

CONTAMINATED LAND

December 2010 Issue 46

BULLETIN

POLICY

HCA budget and staff halved

The Homes and Communities Agency will be reduced to half its size with funding cuts of £1.9 billion for 13 regeneration schemes across England.

The HCA is the national housing and regeneration agency, its role is to “provide funding for affordable housing, bring land back into productive use and improve quality of life by raising standards for the physical and social environment”.

The running costs of the agency will be reduced from £80 million to £40 million. The number of directors will be cut from 12 to six and the HCA’s premises will be reduced from 17 to four offices.

The schemes to be axed include areas in Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester. Schemes

in progress will not be affected and 13 schemes “where there is a financial commitment” will still go ahead.

The HCA said: “The agency will now concentrate on helping councils maximise the impact of available funding through our expertise on procurement and other technical services. We will also support councils where schemes have been abandoned and help them to find a non-PFI route to revive the planned developments.”

The funding cuts will undoubtedly have a serious impact on brownfield redevelopment, particularly as private sector developers continue to struggle. Speaking at a Westminster briefing on meeting housing needs, Birmingham City Council’s

cabinet member for housing John Lines made clear how damaging the cuts are likely to be. He said: “Currently between 60 and 70% of all homes under construction are supported by HCA funding.”

In a letter to local authority chiefs, HCA chief executive Pat Ritchie wrote: “I know you will be dealing with a wide range of reductions in the services you deliver over the spending review period. Our aim as an agency is to support you at your request to meet your housing and regeneration priorities by combining investment and enabling expertise. We will work with you to establish effective investment and asset planning to build on our local relationships and joint track record of delivery.”

REPORTING

Europe has three million contaminated sites

The European Union could have three million contaminated sites – 250,000 of which require urgent remediation – according to the European Environment Agency’s *European environment: state and outlook 2010* report, which said: “Due to more than 200 years of industrialisation, soil contamination is a widespread problem in Europe.”

“The most frequent contaminants are heavy metals and mineral oil. The number of sites where potentially polluting activities have taken place now stands at approximately three million.”

The report said: “It is

difficult to quantify the real extent of local soil contamination as many European countries lack comprehensive inventories together with a lack of EU legislation obliging member states to identify contaminated sites (the directive on the management of waste from extractive industries is an exception).

“Estimates show the number of sites in Europe where potentially polluting activities are occurring, or have taken place in the past, now stands at about three million.

“Some locations, depending on their use and the nature of

the contaminant, may only require limited measures to stabilise the dispersion of the pollution or to protect vulnerable organisms from pollution.

“However, it should be noted that around 250,000 sites may need urgent remediation.”

And it is likely the situation will get worse. The report said: “If current trends continue and without changes in legislation, the numbers reported are expected to increase by 50% by 2025. There is some evidence of progress in remediation of contaminated sites, although the rate is slow. Around 80,000 sites have already been treated.”

IN BRIEF

Wales ends grants

The Welsh Assembly Government has scrapped capital grants for contaminated land.

WAG said: “Following the announcement of the draft budget, you will be aware it is proposed there will be no capital funding allocated for continuing the contaminated land capital projects programme beyond the 2010-11 financial year.

“While this may be disappointing please be reassured WAG remains committed to contaminated land issues within Wales and has asked the Environment Agency Wales to prepare an issues paper on contaminated land in Wales.”

Welsh contaminated land officers said that as internal local authority budgets are generally already very limited, proactive Part 2A works would likely come to a standstill without funding available.

Statutory guidance

Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government have published their consultation on revisions to the statutory guidance for the Part 2A regime – just in time for Christmas.

Environmental Protection UK chief executive James Gruceon said: “This consultation is a golden opportunity to safeguard the health of communities and our environment by improving the regime for managing our industrial legacy of contaminated land.

“We encourage all working in the field to contribute to ensuring the revised guidance is fit for purpose by engaging thoroughly in the consultation process. New guidance must be effective in supporting local authorities to deliver their statutory duties.”

● See page seven for the first press report on the guidance
● www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/contaminated-land/index.htm

HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE...

NEWS

- 2 WSP sells laboratory
- 3 VHE Cardiff contract
- 4 Funding call

5

ERM Corrie project

7

FEATURE:

Three pages of analysis on the statutory guidance review

12 COMING EVENTS

GOING UNDERGROUND

Wiggly worms, Cardiff cock-up, bad puns and birthday slavery

IN BRIEF

Correction

In the gossip column on page eight of last month's *CLB*, we republished statements made in the *South Wales Echo* relating to the remediation of the St Donats area of Cardiff.

CLB regrets the facts as published were incorrect.

Contractor VHE Construction said it was not forced by Cardiff Council to sack a sub-contractor due to complaints about poor construction, but that it made a decision to replace the company due to time and resource issues.

Furthermore, soil used to reinstatement gardens that was subsequently removed and replaced was not "contaminated" as stated by the *Echo*. VHE told *CLB*: "Some locally sourced natural soils were found to have background levels marginally above the site specific criteria set for some determinants."

UKAS accreditation

Derwentside Environmental Testing Services has been granted UKAS accreditation for the quantification of asbestos in soil. It is also now offering speciated mercury analysis.

Technical manager Mike Hopgood told *CLB*: "Mercury and its compounds present a significant potential of significant harm to human health.

"However, the different forms of mercury can present different risks, so the determination of speciated mercury can help in assessing the potential risk presented by mercury in samples taken from sites.

● www.dets.co.uk

Broadmeadow

Teignbridge District Council has announced Morrisons as development partner as part of its plan to regenerate the Broadmeadow area of Teignmouth.

Broadmeadow was previously a landfill and was then used as sports fields for many years.

Concerns about contamination and safety led to the fields being closed for sports in 2001.

INDUSTRY

WSP sells laboratory to Alcontrol

Consultancy WSP Environment & Energy has sold its soil testing laboratory to Alcontrol for an undisclosed sum.

Global managing director Stuart McLachlan told *CLB*: "We've sold the lab to Alcontrol, the staff have moved across, we have a service level agreement with Alcontrol so there shouldn't be any chance in terms of cost of testing for our clients. It has all been fairly seamless, except testing will be undertaken by Alcontrol as opposed to under the ownership of WSP."

McLachlan said around 85 staff have been affected by the move, a number showing how large WSP's testing arm had become. He told *CLB*: "We

made the sale because we felt it was important to focus on our core business. The laboratory has grown quite a lot over the years and while owning it made sense when it was really supporting our internal activities, it became more and more a commercial testing laboratory in its own right, and that's not our core business – it's more Alcontrol's of course – so it made sense to let it go."

A downbeat WSP Group pre-close trading update of 15 December said: "The year has proved challenging in varied but generally difficult markets.

