G021 Site Surveys

Guidance on survey data standards and accessing GiGL resources to support preparation and delivery	
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Introduction

About GiGL

Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (GiGL) is the capital's environmental records centre – we mobilise, curate and share data that underpin knowledge of London's natural environment. We work with a range of stakeholders to collate and verify data on London's natural environment, providing access to high quality data via services tailored to the requirements of those who need to make informed decisions in London.

GiGL provides support for organisations undertaking (or commissioning consultants to conduct) habitat or site surveys, including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) reviews, open space surveys and green infrastructure reviews. GiGL can supply data (or reports) on current baseline survey information and advice on interpretation, data standards and tailored outputs.

Importance of standards

Applying GiGL's recommended survey standards will improve the ease of handling results alongside original survey data and enable GiGL to incorporate local results into the London dataset without loss of local information, therefore improving the legacy value of survey results. This will maximise the value of your investment, by ensuring the data are preserved in a format that supports efficient processing and valid analysis that will inform your current and future projects.

Surveyors should be notified prior to any survey of the available guidance and encouraged to follow the agreed data standards, as outlined in this document. We would always encourage surveyors to contact GiGL in advance of undertaking survey work to discuss their specific plans and where their outputs might need to deviate on GiGL's survey guidance recommendations. If you have any queries about how to record or supply the data please contact the GiGL team.

GiGL Guidance

This document provides information on how to access and use GiGL resources to support the preparation and delivery of surveys, as well as guidance on survey data standards. It outlines provision of data to GiGL partners and to their contractors (including licensing and Service Level Agreement, SLA, costs); how non-partners can access and use resources; and, best practice standards to enable resulting survey/review data to be integrated into GiGL's London wide datasets, thus maximising surveyors' investments in data collection.

After the survey is complete and results are adopted and shared, GiGL will[1];

- Update habitat survey results into the existing baseline for London;

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[1] assuming the quality of the data is sufficient and the format is compatible

- Update SINC boundary, grade or citation changes into the database for London (as either proposed or adopted changes) and calculate and update any consequential changes to Areas of Deficiency in Access to Nature;
- Update open space survey results into the existing baseline for London and calculate and update any consequential changes to Areas of Deficiency in Access to Public Open Space[2];
- Add species data to our database

GiGL is also developing a suite of services relating to the design, implementation and ongoing monitoring of **biodiversity net gain delivery**. These cover the provision of existing information on sites and their surrounds to provide context. These data can be submitted to GiGL and independently managed and integrated into licensed data outputs for London.

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[2] Updates to the core GiGL datasets are normally covered by GiGL core funds. GiGL will provide notification if additional funds or SLA time are required to facilitate updates

Survey support resources

There are a number of ways in which GiGL can support surveyors in the planning and delivery stages. Some of the resources available, and how to access these, are detailed here.

Datasets

GiGL has comprehensive baseline data to inform surveys. Existing GiGL datasets use standardised categories and formats that have been developed and refined over time, offering a template for new data collection. GiGL is able to provide the following recommended baseline data.

Habitats

GiGL's legacy habitat dataset contains information from the most comprehensive surveys of London's habitats, as well as from partners, ecological consultants and land owners and managers recorded from the mid-1980s onwards. It is primarily recorded using the London Survey Method and typically listed as multiple habitats per site parcel. This data is available to surveyors on request.

We are also developing a new dataset consisting of data translated from the legacy habitat dataset integrated with Ordnance Survey MasterMap attributes and boundaries. This new dataset will soon be translated into the new UK Habitat Classification system (UKHab). It will then need to undergo a process of checks and amendments before it can be made available.

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)

SINCs, London's equivalent of Local Wildlife Sites, are sites recognised for the important habitats they support. They are designated by a panel of local ecological professionals. GiGL is the official custodian of information on London's more than 1,600 sites.

SINC GIS boundaries and citation documents are available, which includes information on habitats, notable species, ownership, designation dates, and reasons for designation. GiGL can also provide Areas of Deficiency in Access to Nature, modelled by GiGL according to London Plan guidance, which identifies areas that are >1 km walking distance away from accessible borough and metropolitan grade SINCs.

Open space

GiGL manages a London-wide database of open spaces. The GiGL's Open Space dataset maintains information on the characteristics and boundaries of open land in Greater London including green spaces and other open spaces such as paved civic squares – but excluding domestic private gardens.

