

Meeting Notes for Land Evidence Forum meeting (via MS Teams) 17th April 14:30 – 16:00

Chair: EPA

Attendees: Alan Cahill (CSO), Nova Sharkey (CSO), Catherine Dunbar (DAFM Oliver Molloy (DAFM), Marc Kierans (DECC), Niamh Gibbons (DECC), Claire Byrne (EPA), Fiona O'Rourke (EPA), Gavin Smith (EPA), Ian Doyle (Heritage Council), Lorcan Scott (Heritage Council), Gemma Weir (NPWS), David Nevin (OPR), Paul Kane (Táilte Eireann (TE)), Lilian O'Sullivan (Teagasc), Stuart Green (Teagasc)

Apologies: Hugh Carey (DHLGH), Tara Higgins (EPA), AnneMarie O'Connor (OPR)

Agenda

1. Tour de Table – land related developments and activities of interest (30 mins) (All)
 - a. EPA Copernicus LMS assessment – verbal update from EPA, including invitation to contribute to a national catalogue
 - b. EPA LULUCF project – verbal update from EPA
 - c. EPA short study on land use data structure – verbal update from EPA
 - d. Feedback on national landcover map from users – Round table discussion on use of the landcover map and potential future activities for landcover mapping
 - e. Proposal for a national validation framework
 - f. Interest from GSI and others in setting up the National LIDAR Forum once again.
2. Land Evidence Knowledge Sharing (20 mins)
 - a. Presentation from Teagasc on land evidence activities
 - b. Selection of next presenter
3. Status of Land use evidence review Phase 2 (5 mins)
4. Update on EEA Land Group activities (5 mins)
5. Review TOR and 2023 priorities/focus for this group (25 mins) (All)
 - a. Updates to TOR
 - b. Chairing of the group
 - c. Continued use of Glasscubes
6. AOB (5 mins)
7. Dates and agenda items for the next meeting (All)

No	Mtg Date	Action	Who	Status
40	Apr '23	Discussion paper on national validation framework	SG	
41	Apr' 23	Document regulatory and/or data revision requirements for national landcover map	All	
42	Apr '23	Arrange meeting at the end of June via Doodle poll	FOR	

1. **Tour de Table – land related developments and activities of interest**
 - a. **EPA Copernicus Land Monitoring System (CLMS) assessment – verbal update from EPA, including invitation to contribute to a national catalogue**

EPA continue with the CLMS review GS introduced at the last meeting:

- Data catalogue done with summary information – 103 items

- Next step underway, review of a selection of these 103 (priority from EPA perspective) and the EPA are happy to share their shortlist
- EPA won't review all 103 datasets but are happy to share the format/template for anyone in the group who wants to review datasets that aren't on the EPA shortlist
- Benefit of this would be a standard catalogue that could be shared for land evidence users
- EPA hope to do an accuracy assessment of the datasets, but need to develop an approach for this and see what is feasible to do

b. EPA LULUCF project – verbal update from EPA

LULUCF perspective map has been created for 2018, 2020 and 2021: this is a land use map but only for the LULUCF classes. Reviewing this data now. Trying to process other years depending on available data. Biggest limiter is the ICT infrastructure required to process the data and limitations of data consistency over different years.

NG asked is grassland on mineral soil captured? GS replied only have LULUCF classes now but want to capture other environmental characteristics like management regimes and soil types if we can get the data for this. Current work is focussed on land use (LULUCF) classes.

c. EPA short study on land use data structure – verbal update from EPA

FOR noted that Phase 1 of the land use review identified the need for land use map(s). EPA undertaking very small piece of technical work to examine how the land use data could be structured by looking at what other countries do. Land use data is different to landcover map where you have multiple uses at a location. Looking at options for how it can be structured e.g. grid, series of integrated maps etc. Outcome will be a short technical report on the options which will be well progressed for the next meeting of the group.

d. Feedback on national landcover map from users – Round table discussion on use of the landcover map and potential future activities for landcover mapping

AC noted landcover map is a key dataset for CSO ecosystems accounting. What are the plans for the landcover map: can we cover this in a future meeting? PK confirmed the landcover map is a key dataset that TE will continue to produce they are examining the update cycle for the landcover map which must align with the aerial imagery update cycle.

