

VISUALISING LANDVALUESCAPE

“The Concept in a British Context”

Delphi Group: Round Two Analysis

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www.landvaluescape.org November 2004, as part of his PhD.

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Background

This document presents an analysis of the responses by a specially convened ‘Delphi Group’ of experts and stakeholders, to the second questionnaire on the subject of Value Maps, sent out to them in April 2004 (Vickers 2004a¹). The composition of the full Group of 29 is analysed in a separate document (Vickers 2004b²), the responses to Round One in Vickers (2004c³) and the Delphi Process itself is described in a draft chapter for the author’s PhD dissertation (Vickers 2004d⁴).

The questionnaire ‘Q2’ re-presented most of the original 28 ‘issues’ around the subject to the Group, in order of first round average ‘scores’ and with a few extra Issues suggested by participants, for them to be scored again in four ‘dimensions’: relevance, desirability, feasibility and confidence. This last dimension was used to give weighting to the scores by each participant before a Group score was produced.

Preceding this part of Q2 was a section on draft Policy Options (POs) derived by the author from analysis of Round One responses. A short narrative to each PO explained how it had been arrived at. Participants were asked to score the Desirability of each of seven POs (in one case the Feasibility) and given space to comment on it. They were also asked to re-consider their estimate of when “Britain will have been value mapped by” and to suggest other Policy Options.

The results of Round Two were to have been combined with those from another survey, of overseas exponents and users (actual or prospective) of Value Maps, which was issued to several hundred national representatives of four Commissions of the Federation Internationale Geometrique (World Congress of Surveyors – FIG) in July by the FIG Bureau (Vickers 2004e⁵). This sought to gain an understanding of the conditions under which value mapping develops in other countries, its costs and perceived benefits, which would be communicated to the UK Delphi Group in a third and final Round of interaction at the end of 2004. However only five completed survey forms have been received.

A third strand of work consists of developing and presenting a demonstrator value map model of an area of Oxfordshire, in conjunction with the local authorities there who are sponsoring a study of land value taxation (LVT). The results of this study were presented to a conference in Oxford on 16 September (Waterfront 2004) and the author issued a questionnaire to delegates asking for their views on the value maps to which they were exposed at this conference, also to the discussion there on related subjects, including LVT. Analysis of this feedback is included below.

A series of one-to-one meetings or semi-structured interviews, with key stakeholders in UK Value Maps most of whom are Delphi Group members, is also being undertaken by the author during the latter half of 2004, to probe further into the issues and policy options surrounding the topic. Further presentations to groups of property industry stakeholders are also planned, when the Oxfordshire LVT Trial has completed production of a landvaluescape model.

¹ The Round Two form is at <http://www.landvaluescape.org/archives/000013.html>

² <http://www.landvaluescape.org/archives/000011.html>

³ <http://www.landvaluescape.org/archives/000012.html>

⁴ Not revised since March 2004.

⁵ <http://www.landvaluescape.org/archives/000017.html>

All these activities constitute the research that will conclude with the preparation of a dissertation in early 2005. They are not fully written up here but references are made to them.

Only 23 of the 29 original Delphi Group responded to Round Two, despite the deadline for reply being extended over two months to the end of July. Round One analysis has been re-worked to exclude the six ‘drop-outs’ but the revised Group scores are in no case more than 0.2 different for any Issues. The drop-outs are spread across all stakeholder groups, levels of expertise and opinion towards LVT. However the only representative of what is increasingly seen as a key stakeholder group – insurers – has dropped out of the Group. It is hoped that some drop-outs will re-join the Group for Round Three.

The analysis of Round Two is in two main parts: Policy Options and Issues. An Excel spreadsheet (Mon2public.xls) with the full ‘raw’ responses and analysis on both aspects is available from the author or his website. First though a good indication of how Group members were influenced by each other’s Round One responses is to look at whether it changed their view of when UK value mapping might occur.

Review of when “Britain will have been Value Mapped”.

The mean Round **One** answer from the 15 of those remaining after Round Two who responded in Round One was 2014. The same 15 people had the same **mean** answer in Round Two, however the spread of answers was significantly less: several ‘pessimists’ had become much less pessimistic and a greater number of ‘optimists’ had become a little less optimistic. The most optimistic first time (45) had said ‘2006’ but now said ‘2010’, whereas the most pessimistic (22) had gone from 2050 to 2030, which was still the furthest out. 2008 is now the earliest at which anyone expects Value Mapping of Britain, although one person (49) queried whether ‘Britain’ meant ‘UK’ or one of its constituent nations, because “*some areas will be mapped much earlier*” (than 2020, he thought).

There are now only four members of the Group who expect Value Mapping to be completed in the next Parliament, assuming another General Election before 2010. However most of those who responded to the question (ten people out of 16) expect it to happen within ten years, implying that a decision to commence the series of POs that lead to it will be taken in the next Parliament.

Therefore this single indicator shows that the Delphi Process tends to moderate extreme views but not to change the overall median view. It is an educative process for all concerned but not one that necessarily stimulates radical or innovative thought. However it may help achieve consensus on a difficult and complex policy issue.

Analysis of Policy Options

The POs were presented in a logical order and responses are discussed here in the same order. The Group scores varied considerably between POs, from 2.87 (PO7) to 4.33 (PO5) where 3 represents 'no opinion', anything less is disagreement and anything more is agreement. Although '1' was supposed to be the lowest possible score and '5' the highest, in two cases respondents felt so strongly opposed to a PO that they scored it zero or minus! The zero was retained but the minus score was raised to zero.

It should be noted that the POs inter-relate to some degree, so that if one PO is rejected and another accepted it may mean that the acceptable PO becomes non-feasible. This will be discussed as applicable. However at this stage POs are mainly analysed in isolation: production of a coherent Policy Plan is for Round Three, introduced at the end of this document.

Comments by Delphi Group members are given anonymously, as required by the Privacy Agreement made with participants. The quotes can be identified by the respondent number, given in brackets after each quote. Stakeholder group affiliation and self-assessed expertise in the relevant subject areas, which were given and used in Round One, have not yet been used in the analysis at this stage. The 'generic description' column in the spreadsheet Mon2public.xls gives clues as to who the respondents are.

PO1: Government to support existing LVT ‘desk studies’ by others, specifically by allowing free access to confidential publicly held property value data in trial areas.

It was seen as implicit in the Round One analysis that development of Value Mapping in the UK is almost inevitably linked to the property tax reform debate: not necessarily to introduction of LVT but at least to a ‘not unfavourable disposition by Government towards its consideration’. No respondents disputed this assumption⁶, although one would prefer to see LVT as just one of a range of potential property tax reforms that need to be studied.

Although two responses were strongly against the idea, even one of these appeared to accept that breach of the confidentiality of data supplied for tax purposes to VOA could be allowed if it was for tax research:

“There are exceptions to this of course but by and large these are restricted to the gathering of tax and distribution of benefits.” (4)

This respondent regards valuation data as ‘personal’, whereas the processed data that would be all that researchers need to access is by then de-personalised and should be regarded as an attribute of the property, not of the owner or occupier⁷. The use of the data is clearly related to ‘gathering of tax and distribution of benefits’, hence ought to be allowable if the personal sources are protected. As several respondents pointed out, researchers would need to sign a confidentiality agreement if it was felt that there was potential for them to access personal data, albeit that it should not be necessary for the purpose of the research: it might be impractical⁸ to give access to de-personalised data.

More than half the scores for this PO were ‘4’ and the average score was 3.78, with only three responses scoring ‘2’ or less. These three respondents all expressed concern about the potential loss of confidentiality. With several others, they stated that ‘free’ should not mean ‘unrestricted’ but should be limited to genuine research that Government supported. A typical view was:

“I would agree to disclosure to selective groups that have satisfied stringent criteria and have signed non-disclosure agreements.” (22)

The overwhelming majority view was that, with this proviso, Government should indeed actively support existing studies of LVT and even initiate its own studies, because it is important to have an evidence base before any tax reform policy proposals reach White Paper stage.

Respondents gave some evidence that the problem with access to data held by VOA is not just legal but to some extent is technical:-

⁶ Several dispute the benefits of LVT, as will be seen from their comments.

⁷ In the same way census data is, once processed, not giving users the attributes of the individuals who completed their census forms but of the neighbourhoods they live in. The census users have no interest in individuals, nor would users of value maps be interested in ownership or occupation. Value of property is independent of who owns or occupies it.

⁸ For two reasons:

- a) Expense. The data may be held by VOA in such a way that the personal attributes cannot be removed – or can be implied even if they are removed – and it would cost too much to devise ways of making them anonymous.
- b) Legality. The Statute under which the information is collected may explicitly prevent its use for the purpose of a particular research project. Changing the law is always possible but might be very expensive and take too long.

“The whole issue of developing tools that give information that can be utilised to achieve policy objectives, e.g. affordable housing, is important and the door is open to explore different options. (3)”

Therefore even assuming the will to proceed exists, the technical ability to do so cannot be taken for granted. The processes for collecting publicly held data largely pre-date the computer age and still tend to be devised without consideration given to secondary uses, however beneficial these might potentially be.

Even where a highly topical and important secondary research area is identified and recognised by Government, as is the case of the Barker (2004) proposals for taxing ‘*the unearned increment in land values*’ by way of a one-off tax on award of planning permission, it is unlikely that the Chancellor’s use of the word ‘*study*’, in the quote (Brown 2004) given in Vickers (2004a, 4⁹) meant use of VOA valuation data. Yet such studies were supported by the Delphi Group:

“It is essential for Government to support or even allow research into local taxation alternatives in a range of diverse (not just existing) trial geographical areas. Access to confidential data is, of course, crucial for such research to materialise.” (50)

and

“I feel this is important to re-assure both politicians and the public about the consequences of LVT. Without more extensive trials the debate is always going to tend towards the theoretical. (14)

Some respondents indicated they were unsure whether the PO meant new studies should be commissioned as well as the existing ones, if so should they be in different areas and/or of policies other than LVT. All such possibilities are covered: ‘Government support’ can come directly or indirectly, for example through Research Council funding as well as through selective relaxation of controls on access, or provision of data without charge where it would normally have to be paid for (e.g. to HMLR or OS). However the main barrier is legal and the author feels that, if this were to be removed, external funding could be secured for these and other research projects from within the UK, instead of bizarrely having to rely on the American Lincoln Institute as at present¹⁰.

The issue of VOA’s data quality, consistency and fitness for purpose for LVT was raised by one respondent (48). These are among the key issues that research needs to address.

⁹ Repeated here, with ‘study’ emboldened by this author:

*“While the business rate sets a tax on developed properties, the Barker Report states that there is none on the unearned increment in land values when undeveloped land is granted planning permission. Because this is a long-term issue for both housing and [economic] stability, the way forward is not only to consult widely but to see whether a long term consensus can be agreed. So I hope that over the next year all parties will **study** the Barker proposal and it must be in the interests of the whole country to see whether we can forge a shared approach that would safeguard our environment, lead to more affordable housing and at the same time keep interest rates as low as possible and contribute to the greater economic stability of Britain.” (Brown 2004)*

Note that the ‘unearned increment’ accrues also to land **near** that granted planning permission. The Barker proposal will do nothing to collect this.

