



Fact Sheet

An Introduction to Open, Shared and Closed Data

What is Open Data?

The Open Data Institute (ODI) provides the following definition: “open data is data that anyone can access, use or share.” “Anyone” refers to literally anyone, including commercial users. So Open Data can be accessed, used, remixed and shared again with no restrictions at all. The [2012 government white paper](#) expands on this:

Open Data – Data that meets the following criteria:

- accessible (ideally via the internet) at no more than the cost of reproduction, without limitations based on user identity or intent;
- in a digital, machine readable format for interoperation with other data; and
- free of restriction on use or redistribution in its licencing conditions.

In some cases, the data provider may stipulate that their data is attributed, i.e. data users must acknowledge who provided the original data in any outputs they produce.

Example: a photograph obtained for illustration purposes from [Wikimedia Commons](#), where the photographer must be acknowledged.

LERC datasets do not have to be published at full capture resolution in their entirety to be considered ‘open’. Control over the data remains with the publisher, so resolution can be blurred, attributes withheld, or particular records omitted, it is simply the licence that makes data ‘open’ or ‘shared’.

What is Shared Data?

According to the Open Data Institute this is harder to define and exists in “[shades](#)” as follows

- Named access – “data that is shared only with named people or organisations” for example LERC datasets provided under licence for a specific purpose e.g. work with students
- Group-based access – “data that is available to specific groups who meet certain criteria” for example LERC datasets provided under licence as part of core services for stakeholders
- Public access – “data that is available to anyone under terms and conditions that are not ‘open’” for example any data currently available to the public on the NBN Gateway, or via the NBN Atlas under a CC-BY-NC licence

In practice, this means that data which is available to use, but that is not accompanied by a specific open data licence is referred to as ‘shared’.



What is Closed Data?

Closed data is [defined by the ODI](#) as “data that can only be accessed by its subject, owner or holder.”

Example: employment contracts, personal details, other information people keep to themselves (by its nature, a link to a real example can't be posted here).

Data Licencing

In order to understand quickly what data is open, or what restrictions apply to data, standardised licences are often used. Commonly for environmental data, these licences are either Creative Commons (CC) licences, or the Open Government Licence (OGL).

There are several [CC licences](#) that data can be published under, some of which allow data to be considered open, and some of which allow it to be considered shared.

Licence Name	Description	Open / Shared
CC0	This licence has no restrictions or stipulations at all.	Open
CC-BY	This licence stipulates that data originators must be credited where their data is used, but provides no restrictions on what it can be used for or who uses it.	Open
CC-BY-NC	Like the above except that commercial use of the data is not permitted. The NBN Trust will be defining what it means by 'commercial use' in collaboration with ALERC and other Network members in time for the launch of the Atlas in April 2017	Shared

These licences are currently operating on the [NBN Atlases](#). It is important to note that once a dataset has been issued with a CC licence, this [cannot be revoked](#). New replacement datasets can be released, but the originals will be in circulation forever under the same licence with which they were originally published.

Government Data

In order to publish its own Open Data, the Government has produced the [Open Government Licence \(OGL\)](#). The facets of this licence make it equivalent to the CC-BY licence. The [Ordnance Survey](#) makes some data available under this licence.

Further Reading

The full ODI data spectrum can be found [here](#).

The Defra Open Data Strategy can be found [here](#).

Many government datasets are published [here](#), a lot of which are environmental.

The selection of CC licences available on the NBN Atlases is in line with those used to publish data on GBIF. More information can be found [here](#).