GiGL's open space dataset is based on data collected during a comprehensive survey of Greater London wildlife habitats, which ran from 1986 to 2008/9. GiGL has continued to add value to the dataset since, updating the dataset with information from sources, including London boroughs, Ordnance Survey, and volunteer surveys.

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GiGL can provide surveyors with GIS files showing site boundaries and facilities, and as well as information on site ownership, primary use, access and designations (such as Public Open Spaces).

Species

GiGL holds in excess of 6 million species records, from a wide range of organisations and individuals: expert volunteer recorders, professional surveyors and keen-eyed members of the public. This baseline of biodiversity information for the capital includes sub-sets that are particularly useful for decision-makers, including designated species records and invasive non-native species records.

Recorded species observations for the area of interest can be provided. Extracts of recorded wildlife observations for survey sites can be provided for all or some of the following categories to suit your project:

➢ Protected and Notable Species i.e. Internationally or nationally protected species, National or London Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species, Red Data List species, Species of Conservation Concern in London
➢ Invasive species i.e. those categorised by London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI)
➢ Date of record e.g. records made in the last 10 years only
➢ Geographical resolution e.g. records made to 6-figure grid reference or higher precision

Confidential and sensitive species records will be supplied at a resolution defined by GiGL in the Access to Data Policy.

Other resources

GiGL may also be able to provide tailored resources for survey support such as maps, data entry sheets or custom data audits. Please get in touch to discuss these options further.

Accessing baseline data

The mode of access to GiGL data depends on who is carrying out the survey and their GiGL partner status.

GiGL partners, in-house work

GiGL partners receive core GIS datasets (including those listed above) routinely as part of their Service Level Agreement (SLA). For in-house surveys, partner staff can access these via their SLA manager.

GiGL can provide further interpretation or tailored outputs to support survey work if required. Examples of this include:

• Bespoke outputs tailored to specific survey needs

- Modelled datasets, such as Areas of Deficiency in Access to Nature or Public Open Spaces
- Data audits
- Opportunity mapping

Costs: Provision of core datasets for *in-house* use is a standard part of the SLA package. GiGL can deliver most bespoke or modelled outputs under the existing SLA contract, though large projects may need additional scheduling and/or funding, please enquire. Any externally-

> The SLA licence does not permit the release or publication of GiGL data in the public domain, or direct sharing of data outside of the organisation. Please speak to GiGL regarding permissions for publication

funded work should incorporate costs for GiGL's services.

GiGL SLA partners, external contractor(s)

GiGL can provide SLA partners' chosen contractor(s) with baseline data for the survey area in GIS or spreadsheet format under a Contractor Licence. This temporarily extends the data use terms and conditions in the partner's SLA to the contractor, allowing access to the same data as the SLA partner in order to complete a specific project.

GiGL can meet with partners' chosen contractor(s) to provide an introduction to the baseline data and guidance on how to best collect data that are compatible with integration into GiGL's datasets. We recommend this meeting takes place early in the process. GiGL will arrange for the contractor licence and supply the required data extracts directly.

Costs: Provision of the datasets to consultants and staff time to resolve queries is included as part of the SLA package. Large projects may need additional scheduling and/or funding, please enquire .

> GiGL are unable to undertake data cleansing or digitisation projects following contractor data collection or supply of data significantly departing from best practice standards provided by GiGL, unless prearranged. In cases where a significant amount of work is required to curate data to meet GiGL standards an additional charge/contract may be required, for GiGL to integrate the data into our London-wide datasets.

No current SLA with GiGL

For non-partners conducting surveys, either in-house or via a contractor, GiGL can provide information about baseline data in report format. The report will include summary tables of the species observations, habitat survey (legacy) data, open space attributes, designated site citations and maps, and sign-posting to additional sources of information.

Full resolution GIS datasets are a partner-only product available under licence via SLA.

Costs: non-partner work is charged at GiGL's commercial rate. Please visit https://ecountability.co.uk/london-order-form/ to see prices or request a quote, or consider

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taking up a Service Level Agreement with GiGL if your organisation has an ongoing need to access data and information services: https://www.gigl.org.uk/working-with-us/partners/.

