

Participant Information Sheet

Title of activity: Environmental Information Data Centre (EIDC) User Working Group

Introduction

The [Environmental Information Data Centre](#) (EIDC) is part of the Natural Environment Research Council's (NERC) [Environmental Data Service](#) (EDS) and is hosted by the [UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology](#) (UKCEH). The EIDC manages nationally important datasets relating to the terrestrial and freshwater sciences.

To ensure that we continue to meet the needs of the communities we serve, we are establishing a User Working Group to provide ongoing, structured feedback on our services (e.g. data deposit and data access) and tools (e.g. an AI assisted search assistant). This forum will enable EIDC users to review services, receive updates, ask questions, and share feedback to help inform and prioritise future service development. The NERC EDS plans to have User Working Groups implemented across its network of Environmental Data Centres by the end of 2026.

Members of the User Working Group will be invited to attend meetings approximately twice a year, held online via Microsoft Teams. Each meeting will focus on one or two EIDC services or tools, last around 60-90 minutes, and include opportunities for discussion. Feedback from these discussions will be summarised and shared with members after each meeting. An annual summary report may also be shared publicly, where appropriate, to promote transparency. All contributions will be anonymised so that individual participants cannot be identified.

What is the purpose of the User Working Group?

The EIDC would like input from users about the service provided. The User Working Group is designed to facilitate this aim in the following ways:

- To share aspects of the EIDC service in an open forum.
- To obtain feedback on the EIDC services.
- To identify and prioritise improvements to the services that the EIDC offers.
- To provide regular input from users to inform the ongoing technical development process of the EIDC.

Who is conducting this activity?

This activity is being conducted by the EIDC, based in UKCEH Lancaster. The main contact is **Dr Kathryn Harrison** (kath@ceh.ac.uk), the EIDC Operations Manager.

Why have I been asked/offered the opportunity to take part?

The EIDC User Working Group has been set up to gather feedback from a wide range of people interested in the EIDC, and anyone can express interest in joining. You may have been invited because you use EIDC services, are involved in related work, or belong to a relevant network or mailing list, or you may have seen this through EIDC communications. You are also welcome to share information about the group with colleagues or collaborators who you feel may be interested. The group will include around 6-10 members. If interest exceeds places, members will be selected to ensure a balanced mix of perspectives, including different types of EIDC users, levels of experience, and areas of interest. If not selected, you can still take part in other EIDC engagement activities, such as surveys, polls, or Community Conversations.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary, and it is your decision whether or not to take part. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to, and this will not affect your relationship with colleagues at UKCEH or your access to EIDC data or services in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part; What will I have to do?

If you choose to take part in the User Working Group and are selected, you will be asked to register and provide informed consent as part of the sign-up process, including completing an electronic or paper consent form before your first meeting. Consent arrangements will be reiterated at the start of each meeting, where you will have the opportunity to ask questions.

User Working Group members will be invited to attend two online meetings per year, each lasting around 60-90 minutes. Meetings will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams. Each meeting will typically include (60 min example):

1. Service update (15 mins)
 - What's changed since the last meeting
2. Focused feedback topic (30 mins)
 - e.g. deposit workflows, metadata, access licences, citation
3. Forward look (10 mins)
 - Planned developments
4. Close with actions (5 mins)
 - What we'll take away and when we'll respond

If you attend a User Working Group meeting, notes will be taken. Where all attendees provide consent, an automated Microsoft Teams transcript may also be used to support accurate notetaking. Following each meeting, notes and any transcripts will be reviewed and anonymised, so that comments cannot be linked back to individuals. Once anonymised, it may not be possible to remove individual contributions, as they will no longer be identifiable. We may also invite members to provide optional asynchronous feedback (e.g. surveys, polls or Community Conversation events).

Participation is optional and while we suggest a 1–2-year term, you may leave at any time without giving a reason. If you no longer wish to be involved, please let us know so we can remove your contact details from future communications and meeting invitations.