"The group has recently presented its five-year strategic plan looking forward to 2015, as part of which we stated our

intention to exit non-core activities. We have since sold a loss making testing laboratory in our UK environment and energy business and we are progressing a planned disposal of our small UK donor aid business. We are also restructuring our industrial process business, which has found trading difficult during the downturn, to integrate it into our core UK operations.

"As we move into 2011 we anticipate our markets and trading patterns to be broadly maintained. We expect the UK market to remain subdued as a consequence of reduced public sector spending and without a compensating recovery in the private sector."

REDEVELOPMENT

Atkins review approves Hollicombe proposals

An independent review of Midas Homes' remediation plans for the Hollicombe gasworks site has been carried out for Atkins on behalf of Torbay Council.

Midas managing director Bill Cawse said the report confirmed the developer's plans for the site were robust. He told *CLB*: "We're delighted Atkins has confirmed our proposals are 'belt and braces'."

However, opposition to the proposals remain strong, with locals claiming students at an adjacent primary school are at risk from pollutants they claim could be released to air if the works are carried out.

Preston Residents and Parents Against Toxic Dust's Andrew Robinson said he still has a number of concerns. He said: "Why are the council, Atkins and Midas ignoring common sense best practice which would schedule remediation nearest the school during holidays? Why is Atkins not recommending tenting over contaminated hotspots during remediation to prevent dust release that may endanger residents and school children?"

"And how can estimated soil

volumes for excavation be robust when the site has not been adequately surveyed?"

Atkins was asked: "The use of the odour control sprays around the site will be used to stop dust escaping. Have independent published tests specified and quantified its effectiveness and efficiency against toxic dust?"

Its report said: "The APPS SIAT system is well known to Atkins and is among the best regarded odour suppression technologies in terms of proven effectiveness. It is not thought to be intended specifically as a dust suppression system, as the removal of odorous VOCs and airborne dust particles generally require a different droplet size.

"In Atkins' experience, it is far better to mitigate at source as per [contractor] Morrison's method statement as few if any boundary fence dust suppression systems are genuinely effective."

Robinson said: "Midas propose to use 'bloodhound' trailers to control dust – technology Atkins says is unproven for this purpose."

Soil and underlying groundwater on the site have

been affected by a number of contaminants including metals, cyanide, diesel, petrol and mineral oil.

Midas said remediation would reduce pollution of the local beach. It said: "Pollutants are contaminating groundwater which is finding its way to the sea. By heavily reducing the contaminants on the land, Midas Homes will therefore reduce the contamination of the local beach and ocean."

It plans to excavate around 24,000 cubic metres of soil from the site, of which a third is contaminated and will need to be treated or removed. Midas said: "The scheme to deal with the contamination has been designed specifically to minimise the amount of soil that needs to be removed from the site.

"Covered lorries will be used to ensure soils remain in the vehicles during transportation. In addition, each lorry leaving the site will undergo rigorous vehicle washing facilities to ensure soil/material does not leave the site."

Between 5,000 and 7,000 cubic metres of soil will be treated on site by biopiling.

POLICY

VHE bags second Cardiff job

VHE Construction is carrying out a further remediation project for Cardiff Council, following on from the St Donats job.

The specialist remediation contractor has been awarded a £210,000 contract to remediate and reinstate the gardens of 15 residential properties in the city's Gabalfa area. The homes were built on the former Cambrian Patent Fuel Works, which produced fuel briquettes in the late 1800s and early 1900s before being developed in the 50s for housing.

The site, three kilometres from the city centre, was investigated by Cardiff, resulting in the determination of all 15 properties under Part 2A.

The houses are located over two streets and arranged in blocks of four with what VHE

said was "very tight access" to rear gardens. The affected properties are separate from each other and back onto other properties where no works are to be undertaken.

VHE said the restricted access will require the use of the smallest available plant and manual labour. Following clearance of the gardens, including some well-established trees, contaminated soils will be removed to landfill and replaced with clean soils.

Hard and soft landscape will be carried out in both the front and back gardens of the affected properties. VHE will also carry out monitoring to ensure the remediation is effective.

VHE's construction director Gordon Wilson told *CLB*: "We'll essentially be pulling out

and replacing the top layer of soil, with clean material going back in – there's absolutely no room to remediate on site.

"They were making briquettes, so I'd expect it's benzo(a)pyrene and other hydrocarbons, and there is bound to be some metals in there, although I don't know they were particularly flagged up as an issue.

"We're on site at the moment and are already halfway through the job. It's very awkward because we're working right around Christmas so people are expecting this and that to be done.

"Meanwhile we've had the weather everyone else has had, to the point where soil can't be shifted, and temperatures that froze the diesel in the machines – it's that bad."

INDUSTRY

McAuliffe scores Wolverhampton voucher

Wolverhampton-based environmental contractor McAuliffe Group is the first company to receive funding of £5,000 through a University of Wolverhampton scheme. The remediation firm will use the funding to gain ISO 14001.

The university said: "The business solutions voucher scheme aims to support the economic regeneration of Wolverhampton by encouraging innovation in local businesses."

Vouchers can be redeemed against the cost of expertise and access to specialist equipment or services.

McAuliffe will use the voucher to "evaluate its current business processes and procedures relating to quality, environmental and health and safety management".

The company said: "This will form the first stage of providing practical and relevant processes for the demolition, environmental and contaminated land sectors we operate in and will propel the company through the process of achieving ISO14001."

Wolverhampton director of business solutions Marc Fleetham said: "The voucher is intended to encourage businesses who previously haven't worked with our university to come forward with projects and ideas that could benefit from our experience."

Marketing director Richard Walker told *CLB*: "We've already got strong links with Wolverhampton – my role is through a knowledge transfer partnership with the university. I was appointed through a

government-funded scheme with the Technology Strategy Board, for two years as marketing manager.

"We've identified areas in quality, environmental and health and safety side, which has then fed into the business solutions voucher project.

"We're looking at various industry accreditations – particularly ISO 14001 – as key projects for us, and this is going to funding will help us in implementing that for next year," he said.



The McAuliffe Group on site: the firm aims to gain ISO 14001

IN BRIEF

Student paper awards

PhD students from Cambridge University's geotechnical and environmental group, Claudiane Ouellet-Plamondon and Reginald Kogbara, were among seven recipients of the outstanding student paper awards at the Fifth International Conference on Environmental Science and Technology, organised by the American Academy of Sciences and held in Houston, Texas.

The PhD studies are part of an research programme led by Dr Abir Al-Tabbaa into cost-effective, efficient and sustainable remediation of contaminated land.

The team has been investigating a range of novel materials, processes and technologies, some as part of two large Technology Strategy Board funded projects: soil mix remediation technology (SMiRT) and process envelopes for cement-based stabilisation/solidification (ProCeSS). Field trials will take place in the new year on a former chemical site in West Yorkshire.

Ouellet-Plamondon, in her third year of study, received first prize for a paper titled *Metal retention experiments for the design of soil mix technology permeable reactive barriers*.

