

Land Evidence Forum meeting

Date/time: 14:30 Thursday 19th January 2023

Chair: Fiona O'Rourke, EPA

Attendees: Alan Cahill (CSO), Nova Sharkey (CSO), Frank Barrett (DAFM), Catherine Dunbar (DAFM), Oliver Molloy (DAFM), Marc Kierans (DECC), Niamh Gibbons (DECC), Tara Higgins (EPA), Claire Byrne (EPA), Gavin Smith (EPA), Hugh Carey (DHLGH), Ray Scanlon (GSI), Ian Doyle (Heritage Council), Lorcan Scott (Heritage Council), Paul Kane (OSI), Lilian O'Sullivan (Teagasc), Stuart Green (Teagasc)

Apologies: Gemma Weir (NPWS), Thomas Harty (DAFM)

Agenda

1. Tour de Table – land related developments and activities of interest (30 mins) (All)
 - a. National landcover map status
 - b. EPA Copernicus assessment
 - c. EPA LULUCF project
2. Status of Land use evidence review (15 mins)
 - a. Phase 1 documents and publication
 - b. Phase 2 status
3. Report from EEA Land Group activities (20 mins)
4. Continue discussion on 2023 priorities and focus for this group (15 mins) (All)
5. AOB (10 mins)
6. Dates and agenda items for the next meeting (All)

No	Mtg Date	Action (see list at https://epa2.glasscubes.com/share/s/3e5j2gmi3g7a3ccrodm50u0v1)	Who	Status
31	Sept	Circulate link to Biodiversity Action Plan. https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/1566c-public-consultation-on-irelands-4th-national-biodiversity-action-plan/#documents	EPA	Closed
32	Sept	Read draft Synthesis Report and provided comments / feedback by 28 th September – link will be issued by EPA after 16 th Sept.	All	Closed
33	Sept	If possible, arrange a meeting between DAFM, DECC, EPA and EH.	EPA	Complete
34	Sept	DAFM & DECC to consider needs around infographic material for the launch of Phase 1. EPA to facilitate if time permits.	DAFM & DECC	Open
35	Sept	Arrange meeting in Feb 2023 via doodle pool	EPA	Complete
36	Jan '23	Clarify if research submissions can be done independently by organisations or should be done as a consortium	TH, EPA	Complete, see below
37	Jan '23	Review terms of reference and add comments/suggested edits via the file on Glasscubes before the next meeting	All	
38	Jan '23	Get contact for work on agricultural indicators.	SG	
39	Jan '23	Arrange meeting in April via doodle poll	FOR, EPA	

Item 1 Tour de Table – land related developments and activities of interest

- a. National landcover map status

Update from Paul Kane, who will circulate an email with details before end of next week. Preparing product now – 2 weeks to go to get documentation together but data will be available to download

for main stakeholders: details to follow in email. Data will be provided in Amazon S3 bucket to everyone under the OSI National Mapping Agreement, via a download link.

- b. EPA Copernicus assessment (see item 3)
- c. EPA LULUCF project

GS updated that the national run of data for 2018 had gone to the LULUCF steering committee. Feedback from the SC on this data is important to finalise the method, and feedback is due within the next two weeks. 2021 and 2020 will be processed next: some data limitations exist that can't be resolved without changes to the base data.

FB notified the group that the National Forest Inventory report for 2021 will be available on the DAFM website in the next 2-3 weeks.

SG updated that Teagasc are finalising a "winter bare soil" map over the next couple of months. They are also using an AI model to read symbols for certain land types (e.g. marsh, rushy areas) from the OSI historical 6" mapping to confirm changes from unmanaged to managed land. Teagasc would like input from any other organisations who had used or come across standard definitions for "bare soil" to make sure this is aligned.

MK identified an opportunity to submit items from the Phase 1 list of recommendations as research work to the EPA call for research topics open until 25th January (see item 4 below).

NS updated that:

- (i) She attended a EuroStat working group on land cover and land-use statistics. This included a discussion on the LUCAS survey, a pan-European study running since 2006 using photo-interpretation and field work, and plans for future iterations of LUCAS
- (ii) The amendment to the EU regulation on environmental economic accounts, which would introduce a module on Ecosystem Accounts is going through an approval process at the European Parliament. The CSO are involved in a Eurostat Task Force developing guidance documents and methodologies to accompany the module.

