

National Brownfield Forum

Meeting Notes

8th July 2020, 11.00am – 3.00pm Teleconference



FINAL

Present:

Paul Nathanail (<i>Chair</i>)	GHD
Nicola Harries (<i>Secretariat</i>)	CL:AIRE
David Rudland	Environmental Protection UK
Hannah White	Society of Brownfield Risk Assessment (SoBRA)
Matthew Llewellyn & Trystan James	Natural Resources Wales
Ian Evans	Specialist in Land Condition (SiLC)
Angela Haslam	Environment Agency (EA)
Andrew Williams	Welsh Government – People & Environment
Seamus Lefroy Brooks	Chair of NQMS Steering Group
John Cleland	Geological Society
Tim Elliott	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
Lisa Hathway	National House Building Council (NHBC) (part of the meeting)
Stella Keenan	Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Pollution Advisory Group (YALPAG)
Jane Thrasher	Environmental Industries Commission (EIC)
Vivien Dent	Association of Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental Specialists (AGS)
Frank Evans	Soil and Groundwater Technology Association (SAGTA) (part of the meeting)
Brian McVeigh	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
Richard Boyle	Homes England
Lucy Thomas	Home Builders Federation (HBF)

Invited:

Alan Webb, George Sanders & Louise Wainwright	UKAS (afternoon only)
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Apologies:

Ben Million	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)
Harriet Cooper & Rachel Boulderstone	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Andrew Williams & Joanne Smith	Welsh Government (WG)
Paul Sheehan	Chair of Land Stewardship/Natural Capital Working Group
Emma Tattersdill	UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA)
Caroline Thornton	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
Rob Ivens	Mole Valley Council
Rachael Davies	Flintshire Council & Welsh Contaminated Land Working Group
Steve Manning	Wiltshire Council
Mark Edwards	Lancaster City Council

Corresponding Members:

Julia Thrift	Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)
Philip Ridley	Planning Officers Society
Euan Hall	Land Trust

Agenda

1. Welcome and Apologies
2. Introductions of represented organisations
3. Review of previous minutes & actions
4. Update from Government Departments and Environment Agencies
5. Standards Update
6. Brief Roundtable Update from Industry Groups
7. Sub-Group Updates
8. UKAS Presentation Update
9. AOB
WHO Brownfields Case Studies
10. Date and location of next meeting

Meeting Notes

1) Welcome & Apologies

Paul Nathanail (PN) welcomed everyone and apologies were given. PN thanked Frank Evans (FE) for offering to host the National Brownfield Forum (NBF), however due to COVID we were unable to take him up on his offer.

2) Introductions of represented organisations

Introductions were performed.

3) Review of Previous Minutes & Outstanding Actions

Outstanding actions carried forward for next meetings,

Government Department Updates

MHCLG – Publication of online brownfield mapping tool

Ben Million (BM) to find out further details how the tool will work and what data will be collected and feed back to the National Brownfield Forum.

Terms of Reference

John Cleland (JC) to make contact with Scottish LA to see if there is an interest in participating in the NBF.

Nicola Harries (NH) to make amendments to Terms of Reference once she has heard back from the different industry groups approached.

Update from industry Groups

WLCWG – Matt Llewellyn to confirm with WLCWG when the results of their survey to contaminated land officers will be published.

4) Update from Government Departments and Environment Agencies

SEPA & Scottish Government

SEPA

An update was provided by Caroline Thornton (CT) ahead of the meeting as she was unable to attend in person.

Various work-streams have slowed or paused whilst internal priorities shift and everyone adjusts to new ways of working. SEPA has seen an unsurprising overall decline in land contamination work related to the planning system. They have had a few enquiries about logistical issues at sites where ongoing, in situ, remediation activities required kit maintenance or site access whilst on lockdown, their approach has been to advise on a site by site basis. However, as restrictions ease and the focus moves squarely onto economic recovery SEPA is anticipating a large surge in workloads for both planning and contaminated land staff.