¹⁰ This author and his colleagues at Kingston University and elsewhere have received over \$300,000 since 1997 for research relating to LVT **in UK**. Meanwhile they have received only £10,000 from private UK sources and none from the public sector, apart from in-kind support.

PO2: Enabling legislation, possibly based on the BIDs section of the 2003 Local Government Bill, to allow trials of LVT in a range of areas.

The Group scored this barely more than neutral at 3.13. There was a feeling that PO1 needs to be tested before committing to even trials of LVT: there is more scope for desk studies than some like to think. However the spread of scores was significantly greater than with PO1, indicating that some people feel that desk studies alone are fairly pointless and researchers need to be able to model the feedback effects of LVT into their studies early on.

Among the thought-provoking range of views expressed are these, all showing scepticism about the desirability of ‘piloting’ any new tax, because of potential injustice and/or political reality:-

“I have always understood that it is not possible to pilot a tax.” (3)

In a sense this is true, in that for those subjected to the pilot, the financial effect is permanent: no Government will refund the ‘pilot’ sums levied if the pilot proves unworkable! As another put it:

“This is a fundamental misunderstanding of both the way most politicians think and of the way that they tax. If experimented with alongside existing property tax with little protest the LVT and the property tax would stay. I am still waiting for Mr Pitt to repeal the temporary income tax that he introduced to pay for the Napoleonic wars for example!” (4)

A new tax can be ‘temporary’ and later revoked, amended or consolidated. The word ‘pilot’ is possibly inappropriate, although schemes that involve charges being levied have been trialled in the past (utility companies being charged for road openings by time and lane length, for example) without demur.

“If taxes are actually to be raised on some people by this means then this is a recipe for social injustice. Anyone living in Scotland will tell you that experimenting on people is a recipe for hatred; Mrs. Thatcher’s experiment with the poll tax wiped the Conservatives out in Scotland. By all means do a dummy study and compare what people would have had to pay with what they are paying now but ONLY introduce the system when it applies to EVERYBODY. Anything else will be socially divisive... Making some people guinea pigs and not others would be grossly unfair and politically damaging. (12)

This shows a misunderstanding of the effect of devolution and of the difference between ‘enabling’ and ‘imposing’. The Poll Tax was ‘piloted’ in/on Scotland not long after the UK Government had refused devolution there and without either democratic consultation or technical research. The BIDs legislation and any pilots of LVT suggested here would only result in tax reform for people whose directly elected representatives at the appropriate level opted for it, presumably after some considerable research and consultation. Such people would no more be ‘guinea pigs’ than voters are to any new Government whose policies they do not fully support. A ‘dummy study’ simply cannot adequately emulate the economic consequences of LVT, many of which may be unintended and unforeseeable, whether good or bad.

The length of any LVT pilots is a more serious issue, as is the long-term aspiration for LVT of any Government proposing it.

“Trials would need to last several years to test impact.” (43)

and

“I agree, but it is likely to be important to ensure that the legislation only applies to trialling LVT. If this is not clear it may risk being seen as getting LVT in 'by the back door'.” (14)

Government should be honest about its intentions. Presumably LVT would only be piloted because a Government is favourably inclined towards it and has said so publicly through wide-ranging debate. As (16) put it:-

“The timing of the introduction of such enabling legislation needs to be politically very sensitive. Equally as important, the reasons for the possible introduction of such valuations (and implications) need to be explained very well and discussed in open forums to avoid a backlash to the concept.”

The trials should be clearly seen as part of that debate. The best way to ensure this is by a ‘sunset clause’ which results in the legislation automatically lapsing unless Parliament renews it after a set period, probably five years as a minimum.

One who strongly supported PO1 was just as strongly opposed to PO2, because:-

“I think this would be an environmental disaster, with every owner of a large plot taxed into developing it.” (44)

Another supporter of PO1 was strongly against PO2 for the same reason, which exhibits misunderstanding of how LVT works:-

“There is a danger of LVT being used as a tool to force a landowner to either sell or ‘exit’ from the current use if a tax is levied on a use to which the site either isn’t being put (your HABU requirement) or couldn’t be put e.g. restrictive covenant!” (48)

It is a fundamental human right, not contested by LVT theory or supporters, that ‘value’ for tax purposes has to be realisable, not just in planning law but in practical effect. For example, if a piece of land has planning permission but is physically inaccessible and incapable, for whatever reason, of being put into HABU by the current owner, then LVT cannot be levied until that obstacle to HABU has been removed. Similarly ‘every large plot’ is not necessarily capable of supporting additional dwellings. There is a place for desk-based modelling but also for field trials in taking forward the debate and public understanding of these matters.

There is little problem in delaying the legislation until a considerable amount of desk studies and ‘modelling’ has been undertaken but arguably the aspiration towards LVT should inform the design of the prior desk studies. Unless the data proves totally inadequate for/in the desk studies, it should take no more than one or two years to prove the technical viability of LVT and move into the tax-raising ‘field trials’ stage.

One respondent expressed a view that was widely heard at a recent conference on use of LVT for funding transport infrastructure investment:-

“Legislation is critical if LVT is to be used to fund infrastructure or provide local authorities with capital and /or revenue streams to put in and support infrastructure.” (7)

But could introduction for a transport project be treated as a fair trial for a tax system with wider potential implications? Any trial over a limited geographic area introduces certain artificialities compared to a whole-jurisdiction tax implementation, as this comment says:-

“How do you 'level' the economic and environment factors occurring within each selected area so that meaningful data can be observed and correlated? How do you filter out extraneous economic and environmental influences from the surrounding areas? How do you avoid penalizing some property owners?” (22)

The political climate now may favour use of LVT for, say, CrossRail as an extra tax, rather than replacing non –domestic rates (NDR) or council tax (CT) but who is to say where the value influence of a particular transport investment begins and ends? At least the boundaries of a local authority area are defined in law and there is a democratic process for reviewing them – and for the way elected representatives come into office to decide taxes.

In using LVT for infrastructure ‘gap funding’, the ...

“Danger is that it will be seen to be an additional tax.” (45)

There are as many potential kinds of ‘LVT’ that corrupt the purists’ conception of the tax as there are politicians prepared to dabble in tax reform! The period between launching desk studies and levying any LVT – whether nation-wide or in a trial area – needs to be filled with debate informed by modelling exercises. However the debate need not end with the sending out of the first LVT bills but with the sending out of the last bills for NDR and CT, i.e. a long way into the future, after many refinements of the first enabling legislation.

One respondent encapsulated most of the concerns of the Group but give PO2 the median score of ‘4’:-

“I agree that the theoretical approach envisaged in PO1 needs to be accompanied by a practical examination of the implications of LVT on some sort of sub-national scale. However the reaction from local politicians is likely to be quite negative. So, while I agree with PO2, it definitely needs to be preceded by an element of desk-based research together with a targeted education campaign aimed at local and national elected representatives.” (24)

PO3: Commission a UK Value Maps Market Analysis, building on NLIS and Project Acacia.

The third PO is independent of the first two and focuses on the market for applications in the data that Value Maps use and for the maps themselves. The preamble suggested that the National Land Information Service (NLIS) was a ‘successful model’ for using a PPP to make progress, which itself was a controversial idea in both general terms and in the specific case of NLIS.

The Group score was a perfectly neutral 3.00 and the range of individual scores very wide, indicating a number of issues to explore further. The median score of ‘4’ was awarded by ten respondents, with a further four registering extreme disapproval with ‘1’ or ‘0’ and only one giving it ‘5’.

The low scores imply a belief that only the private sector has ‘*vested interests*’ (49), which shows touching faith in the survivability of pure public sector values in modern, trading, public agencies.

“Information is power. This would represent yet another (very critical) step into bolstering the intrusive powers and influences of the private sector in accessing information about an individual’s assets and thus credit rating etc.” (16)

The implication here is that private credit rating agencies do not already do their rough-and-ready best to deduce such information, which has arguably more unjust effects than if the information upon which they relied was more readily verifiable, as it is in some other countries. Such fears are understandable but the proposal here is merely to involve the private sector in studying the market. Markets are reality and the private sector understands them better than civil servants. To reject this option is to discard an opportunity to secure very considerable public benefits from a partnership approach that most of the Group see as offering a sensible way forward.

“I think that this option would be the most likely to succeed and have credibility.” (22)

The disparate nature of the ‘private sector’ was recognised by one respondent – himself from the property industry - who suggested that on-line data suppliers, rather than (presumably) conglomerates without a specialist track record, should be approached:-

“There has been an explosion of data gathering and on line property data service providers in the last few years – I’d strongly advise a closer investigation of those companies involved – if they in turn could contribute and with their extensive knowledge of the ‘value profile’ of property across the UK, it should be possible to convince the private sector through the involvement of these online providers who have their confidence that such a system is worth investing in. It’s going to come down to cost and it is most unlikely that the private sector will wish to direct resources unless they can identify a return.” (48)

Analysis of this PO will most likely form the bulk of the author’s final dissertation. A major problem will be securing the trust of key players so that they will share their private market information for research purposes. As one respondent said, it may need...

“Government support but limited or no funding. Could be several companies involved working independently with similar or overlapping briefs – the benefits of a creative, even competitive market approach.” (43)

This PO has been raised since Round Two with several private sector property and geo-data industry representatives and the response has been promising. However the uncertainty surrounding the future of NLPG in the wake of the Acacia Programme final reports and with the Local Government Mapping Service Agreement (MSA) negotiations dragging on through most of 2004 is dispiriting to many potential participants in a value mapping. Ironically it may lead to a greater inclination to proceed with minimum involvement of Government agencies, although at some stage a partnership with Government is almost essential.

Assuming Government and specifically VOA remains involved, as with NLIS a competitive approach to enlisting suitable partners for the study, with the prospect of a license-based share of the proceeds of developing the market, might elicit good value **for** taxpayers from data supplied **as** taxpayers! Perhaps VOA or its masters in HM Treasury ought to sponsor the study – which leads on nicely to the issue of who should ‘champion’ value mapping within Government.

PO4: Lobby Government to appoint a single UK politician as Champion to oversee all national geo-data initiatives, including valuation within land management on the European model.

This PO attracted the most lengthy and varied comments, also a very wide range of scores. It was also the only PO where the Group was asked to score ‘feasibility’, it being assumed that having a single political Champion was highly desirable. However the mean score was a barely supportive 3.09, with only seven scoring the median ‘4’. This may be because it is really several ideas, some rather contentious, rolled into one:

- a. A single Champion
- b. A politician as that Champion.
- c. The scope of the role, i.e. whether to include valuation and land management as well as geo-data.
- d. Whereabouts in Government the Champion should be placed.

Only one person queried the assumption that the PO was entirely desirable, most dealt with feasibility whilst pouring relatively different degrees of scepticism on the four elements. Those who scored the PO lowest had difficulty with most, if not all, these ideas. There was only one response that strongly rejected (implicitly saying it was undesirable) the idea of a single Champion politician and this person felt that it was ...