The paper provides engineering implications of mixing granular clinoptilolite with a model clay-sandy soil to remediate metal in polluted groundwater.

Kogbara received second prize for his paper. His research revolves around stabilisation – solidification treatment technology, involving the application of cement-based binders to hazardous wastes to bring about chemical fixation and immobilisation of contaminants.

The paper dealt with developing the range of operating conditions that result in acceptable performance of S/S treated contaminated soils minimising contaminant leaching and improving geotechnical properties.

IN BRIEF

Cotgrave Colliery

Rushcliffe Borough Council has granted planning permission for 470 homes, plus land for employment use and open space on the former Cotgrave Colliery site.

Council leader Neil Clarke said: "We're confident Cotgrave will gain enormous economic benefits as a result of redeveloping this brownfield site.

Andrew Wilkie, chairman of Cotgrave Town Council, said: "Now, a long time after the mine closure there is a real opportunity to reuse the site to bring some benefit for the community."

Planning for schools

Environmental Protection UK has published its response to government's Planning for schools development consultation.

EPUK said it is concerned proposals to extend permitted development to change of use of buildings for schools risks the health, safety and amenity of children, staff and neighbours.

It said: "Previous and historic use of the site must be considered to ascertain the potential exposure of children and staff to any contamination residues such as toxins or asbestos in soil.

"Although building regulations will still apply, we have no confidence that, without a system of knowledge transfer in place, those setting up schools will be aware of all potential health, safety and environmental controls. It is in the interest of all parties, particularly the school promoters, to be made aware of issues such as the presence of land contamination at the earliest possible stage, rather than discovering the need for costly work during building control inspections.

"Building regulations are generally less rigorous than the planning regime, and we therefore question the appropriateness of relaxing requirements for developments that involve children, who are most vulnerable to exposure to environmental pollutants."

REMEDIATION

Plymouth Lipson Vale funding

Plymouth City Council has announced it received just over £400,000 in the final contaminated land capital grants funding window of 2010 to remove contaminated soil from playing fields in Lipson Vale.

The council had applied for funding after elevated levels of lead were found on the site, a former landfill. Works will now begin to remove contaminated soil from the playing fields, which have been closed and fenced off since April.

Cabinet member for street scene, waste and sustainability Michael Leaves said: "This is the news we have been waiting for and we hope the people who

live around here will feel reassured that we have been working hard on their behalf to sort this issue out.

"We are conscious this issue has been a cause for concern, but we can now look forward to a time when this popular area will be once again used by children for play.

"Remediation will likely entail soil screening to separate the contaminated material followed by excavation and disposal to landfill. A new layer of clean topsoil will be brought in to replace the removed soil.

"The grant will also enable a drainage system to be installed and once the new topsoil is in

place, the pitches will be reseeded with grass."

The council said it anticipated work will start at the beginning of 2011 with the main phase likely to take between three and four months. However, the timetable is subject to the tendering process, and will the weather.

The Health Protection Agency's Pete Smith said: "I am pleased these remedial works will take place shortly, they mark a significant milestone on the road to full site remediation and restoration.

"The HPA will remain on hand to offer support and advice to local residents."

SITE INVESTIGATION

ERM project at new Coronation Street home



A former vegetable oil processing facility is to become the new home of Coronation Street following a series of specialist studies by consultancy ERM's Manchester office.

ERM deployed a team of experts as part of ITV's recently announced move to MediaCityUK in Salford Quays, which will include building a bespoke studio and production centre for Coronation Street, the soap that this year celebrates its fiftieth anniversary.

As part of the project, ERM

made an assessment of contamination issues, local ecology and flood risks at the proposed facility, a 7.7 acre site at Trafford Wharf, Manchester.

"Our role has been to carry out environmental due diligence at the site and specialist input into the planning application," said Andrew Sykes, ERM partner in charge of the project. "Our reports that accompany the application include a number of mitigation measures such as tree planting and the protection of wildlife."

ERM formed part of a multidisciplinary team on the

project. In addition to ERM Manchester staff working on the project, the firm brought in specialists from its offices in Edinburgh and Bristol.

ERM told *CLB*: "There is a remediation strategy and remediation statement provided with the planning application. Following approval and appointment of a contractor, we expect soil and perched groundwater treatment to take place along with incorporation of engineering measures such as hardstanding and gas membranes in the final built development."

REGULATION

Water and waste worst performers

The waste and water sectors continue to cause the Environment Agency the most concern over pollution incidents according to its annual *Greener business* report.

The legal waste sector has the most serious pollution incidents of the sectors regulated by the Agency, and causes around half of all serious incidents overall.

The water industry also has an underlying performance issue: pollution incidents from the sector have remained static at around 2,200 per year, although the Agency said more serious pollution incidents have reduced dramatically.

The reason for the Agency's ongoing focus on illegal waste management activity is clear from its findings. The EA said: "Our research highlights illegal waste activity as a serious risk to the environment. Dangerous or hazardous chemicals are often not disposed of properly by illegal operators and this can

blight local communities.

"We have identified over 800 illegal waste sites, of which over 350 are operating within 50 metres of schools, homes or sensitive environmental sites.

"In fact, the analysis indicates that for every ten legal waste sites, there is another operating illegally. We pledge to continue to crackdown on these dangerous sites and urged all waste producers to take responsibility for ensuring they deal only with legitimate waste and skip companies."

However, the Agency said the majority of operators are doing well. The number of serious industrial pollution incidents has fallen by over 30% in the last five years – down from 600 incidents to just under 400.

Chief executive Dr Paul Leinster said: "Our analysis shows most companies have a good environmental record, despite the difficult economic conditions. And serious

pollution incidents have reduced dramatically in the last five years. Green business is good business because it can help reduce costs and enhances reputation with customers.

"But we will continue to target the poor performing companies and illegal activity that cause damage to the environment and pose a risk to communities. There are still too many pollution incidents in the water and waste industries and we will be working with companies to clean up their act.

"And we'll continue to take a zero tolerance approach to illegal waste sites. We have stopped 2,000 in the last two years, but continue to work with the police and other agencies to gather intelligence and target these dangerous operations. However, waste companies, councils and householders also have a role to play by making sure their waste goes only to licensed sites."

GUIDANCE

LGR publishes jargon-cutting planning guides

Local Government Regulation (formerly Lacors) has published two guides "designed to cut through the wealth of environmental and planning jargon to provide officers with a clear overview of the key legislation that shapes the work of both professions".

Both cover dealing with contaminated land under the planning system in detail, and contaminated land officers may wish to ensure their planning colleagues give each a thorough read.

LGR said: "Good communication between planning and environmental protection officers is vital to ensure planning addresses environmental protection issues in the most effective way.

"Fully considering matters such as contaminated land, noise and air quality during the development of local planning policies and as part of pre-application discussions with

developers can save council resources, minimise future financial and legal risks and protect residents' health while delivering sustainable development."

