

National Brownfield Forum

Meeting Notes

18th April 2024, 11.00am – 3.00pm Teleconference



FINAL

Present:

Darren Beriro (Chair)	HKA
Liz Hart (Deputy Chair)	CL:AIRE
Alex Lee (Outgoing Chair)	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
Nicola Harries (Secretariat)	Scottish Government
Rob Foers	Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
Madeleine Berg	Environment Agency (EA)
Matt Llewellyn & Trystan James	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
Angela Haslam	Homes England (HE)
Graeme Duggan	Chair of NQMS Steering Group
Mark Williams	British Geological Survey (BGS)
Seamus Lefroy Brooks	Specialist in Land Condition (SiLC)
Joanna Wragg	Society of Brownfield Risk Assessment (SoBRA)
Tom Henman	CIRIA
Joanna Wilding	Institution of Environmental Science
Joanne Kwan	Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Pollution Advisory Group (YALPAG)
Richard Boyle	Environmental Industries Commission (EIC)
Stella Keenan	Geological Society
Jane Thrasher	National Contaminated Land Officers Group (NCLOG)
Ruth Easterbrook	UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA)
Rebekah Norbury	Local Government Association (LGA)
Emma Tattersdill	Office of Environmental Protection (OEP)
David Crook	Soil and Groundwater Technology Association (SAGTA)
Darren Watson & Richard Hossack	Association of Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental Specialists (AGS)
Chris Taylor	The Society of Remediation Practitioners (REMSOC)
Geraint Williams	National House Building Council (NHBC)
Steve Edgar	
David Jacob	
Apologies:	
Caroline Thornton	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
Andrew Williams	Welsh Government (WG)
Edward Lewis	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
Tim Elliott	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
Hallan Sambrook	Staffordshire Contaminated Land Officer Group

Agenda

1. Administrative:
 - a. Welcome and Apologies
 - b. Introductions of represented organisations
 - c. Actions from last meeting
 - d. Terms of Reference review
 - e. Review of current membership
2. General Knowledge Share
 - a. Government and Regulatory Update
 - b. Opportunity for clarification on the industry updates as received in advance
 - c. Hot or emerging topics open session
 - d. NQMS Update
 - e. Standards
4. Specific Knowledge Share
 - a. Presentation: Claire Eagle – Head of Land Use Programme, Geospatial Commission : “Geospatial Commission overview of its land use programme plus case studies of applications”.
 - b. Discussion
5. Industry Review Update
6. AOB
7. Date of next meeting

Meeting Notes

1. **Administrative**
 - a) Welcome & Apologies

Darren Beriro (DB) welcomed everyone and apologies were given. As new chair, DB thanked the outgoing chair Alex Lee and the continued support that CL:AIRE provides the National Brownfield Forum (NBF) through Nicola Harries (NH).

- b) Introductions of represented organisations

DB introduced himself and welcomed Liz Hart as the new deputy chair of the NBF to introduce herself. DB welcomed Joanna Wragg who is now representing the British Geological Survey and Richard Hossack of Office of Environmental Protection for joining the meeting.

DB opened the meeting by asking attendees to remember the importance of the NBF and its importance to be open and share knowledge, however the meeting is held under Chatham House Rule, so to please not attribute comments to individuals and wait for the official notes to be published before sharing more widely.

- c) Actions from previous meetings

ACTION: Rob Foers will continue to investigate what is the best way for the National Brownfield Forum to try and engage with relevant select committees.

- d) Terms of Reference review

DB asked attendees to review the draft 2024 terms of reference and inform NH of any suggested changes. It was acknowledged that some attendees names have changed and that NH will address these and then publish on the website.

ACTION: All to review the terms of reference and inform NH of any suggested changes that are needed by 25 April 2024.

e) Review of Current Membership

DB recognised the success of hosting the NBF meetings virtually allowing a lot more people to attend. He is keen for this to continue and widen the membership where appropriate but would like to recommend that there is a process for new members to join to ensure transparency and a control on numbers. DB asked members to think about potential new member organisations that people feel should be represented at the NBF as it is recognised that brownfield covers a wide breadth of topics. It was also acknowledged that a number of NBF membership bodies have wide membership interest groups that span across the brownfield sector. Therefore DB requested that members reach out internally and bring updates from across these groups to ensure wide dissemination of knowledge occurs. This hopefully will help not needing to widen the NBF membership unnecessarily to cover off broader brownfield topics. There is a fine balance to widen the membership across different disciplines but not so wide that members currently attending don't value attending.

DB suggested that new applicants provide the following information, and then members review this and confirm if they are happy that the group joins:

- Full name of group
- Legal status (if any)/description of group
- Current members and conditions of membership
- Aim and scope of the group
- Frequency of meetings
- Availability of meeting minutes or equivalent notes
- Name and contact of current chair

Alignment to NBF terms of reference

As an example, DB explained that West and East London Land Contamination Officers' Group (WELLCOG) has requested to join the NBF. DB shared the responses that WELLCOG had provided to the questions. Members acknowledged that local authorities are represented through the National Contaminated Land Officers Group, but regional groups should also be represented. There were no objections raised to WELLCOG's request to join the NBF.

NBF agreed with the process that DB is suggesting. DB confirmed that membership will always remain under review.

ACTION: NH to invite WELLCOG to attend the next NBF.

ACTION: All to think of different industry groups that may not currently be represented at the NBF and to report this back to NH.

2. General Knowledge Share

a) Government and Regulatory Update

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

Rob Foers (RF) provided an update on behalf of DLUHC.

RF confirmed a consultation was held on 'Strengthening planning policy for brownfield development' between 13 February and 26 March 2024. The consultation set out a package of planning policy interventions seeking to further reinforce the strong support given in planning policy for brownfield development, and to better enable development on previously developed land where this would support the supply of new homes. The proposals in the consultation are not, at this time, government policy. We are now carefully analysing the responses to the consultation, and any subsequent changes in policy will be confirmed in due course. Details of the consultation can be found at - [Strengthening planning policy for brownfield development - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-planning-policy-for-brownfield-development)

Other

DLUHC are also continuing work on a range of other planning reforms, primarily in response to measures set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. This includes reforms to streamline the plan making process, and progressing the formulation of National Development Management Policies.

