



**NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION**

FEBRUARY 2015

FINAL VER 1.1

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
1.1 Background	4
1.1.1 Town & Country Planning Act	4
1.1.2 Part2A Contaminated Land Regime	5
1.2 Role of the Land Forum.....	6
1.2.1 Timeline.....	7
1.2.2 Next Steps	7
2. OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME (QMLC)	9
3. BENEFITS OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME (QMLC).....	10
3.1 What does the scheme mean for the regulator(s)?	10
3.2 What does the scheme mean for environmental companies?.....	10
3.3 What does the scheme mean for developers?.....	11
3.4 Existing schemes that operate in a similar fashion	11
4. SUITABLY QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED PERSON (SQP)	13
4.1 Who is the Suitably Qualified and experienced Person (SQP)?	13
4.2 What are the responsibilities of the Suitably Qualified and experienced Person (SQP)?	13
4.3 What are the eligibility criteria for a Suitably Qualified and experienced Person (SQP)?	13
4.4 Specific Scheme Training.....	14
5. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK	15
6. ACCEPTABLE STANDARD OF WORK.....	16
6.1 What are the regulatory standards, guidance or advice referred to within the scheme?.....	16
6.2 What key aspects of reports need to be checked as part of the QMLC process?	16
7. FORM OF DECLARATION	18
8. PLANNING AUTHORITIES.....	21
9. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY	22
10. ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHEME	23
10.1 What might be involved in administering the scheme?	23
10.2 Costs.....	23

**NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION**

10.3	Liability.....	23
10.4	Audit	24
10.5	Current Options for Administration	24
11.	COMPLAINTS PROCESS.....	25
12.	FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	26
12.1	Is the scheme designed to be used in England only or throughout the UK?	26
12.2	If this scheme is voluntary how can it drive improvements across the Sector?	26
12.3	Can it be expanded to cover other legislative regimes?.....	26
12.4	What are the safeguards in the system from a regulatory perspective?	26
12.5	Why is the Quality Mark proposed to be held by the SQP rather than the Company?	26
12.6	How would this scheme fit in with other existing registers/initiatives?	27
12.7	Why do Suitably Qualified and experienced Persons need to be chartered?	27
12.8	Why do we need the Quality Mark scheme if we already have other registers of individuals such as those held (or proposed) by SiLC, CL:AIRE and SoBRA?	27
12.9	Why doesn't the SQP have to be Independent from the Company preparing the report?.....	28
12.10	How can an SQP sign off a report and give it the Quality Mark if it contains historical data collected before the scheme and its quality controls came in to operation?	28
12.11	How can the quality mark be applied to projects that undergo different phases of work?	28
APPENDIX A - ACRONYMS & LINKS		29
APPENDIX B - PROPOSED CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE		31
APPENDIX C - LIST OF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS.....		33
APPENDIX D - SiLC Proposal		36

1. INTRODUCTION

The proposed National Quality Mark Scheme for Land affected by Contamination (QMLC) is a scheme that has been developed by the Land Forum to provide visible identification of documents that have been checked for quality by a Suitably Qualified and experienced Person (SQP). It is hoped that this will provide increased confidence and improved quality of submissions made under regulatory regimes, particularly planning applications, related to previously used land.

The Land Forum intends to facilitate the development of a nationally recognised system for ensuring a satisfactory standard of work that, through endorsement by the Forum and through joint ownership by Land Forum members, can be considered to have support and acceptance across the community.

The initiative is supported in principle by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)¹. A positive response has also been received from individual devolved administrations.

1.1 Background

Standards in the contaminated land sector have improved greatly over the last decade but it is acknowledged that the quality of individual reports on previously used land can still be quite variable, especially with respect to smaller projects. Members of the Land Forum believe that there is a need to improve the quality and compliance of work carried out by third parties to adequately address the risks posed by land contamination.

Past economic activities have left the UK with a substantial legacy of land which is contaminated, for example by past industrial, mining and waste disposal activities. Unless adequately addressed, this contamination can pose unacceptable risks to both people and the environment.

It has been estimated that there may be around 325,000 potentially contaminated sites across the UK affecting around 300,000 hectares of land.

The problems of historical contamination are most commonly dealt with via a combination of actions required by either condition set under the Town & Country Planning Act (1990) or Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act (1990) – sometimes referred to as the contaminated land regime.

1.1.1 Town & Country Planning Act

¹ In his address to the EIC Annual Conference on 2/12/14 Lord de Mauley TD, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Natural Environment and Science, praised the Quality Mark Initiative of the Land Forum in aiming to achieve consistency across the sector.

Land contamination, or the possibility of it, is a material consideration for the purposes of town and country planning. This means that a planning authority has to consider the potential implications of contamination both when developing plans and when it is considering individual applications for planning permission.

The current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)² says that:

- Where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner

The NPPF also says that planning policies and decisions should ensure that:

- The site is suitable for its new use taking account of ground conditions and land instability, including from natural hazards or former activities such as mining, pollution arising from previous uses and any proposals for mitigation including land remediation or impacts on the natural environment arising from that remediation;
- After remediation, as a minimum, land should not be capable of being determined as contaminated land under Part2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and
- Adequate site investigation information prepared by a competent person is presented

In addition to the planning system, the Building Regulations (made under the Building Act 1984) requires measures to be taken to protect new buildings, and their future occupants, from the effects of contamination.

The Planning and Building Control regimes together ensure that land is made suitable for the proposed future use.

1.1.2 Part2A Contaminated Land Regime

The main objective underlying the introduction of the Part2A contaminated land regime was to provide an improved system for the identification and remediation of land where contamination is causing unacceptable risks to human health, property or the environment, assessed in the context of the current use and circumstances of the land. The regime places a responsibility upon the polluter, or if they cannot be found the owner/occupier of the land to address any problems.

The Part2A regime ensures that land is suitable for its current use.

² Similar, but not identical, objectives are set out in the Welsh Government Planning Policy for Wales

**NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION**



1.2 Role of the Land Forum

The Land Forum provides a central point for governmental liaison across the contaminated land community and includes a representation, either in person, through direct correspondence or through indirect representation, with the following organisations that are active in the contaminated land community:

AGS		ICE		RSC	
BLRS		IEMA		SAGTA	
CIEH		Land Trust		SEPA	
CIWEM		Local Authority		SOBRA	
CL:AIRE		Contaminated Land Regulators		SoBRA	
CLG		NHBC		SiLC	
DEFRA		Northern Ireland		Strategic Forum	
EA		Government		TCPA	
EIC		NIEA		UKCG	
EPUK		NRW		UKELA	
Geol Soc		POS		Voluntary Land Forums	
HBF		REHIS		Welsh Government	
HCA		RICS			

See Appendix A for a list of Acronyms and Links to relevant organisations.

