

## Contaminated Land News - November 2000

Licensing contaminated land remediation reared its head again recently. September saw the end of the two-month consultation period on the Environment Agency's proposals on how the regime should operate. The draft proposals are available on the EA website ([www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)) and the final version is expected any day.

Agency staff gave evidence at a public inquiry to the effect that it had made errors on several sites throughout the country, in accepting that a licence was not required when in fact it should have been. Staff also admitted that the EA Interim Guide to Developers (1998) was a poorly worded ambiguous document that had at least one crucial omission.

The EIC contaminated land working group has also been discussing the issue, following a proposal that one solution would be to make all remediation exempt from licensing - something the regulators would find difficulty in squaring with the wording of the law as it stands.

The UK was well represented at the recent CONSOIL conference in Leipzig, Germany. The conference brought together a global audience interested in all aspects of contaminated land, from policy and regulation, assessment and management to financial and economic considerations.

Delegates had the opportunity to see a number of imaginative approaches to remediation, including a proposed refurbishment of a derelict gasometer into a cultural centre. The proceedings represent a useful summary of global progress since the last CONSOIL, held in Edinburgh in 1998.

Meanwhile, output from research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation is presented in Paul Syms' new book *Building homes on used land*, published by RICS Books. It presents 10 case studies of brownfield land that have been redeveloped for housing and represents part of the JRF "Policies into practice" programme.

Problems confronting developers of previously used land are examined in some depth. The case studies offer four lessons for housing developers and their advisers, applicable to all redevelopment situations:

- The need for a comprehensive site investigation, of which the historic study of land use forms an essential part.
- The need for a comprehensive written and photographic record, including waste handling notes, of all remediation works.
- The need for validation to demonstrate compliance with the strategy and achievement of the remediation goals.
- The need for factually correct and readily assimilated information on past uses, site investigations and remediation works to be made available to purchasers and tenants.

The book deserves a wide readership and its message should be taken on board by those considering how to encourage the sustainable remediation of land affected by contamination.

A DTI-sponsored project has just started that will develop tools to link 3D conceptual site models to real-time video imagery of a site, allowing non-specialists to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between subsurface conditions and above ground features. The project is described at [www.augmentedreality.co.uk](http://www.augmentedreality.co.uk)

The Environmental Engineering Research Centre at Queens University, Belfast has established an EPSRC-funded Permeable Reactive Barrier Network (PRB-net). This aims to bring together interested parties from academia, industry, consulting and government, to establish connections and further PRB technology. Planned activities include workshops, a conference and a website. Further information from [prb.net@qub.ac.uk](mailto:prb.net@qub.ac.uk)

A large-scale integrated research project for treatment zone technologies (TZT) and reactive barriers technologies (PRB) in Germany was launched by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung) in May. The network has funds of ECU4M and will run over the next three years. It will collate and evaluate results from German TZT projects to assess applicability, longevity, performance, efficiency and rentability of TZTs in general. Further information is available from [birke@fhnon.de](mailto:birke@fhnon.de)

A survey of remedial techniques for land contamination in England and Wales has been published by the Environment Agency (Ref TRP401) and is available from [www.wrcplc.com](http://www.wrcplc.com).

The survey identified 367 sites remediated between 1996 and 1999, the majority of which involved civil engineering-based techniques. Cost was found to be the major factor influencing selection.

Another EA report, Assessing the wider environmental value of remediating land contamination: A review (TR P 238), presents a platform for the development of guidance on assessing one element in sustainable development: the wider environmental impacts of remediation. This stems from interest in achieving sustainable development among the stakeholders of contaminated sites in the UK. A qualitative approach for assessing the wider environmental effects of remediation would help provide:

- A technical basis for discussion about the wider environmental effects of remediation.
- A framework that allows different stakeholders to discuss on a common basis differing points of view and agendas for wider environmental impacts.
- A comparison of the wider environmental impacts, at least as a ranking for different remedial approaches being considered for particular sites.

Paul Nathanail is course director of the MSc in Contaminated Land Management at the University of Nottingham, email: [ground.engineering@lqm.co.uk](mailto:ground.engineering@lqm.co.uk)