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Graeme Duggan (GD) provided an update on behalf of Defra.

Land Remediation Pathfinder Scheme (LRPS)

GD confirmed that the LRPS is progressing well and they are hoping to launch after the local elections in May 2024. It has been a challenge to get the scheme finalised due to the complexities around the rules of engagement. GD confirmed that there has been lots of interest from local authorities. When the scheme is launched, Defra plans to host a webinar and have extensive promotional activities.

Environment Agency

Angela Haslam (AH) provided an update on behalf of the Environment Agency. She confirmed that a lot of the different projects are still continuing.

Land Condition Risk Management (LCRM)

Colleagues are looking at updating sections of LCRM with respect to the impacts of climate change.

Industry Profiles

The Environment Agency has been working with CL:AIRE to look at how the industry profiles could be better profiled and made more searchable. CL:AIRE hosted a workshop and undertook an industry questionnaire to gather information. The work has been reported in draft along with the building of a draft prototype.

PFAS

All work packages are progressing as planned.

Updated H5

Drafting work is ongoing. Unfortunately work has stalled as the full-time internal resource dedicated to the project has finished.

Refresh of Piling guidance

The draft guidance has been reviewed and sent back to CL:AIRE. Amendments have been made and it is currently being reviewed by the technical industry group members supporting CL:AIRE. Once they have fed back, then the report will go to CL:AIRE's Technology and Research Group for review, and back to the Environment Agency for sign off.

Pollution

Environment Agency is working alongside UK SPILL on a dedicated section to sit alongside LCRM to address new pollution incidences.

Open Discussion by NBF Industry Members

Following updates from DLUHC, Defra and Environment Agency, industry welcomed DLUHC consultation about bringing brownfield land back to beneficial use. However NBF industry members shared their major concerns and frustration that due to the disconnect between planning and environmental permitting regulations, this could prevent DLUHC's aspirations with the delivery of sufficient housing on brownfield sites. There is the will and technical expertise in place. To help with this, an investigation of the relationships between different regulatory regimes and their impact on the delivery of housing and other forms of development brownfield sites would be beneficial. The NBF industry members felt that a number of sites across many different local authorities across England have identified sites suitable for development and these sites have planning permission in place and funding, but unfortunately due to the

disconnect with current environmental regulations and delays in permitting that these sites are not proceeding.

Defra and Environment Agency confirmed that they are aware of the issues and the incompatibilities and the unintended consequences of the waste and permitting regulations impacting the brownfield sector, but these are complex issues that will need significant resourcing and time to investigate and resolve.

This is not a new issue, this was raised by CL:AIRE to the Environment Agency and Defra over 4 years ago and limited progress has been made. At the time, CL:AIRE shared examples of multiple development sites that had not progressed or stalled because of the incompatibilities of regulations and suggested a draft working framework. In addition, industry groups such as RemSoC, SiLC and EIC have also raised this issue and shared projects with Defra and Environment Agency separately.

Industry wants to help DLUHC to deliver on its ambitious plans of developing brownfield sites, and would welcome the opportunity of working with Defra and the Environment Agency to develop a robust system where planning, environmental permitting, biodiversity net gain, and waste policy and regulatory regimes are compatible with each other to facilitate the reuse of brownfield sites for the much needed houses and other forms of development.

Would NBF industry members be keen to come together to openly discuss the various policies and regulatory aspects that are contra to redeveloping brownfield sites, how these should be managed, prioritised or indeed even abandoned in certain circumstances?

ACTION: NBF industry groups to discuss internally whether they would be interested in working collaboratively to discuss the policies and regulatory aspects that are contra to redeveloping brownfield sites, how these should be managed, prioritised or potentially abandoned. Those interested in working collaboratively to let CL:AIRE know by 31 May 2024.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) & Welsh Government

Matt Llewellyn (ML) provided an update on behalf of NRW and Welsh Government.

- Two recently published blogs on NRW website from the 'state of groundwater series'. These cover the assessment work NRW has carried out on its groundwater level and groundwater quality and also setting its priorities for groundwater.
 - Groundwater resources: [Natural Resources Wales / The state of our groundwater in Wales – why we monitor it and what it is telling us about groundwater levels](#)
 - Groundwater quality: [Natural Resources Wales / The state of our groundwater in Wales – An assessment of groundwater quality](#)
- ML also highlighted that over the summer there will be a Welsh Government consultation on amending the Environmental Permitting Regulations to make the process of creating and changing exemptions easier by giving the power to regulators rather than requiring legislative change. If the change happens one area NRW might explore is to facilitate making permissions for certain types of groundwater remediation simpler.
- There has been increased interest in historic metal mines/health effects in Wales recently with a recent Financial Times article and other media articles. Subsequently the Westminster Welsh affairs committee is launching an investigation to look at impact of metal mine pollution on human health, plans for remediation, what information is available to the public, and whether existing regulations and standards are fit for purpose. NRW await findings from the committee but for the moment local authorities continue to have a duty to identify contaminated land within their areas and NRW continues its work via its metal mines programme.

- ML confirmed that more broadly, NRW has seen a marked increase in PFAS solidification/stabilisation remediation proposals at a number of sites. Industry awareness and resources such as the CL:AIRE technical bulletin seem to be having an impact.

Scottish Government (SG)

Madeleine Berg (MB) provided an update on behalf of Scottish Government. She confirmed:

- SG held the second Contaminated Land Advisory Group (CLAG) meeting on the 4th December with discussions focused on themes of building standards verification and land contamination issues (with guest from the Building Standards Hub), waste permitting and interactions with land contamination issues (with guest from SEPA's waste permitting team). Minutes of the meeting are available online: [Contaminated Land Advisory Group minutes: December 2023 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/clearing-contaminated-land-advisory-group-minutes-december-2023/)
- A CLAG regulator's sub-group has been set up to explore Scottish application of the Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM) guidance, meeting monthly since February 2024.
- Due to unforeseen circumstances the new groundwater directions in Scotland are not yet ready, we will continue to work with SEPA to ensure a smooth transition when they are introduced.