SG asked if the next LUCAS will include transects – NS confirmed she raised this but did not get a definitive response yet.

Item 2 Status of Land use evidence review

Phase 1 documents and publication were sent to DECC and DAFM, who have prepared a memo for Government which is scheduled go to cabinet at the end of the month.

Phase 2 proposals and options have been prepared: while they are not agreed yet they will pick up on the recommendations from Phase 1.

Item 3 Report from EEA Land Group activities

GS gave an overview of the European Environment Agency (EEA) land system groups and the Copernicus activities relevant to land. GS updated the group on work the EPA are commencing to catalogue and review the potential uses of the Copernicus Land Monitoring Service products available.

SG agreed this review of CLMS was a good idea and that Teagasc would be willing to support this work and could contribute the results of work they did last year on biophysical products. He noted it is important to pick one of the basic products and do a sensitivity analysis on differences in processing.

RS said GSI are doing work with Karen Daly (Teagasc) using the Tellus data and would like to keep in touch with the Eionet Soils Group activities.

FB asked if pan-European Copernicus data is being used in policy formation or monitoring. SG noted that the new continual inspection model for CAP would influence the design of Copernicus 2 products. It is important to identify the areas where this is not appropriate for Ireland where our own data is a better description of our land regime.

FB asked about the relationship between the new National Landcover Map and Corine updates: GS responded that we are waiting for the EEA to outline how the next Corine products will be created.

Item 4 Continue discussion on 2023 priorities and focus for this group

FOR suggested a review of the Terms of Reference for the group to make sure they were still aligned with expectations. FOR suggested keeping EEA Land group activities as a standing item on the agenda and that a deeper presentation from member organisations on specific topics or projects would be useful. FOR noted the group met more frequently last year than planned, to facilitate the land use review, and suggested a quarterly meeting would be enough now.

SG observed that it is important for the forum to have specific tasks to solve. MK agreed that Phase 2 of the land use review would likely supply some more tasks for the group and this should be clearer when the group meet again in April.

Following MK's suggestion to review items to submit to the EPA research call, the group reviewed some of the recommendations from Phase 1. Group sought clarification from EPA whether a combined submission was needed, or whether organisations could submit their ideas independently: how would the EPA manage overlapping ideas?

TH provided this clarification:

In terms of the process, the EPA research team have confirmed that where several similar-type research ideas are submitted, these will be combined at the screening stage.

Therefore at this stage it is better to submit your ideas, even if there is duplication, so that they are 'in the pot' for consideration.

Ideas must be submitted before the deadline of 25 January 2023:

*It is envisaged that the **EPA Research Call 2023** will seek proposals that address both specific topics as well as broader thematic areas. The inclusion of broader themes aims to widen participation in the EPA Research Programme, to build capacity in emerging areas of policy needs, and to explore ideas that may cross-cut a number of environmental policy areas. Suggestions for both specific topics and broader themes are welcome. Please note that ideas should clearly articulate the research question to be addressed. Projects will not commence until Q1 2024 with a minimum duration of 12 months*

It was agreed that organisations would submit ideas but that other LEF members could be consulted and work together on ideas if this was valuable.

RS noted that GSI are working on peaty/intermediate soils data via the Tellus physical soil samples and AI mapping. FB asked if this would be a product? RS said this was the intention but that a product would be a couple of years away, he invited feedback from LEF members.

LOS updated that a two-day workshop is being organised in May to discuss peat soils evidence. Lots of organisations are involved in peat soil in different ways, and the workshop would help to share knowledge of activity in this area. LEF participants were welcome to join: LOS can put LEF members in touch with organisers.

SG noted work being done in Teagasc on soil indicators, he would get the contact details for FOR to follow up relating to the research call.

SG observed that an AI version of the EAGLE scheme would be useful to allow quick creation of land use data to confirm that classes were mapping as expected.

FOR will send a doodle poll for a meeting in Q2 (April). FOR asked if Teagasc would like to present on their projects of interest.