Guidance documents

In addition to this document, which provides an overview of available resources and general data standards, GiGL can provide a range of guidance documentation for specific GiGL datasets. The documents shown below can be provided on request.
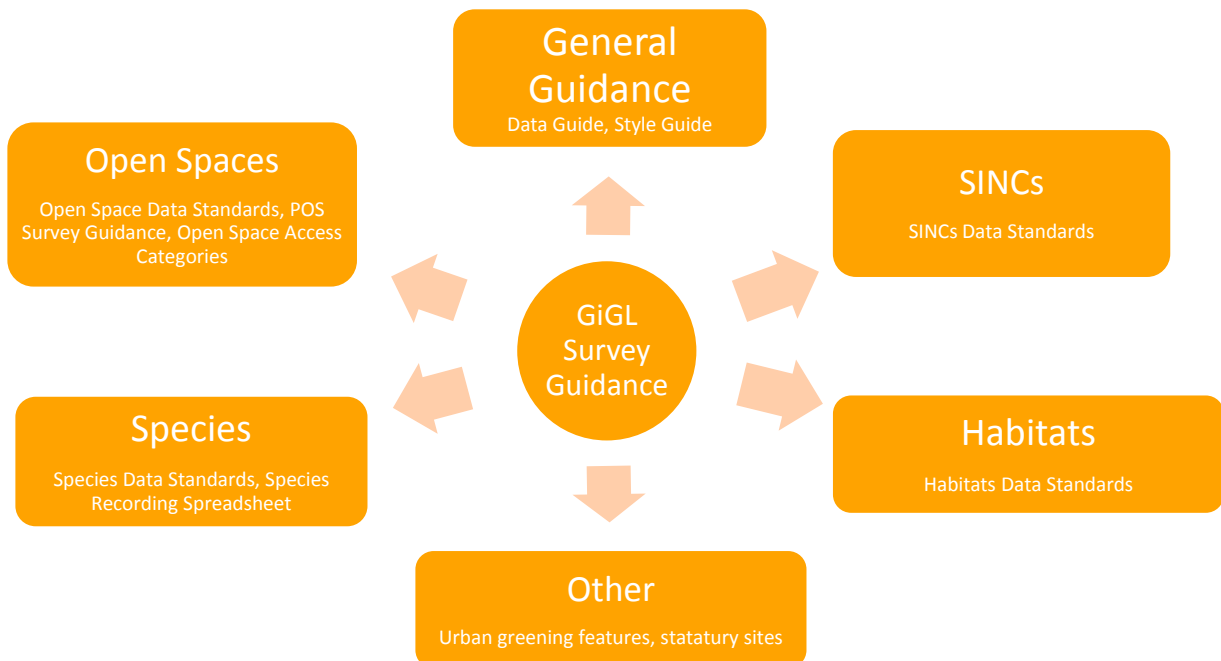
General Guidance
Data Guide, Style Guide

Open Spaces
Open Space Data Standards, POS Survey Guidance, Open Space Access Categories

SINCs
SINCs Data Standards

GiGL Survey Guidance

Species
Species Data Standards, Species Recording Spreadsheet

Habitats
Habitats Data Standards

Other
Urban greening features, statatury sites

Recommended survey data standards

Ecological expertise and local factors will dictate the most appropriate methods for a given survey. However, it is important that survey results are recorded consistently, enabling us to compare like with like to track changes over time. GiGL recommends the following data management standards or considerations in survey design and outputs.

As well as the core datasets, GiGL also manages other types of data, such as site facilities, urban greening features and street trees. Please check with the GiGL team if your surveys generate data that may be relevant.

Mapping guidance

Some general guidance on mapping is given below.

- Be consistent in formatting (e.g. text, date, symbols), definitions and labelling.
- Use the British National Grid coordinate system.
- Map one site/feature per GIS feature (multi-part polygons are acceptable, where one site has several parts).
- Please digitise carefully, snapping boundaries to the latest Ordnance Survey MasterMap polygons where appropriate. Avoid duplicates, slivers, holes, overlapping polygons or empty attribute rows. If two sites share a boundary, the boundaries should not overlap and there should be no slivers or gaps between the polygons. If the boundaries of a surveyed site do not match OS MasterMap boundaries please indicate that this is the case to avoid confusion.
- Retain GiGL site references where present.
- Indicate measurement units if used.
- Where possible use existing typologies and classification systems such as PPG17, GiGL Open Space typologies and UKHab.
- Provide data in GIS format, preferably a shapefile (.shp), tab file (.tab) or file geodatabase (.gdb) format if possible.
- Follow the recommended templates for each dataset type.