Microsoft 365 Copilot (with enterprise-level data protection) may be used in a limited way to support administrative tasks, such as summarising meeting notes. Copilot will not replace human analysis, and all outputs will be reviewed and verified by the project team. No sensitive or personally identifiable information will be entered into Copilot. The tool will only be used within UKCEH's secure enterprise Microsoft 365 environment, which is governed by organisational data protection, security, and access control policies. No other AI systems will be used as part of the activity.

What are the possible risks and disadvantages?

There are no significant risks beyond those experienced in normal, online, public meetings where you are free to speak openly.

What are the possible benefits?

The possible benefits include:

- Early visibility of planned changes or roadmaps
- A real channel to influence prioritisation
- Recognition on the website (name, affiliation, optional)
- A short confirmation letter for CVs / promotion dossiers, if requested
- Clear evidence that feedback is acted on

What if something goes wrong?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this activity, you should ask to speak to the project team who will do their best to answer your questions. The main contact is **Dr Kathryn Harrison** (kath@ceh.ac.uk). You can also email info@eidc.ac.uk.

If you wish to ask a question about the study or informally raise a complaint anonymously to the project team, you can contact **Dr Claus Svendsen** (csv@ceh.ac.uk).

If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the **UKCEH Research Ethics Committee** (ukcehresearchethics@ceh.ac.uk).

Can I change my mind about taking part?

You can change your mind about taking part at any time. If you register for the User Working Group, you are not required to attend every meeting. We will try to schedule meetings at times that work for as many members as possible, but there is no obligation to attend all meetings, and occasional non-attendance is expected.

If you have any concerns about something you have shared, or wish to withdraw comments, please let the project team know as soon as possible and we will do what we reasonably can to accommodate your request before anonymisation takes place. You can withdraw from the User Working Group at any time, without giving a reason. Withdrawing will not affect your relationship with colleagues at UKCEH or your access to EIDC data or services in any way.

What will happen to information collected about me?

During the registration process, we will collect your name, email address, organisation name, and some information about your role and interests (e.g. your interaction with EIDC, the community you represent, areas for improvement, and availability for meetings). This information will be kept private and confidential. Only the project team will have access to it, except in the event of an ethical complaint where the UKCEH Research Ethics Committee may also access the data. Anonymised feedback and summary data may be shared within UKCEH or the wider NERC Environmental Data Service network to support service improvement or related research. Any shared data will be fully anonymised and will not identify individuals.

More information about how your data will be used, stored, and your rights is provided in the Privacy Notice shared alongside this Participant Information Sheet. If you have not received a copy of the Privacy Notice, please contact **Dr Kathryn Harrison** (kath@ceh.ac.uk).

Where can you find out more about how your information is used?

You can ask the primary contact (**Dr Kathryn Harrison**, kath@ceh.ac.uk) for any additional information about how we use your data. The lawful basis for this activity is for the 'legitimate interests' of UKCEH. Further details about how your data will be handled, including your rights, are set out in the Privacy Notice shared alongside this Participant Information Sheet. Additional information on how UKCEH uses your data can also be found here: <https://www.ceh.ac.uk/contributors-ceh-science-funded-through-competitively-won-income>

What will be the outcome of this activity?

Each User Working Group meeting will be documented through anonymised notes summarising key discussion points and feedback, which will be shared with members. Findings may inform reports, blog posts, posters, presentations, or any other communications about EIDC service development. In some cases, anonymised quotations may be included to illustrate themes or perspectives, but no material will be published that could reasonably identify individual participants. Outputs will be used to support improvements to EIDC tools and services and to demonstrate how user feedback has informed development priorities.

Who is organising and funding this study?

This activity is linked to the NERC-funded National Capability Data project and work being conducted across UKRI projects for the EIDC. UKCEH is fully responsible for the project, including the collection, storage and analysis of data, and acts as the Data Controller. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

Who has reviewed this study?

All research involving human participants is looked at by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology Human Research Ethics Committee (UKCEH-HREC).

Further information and contact details

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. If you are happy to take part in the activity, please read and sign the consent form. If you would like any further information, please contact **Dr Kathryn Harrison** (kath@ceh.ac.uk) who will answer any questions you may have about the study.