

Why we helped design the new UK Companies House URIs

Submitted on 11 Nov 2011 by Chris Taggart

Mid October, the [UK Companies House took the wraps off its URIs for companies](#). Now this is actually rather more significant than you might think (though frankly we are going to struggle to make it sexy).

First, it's significant from the UK open data perspective, as in part it was the lack of a persistent URL [which led to Companies Open House](#), an early precursor to [OpenCorporates](#). Like quite a few company registers around the world, Companies House has URLs based on user sessions, which means that they change each time you visit them. The lack of permanent URLs for companies is a real problem when trying to reference companies, as anyone will know who's ever been sent an email containing a Companies House URL only to find it takes you to the search page, not the page for the company concerned.

Second, it is significant because – with a little bit of arm-twisting by the Cabinet Office – Companies House has created these with the input of the open data community in the shape of OpenCorporates. Now URIs for companies is something we've got a bit of an opinion on, publishing over 27 million of them in over 30 jurisdictions, including 7 million for UK companies, and while much about the process was cumbersome and frustrating, what was gratifying was that Companies House listened to our input and changed their URI structure (for help with understanding the difference between URL and URIs see this [Wikipedia Article](#) and this [StackOverflow answer](#)).

Now the information you can get from those URIs is pretty bare to be honest, but that's not really the point here. The point is that the government has now produced URIs which not only permanently identify the companies, but follow the same principles to those used by the Open Data community, being based only on the company number.

So, the Companies House URI for Vodafone PLC is <http://business.data.gov.uk/id/company/01833679> and the OpenCorporates one is <http://opencorporates.com/id/companies/gb/01833679>. Both of these redirect to a HTML web page with a similar URL by default, or to pages that return JSON, XML or RDF data if that is requested. You can see how easy it is to switch between the two, and in fact every UK company page on OpenCorporates now has a link to the Companies House page.

Perhaps some of the more astute business people out there are surely asking, *“Why would they do that? Why would OpenCorporates help Companies House come up with a URI system that mirrors their own and so, arguably, helps make it less essential, and with it reduce a chance of being the monopoly supplier.”*

Well, it's not naïvety; nor is it just a determination to do the Right Thing, although that's very important to us, and in fact the choice of URI structure in OpenCorporates is designed to prevent anyone, including OpenCorporates, being able to have a monopoly over company identifiers. It's also a realisation that unless we pull governments kicking and screaming into the open data world, we'll end up with a world with little power for citizens and little opportunity for those who want to build a business based on open data and doing the right thing have a chance.

This is especially true for corporate data, and in a world where company registers publishing all their data in a free and open way is the exception rather than the rule (shamefully, none in the EU do so), this is an important step, and one we were happy to support.

Now the question is: will this just be another isolated island of URIs, or will the government actually become part of the open data community, by linking out to OpenCorporates and other open data projects? And will they be using OpenCorporates reconciliation service to match their own data, suppliers, etc to real-world legal entity or continue with using proprietary and closed identifiers such as Dun & Bradstreet's poisonous [DUNS numbering system](#)? Answers in comments :)



VODAFONE GROUP PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY
(01833679)

		rdf	json	xml	html
CompanyName	VODAFONE GROUP PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY				
CompanyNumber	01833679				
RegAddress	AddressLine1	VODAFONE HOUSE			
	AddressLine2	THE CONNECTION			
	PostTown	NEWBURY			
	County	BERKSHIRE			
	Postcode	RG14 2FN			
CompanyCategory	Public Limited Company				
CompanyStatus	Active				
CountryOfOrigin	United Kingdom				
IncorporationDate	17/07/1984				
PreviousNames	CONDate	28/07/2000			
	CompanyName	VODAFONE AIRTOUCH PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY			

A Companies House page



VODAFONE GROUP PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY

Company Number	01833679
Status	Active
Incorporation Date	17 July 1984, (over 27 years ago)
Company Type	Public Limited Company
Jurisdiction	United Kingdom
Registered Address	VODAFONE HOUSE, THE CONNECTION, NEWBURY, BERKSHIRE, RG14 2FN
SIC Codes	32.20 - Manufacture of television and radio transmitters and apparatus for line telephony and line telegraphy 64.20 - Telecommunications 74.15 - Management activities of holding companies
Previous Names	VODAFONE AIRTOUCH PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY (2000-07-28) VODAFONE GROUP PUBLIC LIMITED

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Corporate Grouping

VODAFONE **11**

Other companies in this grouping

- Vodafone Marketing S.à r.l. (Luxembourg, 8 Oct 2003)
- VODAFONE MALTA LIMITED (Malta)
- Vodafone International Holdings B.V. (Netherlands)
- VODAFONE LIMITED (United Kingdom, 7 Jun 1980)
- VODAFONE GROUP SERVICES LIMITED (United Kingdom, 7 Jul 1999)
- Eignarhaldsfélagið Fjarskipti hf (Iceland, 4 Jan 2011)
- Fjarskipti ehf (Iceland, 7 Sep 2003)
- VODAFONE (NI) LIMITED (United Kingdom)
- VODAFONE (SCOTLAND) LIMITED (United Kingdom, 29 Nov 1996)

[SEE ALL](#)

An OpenCorporates page for the same company

Previous Names VODAFONE AIRTOUCH PUBLIC LIMITED
COMPANY (2000-07-28)
VODAFONE GROUP PUBLIC LIMITED
COMPANY (1999-06-29)

Registry Page <http://data.companieshouse.gov.uk/doc...>

Recent filings for VODAFONE GROUP PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY



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