \(ECOMET\)](#).

¹ HMSO is now within The Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI). OPSI has a broad remit to advise on and regulate the operation of the re-use of public sector information. HMSO core activities include responsibility for the publication of legislation and the management of Crown copyright.

² Exceptions include Severe Weather Warnings. The Met Office is the authority for the issue of Severe Weather Warnings in the UK, as well as information covered by exemptions/exceptions under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations.

Data and product licensing, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Crown copyright

For information produced as part of its Public Task³, the Met Office intends to make available almost all information and to charge either no, or a small, licence fee for it. The Met Office does not 'sell' its data; rather, it licenses others to use them under certain terms and conditions. Permitted use is specified in a licence (normally non-exclusive) and the Met Office reserves the right to refuse to supply its data under certain conditions. The Met Office uses a consistent approach to charging and may apply the following:

- **licence fee** — charged for the right to re-use the data, product or information itself;
- **handling and delivery fee (or charge)** — made against the cost of the infrastructure to extract, compile and deliver the data, product or information to the licensee;
- **redistribution and / or broadcast licences** — levied for the onward distribution of meteorological information, as supplied, when redistribution and / or broadcast is permissible.

However, a significant volume of information has no licence fee for [academic and research](#) purposes — for more detail see the Met Office website under [Prices and Licences](#). Staff refer to the [Met Office Pricing Policy](#) when determining the fees to be charged.

Most of the Met Office IPR resides in copyright and, in particular, Crown copyright. The Met Office has a delegation from HMSO for management of Crown copyright.

Note: much of the material produced by the Met Office is based on, or includes, information which is not Crown copyright, e.g. information provided by other organisations. Use of such information must meet the licensing conditions agreed with the body which provided the information.

Support for the public task of other Government bodies

The Met Office, in its role as the UK National Meteorological Service, provides a range of non-competed services to other government departments, which account for the majority of Met Office revenues. Such services are generally priced on a cost-plus basis, with their use by the customer strictly limited to activities associated with the Public Task. The level of mark-up is calculated in accordance with the principles of the [Treasury Fees and Charges Guide](#)⁴.

Met Office commercial activity

General principles for commercial activity are set out in the [Met Office Pricing Policy](#) but, occasionally, there may be an exception for which staff will seek permission at a very early stage. Commercial output is available at charges that vary by product and method of delivery. More information can be found in the [Met Office Product Catalogue](#) or by contacting the [Met Office Customer Centre](#). Commercial products are licensed for specific non-exclusive use.

The Met Office as a commercial entity

The commercial arm of the Met Office uses data and products in accordance with the above data policy. An internal licensing charge is calculated and levied according to the data used in the commercial activity. This ensures that the Met Office operates in line with EU as well as UK competition law. The commercial area meets the full cost of its share of these infrastructure facilities and it can be demonstrated that there is no cross-subsidy from public funding to commercial activity.

³ The Met Office's Public Task is defined as all activities funded by the National Meteorological Programme and the Public Meteorological Service and includes the provision of the infrastructure and underlying capability, general UK weather forecasts, media scripts, shipping forecasts, inshore waters forecasts and weather warnings. Each Government body has its own definition of its public task, which includes, but is not limited to, its statutory responsibilities.

⁴ A link will be provided to the guidelines when the redrafted guidelines are published

Scientific co-operation

A large part of the Met Office's meteorological information is licensed through the British Atmospheric Data Centre (BADDC) free of charge, solely for academic and research projects; where a research project is defined as:

“Any project organised by a university, a scientific institute or similar (private or institutional) for non-commercial research purposes only. A necessary condition of the recognition of non-commercial purposes is that all the results obtained are openly available at delivery costs only, without any delay linked to commercial objectives, and that the research itself is submitted for open publication.”

The Met Office also shares data and research findings with other research organisations.
