

PUPF on Land Mapping for Food Growing
13th June 2023, online

Speakers: Dan Geerah (The Land App), Maddy Longhurst (Urban Agriculture Consortium), Mark Thurstain (Geofutures and Hope Spots work)

Chair: Aryo Feldman (Sustain)

Notes: Rebecca Laughton (Landworkers' Alliance)

18 people attended

Maddy Longhurst (Urban Agriculture Consortium)

- UAC is a small, grant funded consortium working with urban food producers of nutrient dense food, to identify best points of intervention to address common needs and concerns.
- Working on farm starts, planning, policy influencing, Community Land Trusts.
- Common interest in mapping, as a way to understand how land is used around them and unlock access to land.
- Working with Lancaster Food Futures to understand peri-urban potential around Lancs.
- Mark had worked with Friends of the Earth in Bristol to look at tree cover, so he adapted the work to looking at food hope spots in Lancs.
- Working with Lambeth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Islington, Leeds and other organisation on mapping food and land.
- Community of Practice - Meets every three months and all sessions are recorded and put on the UAC YouTube channel, so can be located on the UAC website.
- Sessions consider questions like "Why do people love maps? How do we use them and maintain them?"
- Uses HiLow as a way to communicate between sessions.
- This is transitioning to an outward facing community of practice to engage with cities and their mapping needs.
- Very fruitful and valuable community.

Q&A

Q: Why did you choose to initiate the mapping group?

Maddy: Lots of organisations, particularly in the North, were requesting this. Maddy has always been fascinated by place and sense of place. She is a Town Planner. Maps can catalyse as sense of belonging to the landscape. Good way of identifying publicly owned land and protecting it from development, identify possible sites for growing. Commercial land ownership data is available as a layer for maps. Issue of land justice - who owns it. Way of making land visible. Reclaiming way to address power.

Land Explorer is a community centred mapping tool, created by Shared Assets. Now held by the digital commons co-operative.

Maddy did a reccy of all the mapping tools available for community food growers, for FoE report - working with Geeks for Social Change. Asking what mapping tools they can use for their post code gardening project.

Dan Geerah (The Land App)

- The Land App is an online mapping platform that uses data sets
- Collaboration function to enable people to share their private maps and work with each other in real time.
- Promoting good use of land for food and nature to thrive
- 65% of land in UK is either mapped or partially mapped with the land app
- 85 data layers - eg Gov't agencies (releasing new data sets every couple of weeks - eg SSSIs, ancient woodlands, where does land fall where people want to invest - pollen habitats, bee lines, great crested newts.
- Example of LWA Test and Trial - Growing the Goods - using The Land App to mark on new habitats to be added, such as pollinator habitat, buffers.
- When things are marked on map, digitisation enables calculation of area of habitat and how much can be paid for through off-setting.
- LWA Trial created a list of pipe-line projects which could be invested in, and enables growers to
- Aiming to move away from scale of the farm being a limiting factor, so mapping can unlock potential for ELMS funding to be invested in peri-urban farms.
- At the admin level, you can aggregate all farms into a landscape view to create a Map of Maps.
- Fits into ELMS, with single maps fitting into the SFI (Single Farm Payment). When put together with other maps/holdings, you can have groups of holdings applying for Countryside Stewardship/Local Nature Recovery.

Q&A

Q: How do you access funding through mapping

Dan: Best to do it through a group. In Hampshire, 4 farmers next to each other have found £2million for nutrient neutrality on river - on 4 ha. 150 land owners in the group, and all are getting a share of the funding. Easier to get funding if you link farmers together, to get a larger area. For nature, the most important thing is to work with neighbours, even if they are really different to you.

Q: At Regather, we are a CBS and need to scale up. What kinds of investment are you talking about?

Dan: The Land App is agnostic as to source of funding. Grant funding - eg England Woodland Planting is at its peak of generosity. Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality are two other areas of interest. Power of digital map to get better rates from banks. Get a plan first, and worry next about where to get the funding. ESG (Environmental Social Governance) - where companies need to deliver for their local environment they will pay into a pot and that money will

be available to pay farmers for delivering public goods. Opportunities to connect with local businesses who want to invest in the environment.

Q: Bee, can you tell us more about the LWA ELMS Trial, Growing the Goods, and how you used the Land App in that?