On the topic of economic recovery and planning and development – their planners highlighted the article below in relation to proposed changes to the planning system in England and the potential waiving of planning permission requirements for a change of use:

<https://www.cityam.com/boris-johnson-announces-radical-changes-to-planning-system/>

CT would be interested to hear the NBF's views on this if it's discussed? Are there concerns? Currently SEPA don't know what it may mean for Scotland (maybe nothing since planning is a devolved matter). Could this be problematic from a land contamination perspective, the reasons being:

- In Scotland the vast majority of potential 'Contaminated Land' in Scotland is addressed through the planning regime.
- Planning Advice Note 33 makes the link with the Part IIA regime and requires the appropriate risk assessments to be carried out so that the land is 'suitable for use'.
- The output of risk assessments (human health) will depend on the proposed use of the site.
- At the moment therefore PAN33 catches any changes of use through the planning permission system and therefore ensures that the risks are acceptable for the site's proposed (new) use. If planning permission is not required for a change of use, then you may no longer have this safety net?

Future Scottish Government (SG) Consultation on Groundwater Directions

SEPA work to feed into an anticipated SG consultation on Groundwater Directions has been going on for quite some time now. It's been challenging trying to align the requirements across the various regimes and sectors in a consistent and fair way and has involved the redrafting of a number of SEPA guidance documents – including WAT-PS-10. It's hoped that the SG consultation will run before the end of the year and this will include links to the proposed re-drafts of relevant SEPA guidance for comment.

Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Initiative (SVDL)

SEPA is continuing to work closely with the Scottish Land Commission who are leading on this initiative. The intention is that the initiative and associated Taskforce will act as a catalyst for addressing long term land vacancy and dereliction across Scotland.

Underpinning this is a programme of research and analysis to help better understand the nature of the challenge, identify potential changes to policy and practice and share experience of successful projects. The Taskforce has produced a Statement of Intent (see link) and SLC is currently working on a 'Recommendations Document' due to be submitted to Scottish Government in the autumn. One of the more specific aims is to address the issue of 'stuck' DUSTE sites (Derelict Urban Sites from Two thousand or Earlier) that seem to remain permanently on the VDL register. As part of this work stream, SLC, SEPA and Central Scotland Green Network Trust began an engagement process last month with key local authority contacts (initially those involved in regeneration, VDL or contaminated land).

More information on the Initiative and its progress can be found here:

<https://landcommission.gov.scot/our-work/housing-development/vacant-and-derelict-land>

PFA Substances

Both SEPA and Scottish Government are starting to receive enquiries in relation to emerging Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), any existing monitoring information and any available guidance in relation to risk assessment criteria for this group of substances (huge number of substances – sparse amount of info / guidance). SEPA is liaising with the EA and is a member of the cross agency working group on this, which is due to meet in the next month.

Welsh Government – Planning

Joanne Smith unfortunately was unable to attend but sent the following update.

- Last few months have been concerned with making changes to processes and procedures to keep the planning system running. But like all areas of Government, attention is also now on post-covid recovery.
- Our Minister (Julie James Local Government and Housing) has recently emphasised that our approach going forward will focus on addressing longstanding inequalities (which have been made worse by the pandemic) by taking a values based approach to recovery which promotes social, economic and environmental justice
- She is keen that the principles of sustainable development and place making must not be sacrificed in the pursuit of economic recovery at any cost.
- Key priorities include, continuing work on the **National Development Framework (NDF), supporting the implementation of Planning Policy Wales** and facilitating the preparation of **strategic development plans** across 4 regions identified in the NDF.

NDF: The First Minister's Continuity Plan has identified the NDF as a priority to be completed before the next Senedd election and will be submitted to the Senedd for scrutiny later this year with publication of the final framework early in 2021.

PPW: We have undertaken a signposting exercise which will exemplify those aspects of PPW which are particularly relevant to the post Covid 19 recovery and responding to the climate and nature emergencies. This will include revitalising town centres, making better use of resources, including land, and promoting green infrastructure and active travel. We also aim to launch the Placemaking Wales Charter as soon as possible.