The *Guide to environmental regulation* aims to provide planning officers with an introduction to the aims – and links to the planning system – of remediation of contaminated land, local air quality management, industrial pollution control, regulation of statutory nuisance and environmental noise, streets management and tackling environmental crime.

The accompanying *Guide to the planning system* is "extensive reference material for environmental health professionals, utilising real-life case studies and highlighting opportunities to share expertise and evidence to shape local planning policy and therefore set clear expectations of

developers.

"It will also help utilise the development management process to protect the environment and human health through involvement in pre-application discussions, securing appropriate planning conditions and section 106 planning obligations, and effectively enforcing them".

Policy officer Laura Rose said the guides will only be available online in order to allow updates to reflect changes and environmental law and the government's ongoing revamp of the planning system.

She said: "Thanks to all the councils who provided case studies for the guide.

"If your council is working to improve links between environmental protection and planning and would like to feature in future editions please contact me."

● laura.rose@local.gov.uk

IN BRIEF

YCLF meeting

The thirteenth Yorkshire Contaminated Land Forum meeting was the first joint meeting with Royal Town Planning Institute Yorkshire, and celebrated YCLF's third anniversary.

The meeting, held in the Henry Moore conference suite at Leeds Art Gallery, was attended by 110 planning, land quality and landscape design professionals. David Johns of RTPI Yorkshire introduced the event.

John Moritz of Cobbetts LLP provided an overview of legal aspects of planning and land contamination, expressing concern that the good practice identified in PPS 23 may be lost in the government review of planning policy.

John Dunshea of BNP Paribas reviewed the planning consultant's assessment of the regeneration of a number of large sites.

John Dennis of sK(UK) discussed using an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to create land value and Phil Morgan outlined the key messages about SuRF-UK, the framework for sustainable remediation.

CL:AIRE seeks site

CL:AIRE has been contacted by a technology developer who requires a site to undertake a CL:AIRE Technology Demonstration Project.

The site or sites that they require ideally has an impacted groundwater plume so that source zones as well as unsaturated zones can be treated. The site should represent a problem that affects a wider community of sites and has a challenging combination of contaminants.

Contaminants of particular interest are cis-dichloroethene, 1,1-dichloroethene, vinyl chloride, 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane, 1,2-dichloroethane and high molecular weight polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons

IN BRIEF

Locking Parklands

The Homes and Communities Agency and developer St Modwen have signed a development agreement that gives the go ahead to start work on the first phase of housing at the former RAF Locking site, near Weston-super-Mare.

The agreement confirms St. Modwen as the HCA's partner for the site, and includes plans to deliver 100 new homes by mid 2013. Forty of these will be private homes, 30 will be affordable and 30 will be available to buy or part own through the HomeBuy Direct scheme.

RAF Locking, renamed Locking Parklands, was acquired by the South West RDA in 2002 following its closure as a training base in 1998, with HCA taking ownership this year.

South west regional director for St Modwen Rupert Joseland said: "Signing this agreement signals the start of work to transform the site into a high quality community within the next 20 years. In the current climate, we are delighted to have secured funding to progress this important scheme. The HCA has invested around £2.5m in this first phase of development, taking its investment to more than £12 million since 2002."

EPA clean-up plan

The US Environmental Protection Agency has published a draft integrated clean-up initiative plan, a "three-year strategy to focus on the agency's land clean-up programmes".

Sites covered under the EPA's clean-up programmes include Superfund, federal facilities, brownfields, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act corrective action, and underground storage tanks.

The EPA said the goal of the initiative is to accelerate remediation of contaminated sites where possible, address a greater number of contaminated sites, and put the sites back into productive use while protecting human health and the environment.

SITE INVESTIGATION

Poole to sample pottery site

Borough of Poole Council is to carry out soil testing at a former pottery site in Parkstone.

Samples will be taken from land and properties in the area surrounding South Western Crescent. The areas being tested are the site of the former South Western Pottery and former clay pits which were filled in the 1960s and 1970s prior to being developed for housing in the 1970s.

Atkins is investigating the potential presence of landfill gas and possible groundwater contamination.

Cabinet portfolio holder for the environment Don Collier said: "We want to reassure residents living in the area that these tests are a precaution and

required as part of government legislation. We have consulted the Health Protection Agency and its advice is that residents should continue to live normally and use their homes, gardens and local open spaces as usual.

"Anyone who may have concerns is welcome to come along to our drop-in sessions where we can explain about the tests in more detail."

The council said: "One potential risk from landfill sites is gases such as methane and carbon dioxide, which we will be testing for. It is also possible the mix of material used to fill the former pits could cause contamination to soils. As part of the investigation we will

carry out surface soil sampling to identify what (if anything) is in the soil.

"South Western Crescent was supplied with oil as part of a former district heating system which was closed in 1995 and the investigation will look at whether this system was properly decommissioned."

Exploratory works will involve 30-35 hand-dug pits, installation of 24 boreholes and a number of vapour monitoring wells in order to establish if there are vapours in the soil connected to the pipework of the old district oil heating system.

● www.boroughofpoole.com/southwesterncrescent

SITE INVESTIGATION

Forum aims to improve minewater quality

The South Derbyshire Minewater Forum is investigating what can be done to improve water quality at sites near former mines in north west Leicestershire and South Derbyshire.

The forum is looking at how minerals seeping from disused mines can be removed at Saltersford Brook near Donisthorpe and Cadley Hill near Swadlincote.

Water in the brook has become darker due to the presence of iron oxide caused by rising levels of water in former mines. The water, which started to rise following the closure of the mines and an end to pumping in the 1980s and

1990s could have potential consequences for fish and aquatic plants.

The Coal Authority is carrying out regular testing at the sites and took part in discussions about proposals to pump and treat the water at the last forum meeting.

Chairman Matthew Lugg said: The name of the Saltersford Brook and the presence of the Moira Baths in Victorian times indicate the natural presence of chlorides in surface water is nothing new for this area, although the presence of coalmine pumps mitigated this for a time.

"I'm pleased the Coal Authority was able to update

forum members with the latest monitoring data, that there are plans for mitigation and that the impacts of the mine water are local. I look forward to working with forum partners in delivering a solution to this technical problem."

Coal Authority head of environmental development at the Stuart Rolley said: Situations of rising minewater are occurring throughout many former coalfield areas. The South Derbyshire coalfield is a particularly sensitive location because of its conservation status and we are working hard with the Environment Agency and others to minimise the impact of this mining legacy."

POLICY

Proposed extension to Coal Authority powers

The Coal Authority to be allowed to treat any contaminated waters.

The proposed Energy Bill will allow the authority to offer commercial services to treat non-coal minewater and also deal with with non-coal related

subsidence.

