

Contaminated Land Strategy for Wiltshire

Legal requirement to have a Contaminated Land Strategy

Under the terms of the Environment Act 1995, Local Councils are required to prepare a statement detailing how they will implement their responsibilities to inspect the council's area, identify contaminated land and secure its clean up (remediation). The legislation is quite complex and the type of land affected is carefully defined. This legislation covers past pollution of land; ongoing or recent pollution is normally covered by other legislation.

Wiltshire's historic legacy

Past generations were not as conscious of causing environmental damage as we are today. It is obviously undesirable to have a situation for example, where wildlife is being harmed or chemicals are entering a drinking water supply. The Contaminated Land Strategy looks to remedying some of this damage and to prevent further damage. These sites may include gasworks, old landfill sites and industrial premises.

What is in the strategy?

The strategy is a technical document based on the law. It includes;

- A brief description of Wiltshire's historic Industrial and commercial history.
- An overview of the legislation
- A review of technical issues such as the hydrology (water environment), and geology (land/soil composition) of Wiltshire. Both these affect how pollutants migrate through the environment.
- Describes work done to date by the old district councils'
- It states how Public Protections Services proposes to continue this work, how they will survey the county for further sites that require attention, prioritise new sites for further investigation to determine whether they are contaminated and causing or likely to cause harm.
- It describes how we will work with the Environment Agency, who are responsible for 'special sites' and other parties such as English nature and English Heritage.
- It provides information on how we propose to implement the legislation.
- It provides for the keeping of a Public Register of Contaminated Land.

What is in the public register?

The public register is not a list of all the land that may or may not be contaminated. It is a record of action taken by a local council under the Environment Act 1995. It is available for inspection by the public during office hours free of charge. There may be a charge for making copies of entries. We currently have 4 documents, originally published by the district councils. Each is held at the original district council offices, however we are developing an online version for ease of access and some entries have been listed on the site, just enter contaminated land into the Wiltshire Council website search facility.

How do I find out more about my property?

There are only a handful of entries on the public register. We do provide a chargeable service for house purchases/ vendors, where we will review our database and provide a report detailing any contaminated or potentially contaminated sites in close proximity to your property. We will also advise you of any remediation carried and what records we hold. Some site have very detailed reports supporting any clean up that was carried out and we make these available if people wish to read them.

Planning is the preferred mechanism for dealing with contaminated land.

The contaminated land strategy is only one way of dealing with land. The preferred and more sustainable route is through the planning system, when brown field sites are brought back into use. There are numerous sites across the county that used to have an industrial use that fell into disuse and have now been redeveloped for housing, offices, small business units etc. As part of the planning process we will require a site investigation to be carried out and if necessary remediation. We hold these reports for reference and access by members of the public.

If you would like to contribute your comments on the Contaminated Land Strategy in either generally or specific terms or would like more information on contaminated land, Please contact the Specialist Environmental Protection Team at

- Public Protection Services, Wiltshire Council, PO Box 2126 Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 2DJ or
- Email publicprotectionsouth@wiltshire.gov.uk or
- visit our web page at Wiltshire.gov.uk (just enter contaminated land into the search option).

Our consultation is open until the 18th June 2010.

G Tomsett,

Specialist Environmental Protection Team Manager.