RE: Freedom of Information Request – AI Readiness in the UK Public Sector

From Information – Boundary Commission for England <information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk>

Date Tue 11/02/2025 16:11

To ████████████████████████████████████

Dear ███

BCE-FOI-2025-2

Thank you for your email request for information to the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) on 29 January, which has been considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000.

In your request for information you asked:

<u>AI Strategy and Planning</u>

1. To what extent does your department have a clearly defined and documented AI strategy? Please select one of the following options that applies.
   A. No AI strategy in place.
   B. Initial discussions or ideas about AI, but no concrete plan.
   C. A basic AI strategy is in development or has been drafted.
   D. A well-defined AI strategy is in place, but implementation is in the early stages.
   E. The AI strategy is being actively implemented with measurable progress.
2. A fully defined and implemented AI strategy is driving significant impact.
   To what extent does your AI strategy or goals align with the AI opportunities action plan? Please select one of the following options that applies.
   A. Unaware of the AI opportunities action plan or no attempt to align with it.
   B. General awareness of the AI opportunities action plan, but no specific efforts to align.
   C. Some aspects of the AI strategy or goals are aligned with the AI opportunities action plan.
   D. Conscious effort made to align the AI strategy with the key principles and directions of the AI opportunities action plan.
   E. Strong alignment between the AI strategy or goals and the AI opportunities action plan, with clear connections and shared objectives.
   F. AI strategy or goals are fully integrated with the AI opportunities action plan, contributing directly to its successful implementation.
3. What is the likelihood that your department's AI strategy will be fully implemented within the next two years? Please select one of the following options that applies.
   A. Significant obstacles and uncertainties make full implementation unlikely in the next two years.
   B. Implementation is in progress but faces challenges that may delay completion.
   C. Moderate confidence in achieving full implementation within the timeframe.
   D. High likelihood of full implementation, with most key elements in place.
   E. Almost certain to achieve full implementation within the next two years.

4. How confident is your department that current AI governance structures are adequate for managing AI risks? Please select one of the following options that applies.
   A. No AI governance structures in place or serious concerns about their adequacy.
   B. Limited AI governance in place, with significant gaps and areas for improvement.
   C. Moderate confidence in current AI governance, but some areas of uncertainty remain.
   D. Generally confident in the adequacy of AI governance structures to manage most risks.
   E. Strong confidence in AI governance, with robust processes and oversight in place.

F. Extremely confident that AI governance structures can effectively manage all foreseeable AI risks.
5. What percentage of your department's total budget is allocated to AI-related projects this fiscal year? How much is this?
6. How does your department or agency assess the economic impact or cost-effectiveness of AI technologies? Please select one of the following options that applies and provide any relevant data or reports on AI's economic benefits.
    A. No formal assessment: No systematic approach to evaluating the economic impact of AI.
    B. Qualitative assessment: Relies on anecdotal evidence, case studies, or expert opinions to assess the impact of AI.
    C. Quantitative assessment: Uses metrics, data analysis, and modelling to measure the economic benefits and costs of AI.
    D. Comprehensive evaluation: Includes both qualitative and quantitative assessments, considering a wide range of economic factors and potential impacts.

AI Deployment and Use Cases
7. What is your department's current stage of AI deployment? Please select one of the following options that applies.
    A. No AI use cases.
    B. Exploring opportunities
    C. Planning for at least one AI use case.
    D. Piloting at least one AI use case.
    E. At least one AI use case is fully deployed.
    F. Multiple AI use cases fully deployed.
8. For your most significant AI use case, how confident are you that the expected benefits will be realised? Please select one of the following options that applies.
    A. No clear expectations of benefits or serious doubts about achieving them.
    B. Some anticipated benefits, but significant uncertainty about their realisation.
    C. Moderate confidence in achieving some of the expected benefits.
    D. Confident that most of the expected benefits will be realised.
    E. Strong confidence that the AI use case will deliver significant benefits.
    F. Extremely confident that the AI use case will fully achieve or exceed its intended benefits.