SDPs: The Local Government and Elections Bill is currently progressing through the Senedd with the view to it becoming law in early 2021. The Bill will provide a legal framework for regional collaboration through the creation of Corporate Joint Committees and require the preparation of Strategic Development Plans across regions/sub-regions in Wales.

Welsh Government – Environment

Andrew Williams (AW) confirmed that due to COVID land contamination activities have not been taken forward and a lot of local authority resources have been moved into other environmental health activities to support Public Health Wales.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

Matthew Llewellyn (ML) and Trystan James (TJ) provided an update on behalf of Natural Resources Wales (NRW). ML confirmed that a colleague – Louise Siddorn has recently joined NRW to cover the North Wales region. ML confirmed that initially NRW and local authorities suspended their planning advice services but these have all be started up again and it is business as usual. ML confirmed that NRW has received an updated version of CL:AIRE's Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice document for review. His colleague Ross Briscow is leading on this.

TJ updated the NBF on the upcoming International Mine water Conference that is to be held in July 2021 in Newport. Welsh Government, NRW, Cardiff University and Coal Authority are jointly hosting it. Further information is available here:

<https://www.imwa.info/imwaconferencesandcongresses/imwa-symposia/308-imwa-2021-announcement.html>

TJ confirmed that the Coal Authority and NRW have signed a joint MoU to help remediate abandoned metal mines. They will be working collaboratively to deliver £4M of funding secured from Welsh Government.

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

Brian McVeigh (BMc) was welcomed to the NBF. BMC explained that Theresa Kearney has a temporary promotion for a minimum of 12 months to Head of NIEA Regulation Unit and he has backfilled her position. BMC shared the update on behalf of NIEA and DAERA.

Part III of the Waste and Contaminated Land Order 1997 (contaminated land regime for NI) – the minister has considered the NIEA risk assessment completed in relation to the implementation of Part III of WCLO 1997. The minister has agreed to release the NIEA Part III risk assessment for publication. This risk assessment will be placed on the DAERA website in the coming weeks.

Groundwater public consultation – NIEA is progressing their public consultation documentation in relation to groundwater protection i.e. the input of hazardous substances and/or non-hazardous pollutants into groundwater in line with the Groundwater Regulation Northern Ireland 2009. It is likely this consultation will be launched at the end of Q2 (September 2020). This work has been impacted by Covid-19 and hasn't progressed as planned.

Groundwater awareness leaflet – NIEA is producing a groundwater awareness leaflet for the public. This is due to be published by the end of July 2020. A useful 2 sided summary of the importance of groundwater.

Green Growth Agenda – In June 2020 the DAERA Minister did launch a Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/news/poots-plans-green-growth-approach-ni>

Covid-19 impacts on planning and development – there were noted impacts to planning and development in Northern Ireland due to Covid-19 restrictions. There were a reduced number of planning consultations received by NIEA in relation to land contamination and groundwater. Things are starting to pick up again and consultation numbers from Planning Authorities to NIEA are increasing. NIEA has published a Regulatory Position Statement in relation to supporting information for planning applications for burial sites and/or extensions to existing burial sites. Further information available here: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/extension-existing-cemetery-capacity>

MHCLG

Unfortunately, no update was provided by MHCLG for the meeting.

Environment Agency

Angela Haslam (AH) provided an update on behalf of Environment Agency (EA). She confirmed that the EA had delayed the publication to the updated Land Contamination Risk Management guidance (LCRM) during the coronavirus pandemic but now hope to be able to publish shortly.

As a result of restart activities, the EA are anticipating an increase in planning consultations and would recommend developers take advantage of the paid for discretionary environmental planning advice service and consider using the NQMS.

The EA are holding an external regulatory PFAS workshop on 16th July 2020. They are also working on the specification for the next phase of work building on the outputs from the Phase 1 PFAS scoping project.

AH let NBF members know about a public consultation that is currently underway as part of the River Basin Management – Challenges and Choices consultation https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/challenges-and-choices/user_uploads/perfluorooctane-sulfonate-and-related-substances-pressure-rbmp-2021.pdf and <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/challenges-and-choices/consultation/subpage.2019-04-24.6017295253/>

Homes England (HE)

Richard Boyle provided an update on behalf of Homes England. More information on Homes England can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england>. What follows is a selection of information on their recent activities.

