

Soil Action Plan Advisory Forum Newsletter

Issue 16: February 2007

Actions

1. Please send any information to be included in the March newsletter to [Becca Taylor](#) by **Friday 23 March**. It is our intention to circulate the newsletter at the end of each month unless the volume of material is insufficient.

General

1. Maya de Souza assumed the role of Head of Soils Policy Team on 14 February 2007. She is settling in quickly, fitting in both a trip to Brussels for discussions on the proposed Soil Framework Directive at the February Environment Council and chairing the February meeting of the Soil Action Plan Advisory Forum within her first week in post! Maya is trained as a lawyer and prior to this post offered legal advice on farming issues.
2. Andy Holden left the Soils Policy Team towards the end-January 2007. He has moved on promotion to Defra's Nutrient Management Unit.

SUS (Sustainable Soil Management)

1. As noted in Issue 14 of the newsletter, the EU Soil Thematic Strategy was adopted in September 2006, alongside proposals for a Soil Framework Directive. Since then work has been ongoing to prepare various analysis papers and briefings, as well as an initial Regulatory Impact Assessment of the proposals. We have also spent time discussing the proposals with other Member States and MEPs, as well as Commission and Presidency officials. A couple of Working Group meetings were held in January 2007 and the dossier was also discussed at the February Environment Council. At these meetings the UK expressed its support for the principles outlined in the strategy, but also for the need to ensure that legislation - if it is decided that this is necessary - includes proportionate and well-considered actions which build on existing arrangements at national and EU level. We have also raised our concerns over the Commission's Impact Assessment and the weakness of the rationale for proposing regulation in certain aspects of the Directive, for example on sealing and contamination.



EVI (Evidence and Access to Information)

1. The National Soil Monitoring Network: Review and Assessment Study project ([LQ09](#)) concluded that while the UK was rich in soils data at a range of relevant spatial and temporal scales, it was not possible to integrate and/or combine existing schemes (29 considered) to deliver the full requirements of a UK soil monitoring scheme due to problems with differences in methodology and timing of sampling. However, current schemes could provide a framework to establish a new scheme while providing information on indicators of soil quality during a transition period. Existing schemes could also provide data to help interpret and understand any changes observed while running alongside a new UK scheme. It recommended that any new UK scheme should contain two distinct elements, surveillance and contextual information.
2. Under the work of the [UK Soil Indicators Consortium](#), a project will be led by the Environment Agency to design a new UK soil monitoring network and framework for delivery that is based on the indicators of soil function identified by previous UKSIC projects and which can assess the current status of soils and changes over time at a UK and devolved administration level. The project commenced in January 2007 and will run until March 2008. [Further details](#).
3. A project to critically review up to date information on the extent to which reduced tillage practices and organic matter returns will increase the carbon content of arable soils under English and Welsh conditions is being undertaken by ADAS. This three month project is due to be completed end-March 2007. [Further details](#).

AWE (Awareness and Education)

1. After two years, the [Soil-Net](#) project, run by Cranfield University, is coming to an end. The aim of this project was to redress the poor representation of soil science and the functions of soil in the curriculum and in the classroom. A free website has been developed, providing teachers and students (Key Stage 1-4, ages 5-16) extensive curriculum-based information about soil. The site includes a great deal of information, including a range of related educational resources, from quizzes and games, to factual information sheets and case studies. The site also includes a teachers area setting out how the resources can be used in the classroom to meet different curriculum requirements. If you have a links section to your website it would be great if you could add a link to this fantastic resource! Please contact [Steve Hallett](#) for further information.





BUI (Soils in the Built Environment/Planning)

1. Issue 14 of the newsletter reported that Defra's moratorium on spending had halted progress on the proposed joint Defra/DTI Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use and Management of Soils on Construction Sites. While the moratorium is still in place, we have been successful in obtaining funds to further this work. A project has been let to Land Research Associates Ltd to prepare the Code of Practice. It is anticipated that this will include three main sections covering the need for a Code; the Code itself including specifications for the various stages on soil protection – planning, implementation and amelioration/aftercare; and a series of case studies to illustrate both good and poor practice. The project will run until end-October 2007 when a draft Code will be presented for Defra/DTI amendment and consultation.