1.2.1 Timeline

January 2014

A significant discussion was held at the 30th January 2014 meeting of the Land Forum regarding the best way to improve standards in our industry and a working sub-group was consequently established.

June 2014

At a sub-group meeting held on 4th June 2014 the potential elements of a scheme and how it might operate were discussed further and a preliminary view/premise was reached as to the scope and content of a possible scheme.

An initial briefing note was drafted for circulation prior to the Land Forum meeting on 25th June when a resolution was passed to proceed with the scheme development.

October 2014

A sub-group meeting held on 1st October 2014 reached agreement on draft eligibility criteria for Suitably Qualified and experienced Persons to sign off reports and developed a draft declaration. On 7th October the QMLC scheme initiative was raised as the main issue for discussion at a round table meeting with Defra organised by CL:AIRE.

November 2014

Further discussion of a revised draft outline of the scheme and associated draft declaration took place at the 25th November 2014 meeting of the Land Forum. The Forum agreed to adopt the National Brownfield Skills Development Framework as a basis for judging the competence of contaminated land professionals.

December 2014

A further sub-group meeting was held on 11th December 2014, where discussion of how the Scheme document should be updated and expanded with new sections took place and tasks for doing so were allocated around the sub-group members.

1.2.2 Next Steps

The scheme is planned to be launched in the autumn of 2015.

This document, which sets out the scheme proposal and reasoning in some detail, has been developed by the Land Forum for open consultation (see Appendix B for consultation questions).

**NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION**



The sub-group will simultaneously publicise the scheme proposals to the stakeholder organisations that have been identified in order to seek their views (Appendix A & C).

Proposed TIMETABLE

FEB/MAR/APR	Open consultation and liaison with identified stakeholders
MAY /JUNE	Review of consultation responses and final scheme development
JULY	Appointment of administrator and commencement of training
JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER	Training and promotion of scheme
OCTOBER	Scheme launch

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME (QMLC)

Both the Planning & Contaminated Land Regimes require information to be prepared by competent people, but in view of the inevitable specialist and technical nature of the documents, there has been a persistent difficulty for non-specialists to recognise what is competent, appropriate and correct and what is not.

The aims of the QMLC are:

- **to provide assurance to Developers (who retain the legal responsibility for adequately dealing with land contamination problems)³⁴ and to Regulator(s)⁵ that the risks arising from land contamination have been adequately assessed and dealt with⁶ by competent people.**
- **to improve the quality of reports delivered by the contaminated land industry to a level whereby Developers and Regulator(s) can better rely upon the conclusions put forward without the need for further scrutiny or auditing.**

The key features of the scheme are to ensure that:

- Reports⁷ are prepared in line with good practice are signed off by a Suitably Qualified and experienced Person (SQP) approved by the QMLC scheme who checks and ensures that:
 - a. The work has been planned, undertaken and written up by competent people who have relevant experience and/or qualifications in their respective disciplines
 - b. The underlying data has been collected in line with established good practice procedures and its collection has been subject to control via established quality management systems.
 - c. The data has been processed, analysed and interpreted in line with established good practice and any specific advice provided by the relevant regulatory authorities or other authoritative bodies.
 - d. The report sets out conclusions or recommendations that are substantiated by the underlying data and are based upon reasonable interpretations.
 - e. Any limitations in the data or uncertainties in the analysis are clearly identified along with the possible consequences of such limitations.

The scheme should ensure that all legislative requirements connected to the management of land contamination have been met. Documentation that meets the scheme requirements should ensure that regulatory intervention to protect both the public and the environment under the Planning, Part2A or Environmental Permitting regimes is avoided.

³ NPPF Para 120 “Where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner”

⁴ PPW Para 13.5.1 “It is for the developer to ensure that the land is suitable for the development proposed”.

⁵ (Local Authorities and the Environment Agency/NRW/SEPA)

⁶ in line with established good practice (e.g. CLR11)

⁷ such as risk assessments, site investigations, remediation option appraisals or remediation verification reports

3. BENEFITS OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME (QMLC)

The scheme is voluntary and the procedure is simple. It has been designed to operate alongside and within existing quality management systems. It places reliance upon guidance that has already been produced and adopted by Industry. It relies upon the capability of individuals whose status has already been assessed by other professional bodies. By getting it “right first time” everyone will benefit from reduced costs and delays and regulators may have the confidence to reduce or cease their independent third party reviews, allowing them to concentrate their resources on the more problematic or challenging sites.

3.1 What does the scheme mean for the regulator(s)?

Submissions accompanied by the Quality Mark should need to be subjected to less scrutiny by the regulator(s). Increased confidence in the quality of submitted reports should lessen the need for routine detailed auditing or third party peer review and should save the Regulator(s), and indirectly both the Developer and the taxpayer, significant cost (in terms of time and money).

The local planning authority is the regulator with regards to planning. A planning authority receiving a report accompanied by the Quality Mark should as a result have reasonable expectations that land contamination risks⁸ have been adequately addressed, so that a site will be made or has been made “suitable for use” and in the future, (subject to continued similar land use), will not need to be considered for determination as “contaminated land”⁹. The report in question may have been prepared either to support a planning application or to assist the discharge of one or more specific planning conditions.

An environmental regulator (who may be acting as a Statutory Consultee under planning)¹⁰ receiving a report that meets the QMLC requirements accompanied by the Quality Mark should as a result be able to feel confident that risks to controlled waters have been adequately addressed so that enforcement action using instruments such as Anti-Pollution Works Notices will not be required.

All regulators will naturally reserve the right to scrutinise or audit submitted documents for any site as they see fit, but compliance with the requirements of the QMLC scheme should ensure that any sites will pass such scrutiny with the minimum amount of delay or additional cost/expense.

3.2 What does the scheme mean for environmental companies?

The QMLC scheme is aimed at all companies operating in the field of environmental consultancy and remediation contracting. The administering body for the scheme will hold a register of SQPs and their employing Companies.

⁸ (to people, property, habitats and the water environment)

⁹ Note PPW 13.7.4 “*The onus will remain with the developer to ensure that the development of the site will not result in designation as contaminated land under Part IIA. The local planning authority will need to ensure that the land is suitable for its proposed use.*”

¹⁰ such as the Environment Agency

Companies who employ SQPs will be able to see the Quality Mark applied by their SQP to all relevant reports they submit under the scheme. In using the scheme a company is effectively participating in a recognised quality management system that will enhance the value of any existing company scheme(s). The company is demonstrating a commitment to raising standards within the industry, particularly in relation to the competence and quality of workmanship provided by them.