“unrealistic - a single politician would hijack the initiative, unless it was a retired MP. The four UK nations would each need an individual exercise / person.” (49)

Some element of ‘poisoned chalice’ was seen to attach to any Minister who might be seen by the press as “*Minister to Create Taxes*” (14). Another said “*Not a vote winner*” and “*cuts across too many departments / portfolios unless attached to Cabinet Office*”(22)

The questionnaire introduced the Champion as the person to sponsor, among other things, the previous Value Maps Market Analysis. It also raised a possible role for AGI in this, which found little support. One response queried the need for a politician to be Champion but an extremely experienced and senior GI figure put the issue thus:

“The Champion MUST be a politician. For reasons I won’t go into the AGI would in my view be a total disaster. The motives of the professions such as the RICS are deeply distrusted while senior civil servants do not have the mandate.” (12)

Several responses suggested the Cabinet Office was the best place for the Champion, perhaps given the title ‘g-Envoy’. However ODPM also had supporters, and inevitably Treasury. All Departments and their Ministers were seen as having potential or actual conflicts of interest, because several of the main agencies come under ODPM, Treasury, or other ministries and if a Departmental Minister was to become Champion then the agencies under that Department would be seen as having been favoured. Since GI is essential for joined-up government, it follows that Cabinet Office ought to take charge, as with e-government. Moreover since GI is really part of e-government, perhaps the e-Envoy ought to be the GI Champion as well, or a single Minister in Cabinet Office given charge of e- and g-Envoys.

(12) went on to say:

“Joined-up government is a great idea but until performance indicators, bonus payments etc. are scrapped and the common good becomes the driving force rather than the optimisation of each agency’s ‘commercial’ performance there will be no incentive for cooperation.”

This highlights the fact that joined-up GI (indeed all joined-up government) is impossible whilst the interest of each Agency remains paramount to its Chief Executive and Minister. GI co-ordinators in the Inter-Departmental Group on Geographic Information (IGGI) are generally far too junior to influence ‘turf wars’ between agencies, so that ‘joining up’ programmes and projects emanating from within a single Department becomes an afterthought or nuisance factor, which cannot be in the public interest.

Geography fundamentally makes the actions of one agency or department affect many others, which is seldom taken account of and takes the form of land value effects. Therefore Value Maps, as a potential key tool of joined-up Government, are bound to be potentially embarrassing to many in Government who would rather not be faced with literally graphic proof of the unintended consequences of their policies and actions. Hence it is vital not to give power over the development and deployment of that tool to a Departmental Minister.

There were dissenting views. Clearly the nature of Value Maps puts the VOA in a strong place to be lead agency and the course of least resistance might be to make a Minister in HM Treasury responsible.

“So why not get a high profile project in place, perhaps as a joint venture between VOA and say a university, expanding on a study such as this?” (48)

Valuebill is a current example of how a project that clearly has a dominant agency involved can make rapid and useful progress, thanks largely to VOA. However some would say that Valuebill could turn out to be a missed opportunity, because there is a danger that the GI developments it has prompted are geared to the narrow interests of VOA at the expense of the wider interests of all potential users of GI. The fact that Valuebill progresses and shows financial benefits at its national launch in the same week that the Acacia Programme Board reports without a business case for taking forward many of the same developments is proof of a lack of joined-up policy thinking and leadership.

As another highly experienced UK-based international GI figure says:-

“So far there has been no indication of the government taking the lead on GI matters or even agreeing to an independent advisory body.” (45)

There is real dismay among many Delphi participants at this abdication of leadership by Government, at its reliance on one agency for all ‘independent’ advice on GI matters, when that agency¹¹ seems to have commercial reasons for giving such advice. For this reason, ODPM is ruled out by some as the Champion Department:-

“More proactivity is needed [by ODPM] beyond their existing role to coordinate GI in government through IGGI, and to negotiate with OS on NIMSA and PGA. At present there is no evidence that this is the case.” (36)

¹¹ It doesn’t matter which agency, the fault lies with Government, not the agency.

Yet within ODPM lies responsibility for many of the wider uses for Value Maps and other GI, such as local and regional government, regeneration, planning and housing. If OS were relieved of the role of GI advice to Government, an ODPM Minister might be best placed to fill the role of GI Champion, calling on independent advice from the whole of AGI:-

“I think that [championing Value Maps] should be an ODPM Ministerial role as it relates directly to the massive Community Plan ambitions as well as regeneration ambitions of the government.” (3)

“It may be best for a government department leading [Value Mapping] and ODPM is the obvious candidate, in which case I feel it is feasible, if they do decide to look into [property tax] reform seriously.” (50)

Some respondents would go further in reorganising GI responsibilities in Government than merely removing the role of GI Advisor from DG OS.

“I would go further and suggest the formation of a new agency which deals with all matters relating to land and property. Such an Agency (tentatively named the Lands Agency) would include HMLR, VOA, Ordnance Survey, Geological Survey and would centrally maintain systems for overseeing the planning process and local taxation (in whatever format). The economies of scale would be significant, and the ability of such an Agency to drive forward such cross-cutting initiatives such as LVT would be significantly enhanced.” (24)

There would still remain, under this scenario, the problem of finding a suitable Department and Minister to oversee such GI initiatives as Value Mapping. However the problems for any Minister Champion would be much reduced if the agencies responsible for the work were all under his/her control, compared to having what must currently be, in Great Britain, one of the most complex command and control structures for GI in the developed world.

A compromise solution, recognising the low priority that GI is likely to take in Government but taking the best ideas presented by the Group, might be to appoint a Minister from the Lords to a new post in the Cabinet Office, with relevant technical and political expertise and contacts – a modern Lord Chorley – to commission, direct and then oversee the recommendations of a “Five Year UK National GI Plan” to ensure Britain achieves what the EU expects of all member states under INSPIRE. This would ideally be the same Minister responsible for e-Government.

PO5: Re-engineering VOA's IT systems to enable it to take account of advances in CAMA and GIS techniques, both for internal efficiencies and wider public benefits.

This PO received the widest support of all, with a mean score of 4.33 and only one respondent scoring it unfavourably at '2'. Two of the Delphi Group did not feel qualified to score this PO, although both offered comments. Of the remaining 21 responses, a remarkable 11 scored '5'.

The concern is therefore shared by a majority of the Group that there is a danger that the wider public interest could be compromised if VOA modernises its systems without a wide-ranging analysis of the potential uses of Value Maps, resulting from CAMA/GIS. The one doubter felt that:

"Given the way proprietary GIS is progressing and the diversity of GIS software, it should be quite straightforward to implement GIS at any stage of the modernization cycle." (50)

That view appears to discount the received wisdom in IT that systems should be business led. Since VOA's business does not currently include anything but passive advice on land and property valuation, with a strong emphasis on valuation for tax purposes, there is no reason for it to consider the needs of the property industry or even other functions of government. All stakeholders in Value Maps, except tax administrators, are without a stake in VOA's IT system and process design.

If OS and its Ministerial masters had taken a narrow, short-sighted view of the future of **its** business and systems in the early 1980s¹², there would be no MasterMap and no NLIS. It is not even in its own long-term interests for VOA to ignore the potential market for its data since, if OS is a precedent and VOA's own 2000 Report on its activities are to be accepted, there is a huge (albeit as yet unquantified) potential revenue stream from Value Maps and other processed and anonymised data. Just as OS has used the diversity of digital map products and revenue from them to become self-funding as well as maintain a place at the leading edge of GI technology, so could VOA greatly improve the efficiency of its core activities whilst ceasing to be a drain on ODPM's budget – and a net contributor to the public purse if it actively pursued new market opportunities.

Several Delphi Group members put this case strongly, backing their '5' score with comments:-

"There is no conflict between the modernisation work currently being undertaken by the VOA of its IT systems and the desire to enhance this for wider benefits. IT development is not a once and for all project which 'finalises' at any stage. From my experience and knowledge of the VOA's IT capabilities, there is huge amount still to be achieved to properly serve the current limited requirements of NDR and Council Tax, let alone CAMA and mapping future requirements." (5)

"Given the advanced use of CAMA and GIS techniques in other parts of the British Isles and globally, it seems very short-sighted for the VOA to be embarking on a

¹² The author was Project Officer at OS for a study of the user requirements (to 1992) for digital map data in 1982, which led to the acceleration and rationalisation of OS' digitising programme and ultimately to full national cover of seamless, scale-free, continuously revised structured map data in 2001 (Ordnance Survey 1983). Yet in 1979 OS' entire business was geared to producing paper maps.

modernisation exercise without taking these and other technologies/business processes into account.” (24)

“As the only national agency of land/property generally (or at least with a remit that can include 100% of all property and with certain authority), I feel strongly that the VOA should be regarded as a national service / asset whose systems should be maximised and be best available – accuracy of information and the means to manipulate it is the prime ingredient to effective management/strategy. All this doesn’t necessarily justify value mapping, but it is probably your only route to getting it!” (48)

As one GI policy expert pointed out of VOA:-

“Their work is inherently spatial and should be GI-enabled.” (36)

A hopeful tone came from another two....

“The VOA are both intelligent and impartial. I see them as providing the best base for land values.” (44)

“This comment is historic. VOA are already studying the impact of both CAMA and GIS with a view to modernising the applications.” (32)

This misses the point: what ‘applications’ are the VOA studying? It is unlikely that they are looking beyond their core activities, the present tax system or use of their current types of data. And there is urgency, because VOA’s systems are old and re-engineering rarely happens in Government more than once every ten to twenty years:

“VOA will presumably be up against a time imperative.” (7)

The current remit of VOA may not be that which a UK GI Champion would give it. It is not that VOA has come to GIS and CAMA late (which it has) that is the main problem. It is that, having now come to these technologies, it is without any clear directive to employ them in the widest national interest, because no study has been made of the potential uses of its data that might be in that wider interest.

“I certainly agree that VOA should take into account future CAMA/GIS needs. In fact, I’m rather horrified to learn of a suggestion that they have not done so.” (22)

The key word here is ‘future’. Who besides VOA themselves has looked at the future? And has VOA looked at all likely future needs, including those beyond its current remit?

PO6: Compare first- and second-order costs of continuing with the present UBR/CT property taxes (albeit modernised and using GIS) with periodic and annual revaluations, and replacing both with LVT and rolling revaluation.

This PO also incorporates several different ideas:-

- a. The current UBR/CT system (using GIS) with annual instead of periodic revaluations;
- b. Replacing UBR/CT with LVT and using rolling revaluation.

Some respondents had difficulty because they would have liked to score these ideas differently. In retrospect this should have been two separate POs. However even with this difficulty, the Group appeared to clearly support the idea of doing such a study, giving it a mean score of 3.7, with a median of '4' (11 giving this score) and only two responses below '3'. It was deliberate that the proposed study should be designed to look at all three scenarios:

1. No change (assuming GIS is being looked at now to some degree);
2. Unchanged tax base but frequent (annual) revaluation; and
3. Reformed tax base (LVT) **and** rolling revaluation.