Homes England End of Year Statement

A statement from Homes England Chief Executive Nick Walkley on the end of the financial year 2019/2020 was issued on 3 April 2020. Brief extract follows:

“Most of us haven’t faced a challenge like this in our lifetimes. Coronavirus is having a major impact on the sector, and everyone at Homes England understands that our partners are having to adjust and make difficult decisions about what is best for their business and their workforce.

“Homes England will not rush to judgement about how we should respond. We will take the time to engage with and listen carefully to the sector and proactively seek input on the support it needs. More than ever, we need to come together and focus on getting through the challenges ahead of us.

“Our ability to overcome difficulties as a sector has been hugely evident in the last few weeks. Thanks to the hard work, creativity and determination of our partners right across the industry, we have managed to do some significant business. Continuing to build a development pipeline becomes even more important at a time like this.”
(It continues.)

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-england-end-of-year-statement>

Information for Help to Buy: Equity Loan customers during Coronavirus (COVID-19)

HE understands that coronavirus (COVID-19) is worrying and that things still feel very uncertain. There are many questions about what coronavirus means for Help to Buy: Equity Loan customers and a range of questions and answers have been collated with updates as recent as June 2020. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/information-for-help-to-buy-equity-loan-customers-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Homes England contracts Vistry Partnerships

Homes England has completed the sale of two sites to developer Vistry Partnerships which will see 935 homes be built.

At Sandymoor in Halton, Cheshire, 11 hectares of land will be developed to deliver 335 new homes. At the former Lea Castle Hospital site near Kidderminster, 600 new homes will be built. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-england-contracts-vistry-partnerships-to-develop-more-than-900-homes-across-two-schemes>

Homes England Home Building Fund Announcements

As part of the £4.5 billion Home Building Fund, we have agreed funding packages totalling £309 million to accelerate construction at three major London housing developments.

In Brent Cross, a £148 million funding facility will fund land and infrastructure works needed to unlock delivery of 6,700 homes.

At Silvertown Quays, a £105m debt facility will unlock a minimum of 3,000 homes. At Barking Riverside, a £56 million funding package will deliver upfront infrastructure for the 10,000-home scheme.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-england-agrees-funding-packages-worth-300m-to-accelerate-delivery-of-20000-london-homes>

Homes England commissions MMC research study to drive construction innovation

As part of the agency's strategic objective to improve construction productivity and encourage the uptake of MMC in housing delivery, a series of Homes England's own sites will participate in the study.

Monitoring the construction of around 1,500 homes at sites across country over several years, the study will test the performance of different types of MMC.

The research will explore a range of themes and seek to learn lessons about how MMC technologies might be improved upon in future.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-england-commissions-mmc-research-study-to-drive-construction-innovation>

5) 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/68-2020?download=737:nbf-standards-july-2020>

6) Update from Industry Groups

AGS

Vivien Dent provided the update on behalf of AGS. She confirmed the following.

- A number of safety guidance documents are currently under final review and will be published during 2020. These include guidance on working on rail infrastructure and H&S risk assessment for ground investigation.
- The AGS Guide to asbestos is now in its final draft and comprises 2 documents: SI based and lab based.
- The Instrument and Monitoring Working Group (I&MWG) has been set up and have held their first meeting. They are looking to establish with 10 members. They have Engaged with British Tunnelling Society to provide Instrument & Monitoring input to their revisions of the "Tunnelling Specification" and "Monitoring Underground Construction" documents. The new group was also featured as a news item on Ground Engineering journal's website: GEPlus: 23 April - "AGS launches instrumentation and monitoring working group". The I&MWG intend to feature in the next issue of the AGS Magazine and to input into the AGS's revision of the 'Yellow Book' the UK Specification for Ground Investigation. They were also represented at a training event held by the BDA.
- The Safety Working Group now have a sub group looking at the AGS guidance on trial pitting.
- The Laboratories, Data Management and Contaminated Land Working Groups have identified that specifications for investigations is often poor and appear to be copy and paste exercises or do not take notice of current practice. The AGS has now a GI Procurement project underway to try and address some of these concerns.
- AGS Safety Group published Guidance on Safe Ground Investigations in the Light of COVID-19 available from <https://www.ags.org.uk/2020/05/ags-guidance-on-safe-ground-investigations-in-light-of-covid-19/>