The proposed bill will extend the Coal Authority's powers to allow it to offer and charge for remediation of non-coal minewater pollution, along with non-coal mining subsidence.

The coalition government

said it was meeting a policy commitment by "extending the authority's vires to allow them to deploy their existing expertise in remediating coal-related environmental and safety liabilities in non-coal related contexts".

Revising the Part 2A guidance

CLB takes a first look at the just-published consultation on revisions to the statutory guidance for Part 2A, which aims to streamline the regime

Defra has published its public consultation on changes to the contaminated land regime under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The draft of revised statutory guidance for England and Wales is out to consultation until Tuesday 15 May 2011.

The consultation is the latest – and hopefully last – attempt by government to address the problems practitioners have faced in using the Part 2A regime, which has seen little progress achieved in the two decades it has been in place.

The new guidance will be a streamlined version, which attempts to address issues such as how contaminated land is defined for the purposes of Part 2A.

The government said it wanted the revisions to achieve a Part 2A that would “continue to deliver all the benefits of the current regime”, but is simpler, outcome focused, more targeted and better at protecting health and the environment, more transparent, proportionate, accountable and consistent, and with a reduced regulatory

burdens for business.

Government said: “We want greater emphasis on ensuring benefits of intervention outweigh impacts. We also want greater value for the taxpayers’ money used to fund local authority activity, for example through increased targeting of higher risk sites.

“Also, we want to increase consistency in decision making by setting clearer parameters in which decisions must be made, and making clear what factors local authorities should consider. Within these parameters we want to leave room for local authorities to make judgements that reflect local circumstances and priorities.”

Contaminated land strategies

Among the changes proposed is that the required contaminated land strategies be included within wider strategies in order to give more flexibility. The government said: “It is also intended to help raise the profile of Part 2A work in local authorities. In the past many authorities produced large,

detailed strategies, and the risk is that once they have been produced very few people other than the contaminated land officer are likely to read them.

“The advantage of including contaminated land in a wider strategy might be to ensure the issues are seen ‘in the round’ alongside other issues, and that they have more visibility to senior decision makers within authorities.”

Risk assessment

The government also set out its approach to the process of risk assessment. The consultation said: “This would include various key principles of risk assessment, for example the need to take a strategic approach; the aim of dismissing low risk sites as soon as possible in order to focus on finding higher risk sites; and the general need to ensure risk assessment is conducted in a timely and efficient manner.

“The guidance would also clarify that in considering possible future risks the local authority should consider likely future situations, rather than hypothetical worst possible case situations.”

The revised statutory guidance also addresses the somewhat fraught issue of using generic assessment criteria. Government said: “The guidance would recognise it is common practice in the sector to use GACs for the purpose of screening sites early in risk assessment, and it would clarify how certain GACs should be used.

“It would also give legal backing for the use of robust GACs produced by reputable, non-governmental, organisations within the sector. For example, this would apply to the two sets of GACs produced by the Environmental Industries Commission, the Association of Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental Specialists and CL:AIRE; and Land Quality Management and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.”

Risk summary requirement

There will be a new requirement for local authorities to produce risk summaries in a form that can be understood by non-experts. The consultation said: “Local authorities would be allowed to produce only very brief summaries for low risk sites, but there would be a minimum requirement for any site that is likely to be determined as contaminated land.

● continued overleaf



It is hoped revisions to the guidance will help speed remediation of contaminated sites

“In practice, many authorities already produce summaries, but in the past some have not, and in such cases it can be difficult for non-experts (including affected people and businesses; and managers, councillors and lawyers within local authorities) to get a quick overview of the risks at a site without making a major effort to read large volumes of technical material.

“Another advantage of risk summaries is that they could be easily shared between contaminated land officers in different authorities to allow a degree of peer review before decisions are made, and generally to share experience as a way to increase consistency in decision making among local authorities.”

Increasing confidence in Part 2A

The government set out a number of areas in which it hopes the revised statutory guidance will have a positive impact on the contaminated land regime.

It said the changes will lead to increased confidence for local authority officers that the regime recognises the uncertainties they have to deal with; increased transparency for anyone with an interest in knowing what the local authority estimates the risks to be, including affected people and decision makers within councils; increased robustness and proportionality of decisions; and “probably” a net decrease in administrative burden (“there may be an increased burden for the officer who must prepare the risk summary, although many already do this as part of good practice, but this burden is likely to be outweighed by making it much easier for managers, councillors and lawyers within the authority to get an overview of the risks before decisions are taken”).

Eliminating trace contaminants

The revised section on risk assessment will also clarify that background levels of contaminants in soil such as natural presence, or “normal” low levels of human-caused contamination should be considered unable to qualify as contaminated land, presumably in order to address the ubiquitous presence of benzo(a)pyrene which has caused so much difficulty for councils, particularly as is present in suburban soils across much of the UK due to the past practice of spreading ashes from home fires in gardens as a soil conditioner.

The draft guidance says: “The current statutory guidance does not make this clear, and this has caused considerable regulatory uncertainty. For example, some authorities have been uncertain over whether they should investigate or dismiss sites at or close to background levels of contamination.

In some cases this has led to long-drawn-out site investigations before sites are eventually dismissed.

“There have been problems for authorities in areas where there are elevated background levels of contaminants in soil (for example in Cornwall, where much of the county has elevated natural background levels of arsenic); or urban areas where

levels of contaminants in soil (from lead in petrol or benzo(a)pyrene from car exhausts) are ‘normal’ for any modern town or city.

“There have also been knock-on effects for redevelopment of land affected by contamination under the planning system. Developers report that the uncertainty over whether such land might conceivably qualify as contaminated land has compelled them to remediate land to excessive standards and cost.”

Defining significant harm

One of the big issues is that of significant harm to human health, an area where ongoing uncertainty as to how it should be defined has helped noble progress in the determination of land contamination.

The current guidance defines the legal trigger for action on contamination, as “death, disease, serious injury, genetic mutation, birth defects or the impairment of reproductive functions”.

However, the government says: “Experience has shown this definition is unclear. In particular, this is because the definition of disease leaves some uncertainty as to whether only serious conditions are covered, or any condition at all (including trivial complaints). “To date, most practitioners have considered disease should be taken to mean only serious conditions of similar seriousness to the examples given (for example cancer, liver dysfunction or extensive skin ailments).

“This view is supported by the fact Part 2A specifies significant harm rather than any harm, and it would fit with the wider wording of the definition. However it is not clear, and the guidance does not explain how local authorities should go about deciding what harm is significant.”

Two options for clarification

The consultation sets out two options to resolve the problem. One would be a simple clarification of the current definition, in order to “make clear that it applies only to serious unhealthy conditions of the body or part of it that the local authority considers to be of similar degree of seriousness as the examples given in the definition (such as cancer, liver dysfunction or extensive skin ailments).