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)

Caroline Thornton (CT) sent her apologies but confirmed that the publication of the SG Groundwater Directions (and subsequent issuing on the revised SEPA guidance WAT-PS-10) has been delayed.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)

No update was available from DAERA and NIEA.

Homes England (HE)

Mark Williams confirmed that there wasn't anything to update the group on.

National Contaminated Land Officers Group (NCLOG)

NCLOG is delighted to confirm that the publication 'A Regulators Guide to Cover Systems and their Verification' has now been released. The guidance was emailed to the membership and has also been made available on the CL:AIRE WALL at the following location:

<https://claire.co.uk/component/phocadownload/category/5-external-documents?download=987:a-regulator-s-guide-to-cover-systems-and-their-verification-2024>

We hope that the document proves a useful resource for local authority regulators, consultants and other interested parties. We would like to remind everyone that there is no obligation to use this guidance and that it may be referred to it as seen fit. Sections 1.3 to 1.5 of the guidance sets out clearly how the document should be used and its limitations.

Work to plan for the AGM is underway, this will comprise a brief AGM with a training session as in previous years. The AGM date is provisionally the 22 May 2024 and will be an early afternoon session, with the intention to finish by 3pm.

Further training for Local Authority members has been provisionally scheduled in for the summer and autumn, dates will be issued to the membership in due course.

Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Pollution Advisory Group (YALPAG)

Stella Keenan provided an update on behalf of YALPAG. She confirmed that YALPAG's Land Technical Group meet twice a year with the last meeting being held on 13 March 2024. She confirmed that YALPAG guidance documents continue to be reviewed and updated as and when necessary. The Verification Requirements for Cover Systems (Version 4.1) was issued

in June 2021. The Planning guidance was reviewed, updated and issued in July 2023. The Verification Requirements for Gas Protection Systems guidance is currently in the process of being reviewed and updated.

b. Industry Update

CL:AIRE update

Training and events

The following training courses are currently being run:

- Definition of Waste Code of Practice (DoW CoP) - classroom
- Non-Licensed Work including NNLW - for Land Professionals - classroom
- Asbestos in Soil and Construction & Demolition Materials CAR-SOIL™ - classroom
- Verification of Gas Protection Systems - classroom
- Introduction to Controlled Waters Detailed Quantitative Risk Assessment – classroom
- Introduction to Human Health Quantitative Risk Assessment – classroom
- Practical Aspects of Ground Gas, Vapour and Water Monitoring & Sampling – classroom
- Ground Gas Risk Assessment - More Than Calculating a GSV – classroom
- Procurement of Ground Gas Services - Avoiding the Pitfalls – classroom
- Statistics for Comparing Soil Contamination Data to a Critical Concentration - virtual
- Good Practice for Risk Assessment for Coal Mine Gas Emissions – virtual
- Soil and Groundwater Risk Assessment – eLearning
- Sustainable Remediation – eLearning
- Introduction to Brownfield Site Investigation – eLearning
- Asbestos Awareness for Land Professionals – Full & Refresher – eLearning

Further information on each course along with the dates is available here: [Book or buy \(claire.co.uk\)](https://www.claire.co.uk)

Projects/initiatives/publications (listed alphabetically)

Aggregates from Inert Wastes Quality Protocol

The first meeting of the task and finish group to discuss the revision of the quality protocol and the development of a third-party certification scheme was held on 24 January 2024. There are now only three partners participating - CL:AIRE, Network Rail and UROC (United Resource Operators Consortium). Regular meetings have been diarised so it is hoped that this work can progress now all parties have agreed to support it. CL:AIRE will be communicating with its internal working group to ensure wider industry engagement.

Category Four Screening Levels Project

Two C4SL reports (cis-1,2-DCE and trans-1,2-DCE) were published in January. The naphthalene C4SL report has recently been reviewed by the TRG and is being prepared for publication. The interim PFAS C4SL report is currently being reviewed by the TRG.

POST MEETING NOTE:

The naphthalene C4SL report has been published and is available to download <https://www.claire.co.uk/component/phocadownload/category/91-c4sls-phase-2?download=991:naphthalene>

Concawe Sustainable Remediation Case Study Project

The Concawe final report and 10 sustainable remediation case studies were published at the end of November and have been widely publicised. A paper on the work was published in Remediation Journal in January (<https://doi.org/10.1002/rem.21773>).

Defra Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites

No further update. The final version is still with Defra awaiting next steps for publication.

DoW CoP

The Environment Agency continues its work rewriting the DoW CoP and no proposed draft has been submitted to CL:AIRE for review.

EiCLaR (enhanced *in situ* bioremediation)

CL:AIRE continues to work on the EC-funded EiCLaR project delivering knowledge transfer activities (e.g. project newsletters, podcasts, education pack, animation and technical bulletins).

Gas Protection Verification Accreditation Scheme (GPVS)

The new accreditation application window has just closed with a simpler application process following feedback from assessors. There were ten applicants (8 Specialist Grade and 2 Technician Grade) within this round. The interviews are occurring from early April through to early June. The second application window opens in July 2024. The first audit report for the first tranche of declarations has occurred and reported back to SGPVs and made public on the GPVS web page.

ICEC - MCM

CL:AIRE continues to support the Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Centre for Mineral-based Construction Materials (ICEC-MCM), led by University College London.

Industry Profiles

CL:AIRE has received some seed funding from the Environment Agency to look at making the old DoE industry profiles more visible and searchable and to create a prototype of a searchable portal of existing profiles. Phase 1 was to develop a short industry questionnaire, host a workshop and to build a prototype portal for five profiles, with simplified information that is searchable onto individual pages for existing profiles.

