

A Review of Attitudes towards Sharing Geotechnical Data and the use of Geospatial Data Portals in Hong Kong and the U.K.: Lessons for Europe.

Ashley M. Patton

British Geological Survey, Cardiff, United Kingdom (ashleyp@bgs.ac.uk)

Reusing existing subsurface data can greatly cut the time and financial costs of site investigations, and reduce uncertainty regarding ground conditions that can result in delays and overspend. In Hong Kong SAR it is common practice for consultancies to deposit records in the form of factual and interpretive reports, borehole logs and laboratory test data with the Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO) who make this information openly available to access for future investigative works. In addition to these deposits, other datasets available at GEO include, amongst others, landslide records, aerial photographs and as-built records. These archives are the first source of information about development sites in Hong Kong and no investigation takes place without a thorough desk study. Increasingly these data are digital, and can be accessed through a GIS-based online portal.

In the U.K. the British Geological Survey (BGS) acts as a custodian for geoscience data deposited by the public and private sectors on a voluntary basis, and encourages organisations to make their data publicly available through the BGS online data portals. The facility to deposit digital data via the BGS website has recently been launched and should increase uptake of data sharing in the U.K. as it becomes easier for users to batch upload records digitally. Issues regarding data ownership and confidentiality are being overcome by the establishment, in some cities, of knowledge exchange networks where members who sign up to view data are expected under the terms of membership to deposit data. This has received backing from local government in some areas. The U.K. may not have the density of existing data that Hong Kong has but as knowledge exchange gathers momentum the BGS datasets are expected to grow rapidly.

In Europe there appears to be a reluctance to share data. However, escalating demand for land, greater re-development of brownfield sites and an ever-growing need to ensure future construction and infrastructure projects are sustainable and compliant with European environmental targets means reusing data may have a role to play in increased subsurface knowledge, the reduction of unforeseen ground conditions and ultimately saving money. Data in .ags format is particularly favourable due to its uniform nature.

First-hand experience of the approach towards disseminating geospatial data in Hong Kong and the U.K. will be presented, examining the difference in attitudes regarding data sharing in the two territories, and highlighting how it benefits ground investigations and geohazard assessment with the hope that Europe can learn lessons for the future and change old habits. The different systems of data sharing used in Hong Kong and the U.K. will be discussed, and their strengths and weaknesses evaluated with the aim of fostering a methodology for sharing geoscience data within Europe that benefits from the combined successes of both approaches and builds upon existing expertise.