It would also remove reference to “genetic mutation” on the basis of Health Protection Agency advice that not all genetic mutations would lead to significant harm; and in cases where they did, the mutation would be a cause of harm rather than harm in itself.

The second option would be a revised definition of significant harm to human health whereby some forms of harm would always constitute significant harm (e.g. death; life threatening diseases such as cancer; other diseases likely to have serious permanent or long-term impacts on health; serious injury; birth defects; and impairment of reproductive functions); with other forms of harm considered to be significant if the regulator concludes that they are, according to a test specified in the guidance document.

Singular focus on contamination

But the most important issue of all is that of SPOSH, the significant possibility of significant harm to human health, or the intervention point at which councils must take action to protect the public.

The consultation describes “the SPOSH issue” as “a major source of uncertainty since the regime came into force in England and Wales” – an understatement to end all understatements – and admits the current statutory guidance does not provide an adequate explanation of what in fact constitutes SPOSH,

The government said: “The main reason why the current statutory guidance does not give an adequate explanation is that it was published on the assumption that number-based thresholds (describing approximately what would constitute SPOSH with regard to different types of contaminants) would follow soon afterwards, and that this would clarify how local authorities should make decisions. However, to date there have been no such number thresholds.

“The resultant legal uncertainty has led to a situation where many regulators have been uncertain of what level of risk would constitute SPOSH – in particular where the border lies between SPOSH and not-SPOSH. This uncertainty has created considerable regulatory uncertainty for businesses and individuals who are (or could be) affected by such decisions. This includes homeowners and developers of low-risk brownfield sites.

“The latter report that they have been compelled to remediate land to an excessively high standard and cost, which (to the extent that this has happened) is concerning because excessive remediation brings with it a range of financial, socio-economic and environmental impacts.”

The consultation sets out why the government has been unable – despite numerous attempts – to come up with number-based thresholds for SPOSH. Having admitted defeat on the issue some time back, the revision to the statutory guidance appears to have little to offer in terms of a solution, handing the problem to organisations such as the EIC, CIEH and consultancy Land Quality Management, which have taken matters into their own hands.

The government said: “We propose to maintain a test for SPOSH that is qualitative in nature, and which gives the local authority sufficient flexibility to use its judgement to make reasonable decisions in cases where uncertainty exists.

“This is the only way to provide for a SPOSH test which will work in all potential cases, and which allows for local authorities to make legally robust decisions.

“Defra and the Wales Assembly Government have no plans to produce number-based SPOSH thresholds (statutory or otherwise). However, this would not preclude the development and use of technical tools to support the decision making process produced by other organisations within the sector. Such tools would of course have to be in line with the

new statutory guidance. However, the proposed new guidance would provide some legal cover for GACs and similar tools as may be developed in the future.”

A traffic light system for SPOSH

However, the revised statutory guidance will create a new test for SPOSH, which is in effect a “red-amber-green” test.

The consultation said: “The ‘red’ category would describe sites where there is a strong case for considering a site is clearly high risk. The ‘green’ would describe sites that are clearly low risk. The ‘amber’ category of sites is inevitably less straightforward, and the local authority would be responsible for deciding whether such sites are: either ‘amber/red’ sites, which should be considered to be contaminated land; or ‘amber/green’ sites, which are not.”

In the case of amber sites, local authorities will need to consider all the relevant issues underlying potential determination of a site, including “the authority’s estimate of the possibility of significant harm; the likely direct and indirect health impacts of regulatory intervention; whether or not the likely health benefits of intervention would outweigh the likely health impacts; and the authority’s initial estimate of what remediation would involve; how long it would take; what benefit it would be likely to bring; whether the benefits would outweigh the financial and economic costs; and any impacts on local society or the environment from taking action that the authority considers to be relevant”.

The government said: “The test for amber sites would rest on whether the authority believes there is a strong case for regulatory action, having taken account of the best available scientific evidence, the regime’s objectives and other relevant factors.

“The guidance would require amber sites, where the possibility of significant harm is obviously high or low, should be decided on this basis alone regardless of other factors (high-risk amber sites should be considered to be contaminated land regardless of wider socio-economic or environmental considerations; and vice versa in the case of clearly low-risk amber sites).

“However, for any site where the authority’s estimate of possibility of significant harm did not in itself provide sufficient evidence to make the SPOSH decision, the authority would need to consider wider factors before deciding whether the site was (or was not) contaminated land.”

The consultation describes this as a key change to the guidance, stating that the current lack of statutory guidance on how to decide whether SPOSH exists (particularly in the case of amber sites, and in some cases also green) has led to a situation where many local authorities are unclear about what decisions the regime expects them to make, and therefore means it is not clear what outcomes the regime seeks to achieve.

The government said: “Under the current

regime, in theory it would be possible to decide that high-risk sites are not SPOSH, and low-risk sites are SPOSH. This has created regulatory uncertainty with negative consequences for affected people, businesses and regulators.”

The new test would be based on the fact there are broadly four types of site – those that are clearly high risk, clearly low risk, and sites where the answer is not immediately clear, but it can be established following assessment as to whether they are contaminated or not.

The consultation said: “The new test would give local authorities some flexibility to decide whether or not SPOSH exists. However, there would be much greater clarity on the legal boundaries in which the decision must be taken; the nature of the decision; the outcomes the regulator should seek to achieve; how they should approach the decision; and what factors should be taken into account.”

Legal backing for regulators

The guidance will – for the first time – “spell out” what type of sites must be considered red regardless of other considerations while meaning councils are “fully backed up” legally, as well as defining sites that are definitely not contaminated, something Defra said was a “major advance in good regulation because it is very important for a regime such as Part 2A to explain which sites it does not mean to catch”.

On the subject of the all-important amber sites, the draft guidance said: “We will for the first time establish a legal test for how to decide the wide range of sites which potentially fall within this category.

“The broad aim is to give the regulator sufficient flexibility to make proportionate and reasonable SPOSH decisions; while also establishing a framework in which those decisions can be taken which involves consideration of the full range of factors underlying proportionate and reasonable decision-making.”

The new guidance will make it impossible to base SPOSH decisions on calculations made using the CLEA software alone. The government said: “CLEA could be used to help assessors understand and model possibility of significant harm, but answering the question of whether a significant possibility of such harm existed would go beyond the capabilities of the CLEA model.”

Much-needed clarifications

The revised guidance also makes some changes on the issue of determining whether land is contaminated because, government said, “various issues have been raised by ten years of implementing the regime which need clarification”.

There is detail on how local authorities can decide that land is not contaminated, for example in cases where early investigation reveals there is no reason to consider the land might be problematic, and therefore it is dismissed from further investigation).

The document said: “Previously there

was no such guidance. In part this seeks to help speed up decision-making on low risk sites. It also seeks to encourage local authorities, as far as reasonable, to decide that low risk land is not contaminated land, in order to reduce the chance such sites suffer property blight from being left in limbo after they have been investigated.