It could be argued that a fourth scenario should be added: LVT with periodic revaluation. However it was considered that if Government were minded to go to the trouble of undertaking radical tax reform it would have no hesitation in adopting what seems to be clearly the modern, equitable and most efficient method. As one senior local government officer in the Group said:

“Periodic valuations are the bane of local authorities, and I would strongly hope that a study validated your earlier conclusion of rolling if not annual revaluations.” (7)

This study would be complementary to the Value Maps Market Analysis at PO3, which would produce the basis of the revenue stream to pay for the extra costs incurred (if any) by adopting Scenarios 3 or 2 compared to the 'do nothing more' scenario. Whereas probably only VOA itself – or a contractor working for Inland Revenue, such as CGE&Y – can undertake PO6, the user needs analysis of PO3 is best done by those who understand the property market and regional and urban geography more generally. PO3 would produce the product specifications that would need to match with the data definitions used in PO6, before the latter study began in earnest. Certainly the two studies would need to be co-ordinated – by the GI Champion.

The issue of surveying 'reality' constantly, instead of periodically, was pursued by one respondent who stated (his capitals):

“YOU ARE NOT THINKING BIG ENOUGH!” (12)

after explaining:-

“Behind your PO is the whole case for the continual monitoring of environmental issues (using the term 'environment' in its broadest possible context). Thus we should abolish the ten year census and continuously monitor population movements and whether houses have indoor toilets etc. Likewise we should monitor all the factors that determine value (again in its broadest sense - not just financial but cultural and environmental).”

The author wholeheartedly concurs with the idea that ...

“We need local land information managers (LLIM) that would be the eyes and ears of change in the community from improvements to infrastructure to designated and actual forms of land use. The LLIM would monitor all this and changing land and property values.”

If we can do it for topographic mapping and for electoral registers, why not all the other constantly changing attributes of national and local reality? A truly forward-thinking and joined-up e-Government would not merely ‘e-enable’ current processes but re-think what processes are needed in a modern society and how they can best be carried out using current technology and citizen involvement. The ten-year census could (if needed at all) be retained as a by-product of continuous monitoring, a ‘snapshot’ for use by posterity. Decision-making **now** needs to be based on the most up-to-date information available, which Governments are failing to make possible.

At least one respondent marked down this PO because the tax reform element weakened her otherwise strong support for more frequent valuations:

“Continual maintenance of spatial data is preferable to periodic, where it can be shown to be cost beneficial. It can also be tied in to other episodes in the property life cycle more easily e.g. new build, development, transaction etc. However, I cannot comment on the desirability of replacing UBR/CT with LVT. Thus I have marked the PO no opinion overall.” (36)

One private sector property figure in the Group scored – and commented on – this PO exclusively and negatively on account of his opposition to LVT in principle:

“Couldn’t disagree more strongly about replacing current system with LVT – just look at Canary Wharf as an example – the task of assessing land value of any particular part would be complex in extreme, let alone identifying what parcel is to be valued – there are layers of use – infrastructure, retail, leisure, offices etc within one parcel plus then a multi fragmentation of occupation. Assuming it is the occupier that will pay a tax, and why not, then surely the created development sets what is to be valued not the land. If the latter, then one could argue all day long as to what development could take place – indeed with shifting planning policies, what may now exist wouldn’t be allowed again – does one ignore that if valuing the land alone, hypothetically cleared of buildings?” (48)

His was the lowest score of the whole Group, failing to note that it was only a study that was being proposed, not implementation of LVT. If his technical criticism of LVT was valid, this ought to come out of the study and not be a pre-judgement before it begins. The fact is that LVT operates in other countries without apparent technical difficulty or opposition from voters or valuers, in some cases at much lower cost than the UK system. This cannot be ignored.

Another respondent, an academic with an overseas GI background, expressed doubts about the implications of LVT but scored this PO fairly at ‘4’:

“No harm in doing such comparison. However shifting taxation from buildings to land assumes that the owners are the same? If this is not the case (leases) then this may have profound implications.” (45)

Another supported the PO on balance at ‘4’, saying:

“Yes, cost-benefit analysis is important at the planning stage, in order to provide hard empirical evidence against critiques. I also agree with the rolling revaluation idea, if LVT is finally implemented.” (50)

The way in which other developments in property market processes could relate to this PO was pointed out by an independent GIS consultant:

“I support rolling valuations and can see no reason why these should not be performed by commercial surveyors as part of the 'Sellers Pack'. For properties not frequently conveyed, owners should meet the cost of periodic valuations as with any other asset. I urge that this is taken into account as part of any costings analysis.” (22)

The only other respondent to score this PO less than ‘3’ also justified the score on somewhat unreasonable grounds:-

“The local services received are not related closely enough to the value of the house. Annual fluctuations in property values would not help Councils or households to budget and not be related to the value of local services.” (42)

This is a criticism of all property taxes and irrelevant to the matter of whether, assuming such taxes continue in some form or other, the valuation base for them should be reassessed more often. It is the relativity as between taxpayers of the tax that is compromised: infrequent reassessments are less equitable, whatever the tax base. Income tax is not ‘related to value’ of any service received from Government, yet we all expect to pay tax based on an annual assessment. Apart from user fees, the only local tax that attempts to relate payment to value of service **received** is the discredited Poll Tax. In a very real sense, property owners see the value of their homes rise where there is access to good local services like schools and public transport. They can realise that value by selling - or borrowing against the equity of - their home, so there **is** a relationship and it **can** be budgeted for.

If the few responses which ignored the actual proposed PO ‘issues’ and dealt with the merits of LVT are discounted, the support for this study was overwhelming.

PO7: Extend UBR to cover all non-domestic, non-agricultural land, including vacant sites and derelict buildings at HABU valuation, to give nation-wide coverage of property values.

The advantage of this PO is that it enables all urban areas to be valued for taxation – and hence for Value Maps – without any radical tax reform or fundamental re-design of VOA systems. It meets some of the aspirations of LVT campaigners while minimising the chance of political opposition. The author had not considered it at all thoroughly before presenting it to the Delphi Group, because it came from an expert rating colleague whose judgement he respects and who is also researching LVT.

Somewhat surprisingly the PO is narrowly rejected by most respondents, scoring only 2.87. Only five people feel strongly either way and the less strong views score an even six votes each. Because this is probably the most likely PO to actually be adopted by the current Government, one should look at any potential pitfalls rather than benefits in the context of Value Maps.

One of the fundamental defects of this PO is that it perpetuates, indeed reinforces, the rural/urban divide. As one distinguished land policy academic puts it:

“You need to address the steadily increasing rural/urban divide. Again this is an issue of being joined-up. Of course there are significantly different problems in rural areas compared with urban but rural-urban linkages have at last got onto some political agenda. Research into the foot-print of London for example has turned up some interesting inter-dependencies.” (12)

It might stimulate interest in LVT and also an extension of property taxation and valuation into rural areas but equally it might delay it by appearing sufficient to deal with such problems as urban renewal. Whilst filling many urban gaps in the ‘landvaluescape’, it still leaves a huge area of unknown value including the urban/rural ‘frontier’ regions just outside settlements where the greatest changes in land values occur.

Those who see Value Maps as of benefit in themselves naturally tend to reject this PO:

“I would go further and say that Government should be aware of the value of all agricultural land too, as well as the value of other exempt property, so that it is aware of the 'cost' of the exemptions and relief it affords presently. I disagree with the PO because I do not say that UBR should be charged necessarily on all these property types, but at least knowing their value enables Government to make informed decisions.” (5)

Those who oppose LVT also reject this PO. This is from a leading RICS rating expert:

“Extending the UBR to derelict and vacant sites would have a dramatic effect on the commercial property market. Whilst initially it may encourage property owners to make greater efforts to utilise buildings and land in an economic downturn, especially a sharp one, it is likely to exacerbate the situation as property values would be forced down more rapidly and further causing the banks to become more nervous about any loans secured on them. The second major issue would be the effect that it would have on the speculative commercial property market. If a developer is likely to be hit with a tax bill if he is left with an empty property after it is built he is less likely to make the investment waiting until he has pre-let the entire development.”

This will impact all businesses as it will for example effect the business' ability to open new offices rapidly if it is expanding.” (4)

Strong support only seems to come from those who support LVT in itself, as a means of funding local government, but are less enthusiastic about Value Maps, as is this county council director:-

“Local authorities would support this if UBR was de-nationalised because it would increase the local tax base – it would also encourage better land use. There is an argument that tax should be based on the planning status not use, in order to capture the value for the community, and to prevent builders keeping prices up by drip-feeding the market (this is more of a problem in many areas than planning delays).” (7)

A public sector tax expert pointed out that UBR is based on annual rental value, whereas....

“This option would require a completely different basis of valuation to be proscribed. An annual rental value does not sit happily with derelict buildings or vacant sites. Effectively this would be a completely new tax rather than an extension of NDR.” (32)

In fact, it may not be strictly necessary for rental value to be used as the basis for assessing derelict buildings or vacant sites. It would seem possible to assess them, as now for CPO purposes, at their capital value and then apply a conversion factor in the same way that developers do when considering purchase of the same sites. The resultant figure would be the surrogate for HABU rental value and could sit alongside the UBR valuations of adjacent occupied sites after some adjustment to suit the ‘tone’ of the area. Connellan (2004) makes a similar suggestion as a possible first stage towards LVT. However for Value Mapping purposes this is messy:

“Dealing only with vacant or under utilised sites and buildings would lead to a Swiss-cheese muddle that is not sensible in the long term.” (3)

Most comments, as opposed to scores, indicate wariness with this PO:

“Not sure that I see the real added value of this. It could be seen as a first step by Treasury to drawing in more money, rather than as a first step in achieving a more equitable funding approach.” (14)

“There is merit in this proposal and it could form the first step in the process of rolling out LVT. It has two great advantages: speed of implementation and removing the requirement for beneficial occupation. It is likely that the latter will be seen favourably, in the light of Barker (2004). However, I agree that it would be likely to lead to undermine the idea of rolling revaluations, hence my relatively limited support.” (50)

It is worth pointing out that Barker (2004, 4.14), in her comments on LVT (which she says would have a limited impact on housing supply) acknowledges the merits of...

“regular valuations in order to tax accurately”

and

“given the information shortages concerning land ownership and land value in the UK, there are arguments for a more comprehensive land registry in any case.”

If, like Barker, we are seeking Value Maps in their own right, LVT could be seen as aiding the case for them. If we seek LVT – and Barker (2004, 4.22) sees benefits “*for the wider economy*” in it - then PO7 may lead to some localised Value Maps as well as aiding the case for LVT. In either case, other POs seem to have stronger arguments for them but this one has merits if one accepts that both LVT and Value Maps are more likely to evolve as by-products of other policy decisions than arrive by deliberate long-term political decision-making. Politics – and life – are messier in practice than we’d like!

Other POs suggested by Delphi participants

The Group was invited to suggest other policy options and three people did so. These are:

“Lobby for political parties to make an expression of intent [on LVT] in their next manifesto.”(22)

“Taxation will remain the main driver. There is a general principle that a fair tax is one that is charged at the point of financial gain, hence Capital Gains taxation. Taxing an increase in land value merely because it has nominally increased as the result, say, of granted Outline planning permission or some external influence, seems to break this principle. It is likely to be as contentious as the Poll Tax and I doubt that any political party could implement such a tax unless it had been referred to in their manifesto. This means that failure to mention it at the next national elections (which seems unlikely) will cause a delay in implementation of 5-6 years.”

