

SCROL – DISSEMINATION OF 2001 CENSUS OUTPUT

1 Introduction

1.1 This paper gives a brief update on the SCROL project and, in particular the SCROL pilot. SCAG paper 01(10) introduced the project and outlined plans for a pilot project to explore possible methods for delivering results from the 2001 Census electronically, both over the internet and via CD. The recent output roadshows further outlined our proposals for dissemination through the pilot and demonstrated the functionality that would be available.

1.2 Members are asked to note the paper and, in particular:

- **Note the delay to the delivery of the pilot reported in para 2.6**
- **Comment on the release arrangements outlined in para 2.7 and whether the approach proposed is satisfactory.**

2 SCROL Pilot

Background

2.1 The pilot was initiated in July with the following aims:

- To help us gain a better understanding of the features that could be incorporated in an on-line dissemination service;
- To give us a better idea of the costs and technical issues which might be involved in the dissemination of the products from the 2001 Census;
- To understand how the interface with our current computer systems might operate;
- What scalability is involved the solution in terms of expanding the service to take account of different statistics, geographies or metadata;
- And, to develop our in-house expertise to allow us to carry on with the development and seek advice on what external assistance might be necessary.

2.2 The contract to develop the pilot was won by a consortium from GeoWise and Space Time Research (STR). GeoWise is an Edinburgh based company specialising in the delivery of geographic solutions to meet business requirements. It has a proven track record in the development of innovative web-based applications for location-based information. STR is a software development company, based in Melbourne Australia, which has developed a unique suite of software for high performance cross-tabulation and output dissemination. Their SuperSTAR software is currently used by the UK Census Offices and many other statistical offices around the world.

What will the pilot deliver?

2.3 The pilot is aimed at delivering Census output to all types of Census user through a web site and CD application. The web site will enable the user to obtain quick, summary statistics for an area along with its associated metadata. For users requiring more detailed statistics (CAS or Standard Table) the user will be able to select a table from a topic list and the geography required from a list or via an interactive map. Once selected the user will be able to manipulate and reshape the table (change formatting and alter the variable classifications but keeping to the limits predefined in the Census output), perform simple calculations (totals,

percentages), chart the data, create thematic maps, download the table for use in other packages and view the associated metadata describing that particular table.

2.4 The CD is for users who wish to look at a combination of tables and geographies locally. Users will not be able to select geography through an interactive map, but they will be able to undertake extended table manipulation, such as regrouping classifications or areas, reshape the table, compute derived variables, create charts and thematic maps. In addition, the user will have access to the metadata describing the tables, the ability to export the data for use in other software and the ability to create commissioned tables and submit them to GROS for populating, disclosure permitting.

2.5 The data included within the pilot is modified 1991 Census output (modified for disclosure control purposes) presented in 2001 table outlines and will therefore not match published output from the 1991 SAS and LBS tables. It is also worth noting that in the final solution for 2001 Census output, the functionality provided in both the web site and the CD, particularly the functionality of table manipulation, will not allow users to obtain any additional data or perform any additional cross-tabulations which has not been predefined in the Census Area Statistics.

Progress

2.6 The development of the pilot is behind schedule and is now planned for release at the end of November, instead of the end of October as originally planned. The delay is down to additional functionality which has been included outwith the original pilot specification, some difficulties in securing software and extended time taken sorting out issues with the test data. However, both applications (CD and Web site) are now fully functional and the remaining development time will focus on improving the usability of the site, such as implementing help files and tutorials, improving navigation, and developing user evaluation forums.

2.7 As announced at the roadshows, users will be informed of the web site address. For the CD, users are asked to register their interest in receiving a copy for evaluation with Simon Hazlewood of GROS Customer Services on 0131 314 4254 or by email at simon.hazlewood@gro-scotland.gov.uk. **However, it may be possible to provide users with early access to the site or the first prototype CD within the next week while GROS are undertaking some quality assurance of the applications and preparing supporting documentation. Members of PAMS are asked to comment on whether early access to prototype applications is something that is required at the PAMS meeting on 14 November or if they are content to wait for the finished pilot.**

2.8 Users will be asked to provide feedback on the applications (CD and web site) via an evaluation form and the on-line discussion forum. GROS is also considering more detailed evaluation of the applications through small facilitated focus groups. User feedback will help GROS to decide on whether the pilot broadly meets user requirements and inform the specification for developments of the final solution.