Making Open Data Real

It all depends on what you mean by "Open", Minister

In August 2011 Cabinet Office launched a new consultation Making Open Data Real (MODR) and the accompanying publicity all seemed good. We were particularly impressed by the intent expressed by the Minister for the Cabinet Office both in the forward to the consultation and in a radio programme discussing the initiative in which he acknowledged that MODR was about “letting go” and that the outcome was unpredictable but would lead to greater transparency and accountability.

So, that was the headline, what about the detail?

Having considered the underpinning process, apparently relevant related government policies and other potentially relevant but seemingly unaddressed material in our response we expressed concern that the consultation is fundamentally flawed from the outset

The definition of open data is flaky, it identifies a need for open standards despite there being no government definition of an open standard nor any progress on plans to create one. The consultation is also silent on interoperability.

The absence of an Impact Assessment together with the implicit plans to legislate further illustrate the general sense of lack of openness, governance and accountability

We've written separately to Cabinet Office officials about the apparent failure of the government ICT strategy to consider the direct and indirect market effects of public sector decisions and purchasing (institutional and monopsonistic) effects. And then there's the Public Data Corporation which others critique more eloquently.

Our full response to the consultation is downloadable here.