

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

---

Version 1.0

Document Reference: magi0012.doc

---

# **MAGIC**

**Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside**

## **INFORMATION NOTE**

**National Land Information System briefing**

---

Written by Phillipa Swanton, MAGIC Project Manager, DEFRA GI Unit, June 4<sup>th</sup> 2001.

---

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. The National Land Information System (NLIS) is a joint Central and Local Government initiative that will provide a one-stop mechanism for accessing conveyancing information. All organisations registering land (local authorities, the Coal Board, Land Registry, government departments etc.) will be encouraged to provide information to NLIS, although there will be no statutory obligation to do so<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.1.2. NLIS will be an electronic one stop shop linking local land charge search services and HM Land Registry and the ultimate aim is to act as a central reference point for all land and property related information held by many different organisations. It will be web-based and will include online maps and a definitive index of land and property i.e. the National Land and Property Gazetteer.
- 1.1.3. NLIS has been under development for some years now and the idea was originally conceived prior to the e-government targets it is now being used to deliver. A pilot system was developed in Bristol, as the start of the project coincided with Bristol City Council's plans to computerise their property information systems. The Bristol Pilot was designed to 'prove the concept and viability of a conveyancing service based on the NLIS vision'<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.1.4. According to the Local Government Information House, the service proved so successful that it continued in use long after the initial six-month trial period. The private sector will take part in the implementation of the NLIS, as the

---

<sup>1</sup> Sizer, P. (Local Government Information House), Second NLIS Data Provider User Group, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

results of the Bristol trial indicated that, although the project raised interest and proved the concepts of such an approach, government could encounter severe resource and organisational difficulties in running the system.

1.1.3. The NLIS 'hub' has been operational from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2001 (the hub is the electronic gateway enabling access to information which is available from a wide range of sources). Licences are being awarded to provide channels to different types of information such as local authority, land registry searches and **environmental data** including, for example, Common Land boundaries<sup>3</sup>. Current publicity material refers to the information held by the Countryside Agencies but does not clarify how this information could be made available within NLIS.

1.1.4. The Local Government Information House has appointed a Central Government Co-ordinator who has a remit to keep abreast of central government initiatives that may have implications on the NLIS programme. The relationship between MAGIC and NLIS needs to be more fully explored. For example, a DEFRA Environmentally Sensitive Area agreement results in a charge on the land and the implicit suggestion is that all such charges should be held electronically and available via NLIS.

## **1.2. Provision of Central Government Information to NLIS**

1.2.1. The Second NLIS Data Provider User Group held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2001 aimed to help central government organisations understand the concepts behind NLIS and to consider how their information could be provided to NLIS.

---

<sup>2</sup> National Land Information System Frequently Asked Questions (Local Government Information House) September 2000.

- 1.2.2. The Local Government Information House (LGIH) was established to provide a contractual relationship between local government and Land Registry (HMLR) and the local authorities that will act as data providers to NLIS. Central government data providers will initially include any organisations that hold data sets key to the conveyancing process.
- 1.2.3. In the early stages NLIS will operate a three-tier service in terms of the relationship with data providers. Level three will be fully electronic and offer end-to-end transactions between the user and the data provider i.e. requests from users, any associated back-office processing, payments for services and the provision of results will all be electronic transactions and no manual intervention will be needed in the workflow. Payments will be made using BACS.
- 1.2.4. Level one data providers will receive a paper copy of a request made electronically by the user, and will process that request manually and return the result to the user in paper format. Payments can be made to the data provider by cheque.
- 1.2.5. Level two offers a transitional step before reaching level tree (which is the position that all data providers will be encouraged to attain). The data provider will receive the request electronically but will then carry out the search using existing manual or electronic systems and return the results in their preferred manner. This will allow organisations with their own electronic back-office processes to interface with NLIS without fully integrating systems. A start up kit is offered for those organisations without web access.