Risk Management and Ethics
9. How thoroughly has your department assessed the risks associated with AI deployment? Please select one of the following options that applies.
    A. No formal risk assessment conducted for AI deployment.
    B. Initial discussions about AI risks, but no systematic assessment.
    C. Some areas of AI risk have been assessed, but gaps remain.
    D. A moderate risk assessment has been conducted, covering key areas.
    E. A comprehensive risk assessment is in place, addressing a wide range of potential risks.
    F. A thorough and ongoing risk assessment process is embedded in AI development and deployment.
10. How confident are you that your department is compliant with relevant data protection laws when using AI? Please select one of the following options that applies.
    A. Significant concerns about compliance with data protection laws.
    B. Limited understanding of data protection requirements for AI.
    C. Some measures in place to ensure compliance, but gaps may exist.
    D. Reasonably confident in compliance with data protection laws.
    E. Strong confidence in data protection compliance, with robust processes in place.
    F. Fully confident in compliance with all relevant data protection laws and regulations.
11. How well does your department ensure transparency in the use of AI in public services? Please select one of the following options that applies.
    A. No efforts to ensure transparency in AI use.
    B. Limited information provided to the public about AI systems.

C. Some transparency measures in place, but room for improvement.
D. Reasonable transparency in AI use, with public information available.
E. Strong commitment to transparency, with clear communication about AI systems.
F. Full transparency in AI practices, including open data and explainable AI.

Data Residency and Sovereign Infrastructure

12. How does your department or public body ensure that its data storage complies with UK sovereignty and data residency requirements? Please outline any policies or regulations guiding data storage within UK borders.
13. Can you provide the proportion of data stored within UK-based infrastructure versus foreign cloud services (e.g., US-based providers) within your department/agency?
14. What measures are in place to ensure that your data storage solutions meet national security standards? Please provide details of relevant frameworks or protocols currently implemented.

Energy Consumption and Efficiency of AI

15. What is the estimated carbon footprint of your department or agency's AI operations (e.g., training, deployment) over the past year? Please include energy consumption figures if available.
16. How do you track the energy usage of AI workloads, and are there any reporting mechanisms in place for sustainability goals? Please provide relevant metrics or guidelines.

Data and Infrastructure

17. How would you rate the quality of data used for your AI systems? Please select one of the following options that applies.
    A. Data quality is poor and unreliable.
    B. Data quality is a concern, with significant issues.
    C. Data quality is adequate but could be improved.
    D. Good data quality with regular validation processes.
    E. High data quality with robust quality assurance measures.
    F. Excellent data quality with continuous validation and improvement.
18. What is the level of confidence in your department's digital infrastructure's ability to support current and future AI initiatives? Please select one of the following options that applies.
    A. Serious concerns about the infrastructure's ability to support AI.
    B. Infrastructure limitations may hinder AI initiatives.
    C. Moderate confidence in the infrastructure's capacity for AI.
    D. Confident that the infrastructure can adequately support current and near-term AI needs.
    E. Strong confidence in the infrastructure's ability to support ambitious AI projects.
    F. Extremely confident that the infrastructure is future-proof and ready for any AI challenge.☐
19. Does your department or agency currently use a hybrid infrastructure (i.e., a mix of on-premises and cloud services) for its digital operations, including AI applications? Please specify the proportion of services hosted on each type of infrastructure.
20. What factors influence your department's decision-making process when choosing between public cloud, private cloud, or on-premises infrastructure for AI-related projects or services?
21. What plans or initiatives are in place to ensure your department's digital infrastructure is scalable enough to meet future demands for AI-powered services or technologies over the next 5–10 years?
22. How does your department or agency ensure the quality of data used in AI-driven projects or services? Please provide any metrics, guidelines, or standards employed for data validation.

Skills and Training

23. How effectively is your department upskilling employees to use AI? Please select one of the following options that applies.
    A. No upskilling initiatives in place for AI.
    B. Limited training available, with little focus on AI skills development.
    C. Some training programs offered, but not comprehensive.
    D. Effective upskilling programs are in place, providing employees with essential AI skills.

   E. A strong focus on AI skills development, with comprehensive training and support.

   F. A culture of continuous learning and development, ensuring employees are equipped for the AI-powered future.

 24. Will you be relying on in-house skills for AI strategy development and implementation or seeking third-party services/consultancy?