Landfill Remediation

CL:AIRE is awaiting feedback from the Environment Agency and Defra to its proposed framework.

Legacy Wastes in the Coastal Zone

This research project, led by Newcastle University, ends in mid-2024 and CL:AIRE will produce a research bulletin to summarise the key messages of the research.

Monitored Natural Attenuation (MNA) Guidance

The MNA guidance has been completed and is waiting for Environment Agency sign off for publication. The aim is to publish this and the NSZD guidance documents at the same time.

POST MEETING NOTE:

The MNA guidance has been published and is available to download <https://www.clare.co.uk/component/phocadownload/category/22-important-industry-documents?download=993:mna-guidance>

National Brownfield Forum (NBF)

CL:AIRE has supported the production of a draft factual report of the NBF national industry survey. This is currently being reviewed by the TRG. Afterwards, it will be prepared by CL:AIRE ready for publication.

National Quality Mark Scheme (NQMS)

CL:AIRE continues to be the administrator for the NQMS scheme, managing the steering group meetings and has recently updated the Suitably Qualified Person (SQP) register along with preparing the badges for distribution to the SQPs that have renewed their membership as a SQP for 2024 through SiLC. CL:AIRE is currently working with the Environment Agency and SiLC to ensure an NQMS (SQP) can review and prepare reports in line with the updated new environmental permitting guidance on .GOV.UK that the Environment Agency is working on.

Natural Source Zone Depletion (NSZD) Guidance

The NSZD guidance has been approved by the Environment Agency and it is awaiting signoff of the MNA guidance document so they can be published together.

POST MEETING NOTE:

The NSZD guidance has been published and is available to download <https://www.clare.co.uk/component/phocadownload/category/22-important-industry-documents?download=992:nszd-guidance>

PFAS

A PFAS bulletin addressing implications on the management of excavated soils has been further delayed and is due back with CL:AIRE shortly following TRG review and author edits. Additional bulletins are currently being scoped, further details to follow.

Piling Guidance

The updating of the Piling and Penetrative Ground Improvement Methods on Land Affected by Contamination guidance is progressing well, with the second draft having been reviewed by the regulator is with the technical working group for their review.

Sustainable Remediation

The SuRF-UK steering group has been planning its 2024 activities which involve finalising its mapping exercise and working with new sectors to develop more sector-specific guidance documents.

NHBC

On 1 January 2024, NHBC introduced a new Standard Chapter 4.6 called Engineered Fill. The industry has responded positively to this change'. NHBC is open to feedback and queries, which can be raised via Technicalsupport@nhbc.co.uk.

January also saw another well attended annual webinar from NHBC on cover systems take place. Following its continued success over several years, this event will take place again in 2025. With regards to ground gas, we continue to promote NHBCs Foundation Report, NF94: 'Hazardous Ground Gas - An essential guide for housebuilders' at our Builder Days across the country, with positive feedback, and adoption of it.

POST MEETING NOTE

[NHBC Position Statement on the NHBC/RSK Group plc publication 'Guidance on evaluation of development proposals on sites where methane and carbon dioxide are present'](#)

IES

Recent activities for the Land Condition Community include:

- The Land Condition Community will be holding their next meeting in April.
- Early Career Network – the new Steering Group is currently putting together a plan of activities for the coming year and will be joining a working group with wider Land Condition Community members looking at developing resources related to careers in the sector.
- The IES has published it's Brownfield Policy Priorities and is welcoming collaboration across the sector on these areas.

Publications

The Land Condition Community is currently drafting joint guidance with the Institute of Air Quality Management.

Events

- The IES has launched its inaugural conference [Dialogue Between Disciplines](#), a groundbreaking event dedicated to fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing between event professionals from across specialisms and sectors. The first conference will focus on facilitating discussion on the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, with the aim of championing solutions and practical action.
- A webinar has been held as part of a series called [A day in the life a land condition professional, presented by Elaine White](#).

British Geological Survey

BGS is being funded from the Government Office for Technology Transfer to develop a 'Groundwater flooding risk under climate change' dataset. The project aims to deliver the first gridded, digital map dataset of projected risk of groundwater flooding across mainland Great

Britain under different greenhouse gas emissions scenarios and time horizons spanning the years 2020 to 2100.

A groundwater flooding forecasting system has been developed for nine high-risk flood areas of the Chiltern Hills and Berkshire Downs as part of a Defra-funded project led by Buckinghamshire Council. Forecasts will feed into an online and mobile groundwater flood alert application.

In collaboration with the EA and the University of Nottingham BGS conducted a survey of microplastics in sediments from the tidal Thames and connected Medway Estuary.

As part of the NERC-funded CAMELLIA project, BGS has developed an online tool called Road pollution solutions. This tool predicts which roads in London create the most runoff pollutants and how this can be tackled with nature-based solutions. The tool will help local authorities to prioritise water-quality improvement interventions where major road runoff pollution is occurring and in green spaces.

Alison Willams-Clayson successfully defended her PhD thesis on 18th March. The title of the thesis was:

Organic Geochemical Controls on the Dermal Absorption of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons from Manufactured Gasworks Soils

- Alison's research was funded by the Natural Environment Research Council through the Envision Doctoral Training Partnership. CASE partner funding was also provided by National Grid (UK Land and Property) and supported by WSP UK. The research was hosted by BGS in partnership with the School of Geography, University of Nottingham. Details of Alison's latest paper are shown below.
- Williams-Clayson, A.M., Vane, C.H., Jones, M.D., Thomas, R., Taylor, C. and Beriro, D.J., 2024. Dermal absorption of high molecular weight parent and alkylated polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons from manufactured gas plant soils using in vitro assessment. *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, 469: 133858. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhazmat.2024.133858>

BGS is currently finalising two reports for the Environment Agency as part of their PFAS risk screening programme: i) a literature of review of ambient background concentrations of PFAS in shallow soils; and ii) a feasibility study of using archive soils for estimating background PFAS concentrations in shallow soils. It is the intention for this work to be published as an open access paper in a peer-reviewed journal.