NHBC

Lisa Hathway provided an update on behalf of NHBC. She confirmed the following:

- NHBC welcomed a new Chairman, Alan Rubenstein, who was appointed on 1st June 2020.
- Virtual Training has been available from the NHBC Training Team, and they have seen over 30,000 delegates attend free training since Covid-19 lockdown, supporting the industry at this challenging time.
- Housebuilding statistics show that the total number of plots under construction in May 2020 when compared with May 2019 was -4.5%; however, the total number of plots under construction in May 2020 compared to April 2020 was +0.8%. A full breakdown of new home statistics is available in NHBC's Housing Market Report.
- NHBC celebrates its 40th anniversary of the Pride in the Job Awards, which is dedicated to recognising site managers who achieve the very highest standards in house building. 450 site managers out of a pool of 11,000, won a Quality Award in the first round of the awards. The Seal of Excellence and Regional Awards will be announced at a series of virtual events in the autumn, with the Supreme Awards winners revealed in January 2021.
- NHBC is proud to have received the RoSPA Gold Health and Safety Award, which demonstrates NHBC's commitment to ensuring the highest possible health and safety standards for staff members.

YALPAG

Stella Keenan (SK) provided the update on behalf of YALPAG. She confirmed that the Land Technical Group meet twice a year with the last meeting on 11th March 2020. There are also 3 sub-regional groups. She confirmed the following:

- YALPAG guidance documents on planning, verification of cover systems and verification of gas protection measures are continuing to be reviewed and updated. NQMS is now referred to in the latest version of the YALPAG planning guidance. <https://khub.net/documents/6039378/17952859/YALPAG+Planning+Guidance+%28Version+11.2%29.pdf/32a86523-9040-57c9-2efb-4b01d2e5ea7d?t=1593446758630>
- The National Contaminated Land Officer Group (NCLOG) has been in the process of being set up and was planned to be launched this year. Due to the current Covid-19 outbreak however, NCLOG work has been temporarily suspended until further notice.

Some thoughts from YALPAG re what the National Brownfield Forum could move forward on are: training Members of Parliament on contaminated land; guidance on SPOSH; bringing back funding/grant system for Part 2A; raising profile of radon risks – although it is appreciated that some of these elements may be outside the remit of the National Brownfield Forum.

EPUK

David Rudland (DR) provided an update on behalf of EPUK. He confirmed that they recently published their "Before you dig, Garages & Petrol Stations – Guidance for Developers". He also confirmed that their Annual EPUK event will now be virtual and held on November 18-19th 2020.

UKELA

Emma Tattersdill (ET) provided an update on behalf of UKELA. She confirmed that UKELA's annual conference was held online on 25th & 26th June 2020. Six plenary sessions and a number of working party sessions covered a range of topics including (i) threats posed to the environment by Covid 19 and (ii) latest law and policy developments in the UK, EU and USA. Presentations will soon be available to members via UKELA's website.

Upcoming events include the annual Scottish Conference on September 24th and “Waste Law After Brexit” on September 29th, exploring challenges for the waste and resources industries.

UKELA has made further submissions on the Environment Bill and representatives continue to attend regular meetings with DEFRA on the development of the OEP. We are also looking at how the Agriculture Bill may develop and/or have environmental implications.

CL:AIRE

NH provided an update on behalf of CL:AIRE. She confirmed the following:

DOWCoP

A short free online introductory level podcast has been prepared on the DoWCoP and is available here: <https://www.claire.co.uk/information-centre/video-and-podcast-library/category/11-definition-of-waste-code-of-practice>.