Although it will be the SQP who has to sign the form of declaration and take responsibility for compliance, companies will be encouraged to support the continuing professional development of their staff so as to ensure they maintain staff capable of performing their duties in line with the latest good practice applying to their respective specialist fields/disciplines and retain an in-house SQP capability.

Companies who do not employ SQPs will be encouraged to support the continuing professional development of their staff so as to achieve an in-house SQP capability. These companies can participate in the QMLC scheme through having the capability of their team and compliance of their work reviewed and verified externally by an SQP selected from the register.

3.3 What does the scheme mean for developers?

Where a site is affected by contamination, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer (and/or the landowner).

If a developer engages a company who employs a named individual who is registered with the QMLC scheme as a SQP to oversee the project they should as a result be able to feel confident that the relevant work will be carried out to a standard which accords with good practice and is sufficient to pass regulatory scrutiny.

A developer may also engage such a company for an SQP to review/audit a report that has been prepared by a third party in order to assess whether it meets the requirements of the scheme.

This means that by using the scheme developers should as a result be able to feel more confident that their liabilities for land contamination risks are being properly addressed and their corporate responsibilities and environmental policies are being satisfied. Any submitted documents bearing the QMLC Quality Mark will be expected to incur less delay in processing.

3.4 Existing schemes that operate in a similar fashion

Building Control

Currently local authorities allow external companies to undertake building control services and to sign off work on their behalf. This is a voluntary scheme that the private sector has embraced.

NATIONAL **Q**UALITY **M**ARK SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY **C**ONTAMINATION



Reuse of Soil

Using The Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice, a Qualified Person verifies that the correct process has been adhered to and signs a regulatory declaration in place of administration by the Environment Agency.

4. SUITABLY QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED PERSON (SQP)

4.1 Who is the Suitably Qualified and experienced Person (SQP)?

This is a named individual, approved and registered by the scheme operator, who fulfils the ultimate role of sign-off for the report in question.

4.2 What are the responsibilities of the Suitably Qualified and experienced Person (SQP)?

The SQP will:

- a. Assess the capability of the Team responsible for gathering, processing or interpreting the data with reference to the Brownfield Skills Development Framework. In doing so the SQP may rely upon any relevant capability assessments that may have been performed and verified by recognised institutions or organisations (e.g. SiLC, ROGEP, SoBRA, CL:AIRE).
- b. Ensure that key aspects of the relevant reports are either checked/audited by either themselves directly OR verify that these key aspects have been signed off by other delegated individuals with a requisite level of capability within the team.
- c. Ensure that any conclusions or recommendations made within the reports are in line with and comply with the requirements of the QMLC scheme regarding accuracy and reasonableness and that any limitations are clearly identified.
- d. Sign a declaration form for each report to confirm that the relevant aspects of the scheme have been complied with. The declaration form should be incorporated into or attached to the report in question, which may then bear the Quality Mark.

4.3 What are the eligibility criteria for a Suitably Qualified and experienced Person (SQP)?

A SQP should be an experienced professional in the field of land contamination with a commitment to raising standards within the industry, particularly in relation to competence and quality of workmanship. The Suitably Qualified and experienced Person must have an awareness of, but does not have to be an expert in all aspects of land contamination management work. Although they must be capable of assessing whether the product as a whole and particularly its conclusions are reasonable they can delegate the peer review process of individual components of the work to others. However they retain the responsibility for ensuring that those individuals used within the team are capable to undertake those tasks. They should be:

- A Chartered person who has been assessed by a professional body/institution and is bound by the professional code of conduct of that professional body/institution

**NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION**

- Of sufficient experience in the sector to have a good overview of what is required to effectively assess a site and remediate it to a suitable condition (and thereby meet the requirements for regulatory signoff)
- Capable of recognising their own limitations and those specialist skills required of others in a multidisciplinary industry
- Aware of the requirements of the regulatory regimes under which the work is being undertaken.
- Bound by their professional bodies to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) and hence maintain awareness of changing legislation, guidance and standards.

The SQP must have been assessed for competence by a suitably robust process of examination and interview as recognised by relevant professional bodies/institutions and additionally understand how to operate the QMLC scheme.

Contaminated land professionals will be assessed by the scheme administrator for their competence on the basis of the Brownfield Skills Development Framework. Specific proposals will need to be drawn up but for the purposes of consultation and discussion it is noted that the skills framework has 5 levels of capability and that it is envisaged that SQPs will need to demonstrate Level 4 or higher in a range of activities associated with land contamination management, and that they may only be able to delegate individual tasks to persons with a capability of Level 4 or higher in the relevant delegated role.

It is noted that assessment of individuals for competence against the SDF already exists in the form of the SiLC Registration Scheme, and hence this qualification will enable holders to demonstrate possession of the required level of skills (subject to additional training on the operation of the QMLC scheme). A proposal to this effect is appended to this document (Appendix D).

4.4 Specific Scheme Training

An SQP must have received sufficient training to be aware of and to comply with the requirements of the QMLC scheme. It is proposed that a half day training course or equivalent online learning package would be required to outline the role and requirements of an SQP.

5. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The National Brownfield Skills Strategy was launched in March 2008 by English Partnerships (now part of the Homes and Communities Agency) and the Academy for Sustainable Communities following a series of recommendations that were submitted to government in June 2007 as the National Brownfield Strategy after several years of research and stakeholder consultation.

The Brownfield Skills Development Framework (SDF) has been developed over the years with funding from HCA and was published in 2009 and updated in 2014 by SiLC¹¹. It sets out a series of generic core and specialist technical skill sets required for delivering successful projects and a system for assessment of capability levels and for the profiling of capabilities required for a particular role.

The framework has been incorporated by SOBRA into the development of a Register of Contaminated Land Risk Assessors.

It is envisaged that the SQP role for the QMLC scheme can be defined using this framework.

¹¹[Download LCSDF-2014-Version-2.pdf](#)

6. ACCEPTABLE STANDARD OF WORK

6.1 What are the regulatory standards, guidance or advice referred to within the scheme?

The overarching framework for Land Contamination Management work is provided by CLR11. In addition, there are a range of key technical and regulatory documents beneath this that are considered by Industry to set out and describe current good practice. For example, NHBC/CIEH/EA - "Safe development of housing on land affected by contamination".

Individual Local Planning Authorities may have published specific advice on the management of land contamination. For example, strategic "guidance notes to developers" or site specific conditions applied to planning permissions.

The Environment Agency publishes a range of regulatory standards on managing risks to controlled waters from land contamination and on complying with the need for environmental permits. For example, advice on defining the significance of water pollution, on controlling the discharge of pollutants and setting compliance points, or the need for environmental permits to control different remedial activities.