Data products license fees

From 1 April 2024, BGS will apply a 5 per cent increase to its direct licence fees for all data products.

UK Policy activity:

The BGS urban and spatial planning team responded to the recent DLUCH consultation on Strengthening planning policy for brownfield development.

New peer reviewed publications that may be of interest:

Garforth, J M, Tye, A M, Young, S D, Bailey, E H, and Lofts, S. 2024. A comparison of characterisation and modelling approaches to predict dissolved metal concentrations in soils. *Environmental Chemistry*, Vol. 21(1), EN23075. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1071/EN23075>

AGS

The last Contaminated Land Working Group meeting was held on 25 January:

Recent successes of the Working Group

- In January, the AGS held an Early Careers webinar on 'Common Risks of Ground Investigations – Identification and Mitigation' (the recording is available for free on the [AGS website](#)).
- A summary article on the changes to BS 10175 'Investigation of potentially contaminated sites – Code of practice' was published in the March AGS Magazine.
- During the last meeting, Steve Forster delivered a presentation on the 'Identification and Quantification of Asbestos in Aggregates and Soils'.
- The safety working group have recently published guidance on asbestos in soils and classification of potentially contaminated sites for intrusive investigation activities.

The main topics / projects the Working Group are currently working on:

- AGS are hosting their [Annual Conference](#) in London on 25 April.
- Members of the CLWG are represented both on CIRIA's PFAS project steering group and as contractors writing the guidance.
- A mind map of standards relating to site investigation is being finalised along with article on forecourt drilling.
- AGS contributed to BDA's updated guidance on safe intrusive activities on contaminated or potentially contaminated land.
- Volunteers from the CLWG are planning to assist the data management group in reviewing ERES codes.
- During previous meetings, the CLWG discussed the possibility of providing gas monitoring data in an AGS format. An article is being drafted on the lack of standardisation.
- An article on good practice in the use of monitoring instruments for turbidity in piling is to be drafted for the next magazine.
- An article on historic lab methods vs current methods is also in draft.

The topics / projects the Working Group will be looking at in the future:

- AGS intend to support CL:AIRE and the Environment Agency on efforts to update the DoE Industrial Profiles.
- A future article is being prepared on the Environment Act.
- After the publication of the CIRIA PFAS guidance (late spring/early summer), two of the authors plan to write a summary for the magazine.
- NHBC article on the disconnect in geo-environmental investigations.
- AGS are reviewing older publications to ensure they are current and relevant.

SiLC

The SiLC Professional and Technical Panel (PTP) has been led until recently by Dr. Tom Henman as Chair and Louise Beale as Deputy Chair. From 1 April 2024, as Tom has reached the end of his two year term, Louise has succeeded him as PTP Chair with Lucy Bethell appointed as the new Deputy Chair.

The PTP includes organisational and technical representatives from the constituent professional bodies and AGS, as well as a small number of co-opted members. SiLC has several new representatives of professional bodies on the PTP, including new representatives from CIEH. It has recently appointed Neil Hopkins as its recent SiLC Representative.

The last SiLC PTP meeting was held on 5/03/24 and the next meeting is due on 11/06/24 as a face to face event in London. SiLC held its Annual Forum as an online conference on 20/03/24 with over 150 live attendees. There are currently 195 SiLCs and 145 SQPs and there have been 9 applicants in the current assessment round. SiLC is continuing to offer free conversion to SQP for existing SiLCs.

Other current areas of SiLC activity include:

- The SiLC PTP has launched a review of the SiLC application and assessment process seeking to update and streamline the process with the aim of increasing the size of the SiLC register whilst maintaining SiLC's high professional standards and competence.

- Following the successful SiLC/ CIRIA Soil CoP Stakeholder workshop on 'Future regulation of excavated soils', held on 1/02/24, SiLC is leading the development of paper to be published on the findings and recommendations.
- The next SiLC event is our webinar on 'Maximising Natural Capital Benefits for Brownfield and Sustainable Development' to be held on 20 June 2024 – see details here. We are also planning a SiLC webinar for 2024 on an EDI-related topic.
- SiLC is planning to review and update the National Brownfield Skills Framework over the coming year (but not the accompanying Excel tool as our 2023 survey suggested that this is not widely used). As well as a general update, this will include its expansion to cover relevant areas being reviewed by the recently established SiLC Climate & Sustainability sub-group.
- The SiLC EDI sub-group led by Carrie Rose has developed a forward plan with the short-term goal (our pledge) to build an inclusive environment within the SiLC community including SiLCs, Future SiLCs and the PTP, and the longer term aspiration to act as a leader in EDI in the Land Condition Sector.
- The 2nd NQMS audit has recently been completed by SiLC and reported to the NQMS Steering Group.
- SiLC recently submitted a response to the recent DLUHC Consultation: Strengthening Planning Policy for Brownfield Development.

UKELA

Recent consultation responses, copies of which are now available on UKELA's website, include:

- Response to the Scottish Government's Report into the Effectiveness of Governance Arrangements, as required by section 41 of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021.
- Response to the Scottish Government's consultation on a Human Rights Bill for Scotland, prepared by a number of specialist UKELA working parties and groups including the Scottish Working Party.
- Response to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee call for views on the Environmental Principles Statutory Guidance and Environmental Governance.
- Response to the call for evidence by the Financial Reporting Council on the UK Endorsement of ISSB Sustainability Disclosure Standards, prepared by UKELA's Climate Change & Energy Working Party.

Other publications:

- UKELA briefing paper on the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (November 2023)

UKELA's Governance and Devolution Group has prepared a briefing giving an overview of the Act and making recommendations for the review and reform of environmental law under the Act. As you may recall from Emma Tattersdill's presentation to the NBF at its meeting on 30th November 2023, the Act provided for the revocation of a number of retained EU laws at the end of 2023 and gives Ministers powers to restate, reproduce, replace or revoke retained EU law (which will be known as 'assimilated law' from 2024). The Act also removes the legal status of various principles of EU law and affects the way the courts may depart from retained EU case law. This UKELA briefing paper can be accessed via its website.

