

UKBIM Alliance Product Data Working Group – Meeting 1 Interim Report



The UK BIM Alliance Product Data Working group has had its first meeting. Here is a report of its discussions so far.

We would welcome discussion, suggestions and other comments on this work. You can contact us via the communications methods set out at the bottom of this document. The group will be meeting again on 15th May.

1. Structured Data

Product data needs to be structured for us to achieve what we want with it in a digitally enabled built environment. Not everyone in industry knows what ‘Structured Data’ means. We have therefore discussed what we mean by ‘Structured Product Data’ and are drafting up a definition and explanation. As a result, there are several key terms we also feel need defining.

2. Standards

Our January meeting which led to the foundation of this working group, identified that product data needs a set of standards, and that these need to be developed ‘in conjunction with Europe’. We have confirmed that there is a set of International (ISO), European (CEN) and UK (BSI) standards processes and for product data to become successfully digitized the UK needs to align with the work already being done by CEN/TC442 Technical Committee which deals with product data.

We are aware that little is known across industry about all this work, and so the working group are

- Looking for examples to show how the standards that exist are not being implemented
- Confirming what the TC is currently working on,
- Confirming the status of the PAS documents including PAS1192-7 (which was related to Product Data).

This should enable us to set out the state of play with relation to standards in a way which can be understood by lay people in our industry, and identify any issues which need resolving.

3. National Body

The January meeting identified that there did not appear (or it was not known whether) there was a National Body whose role it was to develop and communicate an agreed set of data requirements.

The working group currently believes that this National Body is the BSi. (British Standards Institution). However, it appears to be the case that industry is not clear about its role and we are not clear about how it is working with industry. We will be talking to the BSi about their work and how communication about product data requirements currently works and how it can be improved.

4. Data Hosting

For construction and built environment people to create and use digitized product data they need “Separate hosting services which are simple and cost effective, from which participants can access the information required,” our January meeting said.

There are many different hosting companies occupying this space. Their business model is usually to create and host for a fee, usually 3D content with data attached.

These companies have provided an important service to the industry and committed considerable resources to support the hosting process. However, we believe that how the market has grown may not at present be serving the objective of product data in the most effective way for industry.

In the future, the creation and hosting space may look very different. We are aware that initiatives such as LEXiCON, which is a mechanism to enable manufacturers to create and disseminate structured, governed data to the market, will act as a disruptor in this space. In addition, assigning GUIDs (Global Unique Identifier) to products may allow data to be stored and pulled in from elsewhere.

Organisations creating and working with product data need to be aware of the way that product hosting may be significantly changed by these developments, and be able to make strategic decisions about how to create and store data in future.

We are looking into this area and welcome submissions from individuals and organisations with a strategic perspective to help us in this.

5. Data Journey

The process of “inputting, validating and tracking product data” needs to take place without waste or duplication. At present some of the processes being used are very wasteful. For example, manufacturers already have product data for manufacture, but this is often seen separately from data to be communicated to the specifier, contractor and client, which is often housed in other forms such as pdf data sheets.

This issue doesn’t only apply to manufacturers – it covers all disciplines and one element of particular concern is the journey from construction to FM.

The group does not intend to itemize all the data journeys that occur, we need to focus on the related issues involved at present with product data journeys.

There were some comments during this part of the meeting around BIM uses, with a nod towards Penn State University who have compiled a list of different BIM uses. Is product data determined by BIM uses directly?

We wish to hear from professionals across industry who have challenges in this area to give us examples of what they are currently doing and what they need.

6. Terminology

Across industry we give the same things different names, so we need a dictionary of some sort to help us (and our technologies) talk to each other effectively.

The international standards institutions have standards for the definitions of product attributes, and have concluded that we don't need one dictionary but several, and that these dictionaries need to align to the standard methodology. Many of the individual data dictionaries are working into this alignment.

People in industry need to be aware of this process and have comfort that the way they deal with their product data and the companies who help them are also in alignment with the international standard methodology.

We are writing up the detail of this area and speaking to the standards organisations to clarify matters.

7. Security

Data needs to be secure, but is there a particular need for product data? The recently published PAS1192-5 focuses very much on asset security and doesn't really relate to products.

We welcome input from people across industry to tell us whether product data security is an issue for them, and provide us with examples so that we can investigate this area further.

8. Education

Finally, as well as being simple for people across industry to read, understand, discuss and act on, we need to look at the process of communicating the value of structured data to industry, both in terms of 'Why' and 'How'. The group is discussing what type of communications might help us do this most effectively, with a view to setting up a process of taking this work and pushing it out to be effectively used across our industry.

Talk to Us

There are three ways of getting in touch with the working group:

1. Keep informed of requests for information by subscribing to the Alliance newsletter here: <http://bit.ly/UKBIMAnews>
2. Join the Alliance Slack Workspace to have conversations with the workgroup members and fellow interested parties: <http://bit.ly/joinUKBIMAslack> There is a dedicated #product_data channel for these conversations.
3. Email the group directly at pdwg@ukbimalliance.org

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