

Atlas of Living Scotland – Update

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www.als.scot

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Executive summary

- Atlas now live at www.als.scot including main atlas and spatial portal
- 7.3 million records committed to the Atlas by 32 Data Partners under a Creative Commons License (out of a total of 11 million records currently held on the NBN Gateway by 87 Data Partners).
- Stakeholder partnership group established, user testing group set up and user interface designed and built.
- Atlas of Living Wales business case prepared, Northern Ireland discussions occurring towards developing a business case and England discussions happening at Defra on 2 November.
- Meetings planned (with Kew and RSPB) regarding Atlas for Overseas Territories
- Spatial layers, images and data to be loaded in October and spatial portal and ecosystem database under construction
- Cheap/sponsored hosting options being investigated with Microsoft, DataCentred and Amazon Web Services.
- Project management and communications being coordinated by NBN Secretariat – significant activity needed over the next four months and more resource needed if programme becomes UK-wide

Background

The Atlas of Living Scotland was created in 2015 to provide a platform for the collection, aggregation, analysis and use of biological data in Scotland. It has been created as a daughter website to Scotland's Environment Web. It is also a pilot for a potential UK-wide initiative to develop new biodiversity data infrastructure for the entire United Kingdom.

Many people and organisations in Scotland are involved in observing, monitoring and recording nature including government and non-government organisations, research and educational institutions, Local Environmental Record Centres, museums and botanic gardens, community groups and national and regional biological recording schemes and societies.

The atlas provides a platform to bring the data, collected by these organisations, together, and to merge them with other environmental data such as spatial layers for soil, climate and habitats. This initiative would not be possible were it not for the work of these Atlas Data Partners in monitoring and recording species and habitats across Scotland, most of which is done by volunteers and citizen scientists.

The Atlas of Living Australia team at Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Australia built the atlas. It uses the open source code and biodiversity data infrastructure that they designed and built.

The project is a partnership between the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and the National Biodiversity Network. Significant funding support for this work came from the European Commission LIFE+ funding programme that is supporting SEPA to deliver a range of partnership initiatives in Scotland to provide a trusted gateway to data and information about the environment, and involve Scotland's citizens in discussion, monitoring and action to protect and improve the environment. The European Commission LIFE+ funding programme is the European Union's funding instrument for the environment, which contributes to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental policy and legislation.

Next steps

The following activity will be occurring over the next four months:

- Negotiating data licenses for all committed data.
- Loading spatial layers to the atlas
- Testing the atlas by user testing group
- Capacity training workshops for UK organisations and developers in how to work in the Atlas platform
- Prepare and implement the Atlas communications plan
- Promote through media and presentations and workshops
- Ongoing project management
- Work with other countries (Wales, England and Northern Ireland and Ireland) to expand Atlas infrastructure
- Proposed launch in March 2016