

Contaminated Land News – March 2000

By the time you read this it will be clear whether or not 1 April will be the start date for Part IIa - the revised Guidance and Contaminated Land Regulations needed to have been laid before parliament by 28 January. Nevertheless the DETR and Environment Agency seem to have gone up a gear or two in their preparations for the new regime. The Environment Agency has written a Process Manual to assist their staff in implementing the regime and a training package is being prepared to enable staff to use the Manual effectively. A sister manual and training package for local authorities is to be prepared over the next few months.

At the 11th IBC Conference on Contaminated Land, of which this journal is a supporting publication, 15 presentations provided the annual update on legal, policy and technical developments. Simon Pollard from the Environment Agency National Centre for Risk Analysis and Options Appraisal explained the Agency's commitment to risk assessment as a means of formalising expert judgement and facilitating decision making and prioritising action. He pointed out that increasing use of quantitative risk assessment has not been accompanied by improved use of conceptual site models and illustrated the use of cross sections and network diagrams to communicate the conceptual model. Jim Finnermore (LGC) reported that the CIRIA project on Land Contamination: Control of financial risk was nearing completion and would include guidance to all stakeholders on how to manage financial risk in transactions, liability assessment and other activities.

Bob Gregory (LQM at University of Nottingham) described a number of risk assessment packages for assessing the risks to human health from volatile emissions from landfills - a frequently ignored aspect of landfill investigations. Dr Graham Norris (Nortel Networks) described the use of a funnel and gate active barrier solution to chlorinated solvent contamination of groundwater in Northern Ireland. His talk was illustrated by striking animated 3D PowerPoint graphics of sub surface conditions. Richard Swannell and Guy Holford (AEA Technology Environment) described the Groundview data management solution they have developed around Arc/View to assist local authorities find contaminated land. Having implemented the system in Oxford and Newcastle, they found that a day's training was all it took to get the LA staff up and running on the system. Hilary Townley (Parkman Environment) described a study of worker and public exposure to contaminants during remediation projects. She recommended dermal exposure and metabolite monitoring and the need for explicit protocols on how monitoring should be carried out. Caroline McCaffrey (LQM at the University of Nottingham) reported that the Internet contains only limited information for use in risk assessments. The most reliable information is that from the US EPA (www.epa.gov) but that search engines give low priority to scientific information so finding the right site can be difficult. There is a clear need for a moderated or otherwise quality controlled gate way to contaminated land information on the web. Alistair Kean (Biologic) shared his experiences with mobile plant licences and concluded that although the current situation is a great improvement on where we were even 2 years ago, delays, cost and inconsistency are still too high. He pointed out that DETR are considering a review of licensing carried out by the Urban Task Force and that the MPLs are seen as an interim measure only. Hazel Davidson (Geochem) informed the audience of recent advances in laboratory analysis of contaminated soil. She highlighted moves towards breaking down the TPH parameter into more useful categories - such as saturated aliphatics, unsaturated aliphatics and aromatics, and polar compounds - to better inform risk assessments. Finally Alex Ritchie (NHBC) reported on the first 12 months of the NHBC Contaminated Land Cover and Chapter

4.1 of their Standards. Feedback from builders on 4.1 has been positive and appreciative of the improved consistency the Chapter brings.

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