

CONTAMINATED LAND

Buncefield groundwater pollution still spreading

Contamination of groundwater as a result of the Buncefield explosion and fire now extends 2km north, east and south-east of the site and Three Valleys Water's Bow Bridge borehole remains closed as a precaution, according to the investigation final report.

The Major Incident Investigation Board report includes much of the inquiry's previous work including recommendations for land use near existing facilities. But it says by the end of this year, the Environment Agency has taken over 1,500 water and soil samples and although no pollutants have yet reached drinking water, if permanent closure of the Bow Bridge borehole becomes necessary, alternatives will cost £2.1m.

The report says one borehole contains neat fuel/oil products and groundwater beneath it is contaminated with the fire fighting chemicals BTEX and PFOS and fuel and pollution is migrating south-eastwards. Contamination is being detected at very low levels along to Bow Bridge and the River Ver.

"The Government has recognised that good progress has been made in implementing MIIB recommendations and the Environment Agency will continue to challenge the oil and fuel sector to put in place the remaining improvements that are needed," said Agency director of operations David Jordan.

► <http://www.buncefieldinvestigation.gov.uk/reports/index.htm#final>

Asbestos SGV

DEFRA officials have been in "regular communication" with the Environment Agency over the publication of a soil guidance value on asbestos to replace the existing SGV, environment minister Huw Irranca-Davies told MP Paul Rowen in a Commons written answer. He said the Department has also been working closely with the Health and Safety Laboratory and the Health and Safety Executive and it plans to consult "in the first half of 2009". Hansard, 15 January, Column 887W

Tree felling irate

The Gloucester Citizen reports anger from neighbours of the new Quedgeley Urban Village outside the city following the felling of hundreds of trees to make way for land remediation. The developer and Gloucester City Council says the felling was needed to treat land for contamination and that all the necessary permissions should have been in place. But neighbouring residents complain they should have been consulted.

SEPA determined to resist radioactive determination

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency has decided that radium contamination on the beach at Dalgety Bay (BB, October 2008) is serious enough to support its determination as the UK's first radioactively contaminated land – but it hopes not to determine it and to secure voluntary remediation instead.

An assessment of the contamination at the Fife resort says there is both homogenous contamination across the beach together with two areas of enhanced contamination which could indicate doses up to 66mSv for a one-year old child. But there is significant uncertainty and potential for smaller or larger doses from other point sources and it recommends further work and a full risk assessment of point sources to see if the radium particles could deliver effective doses greater than 100mSv.

"The potential skin doses to infants from the heterogeneous contamination on Dalgety Bay, recognising the associated uncertainties, support the designation of areas of the bay as radioactive contaminated land," SEPA told the Dalgety Bay Forum.

"Further sampling and analysis would be required to reduce the uncertainties around the assessments and refine SEPA's understanding of the magnitude of the exposure of the public. However, the potential costs associated with such work may not be an appropriate use of resource. Furthermore, the timescales required to undertake further sampling and analysis may serve only to delay breaking the identified exposure routes to the public."

Local people fear determination would affect the tourist trade and SEPA is obviously hoping Defence Estates will cough up for rapid voluntary remediation to obviate this. The contamination came from incineration of old military aircraft.

"If you determine it as radioactively contaminated land it will always be on the register," a SEPA spokeswoman told BB. "If you go down that route, then you would have to prove who would be responsible for it and it would take five years." She said SEPA is hoping DE will accept responsibility and remediate the site voluntarily.

► <http://www.sepa.org.uk/>

Littleport gets soil cleanliness certificate

Following the story on the contaminated Littleport housing estate (BB, July 2008) and subsequent remediation work, the plot has received a certificate of soil cleanliness in accordance with current UK & EU contamination acceptance levels.

Three samples were taken and tested for poly aromatic hydrocarbons on the surface and one at a depth of half a metre, using the SSTEESTER™ in accordance with Crown Biotechnology Ltd standard soil testing procedures. One sample was sent to the National Laboratory Service (EA) for

chemical verification.

► <http://www.crownbio.co.uk>

**Environmental "victory"**

TCSR has formally withdrawn its planning application for a thermal desorption plant to clean up contaminated soil at Judkins Quarry (BB, December 2008). The

environmental treatment plant was halted by protests from environmentalists. "This is great news," Keith Kondakor of Nuneaton Friends of the Earth was quoted as saying.