The new version of the updated guidance document is now with the EA and NRW. CL:AIRE is waiting for feedback on the updated document. CL:AIRE is also continuing to audit projects and enforcing its disciplinary procedures.

National Quality Mark Scheme (NQMS)

There are now 110 SQPs currently showing on the register (3 retired and 9 being chased by SiLC regarding renewal). 114 declarations been purchased. The EA continues to endorse the scheme and are now carrying out an internal audit on the declarations that they have received. They will report any lessons learnt which will be shared more widely. The general feedback is positive. The NQMS now requires SQPs to make it very obvious that a report has been prepared under the NQMS by including their unique SQP badge and to insert a copy of the declaration within the report either as a front sheet or as an appendix referencing it within introductory text.

Sustainable Remediation

SuRF-UK updated Annex 1 – indicator report is currently being prepared for publication. It is now going to be published as two supplementary reports for ease of use. Report 1 – How to carry out a sustainability assessment and Report 2 – Indicators mapped against UN SDGs. It is anticipated that they will be published in the next couple of weeks. A webinar on the new reports was presented to SuRF (in USA) and advertised and attended widely in the UK and globally.

[Post Meeting Note: Guidance documents have now been published and are available to be downloaded www.claire.co.uk/surfuk]

International SuRF

The international SuRF group recently met in early June 2020. The next SustRem conference which was to be held in South Africa in Autumn 2020 has been postponed until Autumn 2021. The international SuRF community are looking to support this event.

[Post Meeting Note: The notes of the June meeting are now available to download: www.claire.co.uk/surfinternational
<https://www.claire.co.uk/component/phocadownload/category/69-2020?download=718:notes-from-international-surf-group-and-partners-4th-june-2020>]

Updating Guidance on Comparing Soil Contamination Data with a Critical Concentration

The report has now been signed off by the Steering Group and is currently being reviewed by the CL:AIRE TRG as it will be published as a CL:AIRE document. It will then be passed for publication.

Category 4 Screening Level Project

This project is moving forward. All five batches are now being worked on and are in various stages of progress. Four reports have been finalised following steering group feedback and are now waiting for steering group to sign off so CL:AIRE can prepare for publication. Industry are waiting eagerly for the first to be published.

Verification of Gas Protection

CL:AIRE is moving forward with the preparation and development of the gas verification accreditation scheme rapidly. CL:AIRE has built the website and online application and assessment process and have confirmation of eleven people who would like to act as first assessors. CL:AIRE is arranging for the assessors to have a kick off meeting to discuss the whole process. The assessment is in two stages, experience and practical. We are looking at the best way to undertake the practical assessment part for the assessors in light of COVID.

Monitored Natural Attenuation (MNA) Guidance

CL:AIRE is continuing to work with a small group of industry experts and regulators to update the MNA guidance document so it can be republished as an industry technical guidance document. The first draft of the report has now been prepared with second draft in preparation

SiLC

Ian Evans (IE) provided the update on behalf of SiLC. He confirmed that there are 113 SQPs on the register which includes 3 new SiLCs from the early 2020 assessment process. There are a number of people that are booked on the next SiLC introduction day so it is hopeful that the next assessment window may be busier. There was discussion what support there was for those candidates that were unsuccessful first time round. IE explained that the affiliate scheme has been created to support candidates to know when they are ready to apply for SiLC. People do not fail, candidates are informed about the areas that they need to work on before reapplying.

RICS

Tim Elliott provided an update on behalf of RICS. He confirmed that their Environmental Spring Conference was virtual and very well received. The spring chartership review has continued with some new brownfield specialist candidates being assessed. RICS has continued their training programme to assist staff that have been furloughed. Their membership has reported a large reduction in site visits/property visits in the last few months but this is starting to pick up again. It is currently uncertain what demand there is from the commercial sector for brownfield redevelopment due to the uncertainty of the rental market.

EIC

Jane Thrasher provided an update on behalf of EIC. She confirmed that EIC has been active in working to support members through Covid-19, through understanding the impact of lockdown on environmental business, working with government departments to enable solutions, with EIC's sister group ACE (Association for Consultancy and Engineering) leading the Construction Leadership Council on the Economic Recovery Plan.