FOR asked the group to document their regulatory dependencies and ideal update cycle for the landcover map.

NS outlined the importance of land evidence to ecosystems accounting and asked if there was interest in producing ecosystem map. GW affirmed that NPWS are interested.

GS confirmed that the landcover map is being used to correct LULUCF data gaps. The EPA State of the Environment (SOE) report in 2020 noted the importance of coordinated land mapping. Production work is starting on the SOE 2024 – EPA will have the task of explaining the difference between the new landcover map (2018 imagery) and Corine 2018 statistics.

SG noted the need for communication activities on the proper use of the new landcover map, for non-technical users. The limitations of the map need formal explanation using a very graphical document. It needs to be clear that the accuracy of the landcover map doesn't translate to individual farms or specific suburbs. SG offered Teagasc support for this task. GW agreed that this communication was required. GW asked if a structured feedback mechanism was available to collect feedback on the map. GW confirmed that NPWS have a list of projects that would help to identify future requirements for the landcover map.

FOR noted the need for communication but also noted the project is completed and there are no active project resources available in TE or EPA. It is also hard to document all the potential misuses of the map.

e. Proposal for a national validation framework

GS relayed the possibility to set up a baseline dataset of ground sites to validate different kinds of land maps. SG observed the crucial importance of having ground observations that are scalable for remote sensing use. The land use and management would have to be captured on the ground 3 to 4 times a year to build an annual picture. PK confirmed that a network like this would be very useful to TE, particularly for time series assessment, and TE would be happy to participate and to manage the control points database.

SG had examined this area before and concluded 350 – 400 sites would be needed. It could be run as a voluntary monitoring network like Met Eireann rain gauges. GW noted that FarmForBio and High Nature value farming locations offered opportunities. SG took an action to elaborate what could be done into a short discussion paper. He noted the importance of clearly defining the sample object and purpose so that it can meet multiple purposes.

f. Interest from GSI and others in setting up the National LIDAR Forum once again.

GS relayed that a recent LULUCF meeting raised interest in getting a LIDAR interest group back up and running. SG noted that NUIM had activities in this area. A LIDAR project in Northern Ireland indicates that full LIDAR coverage for Ireland would cost an estimated €6 – 7 million. Pooling resources to create a national dataset that would be available to all public bodies would be worth examining. PK confirmed that TE had been contacted through Colin Bray by NUIM and GSI with regard to starting a National Lidar Forum and that TE would respond directly to this request. TE expect to take a lead role in the acquisition and production of National Lidar data and to manage the National height Model.

2. Land Evidence Knowledge Sharing (20 mins)

- a. Presentation from Teagasc on land evidence activities
- b. Selection of next presenter

This item was postponed to the next meeting.

3. Status of Land use evidence review Phase 2 (5 mins)

MK confirmed that Phase 1 is published online. Government have approved a plan for Phase 2. The details of roles and responsibilities are being clarified. It is planned to have an interim report on Phase 2 completed by the end of 2023 with a final report in early 2025. Land use review or strategy overall is a longer term, rolling process that will need to continue.

4. Update on EEA Land Group activities (5 mins)

GS updated group that an EEA webinar on LULUCF was scheduled for the following Thursday. He would provide an update at the next meeting.

5. Review TOR and 2023 priorities/focus for this group (25 mins) (All)

- a. Updates to TOR
- b. Chairing of the group
- c. Continued use of Glasscubes

Some suggestions were made but overall it was agreed to pause the review of the TOR pending clarity on roles and responsibilities for Phase 2. It was suggested the name of the group could be updated to Expert Group on National Land Information. The existing name “Land Evidence Forum”

implies a link to the products of the land evidence review. Having a rotating chair then implies a strong link with the chair or lead for the land evidence review tasks.

6. AOB (5 mins)

NS advised group there is a CSO forum on Ecosystems Accounting 15th May.

FOR asked group for assistance with soils text in the Land and Soils chapter of the 2024 SOE report, being drafted now.