A question has been included as part of the consultation package to elicit the views of stakeholders as to whether a link to any specific standards is considered essential for the consistent operation of the scheme.

6.2 What key aspects of reports need to be checked as part of the QMLC process?

The aim of the scheme is to ensure that any data collection, analysis and interpretation carried out as part of Land Contamination Management work is of sufficient quality to be relied upon for the purposes of reasoned decision making.

Depending upon the nature of the project and the regulatory regime being addressed, various reports may be submitted at different stages under the scheme. The following key lines of evidence have been identified.

All Reports:

- Is the purpose of the report sufficiently clear in order to put the subsequent conclusions and recommendations into context?
- Is the report intended to address a particular planning condition? If so, does it do so adequately?

Preliminary Assessment / Phase 1 - Desk Study Reports:

- Has reasonable study been undertaken to establish the history and environmental setting of the site and to identify likely contaminants, pathways and receptors?
- Is the conceptual model reasonable?

Phase 2 - Site Investigation Reports:

- Is the scope of the investigation appropriate given the size and nature of the development?
- Have reasonable investigation, sampling and testing been undertaken?
- Have the appropriate issues been investigated?
- Have the issues been assessed using appropriate methods?
- Is the revised conceptual model reasonable?
- Are the conclusions/recommendations robust and adequately justified by the data collected?
- Have relevant uncertainties been highlighted together with their implications for any conclusions drawn?

Remediation Plans:

- Is the appraisal of remediation requirements reasonable?
- Have appropriate remedial objectives been identified?
- Does the remediation strategy address all potential issues?
- Has a remediation options appraisal been completed?
- Have appropriate remediation methods been identified?
- Is the remediation scheme sufficiently robust?
- Where appropriate, have appropriate compliance points been identified?
- Has the need for any regulatory permission(s) been considered?
- Is the Validation and Verification Plan appropriate and sufficient to demonstrate achievement of the objectives?

Validation and Verification Reports:

- Has the remediation been undertaken in line with the approved remediation methodology?
- Is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate that remediation is completed and has fulfilled the defined remedial objectives?

7. FORM OF DECLARATION

1. Site

Name:	
Address:	
NGR	

2. Name and address of Developer(s)

Name:	
Address:	

3. Name of proposed Development

Name:	
Summary description:	

4. Name and address of Client's Agents/Professional Advisors

Agent Name:	
Agent Address:	
Advisors Name:	
Advisors Address:	

**NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION**



5. Name and address of Local Planning Authority

Name:	
Address:	

6. Name and address of SQP

Name:	
Organisation Name:	
Address:	

Declaration

I [insert name] confirm that I am registered with the QMLC as a Suitably Qualified and experienced Person.

I have reviewed the following document in relation to the above site.

- **Title, Date and Reference of report.**

I confirm that:

1. The work has been carried out by appropriately capable people [with reference to the Skills Development Framework].
2. That the work has been appropriately reviewed and the information and data appears factually correct.
3. That any specialist aspects (e.g. DQRA etc.) have been prepared or reviewed by an appropriately qualified/competent person.
4. That the interpretation and conclusions are reasonable.
5. That any proposals to mitigate actual potential or residual risks are appropriate.
6. I am fully aware and comply with the Code of Conduct of [name professional institution] ;
7. The work of this review and Declaration are within the limits of my knowledge, competence and professional capacity.

Signed:

(Original Signature only)

Name:

[Block capitals]

Organisation:

Date:

SQP Registration No.:

8. PLANNING AUTHORITIES

The scheme is intended to be entirely voluntary and thus Individual Local Planning Authorities can choose whether to acknowledge the scheme and whether to adopt a Position Statement in regard to its use under the planning regime.

The purpose of any position statement would be to indicate what level of reliance the Authority wishes to place upon reports submitted in accordance with the scheme and what level of auditing it may choose to apply.

Reference to the scheme could be made in any guidance to developers or at pre-application discussion stage as a desirable (or indeed as a mandatory) component of any work undertaken under planning to deal with land contamination issues under that Local Authority.

The local government associations (LGA/WLGA) will be approached to see if they might prepare an umbrella statement that all LAs could use if they wanted to.

Planning authorities are likely to be able to rely on the QMLC scheme as much as they would rely upon any identifiable indicator of good practice or guidance.

The scheme will potentially greatly assist planning authorities to oversee the discharge of Contaminated Land Planning Conditions, as for example where a verification/validation report bears the quality mark there should be implicit confidence that the remediation has been carried out properly.

9. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Environment Agency and NRW intend to issue a Regulatory Position Statement similar to that produced by the EA for the Definition of Waste Development Industry Code of Practice. The essence of this will be that if work is undertaken in line with the QMLC scheme the EA will assume that all relevant legislative requirements for environmental protection have been met.

However, although the QMLC scheme allows the regulator to rely upon the information presented, the Agency will carry out spot checks and audits as they see fit. It is anticipated that the Agency will carry out increased monitoring of the scheme in more sensitive situations, such as Inner Source Protection Zones (SPZ1s).

The Environment Agency will use its network of contacts with Local Planning Authorities, Local Government Associations and others to introduce and raise awareness of the scheme. NRW and SEPA have been involved through the Land Forum and have indicated broad support for the scheme.

The Environment Agency intends to carry out some audit based activity to increase their confidence in the scheme and to help identify the need for any improvements. This will be done by EA staff reviewing a subset of Quality Marked reports (usually for higher risk sites/settings) as part of their routine consultation arrangements with Local Planning Authorities.

The emphasis of any such reviews will be on the acceptability of the conclusions/recommendations being made regarding regulatory compliance. Reviews will of course be restricted to those aspects of submissions relating to the Environment Agency's regulatory responsibilities. Where conclusions are rejected feedback will be collated and returned to the administering body to allow them to take appropriate actions with the aim of achieving continuous improvement.

Any audit activity by the Environment Agency is designed to be covered by existing routine consultation arrangements and service levels with Local Planning Authorities. There are therefore no hidden or additional costs to the taxpayer associated with these. The only additional activity will be notifications of non-compliance to the administering body with a note as to the fundamental reason for rejection.

10. ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHEME

10.1 What might be involved in administering the scheme?

The scheme administrator would ensure that a register of all individuals authorised to act in the capacity of SQP was maintained. They would also be responsible for collating all feedback on the operation of the scheme for the purposes of identifying improvements.

A robust auditing and complaints procedure would have to be put in place by the administering body in order for the threat of sanctions set out in the Section 11 to be credible. The administrator would also have to provide or make arrangements for induction/training for SQPs.