---

<sup>3</sup> Geographic Information, the Newsletter of the Association for Geographic Information (AGI) November

## **2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NLIS & MAGIC**

### **2.1 The Conveyancing Process**

2.1.1. Further discussions will be required to consider whether any of the MAGIC datasets are considered to be key to the conveyancing process and should they be provided to NLIS via MAGIC or directly from the relevant organisation(s)? It should be noted that the Channel providers for NLIS will be seeking further opportunities for providing added-value access to data sets available via NLIS and that data providers will be encouraged to enter into non-exclusive agreements with NLIS to support this.

### **2.2 The use of the National Land and Property Gazetteer**

2.2.1 NLIS is underpinned by the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG), which contains land and property information structured in a consistent manner using BS7666. The MAGIC project team is currently considering whether BS7666 and the NLPG data formats offer the potential for the basis of a data standard for the MAGIC data sets. We also need to consider whether we would indeed have to use BS7666/NLPG if we were to provide data for NLIS.

2.2.2 BS7666 does not necessarily offer a suitable mechanism for describing rural land parcels and designations, as it has primarily been designed to operate in an urban scenario. The Coal Authority (who will be providing data for properties in Coal Mining Areas) had a similar issue as coal information cannot be referenced using a land and property gazetteer and therefore its only relationship with property is geographical. The Authority will be acting as NLIS data providers and it therefore appears that associated data sets do not

have to be BS7666 compliant. The NLPG will be used by the client to identify the property in question and then geographic overlay techniques will be used by the Coal Authority to extract coal information that is coincident with that property.

## **2.3 Scheme and Designation Data Sets in NLIS**

2.3.1 An initial meeting was held with PS (Central Government co-ordinator for NLIS) on the 15<sup>th</sup> March to discuss whether there was any statutory obligation in the conveyancing process to establish the presence of the scheme and designation data sets which will be held in MAGIC. I agreed to supply a list of the land-based data sets that DEFRA holds so that PS could check to see if there were indeed any such statutory obligations.

2.3.2 However, MAGIC will contain data sets provided by all of the participating organisations. The project board may wish to consider whether any of the data sets which are the responsibility of their respective organisation should or could be made available via NLIS, and whether MAGIC should be the mechanism for providing all scheme and designation data to NLIS.

2.3.3 We also discussed the use of BS7666/NLPG in a rural context and how local authorities and HMLR use the standards for managing land parcels. BS7666 is described as the British Standard for geographic referencing of spatial datasets. However, it could be argued that although the standard may operate well in terms of property addressing it does not fully meet the requirements for land-based information. In a Land and Property Gazetteer, a definitive list of BLPUs are all uniquely identified and referenced to the street that forms the principal access to that property. This basic concept is not easily applied to rural land. However, it does appear that addresses could remain in non-

BS7666 format as long as the unique property reference number (UPRN) is incorporated into the original database.

- 2.3.4 Meetings will be arranged with the Coal Authority, to learn from their experiences with working with non-addressable information in the context of NLIS, and with Intelligent Addressing (responsible for compiling the NLPG from the local authority gazetteers) to discuss the use of BS7666 in rural areas in more detail. Coal mining information cannot be put into BS7666 format as it's only relationship with property is via the underlying geography.
- 2.3.5 We also discussed NLIS plans for including environmental data sets within the application and the potential role for MAGIC in the provision of environmental data. It does not appear that there are (as yet) firm ideas on the type of environmental information that NLIS users might require, although common land information has certainly been mentioned and a Commons Registration Search is provided by Local Authorities are part of the conveyancing process.
- 2.3.6 A model for the provision of information from MAGIC was discussed. For example, it may be possible that NLIS could provide funds to establish the infrastructure that we would require as a data provider for MAGIC in exchange for the environmental information required. It would however be expected that the information provided could be subsequently utilised by the NLIS channel licences for commercial gain, in accordance with the NLIS business model.
- 2.3.7 PS will provide a specification document outlining the interface issues for data providers. If any relationship between the two projects were to be considered, there would also need to be a formal contract between a data provider and

NLIS to cover any financial implications, copyright, intellectual property and contractual issues.