Bee: Bee working with Dan for three years – horticulture test and trial – all sorts of growers from all scale. Idea of trial: growers to audit the benefits, mainly biodiversity. And to Land Management Plans (LMP). Public money for public goods - Gov pays farmers for environmental benefits. Mapping LMP using Land App. Initially spreadsheet, now integrated into growing the goods catalogue. Look through it and put down what you want to deliver. Map shows it clearly and succinctly. Work currently with three groups – Bristol, Cumbria and Kent. Completed maps and LMP. Talked to Defra and hopefully will shape SFI and CS to help small-scale growers.

Q: Does the LMP have to be done by a professional?

Dan: You don't need a professional to put your ideas on the map - The Land App is a useful digital tool to do this. You might need help for putting in the application to Countryside Stewardship. The Government's aim is to be able to move through SFI without an advisor, whereas those applying for Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery are more likely to need an advisor.

Mark Thurstain (Geofutures)

- Finding hope in the Bristol and Bath green belt - finding locations suitable for tree planting. Identify land, give it a suitability score and recommend it. This was looking for poor quality agricultural land, which is suitable for tree planting. Eg Grade 3b land (good land on steep slopes).
- Suitability score - so identifying low income communities (eg those with less access to green space).
- Brought the two data sets together to show suitable land and proximity to low income populations.
- Rachel Marshal (Rurban at Lancaster University) requested using the hope spot methodology for identifying land for food production.
- Used Agricultural Land Classification to identify Grade 2, 3 and 4 land in and around Lancaster. Examples within Lancaster of permaculture projects which have made grade 4 land highly productive.
- Defining peri-urban - loosely defined. They took the definition as being all land within 1600m of key urban settlements.
- Excluded land around nature reserves, woodland, and flood prone areas.
- Put together these data sets to identify hope spots
- Brought methodology to Bristol, to identify land owners with land and pair up with people who need land, through a land matching event as part of the New Entrant Support Scheme, run by LWA.

- Lots more grade 1 and 2 land around Bristol, but also much land is prone to flood risk. Also excluding high biodiversity areas (eg nature reserves, SSSI). Identified land parcels which are suitable for food growing, and those land owners who own it.

Q&A

Q: How do you identify landowners?

Mark: Land Match event was a really positive event, which had lots of land owners, who were making really generous offers. Interestingly, though, there were fewer takers than expected for the land. This might have been because landowners are not offering long enough leases to attract growers who want to invest in the land, and inheritance tax rules might be causing this. This has proven to be a barrier with "Our Food 1200" in Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons).

General Q&A

Q: Why are people not interested in the land offers in Bristol?

Bee: Could be because the land owners are not offering land for long enough, or sufficient security, which would be off-putting to a grower wanting to invest in a growing business. What is needed is a template tenancy agreement suitable for peri-urban plots. There's also a tax barrier which puts landowners off letting their land on long term tenancies.

Q: Are there any attempts within this group to apply for the facilitation fund. Guidance is 2000ha for the size of land holding. In Sheffield we have a viable peri-urban area, and local authority is a major landowner, by all in AHA Tenancies. This has all the ingredients for something constructive.

Dan: Never yet done the application for facilitation fund, but The Land App can help answer questions about If you can get SBI (Single Business Identifier) number for each of farms wanting to be part of the group and enter it into The Land App, then you can identify the cumulative land area.

Q: Are tenant farmers managing to get longer term tenancies?

Gareth: Yes, we've managed to get 20 yearlong tenancies on our land.

Q: What are the barriers to mapping?

Dan: These are getting smaller and smaller, as the technology is accessible and usable, and government is making more and more data sets available. Lots of data is still behind a paywall, and so OS Master Map should be made accessible to catalyse land owners starting on the journey to

Q: When LWA has such small landholdings, will there be opportunities for them to access funding by collaborating and will they be able to get long enough tenancies?

Bee: LWA is doing a lot of work to get Defra to lower the 5ha threshold, so in the future hopefully growers won't have to collaborate simply to access the funds, but in the meantime, they aren't so small that they can't collectively come up to 5ha by collaborating.

Q: Fair Holding Tenancy agreements?

Maddy: Primarily done for community-led housing but really relevant for business and land for food as standard tenancy agreements aren't fit for purpose, particularly in terms of not being long-term enough. Based at the Open Systems Lab. Board have agreed to host session on fair hold for food-growing land.