In order to assist the administering body in responding to any queries or complaints, and monitoring the scale of activity associated with the scheme, the SQP should keep a record of all reports they have produced bearing the Quality Mark and be able to submit the data on request using a specific template (draft example as follows).

Date of Declaration	Type of Report	Report Reference	Additional Comments/Reference
06/07/2015	Remediation Plan	LBH 4132a Ver 2.0	S Borsetshire DC 13/0468/FUL

10.2 Costs

The Environment Agency has offered to make a small contribution towards the costs of setting up the scheme in recognition of the savings and efficiencies that will accrue to the taxpayer in due course.

The costs of maintaining the scheme would be minimal provided that the assessment of SQPs can be aligned with existing programmes of professional recognition and membership.

It is envisaged that once established, the scheme will be self-financing, paid for by annual SQP subscription fees payable to the scheme administrator. In the event that this business model is insufficient to cover the basic costs of administration then alternative models will be considered including whether or not fees should be based upon the number of reports issued bearing the Quality Mark.

10.3 Liability

Liability for reports produced under the scheme lies with and remains with the producing company or individual.

10.4 Audit

In order to provide assurance regarding the robustness of the scheme, to increase confidence in the scheme and to help identify the need for any improvements, it is proposed that the administrator should consider arrangements for a percentage of reports bearing the Quality Mark to be selected for audit. Any feedback from the LPA's or environmental regulators as a result of non-compliance will be taken into account in this process. . However, the nature and degree of auditing must remain commensurate with the aims of the scheme and be in line with the finances made available by its operation.

10.5 Current Options for Administration

SiLC have made a provisional offer to help administer the SQP aspects of the NQMLC on behalf of the Land Forum. The details of this offer are contained within Appendix C. The consensus view of the Land Forum sub-group (who have developed the QMLC proposals) is that SiLC would be a logical and sensible choice to assist in this area given what's required of SQPs and the aspiration to minimise costs by developing synergies with existing Industry initiatives. However, before proceeding further the Land Forum is including specific questions in the consultation designed to elicit appropriate feedback.

11. COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Any complaints regarding the adequacy of individual Quality Marked reports will need to be passed on to the scheme administrator to implement appropriate action.

Reference will be made to the list of key checks/audit questions performed by the SQP in identifying any measurable breach of the scheme process. A detailed technical audit of individual submissions is not contemplated as this will have been carried out by respective Local Planning Authorities/Regulatory Agencies in highlighting any complaint

It is envisaged that a tiered approach would be adopted for dealing with different levels of deficiency. The action taken by the scheme administrator in each case would need to deal with each situation proportionately.

For the purposes of consultation and debate the proposed sanctions and circumstances triggering enforcement could be as follows:

Minor breach (such as part of the report not having been prepared by a person with demonstrably appropriate qualifications/competencies)

- Polite reminder/ Verbal warning. Written warning if repeated breach. SQP suspension for a one year period if more than two identified minor breaches in a three year period.

Major breach (such as gross inaccuracy or bias affecting a key conclusion of the report)

- SQP suspension for a one year period plus notification to professional body. SQP suspension for a five year period on second offence.

Fraud or other criminal breach

- SQP permanently struck off the register .

A right to appeal against any ruling made by the scheme Administrator would be incorporated into the scheme.

In addition to being struck off the SQP register, on a temporary or a permanent basis, steps should be taken to ensure that an SQP can be sanctioned by their professional body in the event of any malpractice.

12. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

12.1 Is the scheme designed to be used in England only or throughout the UK?

The scheme will be trialled in England, but its use will be commended (with suitable modifications regarding applicability of legislation and guidance etc.) to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

12.2 If this scheme is voluntary how can it drive improvements across the Sector?

The economic advantages to the developer of getting their proposals “right first time” will create the driver to use the scheme. The more projects that use the scheme, the more time will be freed up for Regulator(s) to scrutinise and challenge substandard applications. This in turn creates the incentive for companies to employ the scheme next time.

12.3 Can it be expanded to cover other legislative regimes?

The principles of the scheme could be expanded to include remediation work carried out under the Environmental Permitting Regime or to cover soil and groundwater monitoring/baseline surveys (as required by Industrial Emissions Directive).

12.4 What are the safeguards in the system from a regulatory perspective?

- The technical standards to which work must be performed will be set with clear reference to compliance with current established guidance. This creates a clear expectation as to the standard of work to be performed.
- The capability of individuals undertaking the respective diverse tasks within the project will have been checked. This ensures that individuals do not inadvertently undertake responsibilities for which they are not fit to perform.
- The factual information and interpretations of the data will have been critically assessed and audited using an agreed and defined checklist/audit process. This ensures that any deficiencies can be clearly identified and challenged.
- The SQP signing off the work is required to make a clear declaration of compliance. This is significant as the signatory is “vouching” for the suitability of the product which has implications for both “professional status” and “professional indemnity insurance”.
- Liability for any residual environmental problems will always remain legally with the problem holder and in the unlikely event that regulatory intervention is still required all powers of enforcement are retained.

12.5 Why is the Quality Mark proposed to be held by the SQP rather than the Company?

As the scheme relies upon the integrity of an individual to operate (and the sanctions associated with their professional institutions) it makes sense for them to hold the authority to apply the Quality Mark. This also avoids the potential difficulties and costs which might be involved in auditing companies.

12.6 How would this scheme fit in with other existing registers/initiatives?

The QMLC scheme focuses on the concept of using capable individuals to provide defined products that may be considered of reasonable quality by following established good practice and requiring a rigorous process of auditing/checking. It then places the responsibility for the adequacy of that product on the SQP. Such products are produced by multi-disciplinary teams.

There are a number of existing or proposed registers of individuals, the purpose of which is to enable the consumer to identify capable people in different fields. The QMLC scheme provides a process to control the quality of the product and an umbrella under which professionals from all these different fields can operate together as part of a team. A person registered for a particular purpose (eg. SiLC, SoBRA risk assessor, CL:AIRE QP or ROGEP) can be regarded as being pre-assessed as being “capable” of performing in a particular field and will be able to thereby readily demonstrate this competence to the SQP.

12.7 Why do Suitably Qualified and experienced Persons need to be chartered?

With professional status comes a commitment to an ethical code of conduct and the ability for a respective professional body to take action against those who behave inappropriately. For any scheme to be trusted by the Regulator(s) there must be a credible threat of sanctions against those who may be tempted to abuse the system.

In stepping back from scrutinising individual projects for regulatory compliance the Regulator(s) should be assured that the work will have been carried out to appropriate standards and that those checking or auditing the products can be trusted.

12.8 Why do we need the Quality Mark scheme if we already have other registers of individuals such as those held (or proposed) by SiLC, CL:AIRE and SoBRA?