Upcoming events:

- 1st May 2024: 5.30pm onwards: UKELA Social Series, in person - London. The latest in UKELA's bi-monthly networking evening series. Drinks are on the house, thanks to generous sponsors RSK and 39 Essex Chambers. Open to all – members and anyone interested in learning more about UKELA.
- 9th May 2024: 10am to 1.15pm at the University of Exeter: Changing Gear – Waste, Resources, Innovation, Law and Policy. A joint event between UKELA South West and CIWM South West. Hear speakers from the waste industry, the law, academia and the arts.
- 16th May 2024: 5.15pm to 7.30pm, in person – Bristol. Join UKELA South West for the final event in the hugely popular Water Series, featuring a roundtable discussion on the challenges faced by the water industry in 2024.

- UKELA Annual Conference, Manchester: “Environmental Law within a Shifting Political Landscape. 11-12 June online; 14-15 June hybrid.

Events are open to members and non-members. You can find more details and sign up on UKELA’s website.

CIRIA

Climate change - CIRIA has started the climate change and land project and we are looking for case studies and other technical support.

Soil - CIRIA and SiLC delivered a stakeholder meeting on soil on 1 February and the summary of the event will be posted on the CIRIA soil portal www.ciria.org/SOILCOP/. CIRIA Soil Community of Practice 2024 has started and there will be more outputs e.g. update on the soil portal, particularly on the funders only sections, three stakeholders meetings and training. CIRIA will host a soil conference on **10 July in Manchester**. Details will be online soon but seats are limited.

PFAS - CIRIA PFAS guidance will be published in the Summer and there will be PFAS conference in November

Redevelopment of old landfill sites - CIRIA will start to develop a guidance document on this soon.

RICS

RICS UK Construction Monitor Q4 2023

- Construction workloads turn a little less negative with the prospect of falling base rates later this year supporting the outlook.
 - Moderate growth in infrastructure workloads whilst housing activity falls once again in Q4;
 - Financial constraints remain the biggest obstacle plaguing the sector although skill shortages are still to the fore;
 - Anticipated loosening in credit conditions this year supports expectations.

The latest (Q4 2023) UK Construction Monitor presents a slightly less pessimistic picture as to the state of the industry helped by the prospect of falling interest rates over the course of the coming year. This shift in mood is, however, relatively modest with most key metrics in the survey still sending a cautious message. Trend in workloads becomes slightly less negative

Significantly, the 12-month expectation indicators for capital values and rents alike continue to point to strongly divergent trends at a sector level. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the outlook for prime space appears considerably more solid than it does for secondary buildings – and nowhere is this gap starker than when it comes to offices. Meanwhile, the strongest returns according to respondents are likely to continue to be found in alternatives such as multi-family dwellings, life science buildings and student housing.

The headline net balance for workloads, which captures total activity for the whole of the construction industry, remains slightly negative at -8%.

Breaking this down by sector, it Infrastructure still remains a relatively bright spot but momentum has slowed through the back end of last year. At the other end of the spectrum, private housing workloads remain stuck in negative territory while the reading for public housing actually deteriorated. Financial concerns ease somewhat; for the next three months, the credit indicator shows a marked improvement (from -25% to -14%) while at the twelve month time horizon, the series is back in positive territory for the first time since Q1 2021. Financial constraints continue to be viewed as the major impediment to businesses within the construction sector at the present time;

The January 2024 RICS Property Investment Forum meeting

The forum confirmed the challenges presented by:

- the perceived funding gap that has arisen **between investors**:
- who can no longer extend loans without significant further equity and-
- investors seeking a price that reflects a fundamental repricing of UK property investments as the cost of debt and inflation has increased and geopolitical risks have heightened.
- Many will be aware that the normal sources of capital that help recapitalise a market are sparse at present, especially in the listed markets.

[The RICS Property Investment Forum was set up in response to the global financial crisis (GFC) and convenes up to four times a year. Its purpose is to inform RICS on the key areas in which the property investment industry seeks their leadership and support in adapting to the challenges and opportunities ahead to sustain a liquid, transparent and efficient UK property investment market. The input to these debates is provided by a range of industry leading speakers, including the RICS chief economist, industry researchers, valuers, advisers, local and global asset allocators, developers, occupiers and accounting advisers. The debate draws on the views of senior industry participants such as capital providers – both debt and equity, local and global public and private markets – investors with risk appetites from core to opportunistic, investment advisers and occupiers. The output of this forum regularly informs meetings with government and the wider industry.]

RICS response to the UK Government's changes to planning policy for brownfield development

In February Michael Gove announced a series of proposed changes to the planning system to encourage developers to build more homes, particularly on brownfield sites. RICS welcome the renewed focus on brownfield development, particularly to help alleviate housing pressures in urban environments. However, often councils do want to build on brownfield land but face challenges, particularly around making-safe potentially decontaminated sites, which is a costly and complex endeavour. The Government's current proposal seemingly does not acknowledge these difficulties, with there being a distinct lack of funding to support already stretched local councils and planning departments to realise this aim.

March 2024 RICS launched the **Global harmonisation framework for whole life carbon assessment for the built environment 2nd Edition**

The RICS whole life carbon assessment (WLCA) standard is set to become the world-leading standard for consistent and accurate carbon measurement in the built environment. This 2nd edition builds upon the success of the existing RICS WLCA standard, having been extended to cover all buildings and infrastructure throughout the built environment life cycle. **It also links to Whole life carbon assessments - A guide for clients; provides a national playbook for implementing whole life carbon assessments; and provides** supporting documents to use the standard including templates for reporting including brownfield elements covering ground investigation preparation decommissioning and remediation etc.