As well as the regular quarterly working group meetings, EIC has held several extra Covid-19 virtual meetings since lockdown commenced, exploring business impacts on members. One of the main challenges identified early on was the availability of accommodation for construction workers (including ground investigation) which was resulting in excessive daily travel time or work needing to be halted. EIC worked with government, Build UK and Hospitality UK and shared information with members and the situation has since improved.

EIC have worked with members for input to the Construction Leadership Council work on the Economic Recovery Plan discussing how to restart and drive demand in the commercial, social and local infrastructure sector, which will be presented directly to government ministers.

EIC welcomed Karen Andrews, Lead Policy Adviser at the Environment Agency to discuss the CL:AIRE Development Industry Definition of Waste Code of Practice (DoWCoP) at the last Contaminated Land Working Group quarterly meeting. Karen outlined her role in the DoWCoP review and members concerns (which have already been raised in writing) were discussed.

The EIC labs group have been discussing the proposed British Standard on microplastics and note that there is currently a lack of clarity on the definition of microplastics and nanoplastics.

GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

John Cleland (JC) provided an update on behalf of the Geological Society. He confirmed that the regional groups have been running a number of virtual events. JC explained that he is working with the Geological Society to help map out how geoscience links to STEM subjects and how to promote it into the national curriculum. They are also looking at producing more educational materials to enhance the spread of geoscience knowledge across schools. JC is also looking at how many chartered geologist progress through to SiLC, and whether the Geological Society can support this.

SCOTTISH CONTAMINATED LAND FORUM (SCLF)

JC confirmed that Scottish Contaminated Land Forum (SCLF) have been running a number of very successful lunchtime webinars that have been well attended.

SoBRA

Hannah White provided an update on behalf of SoBRA. She confirmed the following:

December 2020 conference

Exact arrangements TBC due to covid conference restrictions. Provisional - Joint with RSC on 2nd December at Burlington House, London.

NAPL Sub Group

This group is moving forwards with agreed deliverables which have been agreed and assigned – TOR are on the SoBRA website. A collection of advisory notes are in draft/review status and we are working on an effective solubility calculator with guidance. As reliant on volunteers, giving timescales with certainty is challenging especially in Covid times.

Vapour Intrusion Sub Group – whilst there was renewed momentum with a new project manager appointed the covid lockdown has impacted this (a large number of volunteers are parents). TOR being re-considered to ensure in line with practitioner needs. Aim/Objectives were to prepare a series of technical guidance summary notes covering: “CSM development for VI linkages”, “When soil gas sampling is beneficial”, “Data collection options available”, “Modelling tools available”. Both “When soil gas sampling is beneficial”, “Data collection options available” are in late stages of review. Scope likely to be extended to support the C4SL project outputs.

Standards subgroup – open to all SoBRA members, but members are overwhelmed by the number of consultations and SoBRA struggle to get constructive feedback.

Asbestos Subgroup - is continuing to focus its work on field and laboratory analysis and the reporting and interpretation of that data – recognising that this is a critical step in risk assessment, and that currently there is a big variation in laboratory methods and data reporting. The group recently ‘published’ a note to SoBRA members on “The Distribution of Asbestos in Soil – what can the data mining of sample results held by UK laboratories tell us?” to support the recently published Defra document.

Acute GACs Report – A revision to this (minor changes) will be posted on the SoBRA website soon. Sub-group closed.

Early Careers Risk Assessment workshop from June 2019. A new top tips document for early careers will be published soon 'Improving Risk Assessment Field to Desk'.

Accreditation: Two application windows per year – one in January and one in August. Not everyone is passing on first application. We are looking at ways to make efficiencies. New window open – closes at the end of August.

2020 Conferences: Summer conferences (early careers and 'Tackling the emerging contaminant time bomb') postponed due to Covid. Winter conference and AGM on 2nd December 2020 may be virtual if there is uncertainty at the RSC London venue.