The Liberal Democrat Party had Site Value Rating (SVR) in its 2001 Manifesto, as its preferred replacement to UBR. The Green Party campaigned hard on LVT in the 2003 elections to the Scottish Parliament. Neither Party has any chance of forming the next Government but both will almost certainly include LVT/SVR in their manifestos and may elicit positive personal statements from some candidates of other parties. If the next General Election results in no party having an overall majority, it is conceivable that the next Government will include one Party and perhaps over 100 MPs committed to LVT. In any case, there are precedents for Governments implementing policies that were not in their manifesto and if a Government merely has a general commitment to review taxation – especially local taxation, as the present Labour Government has in the Balance of Funding Report (Raynsford 2004) - then LVT is not ruled out in the next Parliament.

“To complete land registration by a specified date. (40)

This Scottish land reform campaigner pointed out in a comment to PO6 that once the UK has a complete register of land, it ought not to be difficult to conduct a national land valuation. Barker (2004) implies the same. Therefore such a PO deserves separate mention, as a stage towards both LVT and Value Maps. Although HMLR has stated that

it is able to complete the Register for England & Wales by 2010¹³, there is as yet no policy commitment to do so. It only requires secondary legislation to trigger completion: a decision to implement either Value Mapping or LVT could be that trigger.

“Policies to safeguard property owners from fluctuations in property values causing budgetary difficulties.” (42)

It would certainly help, assuming Value Maps result from LVT, if a hardship clause was included in any legislation for the tax. Quite how ‘budgetary difficulties’ could be fairly defined in law and ‘safeguards’ applied is more difficult. The present UBR operates with ‘transitional arrangements’ that place limits on the rate at which property tax can increase for a particular hereditament after a quinquennial revaluation. With rolling revaluation and reasonably steady Government budgets there should not be nearly as severe changes from year to year in tax bills under LVT as under UBR or CT. Also LVT could be phased in gradually to reduce payment difficulties.

It would be unwise to be too specific about such ‘policies’ until further studies had been undertaken but some PO along these lines is advisable, if value maps are to be linked to any tax reform. However the inescapable fact is that many things cause land values to change dramatically, from sudden unexpected inundation to closure of a railway station. Value maps should highlight these changes and cannot, of themselves cause them - although there might be ‘positive feedback’ and secondary changes in land values caused by more people being aware of the primary causes of change, thanks to value maps.

¹³ Peter Collis, Chief Land Registrar, said at AGI’s 2004 conference that he expected the Registers to be complete by 2012 but admitted that there needs to be secondary legislation to trigger retrospective registration on a very large proportion (by area) of land that will not undergo transactions before then or be voluntarily submitted for title registration.

Weighted Analysis of Issues

The 28 Issues presented in Round One were reduced to 23 in Round Two. Two of these were entirely new, numbered 2/7 and 2/8. Three issues (2/2, 2/4 and 2/5) were significantly reworded and another four were combined into two (2/1 with 2/3 and 5/3 with 5/4). The analysis of Issues here uses the new descriptions and only the 23 retained for Round Two, whose scores are first compared with those after Round One. The effect of removing ‘drop-out’ Group members’ responses and of applying the ‘confidence’ factor of each participant to their ‘raw’ score is also looked at. Finally the relativity in scores on the different Issues, as adjusted, is discussed in terms of feasibility and desirability as well as relevance.

The full spreadsheet of Delphi Round Two responses, with comments by respondents attached, is available on the Landvaluescape website. Analysis here is mainly of the Group scores.

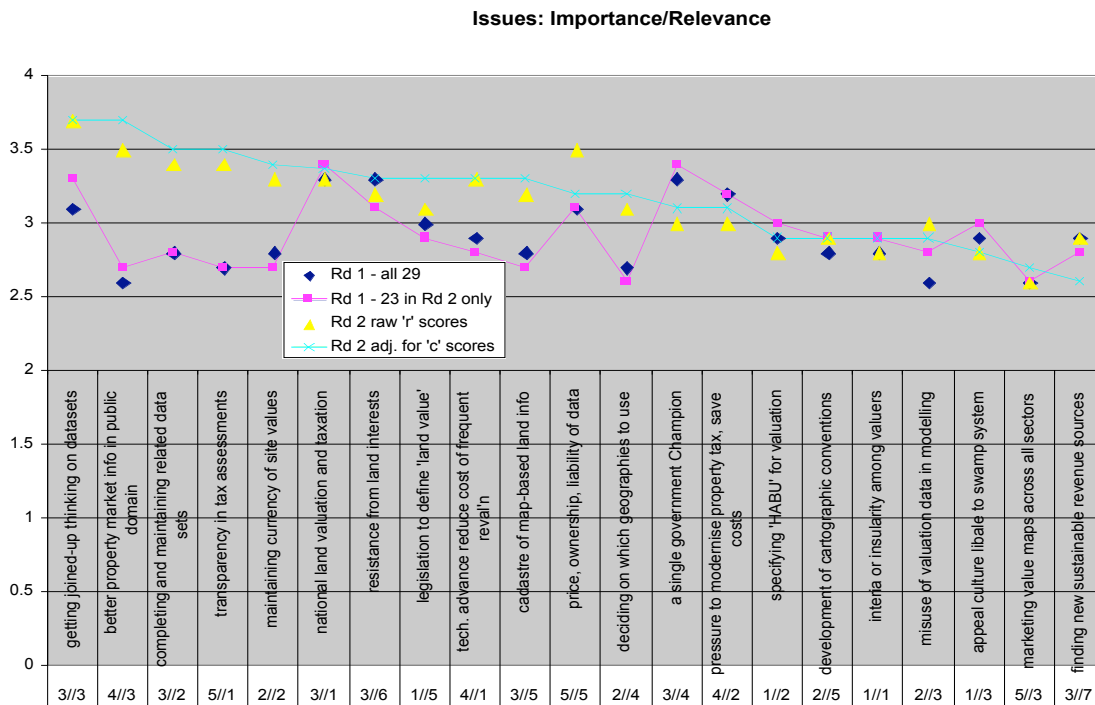


Figure 1 – relative importance of issues

Figure 1 shows the 21 Issues that appear in both Rounds, in descending order of ‘relevance’, according to the Group’s Round Two weighted opinion (the blue line with crosses). The red line with squares shows the Group’s scores for the same Issues’ ‘importance’ in Round One, after removing the scores of the six people who didn’t participate in Round Two. (The black diamonds show the Group scores if those six people are included.) The yellow triangles are the ‘raw’ Group scores in Round Two, before applying a weighting factor to each individual’s score according to their self-assessed ‘confidence’ in this Issue.

It can be seen firstly that there is little difference to the Round One scores when the ‘drop-outs’ are excluded: only one Issue changes score by more than 0.1. Nevertheless the remaining analysis only includes the 23 people who took part in both Rounds.

Secondly there are far more scores that increase or remain the same than decrease (20:3) when weighting for confidence is applied. This seems to show that the more a person thinks they know about a subject the stronger their view as to its relevance: people with little knowledge – or much humility! – tend to score themselves lower on the relevance of an issue than people who are confident in their views. This shows that a robust score for the Group need not be a compromise of differing views.

The third significant fact about Figure 1 as a whole is that the views of the Group became more confident as a result of their studying Round One results. In only five Issues, all of them in the less ‘relevant’ half of the graph of Round Two scores, did the scores drop: no Issue dropped by more than 0.2, whereas nine scores rose by 0.3 or more. All Issues that were scored at 3.1 or above in Round One ‘importance’ stayed above that score on ‘relevance’ in Round Two. In addition another eight Issues rose to a score of 3.1 or above that had been scored initially at no more than ‘important’ (3.0) by the Group. Only two Issues that had initially scored above 3.0 dropped at all. It can be said that the Group did not ‘change its mind’ about anything that they first thought to be important.

The largest increase in score (2.7 to 3.7) was for 4/3: “*having better property market information in the public domain*”. This underlines the relevance of market data to the efficient operation of the market. Half the Group now thought this ‘must be resolved’ (score 4) before value maps could develop.

Related closely to this, the second largest rise in score (2.7 to 3.5) was for 5/1: “*Transparency in tax assessments*”. If value maps are based on tax assessments, which in turn are based on market transaction data, then there is an intimate relationship between making tax assessments transparent through value maps and having property market information (as value maps) in the public domain.

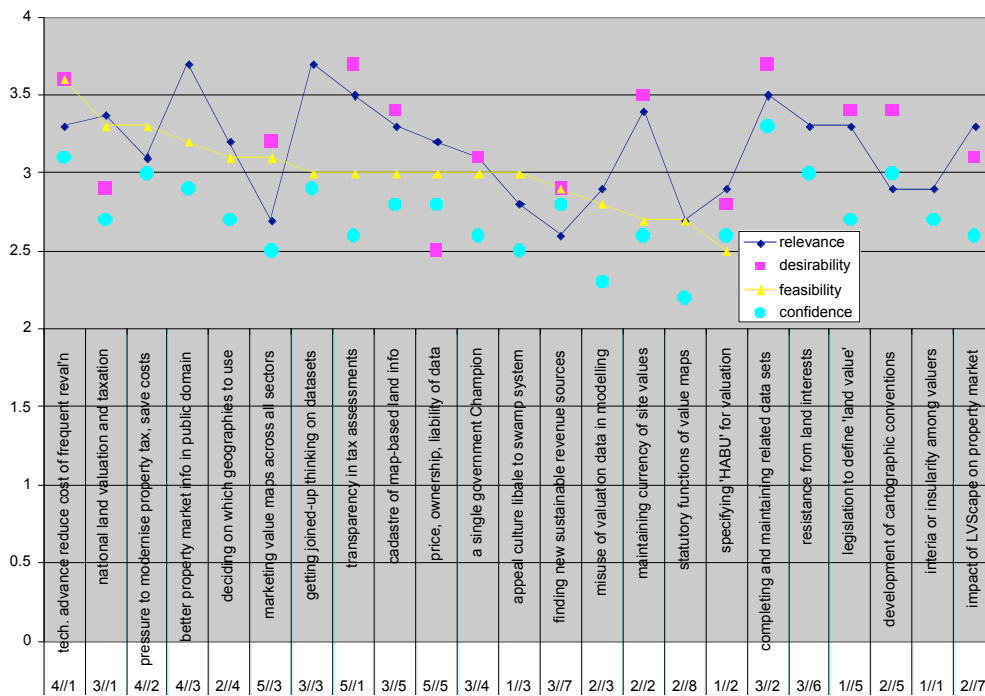


Figure 2 – Issues: ‘4D’ Analysis of Round Two

Turning to Figure 2, we see the 23 Issues in Round Two arranged in descending order of ‘feasibility’ of resolution, with the Group weighted scores also for ‘relevance’ and ‘desirability’. The blue circles indicate the Group’s confidence score: their collective self-assessed expertise in the subjects.

For some Issues, either or both of ‘feasibility’ and/or ‘desirability’ are not scored, because it was felt that these aspects were either not at issue or were too complicated to score in such a simplistic way. Some of these aspects have been (or will be) explored in interviews with selected experts. For example, the feasibility of “*completing and maintaining related data sets*” (3/2) is crucial to the validity of value maps but needs considerable investigation in its own right. Again “*getting joined-up thinking between various agencies responsible for component data sets*” (3/3) is clearly highly desirable and hardly needs to be asked, so wasn’t. Even with several boxes in the scoring grid blanked out, some participants were unable to score in some instances, responding merely with statements like “I can’t interpret the question”.