[First published in 2017, the WLCA standard mandated a whole life approach to reducing carbon emissions within the built environment. The new edition, authored by decarbonisation specialists and supported by a global expert working group, has been revised to reflect advances in professional practice and updates to legislation and regulatory requirements. It also includes an expanded scope to include all built asset types including infrastructure.

Using the WLCA standard, assessors can estimate the amount of carbon emitted throughout the life cycle of a constructed asset, from the early stages of development through to the end of life. It gives visibility to embodied carbon, operational carbon, and user carbon – something that is vital to carbon calculations and a unique feature of the RICS standard. By giving visibility to the carbon cost of different design choices, the standard aims to help manage carbon budgets, reduce lifetime emissions and deliver a net-zero future for the built environment.]

SOBRA

Conferences

No summer conference is planned for 2024. The RSC Toxicology Group / SoBRA joint Winter Conference (and SoBRA AGM) is scheduled for on Tuesday 10 December 2024 at Burlington House, London, and online.

Sub-groups

The active sub-groups are:

NAPL

Ground Gases (with a radon working group)

Early Careers

The Executive Committee are currently progressing a review of previous sub-group outputs (GWvap) with a view to identifying any updates that are needed since the publication of the C4SLs.

Publications

SoBRA H&D risk calculation worksheet updated

Conceptualising & Characterising Contaminant Distribution in Soil Top Tips published

Details of all recent publications are available at [SoBRA Reports](#).

Accreditation scheme

The first 2024 window was open during February 2024. There were 6 applicants for either RSoBRA or ASoBRA. Currently there are 109 accredited members, of which 53 are ASoBRA for one or more disciplines.

Other activities/events

The early careers sub-group are organising another series of freely available webinars for 2024, but no dates have yet been set. Access to and details of all the previous webinar recordings can be found here [Early Careers Webinars – SoBRA](#). The early careers group has recently put out a call to SoBRA member for more participants.

Environmental Industries Commission (EIC)

An overview of EIC activity, including an overview of our recent submission to government on the brownfield consultation. Happy to discuss any of these items in more detail.

Staffing changes:

On 4 March 2024, the Board of the Association for Consultancy and Engineering Group (ACE) has appointed Kate Jennings as its new Chief Executive, strengthening the association's position as a leading voice for UK consultants and engineers in the Built Environment.

Ideally placed, Jennings's extensive infrastructure career includes serving in the Cabinet Office and the Department for Transport leading on EU and international transport policy, followed by a strategic leadership role at the Railway Industry Association and her most recent post as an Executive Board member at Logistics UK where she established a strong policy team and strategy for success.

“On her appointment Kate Jennings said, “Nations around the world are prioritising infrastructure in the race to deliver net zero and green growth. The UK stands at a pivotal juncture, but there is a serious risk of falling behind. With a general election fast approaching and many ongoing industry challenges, I am delighted to be leading the ACE and EIC during this critical period for our members. Our objective is to ensure that every political voice understands the role our sector plays in contributing solutions that support sustainable growth and prosperity.

Engaging with stakeholders, government representatives, and our membership is paramount. Our members serve as partners for government, and the collective expertise of our industry uniquely positions us to translate political aspirations into reality through a solutions-based approach.

I look forward to the discussions ahead, strengthening new and existing partnerships, and delivering our impactful annual plan to drive our industry forward and contribute significantly to the UK's economic prosperity.”

The EIC Policy Team has also seen some changes, with the appointment of two new roles to support its members. Members will continue to be supported by the EIC Policy Director, as well as a newly promoted Policy Manager. Two new roles have been created to support members including a public affairs executive, and a nations policy lead.

General Election:

For the last 18 months, EIC has been engaging with Government and HM Opposition in advance of the next General Election. EIC published its first draft of a manifesto in 2023, and

has since submitted evidence to a range of political policy reviews including the Labour Party Policy Commissions.

2024 projects:

Across its taskforces and working groups, EIC is working on a range of projects during 2024, with the aim of supporting and providing further evidence to support its [manifesto](#) (published in 2023). Some of these projects include:

- Future Skills Plan - The Plan will be a resource designed to offer insights into the evolving needs and demands of the environmental services sector. Led by EIC's taskforces and working groups, it will also deliver a forward-looking analysis of emerging trends, technologies, and skills that are crucial for staying competitive in a rapidly changing industry. Members can expect to gain a deeper understanding of the skill sets, training, and expertise required to address pressing environmental challenges, drive innovation, and foster sustainability. The project is initially working with the EIC Labs group to understand challenges and opportunities facing members participating in that working group.
- Emerging and Disruptive Technology - Through an in-depth survey conducted among members, industry leaders, and technology experts, this report aims to provide valuable insights into the prevailing technology trends, adoption rates, and the transformative potential of emerging technologies. Subsequent roundtables on key areas of the report to be hosted following report launch. Following the report, we will also undertake a series of 'deep dives' to explore how technology is impacting different areas of interest to members, including contaminated land.
- DoWCoP - the EIC published a positions paper in November 2023, and is now making representations to key stakeholders on some of the key findings. EIC is also finalising plans for a further launch event in June. Members of the NBF are welcome to attend.
- Land Remediation Tax Relief - building on the recommendations made in the 2022 paper on the viability of brownfield land, the EIC is now in the process of working with its members to update recommendations relating to tax relief. EIC will be making further representations to HM Treasury, given the possibility of a final 'fiscal event' before the next general election.
- National Development Management Plans - following representation to officials at DLUHC, EIC will soon begin producing a paper on what a 'good NDMP for Contaminated Land' would look like. **EIC would welcome views from stakeholders on the NBF as part of this work.** Government officials are keen to explore this issue given NDMPs will have the same weight as the Development Plan (unlike the NPPF) so will have a greater bearing on planning decisions.
- Air Quality Solutions Handbook - EIC's Taskforce on air quality, in addition to working with stakeholders on policy asks, are also developing a resource that showcases innovative and effective air quality solutions. It will provide an overview of cutting-edge technologies, strategies, and best practices employed by our members to address air quality challenges. By creating this handbook, we aim to not only highlight the expertise and contributions of our members but also to serve as a valuable resource for businesses, policymakers, and clients seeking solutions to improve air quality.
- Asbestos in soil client guide - EIC is finalising plans to publish a client guide in this area. Led by our Environmental Laboratories Group, the guide will provide information on identifying, assessing, and managing asbestos contamination in soil. It will equip clients with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate the complexities of asbestos-related issues. By producing this guide, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of the risks associated with asbestos in soil and the importance of proper management.
- Circular Economy Action Plan - Led by our waste group, will outline a strategy aimed at transitioning towards a circular economy model. It will highlight the industry's role to responsible waste management practices, innovative recycling programs, and circular design principles. By producing this report, we aim to not only showcase the contributions to a more sustainable future but also engage stakeholders and drive awareness about the benefits of embracing a circular economy approach across our industry