The new scheme does include a register, but it is about getting people with the right skills to perform specific activities within a defined process. The aim is ensure the adequate management of land contamination issues. The existing registers help in identifying individuals with some (but not necessarily all) of the required skills needed to undertake the land contamination management process. The intention is to draw in and utilise those individuals within the new QMLC scheme as either candidates for SQP or recognised practitioners/reviewers in their own specialist fields.

The SiLC register was set up on behalf of a range of professional bodies/institutions (ICE, RICS, IEMA, CIWEM, Geol Soc, RSC, REHIS, CIEH and AGS) and provides a list of pre-assessed “capable” individuals who would be well placed to fulfil the role of SQPs under the Quality Mark scheme. However the QMLC scheme goes beyond accreditation of an individual and defines specific tasks (auditing and verification) which are necessary to ensure that individual products may be considered of sufficiently good quality. Existing SiLCs would require additional training in order to fulfil the role of SQPs as defined by the scheme administrator. Depending upon the final form of the SoBRA risk assessor scheme, it is envisaged that any proposed register

of risk assessors would provide an ideal source of pre-assessed “capable” individuals for undertaking tasks associated with risk assessment under the scheme and that some of those individuals will also be capable of performing the role of SQP. However the QMLC scheme goes well beyond accreditation of an individual in relation to a specific subject area and imposes specific tasks (auditing and verification) which are necessary to ensure that individual products are fit for purpose.

CL:AIRE hold a register of qualified persons for the purpose of implementing the development industry definition of waste code of practice. This register is of people who have a knowledge of materials management issues but not necessarily those who undertake land contamination management. However there will undoubtedly be individuals on this register who would be eligible to perform tasks as specialists within the project team or who could fulfil the duties of SQP subject to appropriate examination and training.

12.9 Why doesn't the SQP have to be Independent from the Company preparing the report?

The QMLC scheme is designed to be operated within existing quality management systems (often accredited) which rely upon the concept of peer review/checking and sign-off. It works best if the SQP has an intimate knowledge of both the project in question and the staff undertaking the work. The administering body ensures that there is an external “independent” element that can be relied upon to police the process.

12.10 How can an SQP sign off a report and give it the Quality Mark if it contains historical data collected before the scheme and its quality controls came in to operation?

The quality mark applies to the individual product being prepared (and the team preparing it). The SQP has to consider the reliability of any data collected in vouching for the reasonableness of any conclusions drawn from that data. Any critical uncertainties have to be identified as part of the process.

12.11 How can the quality mark be applied to projects that undergo different phases of work?

The quality mark applies to specific products or reports and more specifically to their conclusions and recommendations. Reports may be desk studies, risk assessments, options appraisals or remediation verification reports. If a later quality marked report relies upon data drawn from earlier non quality marked products then the reliability of that data and its implications for conclusions/recommendations made in the later report will be made absolutely clear.

APPENDIX A - ACRONYMS & LINKS

AGS	The Association of Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental Specialists http://www.ags.org.uk/
BLRS	British Land Reclamation Society http://www.blrs.org/
CECA	Civil Engineering Contractors Association http://www.ceca.co.uk/
CIEH	The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health http://www.cieh.org/
CIWEM	Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management https://members.ciwem.org/
CL:AIRE	Contaminated Land: Applications In Real Environments http://www.claire.co.uk/
CLG	Department for Communities and Local Government https://www.gov.uk/
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs https://www.gov.uk/
EA	Environment Agency https://www.gov.uk/
EIC	The Environmental Industries Commission http://www.eic-uk.co.uk/
EPUK	Environmental Protection UK http://www.epuk.org/
Geol Soc	The Geological Society http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/
HBF	Home Builders Federation http://www.hbf.co.uk/
HCA	The Home and Communities Agency https://www.gov.uk/
ICE	Institution of Civil Engineers http://www.ice.org.uk/
IEMA	Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment http://www.iema.net/
Land Trust	The Land Trust http://www.thelandtrust.org.uk/
NHBC	National House Building Council http://www.nhbc.co.uk/
Northern Ireland Government	http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/
NRW	Natural Resources Wales http://www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/
POS	Planning Officers Society http://www.planningofficers.org.uk/

NATIONAL QUALITY MARK SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION



REHIS	The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland http://www.rehis.com/
RICS	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors http://www.rics.org/uk/
RSC	The Royal Society of Chemistry http://www.rsc.org/
SAGTA	The Soil and Groundwater Technology Association http://www.sagta.org.uk/
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency http://www.sepa.org.uk/
SoBRA	The Society of Brownfield Risk Assessment http://www.sobra.org.uk/
SiLC	Specialist in Land Condition http://www.silc.org.uk/
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association http://www.tcpa.org.uk/
UKCG	UK Contractors Group http://www.ukcg.org.uk/
Welsh Government	http://www.wales.gov.uk/

APPENDIX B - PROPOSED CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Proposed questions to be asked via an open consultation available from the Land Forum website
www.claire.co.uk/landform

Question 1. Which of the following categories best describes your role with regards the assessment and management of land contamination (choose 1 or more):

- Landowner/Developer
- Planning officer
- Contaminated land officer
- Consultant
- Contractor
- Environmental Regulator (EA, SEPA, NRW, EA NI)
- Other (please state)

Question 2. Are you in favour of such a scheme being instigated? Yes/No. If not, why not?

Question 3. Role dependent questions:

- Those who ticked the box for Landowner/Developer
 - a. How likely would your organisation be to favour use of consultants/contractors that were signed up to the scheme? (not at all likely, unlikely, 50:50, likely, very likely, don't know)
- Those who ticked the box for LPA or CLO :
 - a. How likely do you think your local authority would be to issue a position statement that encouraged developers to use consultants/contractors that were signed up to the scheme? (not at all likely, unlikely, 50:50, likely, very likely, don't know)
 - b. To what extent would such a scheme help or hinder you in your role at the local authority? (very unhelpful, unhelpful, will make no difference, helpful, very helpful, don't know)
- Those who ticked the box for consultant or contractor:
 - a. How likely would your organisation be to sign up to such a scheme? (not at all likely, unlikely, 50:50, likely, very likely, don't know)
- Those who ticked the box for Environmental Regulator:
 - a. To what extent would such a scheme help or hinder you in your role? (very unhelpful, unhelpful, will make no difference, helpful, very helpful, don't know)

Question 4. Do you agree with the proposed minimum requirements for the Suitable Qualified Person ? (Yes/No). If not, what should be added/removed/modified?