Figure 2 is ordered in this way so that the Issues which may be easiest to resolve can be highlighted, thus leaving the more difficult ones for further study by other means. These ‘easy hits’ may prove the enabling factors, therefore this part of the analysis will take them in the order they appear.

Issue 4/1: ***Technical advances reducing the cost of frequent revaluations.***

Clearly highly feasible (annual revaluations are happening in many countries), equally very desirable, not as relevant as many other issues, is a summary of the situation. The Group was collectively quite confident in their scores on this issue.

One expert (12) commented: “*I don’t want a computer to value my propertywe need better models...IT has a partial contribution*”. It should be emphasised that computers merely **assist** in CAMA (computer aided mass assessment) and make it easier to achieve better valuations, partly because the skilled experts are released to focus on those types of property and geographic regions that are less amenable to computerised methods. By enabling both more frequent and more transparent revaluations, technology has altered the potential focus of the task to be undertaken by tax assessors. But technology alone cannot change the way the task is actually performed.

Issue 3/1: ***Commissioning a national land valuation for taxation.***

The words “*The political sensitivity of...*” were omitted for Round Two, yet if there is a problem with feasibility it is a political problem. Perhaps removal of ‘political’ helped produce a high feasibility score, yet it may be that the politics of property taxation are not as sensitive as some suppose. There is no obligation to use ‘land valuation’ for an explicitly land-only tax, because most legislatures that commission CAMA valuations do not have LVT. De-coupling the introduction of value maps from modernisation of property taxes, even the extension of current taxes to cover currently exempt properties (vacant urban sites and/or farmland), may be more feasible than relying on radical LVT to justify value maps simply because such a tax **has** to have land valuation. Land values are simply a by-product of modern tax assessment methods, which require market transaction data (overwhelmingly sales of land with buildings on) to operate. However it is hard to justify a national land valuation, especially one by VOA, solely for land policy reasons.

The driver to commissioning such a land valuation could be...

Issue 4/2: *Pressure to modernise property tax administration and save costs.*

This is seen by the Group as very feasible and indeed is actually occurring at VOA and in Northern Ireland already. Modernisation is not necessary happening because of the direct savings in producing tax assessments but in order to reduce the level of expensive appeals and improve the acceptability of the current property taxes.

Issue 4/3: *Having better property market information in the public domain.*

The desirability of this is self-evident (hence not scored), although not a strong driver in most sectors of the market and arguably not in the interests of those in the property profession whose exclusive possession of market information gives them competitive advantage and helps justify their service to the public. Therefore the high feasibility score given to this by the Delphi Group is encouraging, perhaps an indication that other drivers for change and the collective benefits of an efficient property market in particular outweigh short-term advantage.

A point to be emphasised is that value maps enable market information to be in the public domain in a graphic form that protects the privacy of individual market players more easily than with spreadsheets. There would be resistance to any move in the UK to make **raw** transaction data publicly available. However market-value based property tax assessments, carried out under professional control of qualified valuers, can be regarded as placing property market information **indirectly** in the public domain: the assessments are not themselves inherently confidential data. Maps are probably the best way to reveal that information.

2/4: *Deciding which geographies to use.*

Rewording this resulted in a higher score (2.6 up to 3.2) and it wasn't appropriate to ask for a 'desirability' score, because unless values are mapped at the land parcel (unique record) level – which could be difficult for most purposes – it is a technical issue that simply must be solved. It is encouraging to see that the Group thought it was feasible to do so. In practice, those jurisdictions overseas that opt to retain confidentiality at the parcel level generally adopt a zoning system for the purpose of CAMA and value mapping. This was what the OxonLVT Trial also did. Such trials could be used to experiment with this aspect of value mapping before settling on a standard procedure but it should not be difficult, if careful note is taken of the 'break lines' in the local land and property geography: changes in land use, property type, soil conditions, etc.

5/3: *“Marketing value maps across all sectors”.*

Another re-worded issue but with little change in score from Round One, although one person wasn't sure if this meant 'mapping market values' rather than 'marketing value mapping' (it is the latter). It was not seen as much more highly relevant now than before (score 2.7), possibly because most Delphi participants see tax administration as the main driver. However the high scores given to both feasibility and desirability indicate a faith in the potential for using UK trials and overseas experience to sell the idea as a tool for other applications. This reflects the overwhelming support in previous surveys by Vickers (2000, 2002 and 2003).

3/3: *“Getting joined-up thinking between various agencies responsible for component data sets”.*

This is seen as one of the two most relevant issues. Its desirability wasn't in question and its feasibility is seen, encouragingly, as fairly high. However the experience of Acacia and the NLPG discussions since June 2004 has been that commercial considerations appear to be getting seriously in the way of dispassionate rational thinking by some public agencies (see 5/5). Few Delphi participants would be aware of the behind-the-scenes negotiations over the delayed renewal of the local government Mapping Services Agreement (MSA), which may explain the high feasibility score. It is noticeable that the weighted 'f-score' is lower than the raw score, which indicates that those in the know scored this lower (back in April/June, before the situation worsened) than those not involved in the discussions. It is also significant that the only two public sector Delphi participants who scored '4' for feasibility work for agencies that are not directly affected by these negotiations.

5/1: *"Transparency in tax assessments"*.

Several respondents commented to the effect that this requires a culture shift: allowing third parties to know one's tax liability – even when it is not 'earned' or strictly 'personal', as with property taxes – is not currently acceptable to many in the UK. However the aggregate score for this (d+r+f) is higher than for any other issue, also the increase in score for importance/relevance between Rounds is greater than for all but one. This shows a realisation that a key advantage of value maps is their ability to obscure **individual** tax liability whilst revealing the overall pattern of 'landvaluescape' and hence of local tax assessments (if land values are mapped separately). Everyone wants more transparency in every one else's tax assessments and almost everyone would probably like to know how their own relates to their neighbours'.

3/5: *"Developing a cadastre of map-based land information"*.

Relevance and desirability both score more highly than feasibility (3.0) and relevance scores now significantly more than 'importance' in Round One. It is therefore reassuring to learn that the key agency in England & Wales (HMLR) is on target to complete its Land Registers and has already completed its electronic Index Maps within budget and on time (Monday 2004). One respondent (12) commented that addresses are more important (presumably than land parcel extents) and that there needs to be more joined-up thinking on content of such a cadastre. UK's membership of the EULIS project is also a good sign, although it is unclear what is envisaged for the scope of a British cadastre beyond that set out in Land Registration Acts. Hence the need for more thinking before 'developing' this. Most EULIS participant nations envisage values to be a natural component of land information but the 'value theme' is absent from the draft INSPIRE Directive (EC 2004).

5/5: *"Data pricing, ownership, licensing and liability policies acting as barriers to wider public use of value maps"*.

The low desirability score (2.5) is puzzling, although it is reassuring to see a fairly high score for feasibility, because 'relevance' also scores high. This may reflect the understandable diverging views of data producers and users: the latter tend to want low cost, simple pricing structures, whereas producers and custodians of data want to maximise revenue and protection against claims (appeals). Several non-expert Delphi participants did not score at all for 'desirability' or 'feasibility', leaving the scores polarised and inconclusive. Also it may not have been clear whether 'desirability'

referred to the ‘barriers’ being present or being removed! The project manager on one national public sector initiative scored ‘feasibility’ at ‘2’ (with ‘confidence’ at ‘4’) and elaborated perceptively:

“Data pricing, ownership, licensing and liability policies are all huge barriers to wider public use of Value Maps and other cross-cutting projects. Therefore these barriers are very undesirable, and their existence makes initiatives such as LVT possibly unfeasible.”(24)

Two other participants who are personally involved in these issues scored them similarly. However the overall response showed that the issue needed probing in detail by other means and that the attributes are not altogether appropriate in this case.

3/4: ***“A single government champion for the idea”***

Scores for all three dimensions of this Issue clustered at 3.0-3.1, but with ‘relevance’ significantly lower now than ‘importance’ previously. One respondent said ‘*not a politician*’ (49) and another ‘*not sure if it is seen by government as being a vote winner by an apathetic electorate*’ (24). This is understood, however whilst not being a vote-winning subject *e-government* – which includes GI - is likely to be regarded as important by opinion-formers and, owing to its complexity and cross-cutting nature to need a senior person in government (not necessarily an elected politician but someone with access to those who are), to champion it firmly. It was noticeable at the 2004 AGI conference that in Scotland, Northern Ireland (NI) and Wales this is regarded as a key factor in GI strategy development and implementation: the NI member of this Group was the only person to give it ‘4’ for ‘confidence’, as well as desirability and relevance.

1/3: ***“Appeal culture liable swamp system”***

This is now seen as less important/relevant and quite feasible to resolve: a vote for the efficacy of mapping values perhaps. Some interesting comments:

From a property appraisal academic (11): *“Appeals spring from issues of fairness and transparency. If these principles are met, there should be confidence in a low appeal rate.”*

From an experienced rating valuer (5): *“I suspect that there would be a near 100% appeal rate initially, unless the level of tax was so low as to be meaningless.”*

A national geo-data project sponsor (24): *“In order to prevent this, LVT would need to be introduced on a phased basis, both in terms of geographic area and in terms of its relationship with other forms of local taxation. This should prevent swamping of the system.”*

Assuming tax reform and value mapping to be linked, there would indeed need to be a geographically limited trial period for policies and techniques to be refined, then a **gradual** replacement of other property taxes with perhaps emphasis on extending the tax base to types of property currently untaxed (vacant land and derelict buildings), so that numbers of ‘losers’ are kept small. However this hypothesis cannot be tested until values are actually used as a basis for tax reform. The use of maps in the 2005 business rate and 2007 council tax revaluations will help test their worth in reducing appeals.

3/7: ***“Finding new, sustainable government revenue sources”***

This has become less relevant but is seen as reasonably feasible and desirable. It is unlikely to be a driver therefore for reform of local government finance alone: other policy drivers, such as dampening house prices and maintaining economic stability or reducing inter-regional wealth disparities, could be more significant for LVT or for justifying value maps (see also 2/8).

2/3: *Misuse of [subjective] valuation data in modelling*”.

The phrasing of this gave some difficulties but one respondent noted that “*mass valuation is common in much of Europe*” and felt it would only be an issue during the introduction of value mapping (14). The key point is to accept that valuations must be firmly based upon market transaction data, thereby limiting their subjectivity. Providing there is sufficient information about properties being transacted, there is the capability to apply statistical analysis and valuers’ skills to prevent ‘misuse’.

The Group’s most significant and confident member, a senior tax administrator, had least faith in the feasibility of tackling this issue, although spatial analysis experts expressed some confidence in their fairly high scores on feasibility. The low Group ‘confidence’ score shows that this isn’t an issue that many have thought about and that further work is needed before value maps are used for tax reform.

2/2: *“Maintaining currency of site values”*”.

Relevance and desirability were scored very high, feasibility less so. One respondent felt that ‘Local Land Information Managers’ (LLIMs) were the key. This is certainly where the highest cost – and also benefits beyond revenue raising – will lie. Confidence in up-to-dateness of the model is crucial: “*Land taxes are built on the day before yesterday’s news*” (14).