Submission to government consultation on brownfield

EIC welcomed the opportunity to engage in the Government's ongoing consultation into strengthening planning policy for brownfield development. Our submission represented the collective perspectives of members on the proposed changes to planning policy for brownfield development in the UK. We have drawn on some insights from members of EIC's sister organisation, the Association for Consultancy and Engineering.

Our submission focused on the following areas:

- Flexibility in Planning Policies: The submission supports proposed changes to make clear that local planning authorities should give significant weight to the benefits of delivering homes on brownfield land and should adopt a flexible approach in applying planning policies or guidance related to internal layout, encouraging innovation, and addressing site-specific challenges.
- Application of Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development: The submission endorses proposed changes to the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) thresholds, specifically introducing an additional presumption trigger of 95% for previously developed land in major towns and cities subject to the urban uplift. This aims to incentivise brownfield development and ensure sufficient housing supply in strategic urban areas.
- Addressing Barriers: The submission identifies various barriers to delivering brownfield development, including regulatory complexity, infrastructure constraints, and financial viability issues. It emphasised the need for coordinated efforts to overcome these challenges and promote sustainable urban regeneration, and includes a series of recommendations from EIC as part of the 'Brownfield First' campaign.

c. Hot or emerging topics

DB explains to the NBF members that he would welcome people raising issues under this heading ahead of the next meeting, so items can be tabled.

LH suggested that biodiversity net gain should be a topic to discuss as this is now law and is a growing issue impacting the brownfield sector. Perhaps a speaker to present at the next meeting on this topic would be beneficial.

Zane's law was also raised as a potential issue that needs to be discussed, particularly in the light of climate change. [Zane Gbangbola: Council votes on new law amid landfill concerns - BBC News](#)

DB thanked members and these will be looked at for the next meeting.

d. National Quality Mark Scheme for Management of Land Contamination (NQMS) Sub Group

Seamus Lefroy-Brooks (SLB) explained that the NQMS was launched in 2017 and he has been involved since 2014 (10 years). The scheme has grown in stature with 145 Suitably Qualified People registered on the scheme. The scheme is now profiled on LCRM but the profile of the scheme now needs to be taken to the next level. After 10 years, SLB would like to step down as chair and encourage a new chair to drive the scheme forward.

As the scheme was created by the NBF, it is for the NBF members to appoint the new chair according to the Terms of Reference. NBF members were asked to talk internally within their membership for nomination of potential chairs. SLB confirmed that the NQMS steering group (which is made up of representative from the NBF) is in place to manage the authority and the everyday processes are managed by CL:AIRE providing the secretariat, but a new chair is needed to drive the scheme forward.

ACTION: All to discuss internally within their membership groups for nominations for a new NQMS steering group chair.

e. Standards

Nicola Harries (NH) shared the update that Mike Smith kindly provided outlining the new standards that are in preparation or out for consultation. Sincere thanks were given to Mike Smith for collating and sharing this information. Full details are provided here:

<https://www.claire.co.uk/component/phocadownload/category/110-2024?download=990:nbf-standards-april-2024>

4. Specific Knowledge Share

Presentation: “Geospatial Commission overview of its land use programme plus case studies of applications” – Claire Eagle (CE) Head of Land Use Programme, Geospatial Commission.

CE provided an introduction to the role of the Geospatial Commission (GC) and the role and importance of collating and using data effectively. CE explained how data can be used to help land use decision making and assist in prioritising and making evidence based decision. CE shared two case studies, one relating to the national mapping of utilities to avoid strikes known as National Underground Asset Register (NUAR) and one showing how data can be mapped to help with land use planning. GC colleagues would be interested to hear thoughts and suggestions for alternative uses of NUAR.

DB thanked CE for her really informative presentation. It has helped NBF members understand the role and breadth of some of the aspects and projects of the Geospatial Commission and identify some cross overs with the work of the NBF members.

CE asked the following questions of the NBF members:

- What are key challenges in brownfield development where geospatial data could play a role?
- Where do you see opportunities for better application of geospatial data for brownfield development?
- What should the Geospatial Commission be thinking about with regards to working more closely with your sector?

NBF members confirmed that they were keen to engage and support the Geospatial Commission. Members were asked to let NH know they were interested and she will collate names and organisations and forward onto Claire Eagle. The presentation that Claire Eagle presented is available to download here:

<https://www.clare.co.uk/component/phocadownload/category/110-2024?download=994:geospatial-commission-claire-eagle>

ACTION: Any NBF members interested in their organisations contact details being passed to Claire Eagle to discuss responses to the above questions or NUAR, to provide these to CL:AIRE by **31 May 2024**.

5. Industry Review

DB provided an update on the industry review. The report has now been prepared and internally reviewed. The final report will be published as a CL:AIRE report so has now been through its internal review process. The reviewers comments are now being addressed and then CL:AIRE will prepare it for publication.

6. AOB

Alex Lee wanted to bring to the attention of the NBF members the following event on 15 May 2024 at Burlington House, London: [Joint Higher Education Event 2024 – Building a Strategic Geoscience Alliance](#)

7. Date and location of next meeting

The remaining 2024 dates are:

- 4 July 2024
- 28 November 2024