- Question 5.** In your view, are there any existing schemes that can be used to demonstrate that the minimum requirements for the SQP have been met for an individual? (Yes/No). If yes, list what these are?
- Question 6.** In your view, are there any existing organisations that could administer such a scheme? (Yes/No). If yes, list what these are?
- Question 7.** For consistent operation of the scheme, is it necessary to link the scheme to any specific standards and/or guidance documents (Yes/No) and if so what do you consider these to be?
- Question 8.** Do you agree with the list of key aspects of reports that need to be audited as part of the scheme? (Yes/No). If not, what should be added/removed/modified?
- Question 9.** Does the declaration have sufficient information/statements? (Yes/No). If not, what should be added/removed/modified?
- Question 10.** Taking into account the proposed complaints procedure that has been outlined, do you think that a specific (non-technical) scheme audit system is required in addition to any other audit systems operated by regulators or companies?

APPENDIX C - LIST OF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Identified stakeholder groups are as follows:

Sector	Audience of Members (mainly)	Name of Group/Organisation
Land Contamination (LC)	Private Industry	EIC
LC	Private Industry	SiLC
LC	Private Industry	AGS
LC	Private Industry	SAGTA
LC	Private Industry	CL:AIRE
LC	Private Industry	NHBC
LC	Private Industry	HBF
LC	Private Industry	CECA
LC	Private Industry	UKCG
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	Yorkshire Contaminated Land Forum
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	East Land Quality Forum
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	Northeast Contaminated Land Forum
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	Northwest Contaminated Land Forum
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	North East Thames Contaminated Land Forum
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	Welsh Contaminated Land Forum
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	Scottish Contaminated Land Forum
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	The Ireland Brownfield Network

NATIONAL **QUALITY MARK** SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION



LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	JISC – Contaminated Land Strategies
LC	Private Industry & Local Authority	SoBRA
LC	Local Authority	EPUK
LC	Local Authority	Local Authority Contaminated Land Forum (CIRIA)
LC	Local Authority	YAMMER - Contaminated Land Officers Group
LC	Local Authority	Local Authority Environmental Pollution Groups/Contaminated Land Groups (CLOGS)
LC	Government	Defra
LC	Government	Environment Agency
LC	Government	Scottish Government
LC	Government	SEPA
LC	Government	Welsh Government
LC	Government	Natural Resources Wales
LC	Professional Institution	Geological Society
LC	Professional Institution	IEMA
LC	Professional Institution	RSC
LC	Professional Institution	CIWEM
LC	Professional Institution	REHIS
LC	Professional Institution	CIEH
LC	Professional Institution	ICE
Planning	Private Industry and Public Sector	Royal Town Planning Institute

NATIONAL **Q**UALITY **M**ARK SCHEME
 FOR
 LAND AFFECTED BY **C**ONTAMINATION



Planning	Private Industry and Public Sector	Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Planning	Private Industry	Town and Country Planning Association
Planning	Local Authority	Local Government Association
Planning	Local Authority	Welsh Local Government Association
Planning	Local Authority	Planning Officers Society
Planning	Local Authority	Local Authority Planning Officer Groups
Planning	Government	CLG

APPENDIX D - SiLC Proposal

A SiLC Proposal to support a Quality Mark Scheme January 2015

○ **INTRODUCTION**

Discussion continues around the initiative to develop a “Quality Mark” scheme for the sector dealing with previously developed land, more broadly termed brownfield by Cabernet¹². This has been driven in part by historic and current concerns in the industry that standards of some work are inadequate, and partly by concerns that with reducing budgets in the public sector, the further oversight of regulatory submissions to whichever relevant body may be insufficient to ensure good outcomes when it comes to using or building on previously used sites. The Environment Agency, Defra and DCLG have put forward views that are supportive in principle of such a scheme.

The Land Forum has debated the potential scheme and is active in pushing forward with ideas for such a scheme. SiLC has also debated the principle of such a scheme at PTP meetings, and believes that it currently plays a strong role in improving standards, and is already leading the push to improve quality of work in the sector, whatever the regulatory framework. The recent publication of the Skills Development Framework is an exemplar of this.

On this basis, SiLC has produced this position paper setting out in simple terms the following:

- The scope of a scheme, and what it might achieve;
- What sign-off might look like;
- Who might act as signatory to a submission;
- What value this might bring to the situation.

○ **SCOPE OF THE SCHEME**

A Quality Mark (QM) scheme must be adaptable and broadly drawn so it can be applied across a range of regulatory regimes. These regimes are managed by Local Authorities and/or the Environmental Agencies of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and hence all parties involved must be supportive of a scheme which sets out to increase their confidence in submissions which ultimately underpin regulatory

¹² CABERNET has defined brownfields as sites which:

- have been affected by former uses of the site or surrounding land;
- are derelict or underused;
- are mainly in fully or partly developed urban areas;
- require intervention to bring them back to beneficial use; and
- may have real or perceived contamination problems

decisions. Whilst the Environmental Agencies are single bodies that may be able to deliver some form of corporate agreement to a QM scheme, Local Authorities are individual organisations, and a number of overarching bodies such as RTPI, CIEH and LGA may feel they have some role to play in accepting a QM scheme. However, in the light of governmental support but only in the context of this being an industry-led initiative, any QM scheme will be voluntary, and decisions about who adopts it will be a matter for individual organisations. It is hoped, however, that a number of overarching bodies will see value in the scheme and promote its use amongst their members/interest group. The leading professional body in the field, the CIEH, has nonetheless given its backing exclusively to the SiLC scheme.

The proposed scheme is focussed on a number of subject areas such as site characterisation, risk assessment, options appraisal, remediation and verification which needs to be carried out in line with good practice so as to meet basic legislative aims. Thus, the risks posed by land contamination will be adequately assessed and appropriate actions taken to manage or mitigate. The end result should be a situation where a regulator (EA or LA) can be satisfied that they don't need to take any additional action to ensure compliance with environmental legislation such as Part 2A, Planning or Environmental Permitting regimes. In summary:

- 1) The procedure of being assessed under a QM scheme should demonstrate that the work has been carried out in accordance with commonly accepted technical approaches that constitute good practice.
- 2) It should show that capable people have carried out the relevant work.
- 3) It should ensure that key elements of the work have been peer reviewed to ensure that they have been done in line with good practice.
- 4) Someone who is competent must "sign off" for the adequacy of the product in question.

Thus, the scheme needs a procedure for checking the work fulfils its objectives, that good standards of approach and practice have been applied, and the outcome delivers the regulatory needs. It should show the basic QA/QC process that people with the right skills have carried out each stage of work and signed off internally – a governance process. It should define and show compliance that any necessary peer review has taken place, and that the peer reviewer is competent to do this.

