



UK OPEN
GOVERNMENT
CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK

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The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
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9 April 2018

Dear The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP,

Commitment to open government

We write to you on the behalf of the UK Open Government Civil Society Network¹ to set out our enthusiasm to work with you again and progress on the open government agenda,² following the recent transfer of data policy and governance from the Cabinet Office to the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

As you know, the UK was a founding member of the global Open Government Partnership³ (OGP) in September 2011, and has played an active role in support of its development globally and in the UK. Consequently, and in line with the principles of the OGP, the UK Open Government Civil Society Network has worked with Government Ministers (including yourself previously) with the open government brief to make progress on issues around open data, transparency, public participation and digital engagement reforms.

Successfully working with you before on the 2016-18 UK Open Government Action Plan enabled the UK to demonstrate important leadership on a number of open government reforms, including:

- Committing to a public register of the beneficial ownership of overseas companies owning UK property and bidding for government contracts;
- Improving extractive industry payment and revenue transparency;
- Adopting the Open Contracting Data Standard (led by Crown Commercial Service), and continuing to pursue transparency of government grants in line with the 360 Giving standard;
- Developing and publishing a new Anti-Corruption Strategy

¹ The UK Open Government Civil Society Network <http://www.opengovernment.org.uk/>

² Open government is the simple but powerful idea that governments and institutions work better for citizens when they are transparent, engaging and accountable <https://www.opengovernment.org.uk/about/>

³ The Open Government Partnership (OGP) <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/>

We are eager to build upon previous reforms and introduce new commitments to advance open government as part of the fourth Open Government Action Plan (2018-20). This is also a unique opportunity for ambitious open government reform as the UK leaves the European Union halfway through this new plan.

With actions already underway for developing the 2018-20 action plan, there is not much time left if it is to be launched at the OGP Global Summit in Georgia in July, as planned.

To that end, we ask that you:

1. Meet the Steering Group of the UK Open Government Network as soon as possible to discuss the development of the 2018-20 UK Open Government Action Plan;
2. Encourage your ministerial colleagues across all Whitehall departments to engage with developing the UK's 2018-20 action plan;
3. Represent the UK at the Open Government Partnership Global Summit in Tbilisi, Georgia, in July.

We look forward to working with you, your ministerial colleagues and civil servants to progress open government reform in the UK and globally.

Yours sincerely,

Colm Burns, Northern Ireland Open Government Network

Gavin Freeguard, Institute for Government

Jess Blair, Electoral Reform Society and Welsh Open Government Network

Lucy McTernan, Scotland Open Government Network

Michelle Brook, The Democratic Society

Rachel Davies Teka, Transparency International UK

Tim Davies, Practical Participation

Tim Hughes, Involve