2021 Conferences: SoBRA is considering two early careers conferences in summer 2021 (depending on Covid) to replace those proposed for summer 2020 [with RemSoc; one in Birmingham and another in Scotland (also joint with SCLF)]. We are also planning a summer conference – 'Tackling the emerging contaminant time bomb' in Birmingham. Winter conference and AGM in December, at the RSC London.

Homes Builders Federation (HBF)

No update from HBF was available on this occasion.

7) **Working Group Update**

National Quality Mark Scheme for Management of Land Contamination (NQMS)

Seamus Lefroy-Brooks (SLB) provided an update on the NQMS. He confirmed that the steering group met on 23rd June 2020. Currently there are 109 declarations purchased. EA also gave preliminary feedback on the auditing work that they have carried out. Preliminary feedback from the EA is positive and that they continue to support the scheme. The profile of the NQMS will be much higher once the new LCRM web pages are launched. Further detailed review of the feedback will be performed by SiLC (awarding body) and CL:AIRE (administrator) once full details are known. SLB confirmed that they are hopeful that YALPAG will start to signpost to the NQMS in their updating of the planning guidance so that the map hosted on the NQMS web page can be further updated. SLB confirmed that the scheme is gaining traction but that there is still a problem with awareness across some sectors. NQMS Steering Group are looking at writing editorials for broader industry sector magazines to raise the awareness of the scheme. They will also be writing to ministers again to raise the profile of the scheme to encourage further use in publicly procured projects.

Land Stewardship/Natural Capital Working Group

Paul Sheehan (PS) confirmed that he continues to work closely with NICOLE Land Stewardship Working Group but no additional work has currently been taken forward with the NBF Working Group. PS would welcome other members of the NBF to support him.

ACTION: PN to talk to PS about how to revitalise the working group.

8) **UKAS**

PN introduced Alan Webb (AW), George Sanders and Louise Wainwright from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) and thanked them for their time. AW introduced NBF members to UKAS and explained that they are the national accreditation body for the UK and appointed by government through BEIS, (Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department). They are the sole national accrediting body for organisations/companies that undertake conformity assessment activities such as surveying buildings for asbestos containing materials. They have been approached to look at developing recognition of accreditation for surveying asbestos in land and would welcome the opportunity to discuss such a scheme with NBF members. AW explained that the development of any accreditation scheme needs to be in the public interest, technically valid and that there is a market for it.

AW explained the reasoning of why it was felt that such an accreditation scheme was required and how UKAS envisaged it could work. NBF members explained to AW how the geoenvironmental industry currently approached working on brownfield land and work within an existing competency framework. They also explained that there is already a large amount of technical guidance and British Standards that are specific to working on land affected by contamination. There was also concern that such an accreditation scheme was focusing on just asbestos, whereas geoenvironmental professionals have to consider many hundreds of different contaminants. AW explained that the scheme could be developed to cover surveying for other contaminants, not just asbestos. In addition, accreditation is a potential mechanism for providing 3rd party assurance that organisations are competent to survey to the technical expectation.

AW thanked the NBF members for their feedback and it was concluded that NBF members were not supportive to an accreditation scheme for surveying of asbestos on land as they did not feel it was beneficial to the geoenvironmental industry, as there is already sufficient guidance and competency frameworks in place. Additionally, members of the forum did not see a need for the accreditation scheme being considered by UKAS and indeed could see a number of weaknesses in it for reasons that were explained during the meeting. AW took the concerns away to consider as part of the development of any such scheme.

PN thanked AW and his colleagues for their time and requested if they required further clarification on any points to please come back.

9) AOB

WHO – Brownfield Case Studies

PN wanted to draw the attention of NBF members that WHO was recently asking for case studies of redeveloping brownfield sites. PN put forward The Avenue site in Chesterfield and he understand that this is being taken forward by WHO.

10) Date and location of next meeting

NH confirmed the next meeting is scheduled for 24th November 2020. It was supposed to be hosted at SEPA's offices in Edinburgh, but in light of COVID, NH will confirm if this meeting will be face to face closer to the date or virtual.