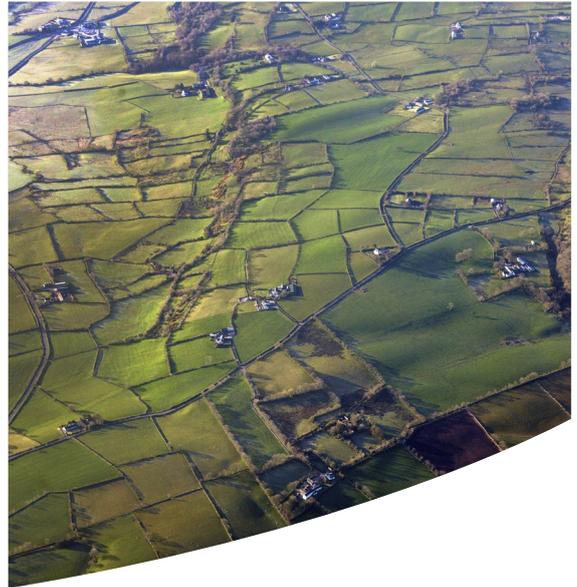


SUCCESS STORY

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS (DAERA)

Integrated team delivering a scalable platform and innovative digital service



Working closely in Agile teams, Sopra Steria and DAERA experts have delivered the GeoSpatial Aid Application - an intuitive rules based online map application for farmers to create and submit land claims. The new integrated digital functionality has improved the ease of use, enhanced the accuracy of claims and streamlined processing.

The challenge

As one of the largest Government Departments in Northern Ireland (NI), the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is responsible for the development of the rural sector in NI, including agri-food, fishing and forestry. DAERA also provides a veterinary service, which administers animal health and welfare. The Department has an annual budget of £285 million and employs around 3000 people.

One of DAERA's primary responsibilities is to administer the application and payment process for a wide range of European Union (EU) area-based subsidy schemes that support the farming and fishery industries. These schemes aim to ensure that farmers in NI receive the agricultural grants and livestock subsidies to which they are entitled, and DAERA is further responsible for undertaking the associated inspections to ensure compliance with the many stringent rules of the schemes.

DAERA were looking to commission new infrastructure and a GeoSpatial Aid Application (GSAA), to fully meet the requirements for an EU compliant Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS), incorporating:

- a scalable platform to meet DAERA's medium and longer term Geographic Information System (GIS) requirements
- an interactive, public facing online farm map solution, to provide GIS functionality and mapping services to a range of external stakeholders and customers, as part of an annual claim for EU grants

DAERA needed a transformation partner who could provide the additional skills to deliver the programme and help them to meet their strategic business objectives in a timely manner.

Key points

- Innovative Digital Service for Farmer / Agent changes to a Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS)
- The digital application provides a more intuitive and powerful tool for farmers and agents to use.
- In 2017, 94% of Northern Ireland's farmers received advance payments, amounting to distribution of nearly £182.7m, surpassing department targets
- Northern Ireland was the first region in the United Kingdom to introduce advance payments, this was possible because of an increase in the number of farmers submitting their application online.
- Professional integrated development team of Sopra Steria and DAERA staff operating an Agile delivery methodology.

Our solution

With extensive experience in effectively delivering other GIS and LPIS solutions in Scotland and England, Sopra Steria were able to architect a technical solution to meet DAERA's requirements and provide the necessary skills to augment and complement the DAERA team.

A scalable platform was an important initial building block for delivering future DAERA programmes and satisfying EU requirements for a fully compliant LPIS. Sopra Steria worked with DAERA to define and implement a new high availability infrastructure architecture, consisting of a best breed technology stack including, ESRI, Geocortex, Oracle, Azure messaging and MS .NET.

Sopra Steria experts, with a range of skills including Business Analysis, GIS, Agile development and Testing, worked together in a joint team with DAERA to deliver the GSAA, a web based application to provide farmers and agents with a digital facility updating the details of their application in real time in response to their land changes.

The map driven interface has been fully integrated with a series of intuitive forms, which takes the user through the steps necessary to complete an application for EU subsidies, consistent across all interfaces and applying relevant EU subsidy scheme rules and regulations throughout the application process.

Submitted applications are managed through job queues and stored in the DAERA Corporate GIS master dataset, for review and processing into the LPIS by DAERA staff.

How we worked together

To successfully deliver the GSAA, Sopra Steria and DAERA adopted a flexible business engagement model. This approach has been underpinned by a full understanding of DAERA's business needs, transparency and open communications and the use of an Agile development model.

Development commenced in the summer of 2015 with an integrated team of ten from Sopra Steria working with DAERA managers and delivery teams on requirements analysis, design, development, architecture and best practice for Agile delivery.

Sopra Steria facilitated engagement with pioneers in user experience design to create a streamlined and intuitive end user experience. Regular demos and workshops within the Agile delivery framework have maintained a high level of user engagement, delivery momentum and quality levels. Early and frequent live deliverables have enabled the diagnosis of potential deployment and service issues, prior to adoption of the GSAA into business as usual.

Results and benefits

The digital application provides a more intuitive and powerful tool for farmers and agents to use. It has delivered new functionality, making it easier to perform map changes, including previously difficult tasks to perform such as splitting fields and amending ineligible features such as barns, streams and fallow land.

As a result, 99% of farmers moved from pre-populated paper forms in favour of GSAA, exceeding the target of 75% set by the EU targets.

The availability of real time land changes when completing applications has enabled more accurate claims to be submitted. This has halved the time needed to assess land changes, resolve discrepancies, and prevented inaccuracies; that has consequently resulted in farmers receiving advance payments.

Working with Sopra Steria, DAERA has achieved two significant objectives.

1. The establishment of an infrastructure architecture which will underpin the future digitisation of DAERA business applications
2. The rollout of the business critical GSAA online application which has enabled 30,000 NI farming businesses to submit claims across 750,000 fields in the three month period from March 16.

Looking to the future, DAERA's target is that by 2018, all changes and final submissions will be made online.

“ Digital partners are an integral part of our business and as a reliable partner, Sopra Steria continues to assist in delivering our digital transformation vision. With their commitment, focus and skills, Sopra Steria employees are committed to delivering new and improved solutions and services for our customers. ”

Paul McGurnaghan,
Head of DAERA Digital
Services



Sopra Steria, European leader in digital transformation, provides one of the most comprehensive portfolios of end to end service offerings in the market: Consulting, Systems Integration, Software Development and Business Process Services. Sopra Steria is trusted by leading private and public organisations to deliver successful transformation programmes that address their most complex and critical business challenges.

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