○ **SIGN OFF**

Sign off must be by a suitably qualified and experienced person (an SQP). As a minimum they should be Chartered and bound by a professional Code of Conduct, and there seems to be general agreement on this point. Other qualifications may be equally relevant such as EuroGeol or EuroEng. They should have sufficient experience in the sector to have a good overview of what needs to be done to deliver regulatory sign off on a site or project. This experience might come both before or after achieving Chartered status. They should be good at what they do (reference their qualifications as a geologist, or a chemist or engineer etc), and understand how other skills sit alongside each other to deliver the big picture, and be fully aware of the regulatory regime under which the work is being carried out.

They should be able to demonstrate the ability to communicate their findings to third parties. In order to show that they meet this level of capability, there should be some form of interview and/or examination process. The process would need to be conducted by a credible organisation. In order to gain national credibility and substance, the process would need the backing of some learned bodies or institutions that are familiar with the subject matter..

○ ***THE SUITABLY QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED PERSON (SQP)***

At the December 11th meeting of the Land Forum Professional Standards Sub-Group, the subject of how the scheme might operate and who might qualify as an SQP was debated. On behalf of the SiLC register, it was proposed that SiLCs should form the basis of the scheme. The SiLC Register already has the following attributes:

- An established scheme spanning the entire UK with an established process for identifying and registering professionals in the brownfield sector and beyond, who have demonstrable experience commensurate with signing off a QM type process.
- An organisational structure which has operated successfully since 2001 –nearly 14 years.
- A Register that is a limited liability not for profit company that can operate independently;
- A Code of Conduct and Ethics which is compatible with all Member Institutions and Organisations Codes, but also reflects the ethos of the Register;
- A set of procedures to deal with exams, the register itself, and any complaints against SiLCs arising out of a breach of the Code of Conduct;
- The backing of seven professional Institutions (ICE, IEMA, CIWEM, Geol Soc, RSC, REHIS and CIEH) and one respected technical body (AGS), who jointly make up the Board of the Company.

There are about 160 SiLCs currently. If a new process was to be set up, this would start with zero members, and certainly constrain the scheme for a number of years until a robust system of assessment was established and sufficient registrants had passed through the process.

On this basis, the SiLC Register believes it already provides the ideal basis to deliver SQPs for a QM scheme. There would be need for a small extension to the SiLC Criteria requiring applicants to have a thorough understanding of the QM scheme. Additional rigour could also be applied by adding an item to the SiLC Code of Practice requiring full compliance with the QM scheme when signing off a SQP declaration. The SiLC Criteria and Code of Practice could be updated immediately and apply to all applicants undertaking subsequent assessment rounds. However, there would be need for additional training for all previously registered SiLCs on the QM scheme before they would be able to act as a SQP. It is anticipated that this need only be a relatively short session which could be run as an online webinar. In order to maintain the assurance provided by the SiLC examination process, we propose that following the additional training, the current SiLCs would be required to complete and pass a short on line test on the QM scheme.

NATIONAL **QUALITY MARK** SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION



The SiLC Criteria and Code of Practice, with draft amendments to account for the QM scheme, are appended to this document.

○ **VALUE OF THE SCHEME**

The value of the scheme will not be the same from all perspectives, or even from two organisations with a similar perspective. For example, some local authorities remain more than capable of dealing with brownfield applications without additional procedural support. Others are thinly stretched due to funding cuts, and need all the help they can get in ensuring that, for example, planning applications go through correctly and smoothly. Some consultancies are well organised and have strong QA/QC procedures and an internal sign off process, with the necessary in-house skills to deliver good outcomes, whilst others are less able to deliver in this manner, but would benefit from a process which they can adopt to improve the standard of their work, possibly networking with other parties to share skills and deliver good work.

Whatever the viewpoint, a QM scheme that recognises the role the SiLC Register can play has great potential to improve quality and standards in the industry, help regulators by ensuring they receive good submissions first time round, improve the timescales for processing applications and improve the overall efficiency of regulatory processes. SiLC is already well placed to support the scheme, and would not constrain the regulatory process by a lack of numbers.

○ **SUMMARY**

This paper has been produced by the SiLC PTP and provides a short overview of the debate around the establishment of a QM Scheme, and what the Scheme might aspire to deliver. The paper proposes that SiLC forms the basis of a QM scheme, and the SiLC Register should form the core of the SQPs needed to begin the scheme. The QM scheme is not constrained by subject area within the overall concept of dealing with previously used land, and could become a valuable part of the regulatory process in the next year.

NATIONAL **QUALITY MARK** SCHEME
FOR
LAND AFFECTED BY CONTAMINATION



SiLC Criteria (*including draft changes in italics*)

Candidates should:

1. Be able to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their particular area of expertise
2. Be able to demonstrate awareness and some understanding of other relevant fields and professions required in land management
3. Be able to demonstrate objective judgement in information and data management
4. Be able to communicate well and manage effective interaction between interested parties
5. Show familiarity, understanding and ability to assess and summarise complex data
6. *Be able to demonstrate thorough understanding of the requirements of the Quality Mark (QM) Scheme and the responsibilities of the Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQP) (provide link to the QM scheme documentation)*
7. Know and demonstrate a willingness to comply with all sections of the Code of Practice

SiLC Code of Practice (including draft changes in italics)

The SiLC Code of Practice is designed to ensure the commitment of individuals to the aims and objectives of SiLC, which are to:

- ◆ continuously improve the competence of land condition practitioners; and
- ◆ establish, enhance and uphold the professions reputation.

Specialist in Land Condition shall:

1. Uphold and promote the integrity of their profession.
2. Exercise honesty, diligence and impartiality in their professional work.
3. Seek to understand and comply with all legislation / standards in the country in which they are practicing.
4. Not allow conflict of interests to influence their professional decisions and judgement, make all bodies concerned aware of such conflicts.
5. Not accept anything of value from clients, employers or third parties which could be thought to influence their professional judgement.
6. Continually work to maintain and improve their knowledge using a combination of training and practical work; and give reasonable assistance to candidates wishing to enter the profession.
7. Maintain and enhance levels of proficiency, both individually and throughout the profession.
8. When giving advice, make relevant persons aware of the potential consequences and alternatives.
9. Acknowledge their limitations of competence and not undertake any work which he / she knows is beyond their professional capability.
10. Ensure all information given to and contained within data assessments is, to the best of their knowledge, correct and accurate.
11. Not endorse any information or declarations from clients or third parties which they cannot verify as accurate and true.
12. *Keep up to up to date with QM scheme and comply with all the requirements when acting as SQP. If a scheme on which they have acted as SQP is audited by a Regulator (EA, NRW, SEPA or LPA) or the SiLC PTP, provide all information that is requested.*
13. Endeavour to uphold and enhance the reputation of the register.