

Soil Action Plan Advisory Forum Newsletter

Issue 9: January 2006

Actions

1. Could all AF members please let [Becca Taylor](#) know their availability for the weeks commencing 15th and 22nd May 2006, for the next AF meeting.
2. Please send any information to be included in the next newsletter to the [soils mailbox](#) by **Wednesday 22 February**. It is our intention to circulate the newsletter at the end of each month unless the volume of material is insufficient.

General

1. 3rd January 2006 saw the departure of Derek Holliday on secondment to the Country Landowners and Business Association (CLA). Derek will be working for the CLA for the next 12 months as their Environmental Policy Advisor. John Hodgson will be working to the Soils Team part time and with Becca Taylor will take on work on the EU Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection and cross compliance.

SUS (Sustainable Soil Management)

1. The *Cross Compliance Soil Protection Review (SPR)* and revised *Cross Compliance Guidance for Soil Management* were sent to all farmers in England during December 2005. The Guidance has been updated to take on board stakeholder feedback, and includes new sections on managing soils not in agricultural production and managing soils under set-aside. As part of their cross compliance advice contract, Momenta will be running a publicity campaign to raise awareness of key dates (completion of SPR by 1 September 2006, implementation from 1 January 2007) and to help farmers understand their commitments in terms of completing the SPR. Further details are available from the technical helpline: 0845 345 1302.
2. We understand that the Soil Thematic Strategy package (including proposals for a Soil Framework Directive and the associated Impact Assessment) is now in interservice consultation within the European Commission. The consultation will end early February and it is anticipated that the policy package will not be discussed (and approved) by the Commission before end-March. We believe DG Environment's plans have not changed and the consultation is very much based on the proposals presented to Member States back in June 2005.

EVI (Evidence and Access to Information)

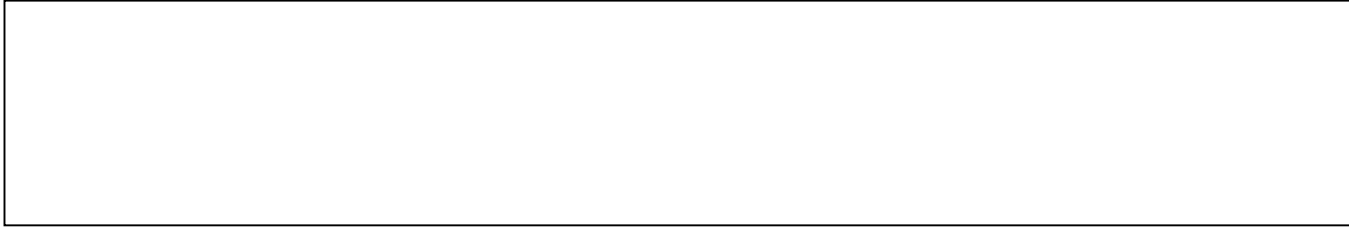
1. A recent report on "Paper Waste Spreading on Agricultural Land" (Science Report Reference SC030181/SR, Environment Agency) has provided interesting data on the recycling of paper wastes to agricultural land. Around 712,000 tonnes (fresh weight) of paper wastes were spread on 10,500ha of agricultural land in 2003. The mean application rate on tillage land was 41t/ha for biologically treated paper wastes and 76t/ha for non-biologically treated paper wastes. The report also contains data on typical paper waste nutrient and heavy metal concentrations, and based on laboratory analysis data and scientific literature identifies the main agricultural benefits of applying paper wastes to land.
2. The European Commission has awarded a Euros 1.5 million contract to Cranfield University to coordinate a strategic project in support of the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection. **ENV**ironmental **AS**essment of **Soil** for **MO**nitoring (ENVASSO) aims to design and test a single, integrated, operational and EU-wide set of measurable criteria and indicators as a basis for a harmonised comprehensive European soil and land information system. The project started on 1 January 2006 and has five core partners and 32 additional partners from all 25 EU Member and Associated States. Further information available from: Prof. Mark Kibblewhite, ENVASSO Project Director m.kibblewhite@cranfield.ac.uk.
3. The final report for the SNIFFER project on *Indicators of soil resilience for Scotland and Northern Ireland* has been published: [Indicators of soil resilience \(SNIFFER\)](#). The report proposes a set of headline, secondary and tertiary indicators for soil quality (physical, chemical and biological), as well as headline and secondary indicators for soil resistance and resilience. A risk-based approach to soil monitoring is proposed, with further refinement to the proposed set of indicators required in order to allow implementation of a programme of monitoring that will allow quantification of loss of soil quality and the resistance and resilience of soils to change. Results from this project will feed into the work of the UK Soil Indicators Consortium in establishing a set of national soil indicators.

BUI (Soils in the Built Environment/Planning)

1. Back in November, the Soils Team let the first phase of a project to assess the economic value of soil functions. This first phase, being undertaken by ADAS, will incorporate a review of relevant literature and the development of a methodology for the valuation of soil functions. The complexity of this task will probably necessitate the use of some fairly novel approaches as the project team looks to find ways to attach values to the many services that make up soil functions. The first phase of this project is due to report in the middle of March.
2. The WSP Environmental project investigating soil compaction on construction sites mentioned in Issue 8 is underway and scheduled to finish at the end of February. The work has already raised a number of issues and we will share the conclusions with Advisory Forum members as soon as they are available.

AWE (Awareness and Education)

1. The Soils Team is collaborating with our soils contact at the Government Office for the South East to organise a soils workshop for Government Office officials. Members of the Rural Development Service/Natural England National Land and Grazing Management



Team, as well as the Environment Agency, will also attend. Although the workshop will not focus exclusively on the built environment we intend to cover the relationship between land use and soils policy in the context of Regional Spatial Strategies and Sustainability Appraisal.

PB No 9052A

**Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR**

www.defra.gov.uk