Reconsidering determinations

Other areas visited by the revision on which the previous guidance remained silent include reconsideration of determinations, making it clear regulators can and should reconsider decisions where new information comes to light.

It also introduces a requirement for councils to “consider” informing affected persons before making a Part 2A determination in order to give them a chance to comment. However, the document said: “Many authorities already do this in practice. The guidance would leave authorities with considerable discretion to decide whether (and if so how) to consult, with a view to ensuring this provision does not become something that can be used for the wrong reasons by liable persons to delay the authority’s decision and/or remediation requirements.”

There is also clarification that councils may postpone determination if they consider it reasonable to do so (for example if a liable person agrees to remediate land without the need for formal determination).

Profile-raising for Part 2A

Hopefully the revisions to the statutory guidance for Part 2A will go some way to improving the situation for regulators who have struggled to make progress within in the regime in recent years, particularly in the area of defining whether sites require determination as contaminated land.

There was never any indication Defra had the slightest intention of changing its long-held and much repeated position that it cannot and will not publish numerical values for SPOSH, so hopefully there will not be any Christmases spoilt by the revelation the revised guidance does not include a pledge to deliver them.

However, an attempt to address the issue has been made, and in some detail, and it can be hoped the new traffic light system helps smooth the way for councils looking to progress their Part 2A work.

But the question on everyone’s mind must now be whether the contaminated land capital grants scheme – already abolished in Wales – survives Treasury’s sharpened knives in the New Year. As the scheme is by far the main source of funding for Part 2A activities, if it is suspended or scrapped it may be the bright, shiny new guidance will oversee a regime devoid of any activity.

And with local authority budgets cut to ribbons and no certainty contaminated land teams within some councils will even exist in 2011, Defra’s hope the provisions of the guidance will “help raise the profile of Part 2A work in local authorities” may come to nothing if the regime slips quietly into hibernation in a flurry of inactivity.

Beyond the spending review

Andrew Parsons, director of Glasgow-based IKM Consulting provides a bleak outlook for the contaminated land sector in the wake of the spending review

Andrew Parsons describes a sector in crisis. With funding for action on contaminated land slashed (along with everything else), he fears a return to the dark ages for land remediation, unless practitioners on both sides of the public/private sector divide take action to help themselves, now.

With the housebuilding sector still to show signs of real recovery, job and funding cuts in local government and fierce competition between consultants and contractors for what work is out there, Parsons is concerned real damage could be done to what is now a multi-million pound industry supporting several thousand jobs in Scotland alone.

Working to maintain standards

He calls on contaminated land professionals to act now to protect the regulatory system during the consultation on Part 2A guidance, maintain quality and technical standards despite financial constraints and fight to increase the visibility of land

contamination as an issue for local government in order to protect what little funding remains.

Scotland de-ringfenced funding for contaminated land some time ago, a route England is now going down across the board. However, Parsons warns of the potential for dire consequences for environmental protection. He says: "A discussion recently at an Environmental Protection UK and Scottish Government conference suggests that of the £18 million notionally allocated to contaminated land in financial years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, only a fraction of these monies are actually being spent on contaminated land now that they are rolled up in the general capital grants."

He tells *CLB*: "The Scottish Government provided £18 million in capital grants to local authorities, but if you ask contaminated land officers how much actually ends up coming across their desks it is a very small percentage – for some councils it's just a few percent, up to around

40%, because it's not ringfenced any more, and while the money may still be part of the council's spending pot, it is now up to the head of the council to decide how it's divvied up alongside other areas such as education and social services."

Parsons fears England faces a similar problem. He says: "At least before when the money was assigned to environmental health it was protected to a certain extent, but you've got people out there who don't believe contaminated land is even an issue."

"If you don't protect your funding it will be spent elsewhere – in some cases rightly so with cuts across the board and hospitals at risk of closure. But if we forget completely about contaminated land we'll undo a lot of excellent work carried out over the last decade."

"We must implore the bean counters in local government finance departments to reverse this trend, in order to support our communities, our regulators and our industry."

Quality at risk

Parsons also warns quality is being squeezed along with budgets, as councils looking for lowest price bidders for work pressure consultancies to lower their fees. He says: "It's all too easy for the 'tender process' to select solely on the basis of cheapest price. There is a real danger our modern and sophisticated environmental industry will become filled with the snake oil salesmen of days gone by where limited sampling, poor data collection methods, generic reporting and an absence of quality control are rife."

Failing framework agreements

He uses framework agreements between local authorities and consultancy providers as an example of where it's all going wrong. Parsons says: "Traditionally five or six consultants would be successful and the work would be split between them. But what's happening now is that while framework agreements are still getting five or six consultancies on board, all the work is being assigned to the firm ranked number one for price."

"IKM recently signed a framework agreement where we were the highest for quality and technical ability, but fifth on price, so we're not getting any work. We still qualified to be in the agreement, and will need to spend money to administer the framework for five years, but we're not



Scotland's multi-million pound contaminated land industry supports thousands of jobs

guaranteed to get any work because of the way the system has changed.

“We had been on a framework agreement with the same council for the five years previous – along with four or five of our competitors, all of whom got work out of it – and we were one of the cheaper consultancies when it was signed. This round our price went down 15%, which we will have to maintain for five years, so effectively our rates will be 15% lower than they were a decade before, which is mental.

“Yet we’re still the fifth most expensive, which means the sector is not going to be in a good situation in years to come, because the firms that are bidding really low to bring in work won’t be sustainable.”

Singular focus on contamination

Parsons warns that in order to offer services so cheaply, it will be impossible for providers to afford to retain highly skilled staff, and says “there’s no way you can afford to do the strong science and quality testing required to get good results”.

He says: “That’s where the snake oil salesmen come in, because they’ll sell you the earth but the delivery is very poor. Five or six years ago consultants were not just valued on price – okay, so we had to be competitive, but there was an issue of technical ability not just price, which meant the job being done properly, the first time.

“Now we’re in danger of slipping all the way down that slope again and it’s not just small firms punching above their weight, it can be big corporations that want turnover and market share and have deep pockets. Unfortunately the majority of consultancies in Scotland are SMEs ranging in size from 20 to 100 people, which makes it very hard to compete.

A thriving ambulance service

“People are not doing risk assessments properly and when they’re questioned on whether they can fix it they can’t, because they don’t have the technical knowledge. At which point it becomes a contractual issue – some local authorities we work with are actually taking legal action against service providers who can’t produce the goods.

“Ironically, one area where our business is developing is fixing things. It’s kind of an ambulance service for when it all goes horribly wrong.”

Examining consultants’ abilities

Parsons says: “The local authority skills



IKM Consulting director Andrew Parsons

base on the technical side is very good – they’ve come a long way in the last five or six years. But unfortunately where it used to be the technical guys who were involved in procuring consultants, now that responsibility is in a completely different separate department. But if no time is taken to examine the technical abilities of the consultancies, then the decision is in the hands of the bean counters alone.