2/8: *“Statutory functions of value maps”*”.

This new Issue was introduced after comment in Round One that whatever the **potential** uses of value maps might be, public attitudes towards their introduction would depend on the statutory purpose(s) for which they were ostensibly to be used. These would be enshrined in legislation, which would incorporate definitions and mechanisms for assessment, appeal etc. No desirability score was asked for, because it was presumed that this was a ‘given’ – if not, then ‘relevance’ would show a low score. In fact the Group did not give this a high score on any count and it scored especially low in ‘confidence’, indicating that most were unable to grasp its meaning. Two responses explicitly confirmed that.

2/6: *“Specifying ‘highest and best use’ for valuation”*”.

This continued to score moderately high on all counts except feasibility. One respondent, a senior valuer and tax expert (5), seemed to think it significant that the words ‘fair’ and ‘market’ were left out of the wording in this Round: he did not score it on desirability but commented: “*no tax is acceptable if it is perceived to be unfair*”. Clearly this is true but the law agrees with another view:

“Use of land should be a planning (and hence political) matter. Once use has been determined a value can be calculated (taking into account external factors) Valuation should not determine use” (22).

This would require either a major change in planning law or clearer interpretation by the courts or the legislation that introduces LVT. Currently planners are specifically barred from considering the effect of their decisions on land values: *“until you can make planners think about land values”* (12), this will be a major issue.

In the British planning system there will be areas undergoing land use change that present difficulty to valuers unless procedures are introduced to strengthen the basis of presumptions that have to be made. The idea of a Certificate of Development Potential has not been challenged – but nor has it yet been put to use (Hudson 1975). The issue of ‘hope value’ and when to include it in tax assessment is important. Ultimately value maps must either strictly follow the market and include hope value or they must follow the Local Plan and ignore it. The best solution is probably not to include any element of value that is not legally and physically capable of being immediately realised in every respect, at least for tax purposes.

3/2: ***“Completing and maintaining related data sets”***.

The feasibility of this was not questioned, since it was seen to be self-evident. Extent, ownership, actual and potential use of a piece of land are either realities waiting to be placed on record or are capable of being defined, if there is political will to change planning law. The words “technical problems with...” that had prefaced this Issue were consciously removed for Round Two. This proved unfortunate, since it has become abundantly clear that there are major institutional problems relating to the completion of these data sets, despite strongly expressed aspirations in certain quarters of Government and an almost universal expectation that the problems can and will be solved. Relevance and desirability are scored higher than for any other issue. Pertinent comments were made:

“A full dataset of property ownerships including intermediate interests would be required. This has been resisted by Government and used as the reason why it is not feasible presently to include landlords in statutory BID schemes.” (5)

“Ownership is less of an issue than addresses. That particular nut has not been cracked in England and Wales, and there does not seem to be the political drive to do something about it.”(24)

“A major goal for any sort of national land valuation would be that it is maintained and consistent with other land-related data coming from other agencies. The relevant agencies e.g. Ordnance Surveys, land registries etc must be involved in decisions on referencing, and management of time and change to property parcels.” (36)

Clearly the issue here is more to do with political will and the need to join-up thinking on *e-government*, which is little more than pious aspiration at present. It is significant that this issue scored higher than all others on ‘confidence’: everyone except Government, it seems, knows how important it is and where the blame lies. Emerging economies in Eastern Europe are giving this the highest priority – but not our own.

3/6: ***“Resistance from land interests”***.

This continued to score high on relevance but scores weren’t asked for on other dimensions. There are countervailing factors:-

“The fact that some vested interests would be vocally opposed cannot be considered in isolation. Far more significant groupings (on the democratic scales) might be

persuaded in favour of less taxation on income and more on wealth (especially landed wealth).(11)”

“This largely depends on which political party is in power. The issue is likely to be unimportant to a socialist party and conversely, important to a conservative party. (22)”

In Lithuania, the Conservatives were the only political party to support LVT in the general election of October 2004 and they did not seem to lose votes over it! The argument they used was that in a thriving enterprise economy such as they aspire to be, enterprise should be taxed as low as possible and landed wealth pay its share (Bagdonavicius 2004)). Since their land privatisation programme is in its early days, there is no powerful landowning constituency yet. In Britain, it is said “we are all landowners now”: with millions treating their houses like piggy-banks, it is unsurprising that voters and politicians are wary of taxing land.

1/5: ***“Legislation to define ‘land value’.*”**

This scored high on relevance and desirability and wasn’t scored on feasibility. However two respondents pointed out that, prior to its use for taxation, a simple ‘agreed’ definition could suffice, also that the role of the professions should not be understated: they should at least be consulted before a definition is enshrined in statute.

2/5: ***“Development of cartographic conventions”.***

This was an amalgamation of two Issues from Round One but its importance hardly changed. ‘Desirability’ scored high, ‘relevance’ less so. There was no request for a feasibility rating. Trials will produce best practice. The fact that some respondents weren’t sure what the importance was – or why it might be important – indicates that the issue may either be overstated or underappreciated.

1/1: ***“Inertia or insularity among valuers”.***

This did not score particularly high on the count asked for – relevance. The only two comments give the archetypal valuer and non-valuer views:-

“There is at present healthy scepticism amongst valuers about LVT. This is not however borne out of a resistance to change or a belief that the present NDR and CT systems are perfect, but in doubts as to whether LVT would provide professionally acceptable valuations - thus acceptable to the taxpayers. LVT would undoubtedly lead to increased workload for surveyors/valuers and therefore it is reasonable to opine that the negative views generally expressed by the surveying profession and not made with self interest in mind.” (5)

“I am not familiar with the culture of the UK valuer community, but if it is similar to the culture of other professional communities, then there is likely to be significant resistance to change.” (24)

The fact is that where CAMA has been introduced (whether for LVT or not) then the workload of valuers involved in tax assessment reduces significantly. This becomes more true as technology advances but it is predicated upon a clarity in the planning system and careful design of the tax system. It would involve a considerable amount of work for those planning and implementing the changes required in professional practice and the overall reduction in workload may take several years to occur and leave many

experienced and senior valuers disadvantaged. The same happens when any profession or trade changes its methods.

2/6: ***“Impact of ‘landvaluescape’ on the property market”.***

This was a new Issue for Round Two which came in quite high on relevance and desirability. It is interesting to note that when value maps have been introduced elsewhere **after** (not simultaneously with) CAMA, there has been a step-change improvement in the Sales Ratio, which is the empirical test of the validity of the model: in the case of Lucas County Ohio, the variance between assessed and market value halved (Thurstain-Goodwin 2004). Since the maps don’t change the maths, it must be the perception of accuracy obtained from the maps that influences the market. In other words, value maps are a significant influence on the prices that buyers and sellers are prepared to settle for. This could be seen as a threat to the traditional property agent, who ‘carries the market in his head’: once it is ‘out there’ in the public domain on value maps that are kept up-to-date, the agent loses value as an intermediary.

Waterfront Conference Delegate Feedback

At a conference in Oxford on 16 September 2004, organised by the Waterfront Conference Company on the author's initiative as a means of using the Oxfordshire LVT Trial to engender interest in his research, a form was included in delegates' packs asking for views on various matters. Of the 88 people present (including platform speakers and organising team) only 15 completed the form and several of these did not fully complete it. Those who completed the form were by no means representative of the population at large or even of the main stakeholders in value maps, however a brief analysis of their responses is included here, since the intention was to use the results to inform Delphi Group participants of the reaction of others to the ideas which they have been asked to think about.

The 15 respondents comprised 9 self-admitted political types, 3 planners, 2 software suppliers and a data supplier. They agreed that value maps had a number of uses (see Figure 3) except that they didn't see that they would reduce the cost of property tax administration or the number of appeals. They supported all the seven POs except for the appointment of a politician as geo-data policy Champion (see Figure 4). They saw some benefits accruing to all stakeholder groups but in particular to planners and investors, estate agents, their customers and tax administrators (see Figure 5).

This feedback form will be adapted for use at several other events during the remainder of this study, including a further seminar on the OxonLVT trial in January and a meeting of a group of local housing stakeholders in West Berkshire in late November. At this stage all that can be said is that there is no reason to suppose that value maps will not attract broad support for the hypothesis.