Future Ambitions

 25. How confident are you that your department will reach its AI ambitions? Please select one of the following options that applies.

   A. Significant doubts about achieving AI ambitions.

   B. Low confidence in reaching AI goals.

   C. Moderate confidence in achieving some AI ambitions.

   D. Confident in achieving most AI goals.

   E. Strong confidence in reaching AI ambitions, with clear plans in place.

   F. Extremely confident in achieving and exceeding AI ambitions.

Our response:

The Commission is largely dormant following the conclusion of the 2023 Review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries. The next review is currently planned to begin in 2029 and report in 2031. We are not engaged in any AI-related activities. Many of the possible responses in your survey were not applicable to our circumstances, and I have instead provided our responses here.

1. No AI strategy in place.
2. Unaware of the AI opportunities action plan or no attempt to align with it.
3. No information held.
4. This calls for an assessment which the Commission has not carried out.
5. We have no budget allocated to AI-related projects.
6. No information held.
7. No AI use cases.
8. This calls for an assessment which the Commission has not carried out.
9. No formal risk assessment conducted for AI deployment.
10. This calls for an assessment which the Commission has not carried out.
11. This calls for an assessment which the Commission has not carried out.
12. Our data is stored on the systems of our sponsor department, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We have no specific policies relating to data storage within UK borders in addition to any they might apply.
13. No information held.
14. No information held.
15. Our carbon footprint for AI-operations is zero.
16. We do not track our energy usage.
17. We have no AI systems, and hence no data is used in such systems.
18. This calls for an assessment which the Commission has not carried out.
19. The Commission's infrastructure is provided by our sponsor department. We hold no information on the proportion that is on-premises or cloud based.
20. In the absence of any AI-related services or technologies, we have no plans or initiatives.
21. This calls for an assessment which the Commission has not carried out.
22. We have no AI-driven projects or services.
23. No upskilling initiatives in place for AI.
24. No information held.
25. This calls for an assessment which the Commission has not carried out.

Under the provisions of the FOIA , if you are dissatisfied with the response provided you may wish to ask for an internal review. If this situation arises you should write to:
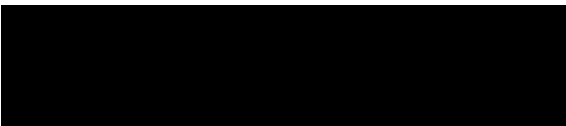
The Acting Secretary

Boundary Commission for England

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Email: information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk

If you are not content with our response following an internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the BCE. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Office of the Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Kind regards

From: ███████████████████████████████████
Sent: 29 January 2025 17:26
To: Information - Boundary Commission for England <information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk>
Subject: Freedom of Information Request - AI Readiness in the UK Public Sector

You don't often get email from ████████████████   Learn why this is important
Hi there,

We are writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We are conducting research into the UK public sector's readiness to harness the opportunities presented by artificial intelligence (AI), particularly in light of the government's AI Opportunities Action Plan.

Our research aims to understand the current state of AI adoption, infrastructure, and skills development within UK public sector departments and agencies. We are particularly interested in exploring:

- **AI Strategies and Implementation:** The existence and implementation of AI strategies aligned with the national action plan.

- **Data and Infrastructure:** The availability of robust data and infrastructure to support AI initiatives, including considerations around data residency, sovereignty, and security.

- **Risk Management and Ethics:** Measures in place to mitigate risks associated with AI, including bias, data protection, and transparency.

- **Skills and Training:** Efforts to upskill the public sector workforce to effectively utilise AI technologies.

We are producing educational documentary material aimed at informing and supporting the UK public sector in its AI journey. As part of our qualitative research, we are keen to gather diverse perspectives and insights. If anyone within your department would be interested in discussing these topics further, we would be delighted to arrange a conversation.

Please select the options in the following survey that most closely align with your organisation. Our preference is responses via the following link for data analysis reasons.

FOI REQUEST LINK: ███

However, we have also attached the raw questions in word document format.

We would appreciate it if you could provide the requested information by **26/02/2025**.

If you need any clarification on the questions, please let us know.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Best,

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