“In fairness there were issues in the past, where tenders were being handed out to friends and relatives, but it has now gone to the opposite extreme – the technical people need to have a voice.”

Paying the price for council cuts

Further damage to the ailing contaminated land sector could come with local authority job cuts and the toll they will take on skills on the gamekeeper side of the fence.

Parsons says: “The people who have brought councils along on Part 2A, but more importantly the support they give to planning applications, will be lost, and when the economy recovers and housebuilding restarts – which it will – the whole process will grind to a halt if councils don’t act to retain that expertise. It happened during the last recession when a lot of skills went out of the sector.”

Keeping the sector healthy

Parsons says consultancies also have a role

to play in helping guide the contaminated land sector through the wilderness: “While there may be less money available, quality and added value can still be maintained by developing a system to focus on the most contaminated sites, where the worst problems exist.

“And there has never been a better time for our community to work together to sort out the test of significance and to allow us to focus our limited resources in the correct place. When times were good consultancies wasted a lot of time on sites that were not really a risk – we should be focusing on the higher priority sites rather than trying to make every single site an issue.

“When everything was going well we tended to see these terribly niggly issues that just weren’t a problem. And we need as an industry to make sure we work together to keep quality up, and we still need to push to have the issues with Part 2A resolved.

“A review of the Part 2A process is underway, and based on the experience gained in the last ten years our communities both north and south of the border have a great opportunity to work together and create a system that will last for the next generation. I would encourage all those who are able to man the lifeboats and row us towards dry land.

“It’s really important to resolve what amounts to significant in SPOSH, which we’ve forgotten about when we shouldn’t –

Scurrilous stories

CLB paid the price for reprinting shock-horror stories from local newspapers in its scurrilous gossip column when editor Rob Bell was collared by VHE Construction's Gordon Wilson at the recent Yorkshire Contaminated Land Forum event in Wales. We had republished false facts first printed in the *South Wales Echo* about VHE's work at St Donats in Cardiff. Note to self: never underestimate the ability of local papers to whip up a frenzy and not understand the technical background behind it!

Hopefully we were able to talk Gordon round over a drinks at the excellent social organised by Zoe Cooper after the Forum, proving that the world of contaminated land is not all grey and dreary.

Slaving on his birthday

Editor Rob Bell has spent the hours after midnight on his birthday finishing up the final issue of *CLB* for the year, in order to ensure our dedicated readers have full analysis of the government's consultation on revision of the statutory guidance for Part 2A on their desks just three days after it was published.

It's that kind of dedication to quality

journalism that has seen Rob rise to the exalted position of *CLB* editor despite the fact that he is just 21 (surely not!).

Travellers contamination risk

There is a widespread feeling that councils are reluctant to grant planning permission for traveller sites – or that land contamination can come in as a handy excuse when such applications arise (as you'll know from the string of stories dating back years that suggest just that).

That feeling may be reinforced by the news that land contamination has been cited as an issue in the denial of permission for traveller sites in both Brighton and Flintshire in the last month.

Beach awash with bad puns

Scotland's newspapers have caught up with *CLB* in reporting on Defence Estates cessation of radioactive particle removal from Dalgety Bay, with every single story referring to the beach as being "awash" with contamination.

Despite being as fond of a bad pun as the next newsletter, *CLB* can reassure our readers that – despite the temptation – we would never do such a thing, so wipe the horrified look off your face.

Putting wiggly worms to work

Researchers in South America are studying the viability of using earthworms to process hazardous material containing high concentrations of heavy metals for the bioremediation of old industrial sites, landfill and other potentially hazardous areas, according to the *International Journal of Global Environmental Issues*.

Eisenia fetida could become a useful tool in the processing and safe management of hazardous wastes with high metals content, according to chemist Lué Merú Marcó Parra of the Universidad Centro Occidental Lisandro Alvarado in Cabudare, Venezuela.

Merry Christmas from CLB

As 2010 draws to a chilly close, *CLB* would like to thank its readers for their support during what has undoubtedly been the toughest year the contaminated land sector has ever faced.

The housebuilding sector remains stalled, the public sector is absorbing horrendous cuts, with environmental protection sure to suffer, and times remain hard for consultancies.

Still, things can only get better huh? If you don't have to get anywhere, enjoy the holiday and the snow!

CONTAMINATED LAND EVENTS 2011

January 27

RUSHLIGHT CONFERENCE – CLEAN TECHNOLOGIES SHOW AND GALA AWARDS DINNER

To be held in London. Visit www.rushlightawards.co.uk.

February 2-3

GROUNDWATER RISK ASSESSMENT OF CONTAMINATED LAND

An ESI training event, to be held in Shrewsbury. Visit www.esinternational.com.

February 9

THE TRANSPORT AND FATE OF GROUNDWATER CONTAMINANTS

A Geological Society event to be held in London. dcg@bgs.ac.uk.

March 9

THE NITROGEN CYCLE – IN A FIX?

A Royal Society of Chemistry event, to be held in London. Visit www.rsc.org.

April 10-15

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH INCORPORATING THE SEGH 28TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

To be held in Ormskirk. Visit www.edgehill.ac.uk/segh2011.

May 24-26

SUSTAINABILITYLIVE!

To be held in Birmingham. Visit www.sustainabilitylive.com.

May 26-27

VITO SYMPOSIUM – IN-SITU ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND POLICY

To be held in Ghent, Belgium. Visit www.ugent.be/bw/soilmanagement/en.

June 26-27

BIOREMEDIATION AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGIES SYMPOSIUM

To be held in Reno, Nevada. Visit www.battelle.org/conferences/bioremediation.

September 20-25

GeoMED 2011 – 4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICAL GEOLOGY

To be held in Bari, Italy. Visit www.geomed2011.it.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

1yr sub £229 2yr sub £409 3yr sub £589  We take credit cards 01737 642283

Concessions available for individuals, charities and non-consultant academics

Name Position
Organisation
Address.....

Postcode signed
E-mail

- Please invoice me: order number:
- Cheque enclosed (payable to Environmental Management Publishing)
- BACS payments: details on request
(Please include company name in payment reference) VAT no 869 8809 41

CREDITS



Editor: Rob Bell tel 020 8696 6874
(fax 0871 256 5273)

email rob.bell@empublishing.org.uk
32A Oakdale Road, London SW16 2HL
www.contaminated-land-bulletin.org.uk

Copyright 2010 ISSN 1751-8377
Printed and published by
Environmental Management Publ. Ltd
PO Box 592, Redhill, Surrey RH1 3WN

CONTAMINATED LAND
BULLETIN

TRY OUR OTHER TITLES...



Why not try our other newsletters on noise and air quality?

email enquiries@
empublishing.org.uk for a
no-obligation free three
month trial.

Rob Bell