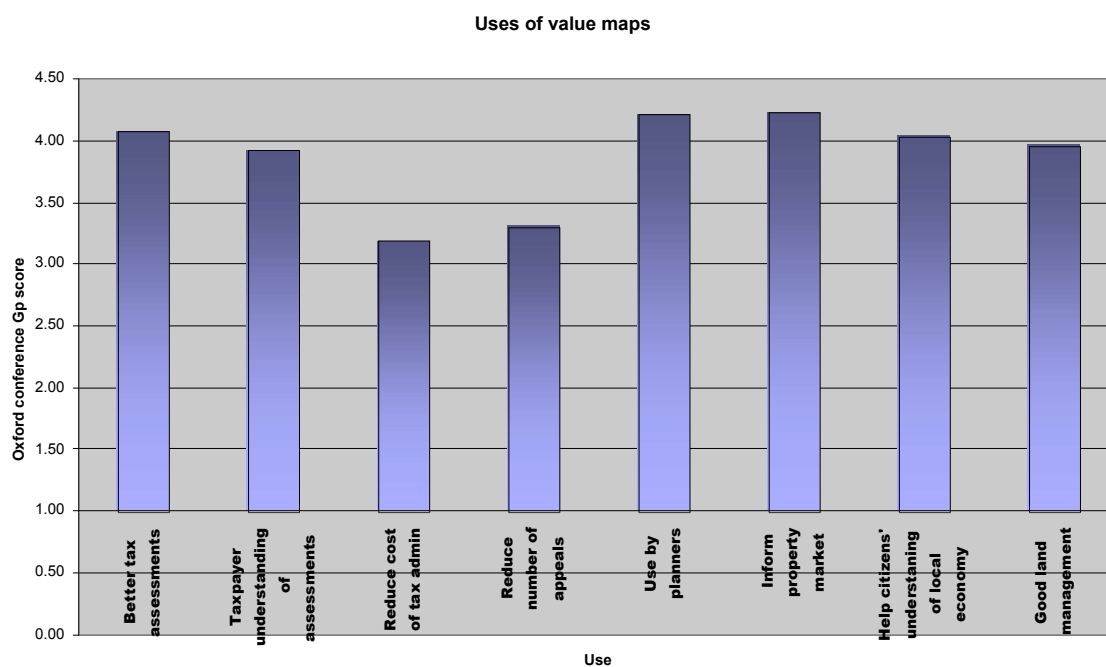


Figure 3

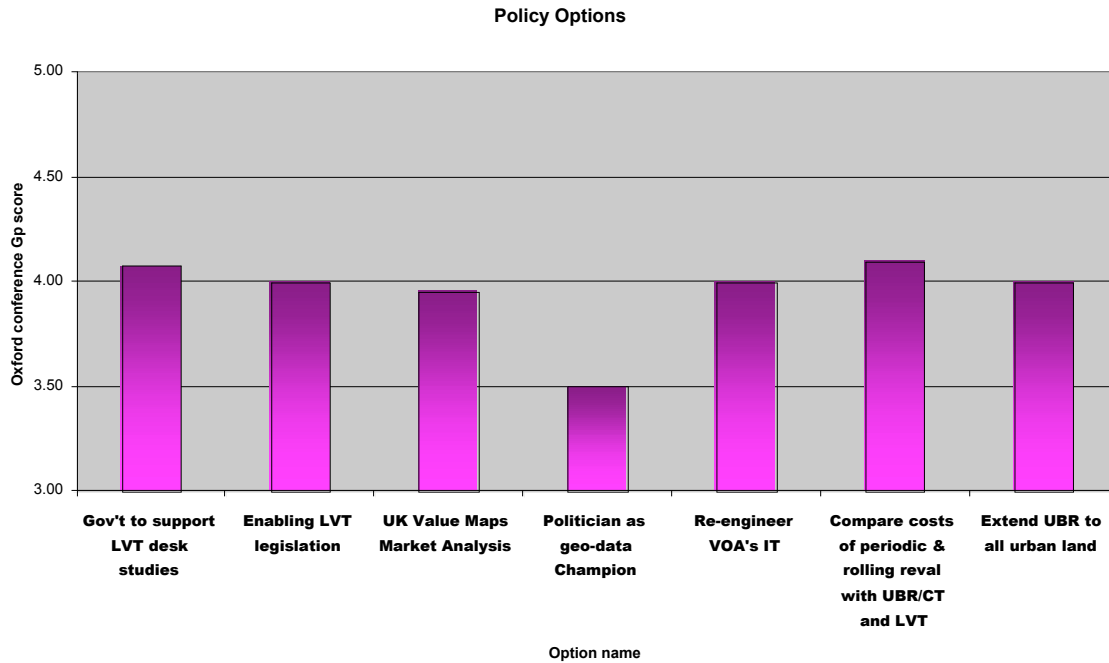


Figure 4

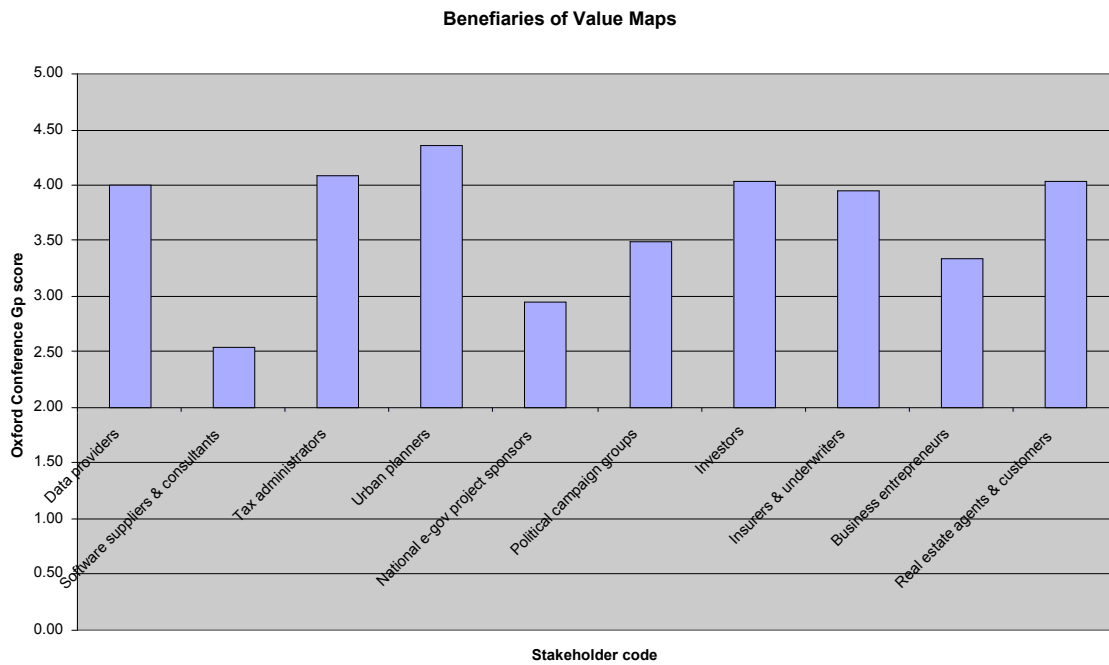


Figure 5

Draft Policy Plan

Having analysed the Issues relating to UK value mapping as thoroughly as the Delphi Process allows and having also introduced participants to some Policy Options (POs), in Round Three the aim is to seek broad consensus as to the range of policy (and other) actions that might be required to achieve the introduction of value maps. Additional POs which either some participants offered or which have emerged through interviews and other activities by the researcher are here brought together with some of the original set and tabulated in draft as a coherent whole Policy Plan for comment by the Delphi Group.

In addition, Delphi participants will be asked in Round Three (as were the overseas FIG targets and the Oxford conference delegates) to give their views as to the relative potential benefits of value maps to specified UK stakeholder groups. Other methods – mainly further one-to-one meetings – will be used in an attempt to derive indicative figures for costs of the various measures necessary and the quantifiable benefits to ‘UK plc’ that may accrue. Benefits and costs will be attributed to the various stakeholder groups, for each separate component of the Plan, where possible in the final dissertation.

It has become apparent that there are three distinct but inter-locking aspects to any Plan:-

- * **‘The Mind’s Eye: Revealing the landvaluescape’** – this encompasses the philosophical, geo-science and cultural aspects that gave rise to the concept paper which began this research. It has almost nothing to do with tax or land policy, although it could have a great influence on political forces especially in relation to the economic and ethical case for LVT.
- * **‘The GI Agenda: Joining up geo-data’** – this involves the mechanics of making the reality of economic geography in the UK come together using modern technology: the institutional, legal and technical elements of the various datasets that are needed for value mapping. As a by-product they are needed also for LVT.
- * **‘The Property Business: markets and taxation’** – this is the group of issues that are not geographical but dependent on geography: drivers from within the property, finance and insurance markets that could release funds to enable value mapping.

It is clear now that, although any modern tax on real estate would most rationally use CAMA/GIS and hence value maps, value maps are not dependent on LVT. There are several reasons to separate land values from building values, among which are ‘revealing the landvaluescape’ and ‘introducing LVT’ but also ‘targeted premiums for property insurance’, ‘better land management’, ‘reduced risk for investors’, etc. The point is that LVT is more dependent on value maps than value maps are dependent on property tax reform: they may naturally go together but it can be counter-productive in a society of owner-occupiers to draw attention to that link.

It is clear also that the Delphi Group contains people who are strongly supportive of LVT as well as people who are not, which inevitably influences their responses to many of the Issues and POs. The purpose of any Policy Delphi is not to **make** decisions or even achieve consensus (although that is desirable where possible and many Issues are non-contentious e.g., in this case, nothing to do with LVT) but to draw out a range of policy options that can be analysed by suitable people with as wide a variety of views and expertise as possible, so as to inform **others** – outside the process entirely and also holding differing views – as to what might be achieved in the real world (Turoff 1970).

Inevitably Policy requires political decision-making in order to be carried forward, such decisions hopefully being taken in the light of evidence.

Consequently this Policy Plan contains alternative courses of action, some of which may not be necessary for the shared objective – UK Value Mapping – to be achieved. It attempts to satisfy a variety of possible political scenarios, all having some realistic prospect of taking place.

Most of the ‘High’ priority POs are currently seen as essential for value mapping (Policy Plan includes POs 1,4,5,6,8,11): none of these relates to LVT. The other POs listed are seen as helping to secure an easier passage for value mapping, in some respects, although arguably making the Policy Plan more controversial and politically difficult because they involve tax reform and/or more far-reaching changes in geo-data policy. This draft Policy Plan is highly dependent on the formation of a private sector consortium (PO4) emerging as a catalyst.

No.	Policy Option	Explanation	Priority	Links back to
1	Government statement of support for the idea of a national land valuation, independent of tax reform and primarily as a potential tool of land policy.	Would encourage a number of research activities and justify access by researchers to publicly-held datasets. Would not immediately require Government to provide any other resources.	High	
2	Government to accept publicly that, in principle, the monitoring of all key datasets should be continuous and not periodic.	Applies to census, electoral register, etc. – as well as land and property values. Already accepted for topographic data, postcodes, etc. Would make it harder to resist calls for rolling revaluation, irrespective of type of property tax.	Medium	
3	Government’s proposed “GI Panel” to report to a different Department than OS (preferably Cabinet Office).	Would make it more likely that GI projects are seen as part of wider <i>e-government</i> . There is an inevitable conflict of interest when a public agency is also trading with other public sector bodies: the agency’s interests are conflated with those of ‘the public’.	Medium	
4	Private sector consortium offer to Government to fund national land valuation.	Could be: Association of British Insurers, who need building values; Society of Mortgage Lenders, who need house market prices; British Property Federation, interested in	High	1

No.	Policy Option	Explanation	Priority	Links back to
5	Public Private Partnership Agreement to produce and maintain consistent all-embracing land value dataset.	If data is to be used for any statutory purposes, it will need Government approval. First stage: 'in principle' agreement.	High	4
6	Commissioning a UK Value Maps Market Analysis	Following directly from PPP Agreement in principle, would identify costs as well as benefits. Needs Government support but should be carried by private sector.	High	2, 5
7	Appointing a Government Champion for GI, including Value Maps.	The same Minister responsible for <i>e-government</i> would be best. Hopefully this is someone in Cabinet Office.	High	3
8	Completing the UK Land Registers.	Assuming a 'trigger' is needed for retrospective title registration in Britain: Scotland's situation different than E&W.	High	
9	Separate data custodianship responsibilities from production and use, creating a State Enterprise Centre of Registers (SECR).	Based on Lithuania model, self-funding. Advantages: 1) overcomes conflicts of interest between producers, users and the wider public interest in key data sets; 2) concentrates expertise in information management; 3) maximises revenue to Exchequer from private sector users of public data. This is the institutional expression of 'joined up e-government'. In UK and for value mapping could incorporate land title and ownership parcels, land use, addresses and values (not 'raw' data).	Medium	3,7

No.	Policy Option	Explanation	Priority	Links back to
10	Create network of Local Land Information Managers (LLIMs)	Might be employed by SECR, as its local presence. Would also act as resource for local GI users. Need not be public sector, local surveyors might tender to provide the service. Main task: identification and classification of changes in attributes of spatial features held by SECR.	Medium	9
11	Re-engineer property tax IT systems (VOA and equivalents in Scotland) to fully exploit GIS / CAMA.	Irrespective of tax reform but if possible incorporating all types of land in due course. Assumes Valuebill Project completes the NLPG by 2007.	High	
12	Allow tax-raising trials of LVT.	Although value maps and land valuation can happen without LVT, it would seem sensible to link tax reform studies to value maps. Government support needed (Scotland might not need approval from UK). Could come if BIDs' funding arrangements prove unsatisfactory at 2006 review.	Medium	
13	Revive NLUD in accordance with original purpose.	To include actual use and 'HABU' for all land types (the latter assumed to be same as actual unless proved otherwise). Might first need to be justified as result of Value Maps market analysis.	Medium	6, 10
14	Extend property taxes to cover all urban land, especially vacant sites and derelict properties.	Might help justify value maps. Has other benefits, as Urban Task Force recognised.	Medium	

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