GiGL can provide spreadsheet and GIS templates for habitat, open space and SINC polygons and species records.

Metadata

Metadata is data that describes a dataset. They describe what the dataset consists of, what different columns and attributes mean and what categories were used. Quality metadata is critical to interpreting and reusing data and is necessary avoid any misinterpretation of the data content.

Any dataset provided to GiGL should include the following metadata:

- A name or code for each field (attribute)

- A description of each attribute & the categories or typology used for each attribute Note: if strictly using GiGL attributes and typologies it is only necessary to indicate that these are the standards being used
- In addition, each dataset should be accompanied by a document ('read me' file) listing:
- The date(s) of the survey
- The scope of the survey e.g. borough wide, play spaces only, a specific area of the borough. If partial site surveys are undertaken, the reason for this should be recorded (e.g. inaccessible, only specific habitats/areas of interest)
- The organisation undertaking the survey
- A lead contact at the organisation who is able to answer questions about the survey data if they arise
- The name and version number of the software package the data are provided in

GiGL can provide a metadata template with all required information to fill in when providing survey data.

When to provide data

We encourage surveyors to provide an example survey output to GiGL before undertaking survey work to ensure the outputs meet the recommended survey data guidance as outlined by GiGL.

Survey results should be shared as soon as possible after the survey data is collected and collated, to avoid delays in updating GiGL's core datasets.

Some projects will involve re-surveying sites over a period of time, for example a site development where baseline, post-development and/or monitoring surveys will generate new data. For a single development footprint we therefore encourage surveyors to send data to GiGL at the follow stages:

- Pre-development: An initial survey producing baseline data (GIS map layers/attributes) for the site as well as GIS map layers/attributes of planned/target post-development changes, with the planned dates of completion.
- During development: Data from monitoring surveys that are necessary to confirm if the site or habitats within the site have changed/established and/or their interim condition; mapped to the same standards with full attributes.
- Post-development: GIS maps showing habitats now present at the site. Please map the site to the same standards as the initial survey data, with full attributes. If any areas have not changed since the initial survey, please include the (same) data in this update.

How to provide data

Incoming survey data can be sent to GiGL's submissions email at submit@gigl.org.uk. Ideally data should be packaged in a zip folder with the accompanying metadata as outlined in this document. The email subject line should include information on the data type and survey area (e.g. 'Habitat data submission for Barnet').

Please contact submit@gigl.org.uk if your data is too large to send by email as an alternative method can be arranged.

Survey Scope

When surveying sites such as SINCs or Open Spaces, GiGL recommend surveying the whole site area. When only partial surveys are undertaken, the scope and reason should be recorded in the accompanying metadata.

Access points

Access points are used to model Areas of Deficiency (AoD) in access to Public Open Spaces (POS AoD) and Nature (SINC AoD). Please see the relevant guidance documents for more detailed information on SINC and Open Space surveys.

General guidance for mapping site access points is given below:

- Map as a GIS points layer with one GIS point per access point (or line where applicable).
- Points should be mapped on to site boundaries and where possible be snapped to Ordnance Survey MasterMap.
- Indicate the site that each point relates to in the attributes. This should reference the GiGL ID if mapping attributes to SINCs or Open Spaces.
- Map gates and entry points open to the public, or specify points that have limited access in the attributes (e.g. entrance to residents only or at limited times).
- Open-sided sites can be represented by adding access points at 10m intervals along the open edges, or by drawing a line along the road/path adjacent to the open edge in a separate line layer.
- Please specific they scope of the access point survey, i.e. indicate if all sites were surveyed, or just a subsection.
- Please indicate the method used to survey the access point e.g. if the point was identified during a ground survey (e.g. checked on site) or as part of a desktop review (e.g. identified on Google Maps etc).

Detailed dataset guidance

GiGL provide detailed recommendations for specific datasets, including:

- SINCs (including Areas of Deficiency in Access to Nature)
- Open Spaces (including Public Open Space and Areas of Deficiency in Access to POS)
- Species
- Habitats

We recommended surveyors refer to the relevant documents for specific and complete guidance on each survey type.