

Hazardous Substances Project – External Update 2

Who is this for?

This is the second of a series of updates that the Hazardous Substances Project Board are sharing with the stakeholders we think will be interested in this project. The aim is to raise awareness of what is happening, and how and when you can get involved and contribute. This project is relevant to anyone who discharges pollutants to groundwater, carries out or regulates any activity that could give rise to such a discharge.

Background

The Hazardous Substances Project Board has representatives from SEPA, the Republic of Ireland EPA, Natural Resources Wales¹ and the Environment Agency. It has been set up to deliver the following in 2014:

- an efficient and effective way of determining which substances are hazardous, which we will do through the existing JAGDAG² process which includes scientists, business and industry as well as all of the Agencies; and
- a common approach for UK and Ireland on how we comply with the 'prevent' requirements of the Groundwater Daughter Directive (GWDD) and to take account of any environmental and business implications. This means a common approach on how we use environmental standards to identify the need for preventative and restorative work, and how we identify what action is proportionate. This includes how the numerical values are derived and applied for both local-scale and water body-scale impacts.

Determining which substances are hazardous

The Joint Agencies Groundwater Directive Advisory Group (JAGDAG) has now been joined by Dr Marie-Jo Booth representing Energy UK, and Leslie Heasman representing the landfill sector. They and the other industry representatives are actively involved in providing technical advice on substances to be considered, and the determination process.

The first consultation that uses the new methodology ended on 11th March and we received 16 responses. We are reviewing them and will report the outcome as soon as possible.

If you would like to be updated and be able to comment on proposed determinations etc then please contact JAGDAG_England@environment-agency.gov.uk

¹ From 1 April 2013, Natural Resources Wales (Wales' single body) took over the functions carried out by the Environment Agency Wales, the Countryside Council for Wales and Forestry Commission Wales.

² Joint Agencies Groundwater Directive Advisory Group – more information is available at <http://www.wfduk.org/stakeholders/welcome-joint-agencies-groundwater-directive-advisory-group-jagdag>

Setting standards for hazardous substances

We use environmental standards in the design of new activities to prevent hazardous substances from entering groundwater, and to understand the degree of harm where they have already entered groundwater.

The current standards are now available on the UK Technical Advisory Group's webpage, along with the consultation response document. Here is the link:

<http://www.wfduk.org/stakeholders/stakeholder-review-2012-response-submissions>

The consultation process highlighted a lack of clarity about how the current standards have been set and are being used and so we will use this project to engage on how future standards are set. This part of the project is due to be completed in September 2014, and we will engage throughout the process with stakeholders.

Since the last update, we have run the concepts produced, past UKTAG's Groundwater Task Team (GTT) and the members have approved them with some edits. We are now working with our consultants to put these concepts into an options paper to complete phase 1 of this project. Soon after, we will consult internally on these options, prior to then turning to a wider external audience for comment. We will also start the 'call for evidence' for this project at that time.

Also since the last update, we have set up a website summarising the project. Here is the link: <http://www.wfduk.org/stakeholders/mrv-work-area>

If you would like to be updated, perhaps submit data and be able to comment on proposed standards please contact MRVs_England@environment-agency.gov.uk