

The Policy Framework Soil Strategy for England

The Institute of Professional Soil Scientists
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Background

Follows on from:

- First Soil Action Plan for England (2004-06)
- Informal and formal consultation on proposals
- Existing evidence base on soils

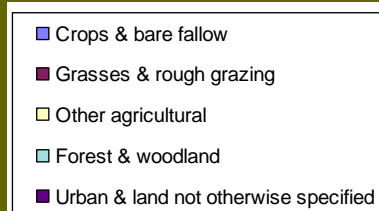
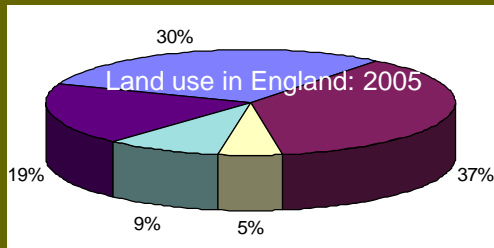
Key issues on agenda:

- Ecosystem services approach – range of soil functions
- Climate Change – adaptation and mitigation
- Proposed Soil Framework Directive



Focus

- Agricultural land considering the proportion of total land area taken up by agriculture
- Soil in our urban environment which is under considerable pressure
- Uncultivated land which holds a large store of carbon



Aims of Strategy

- To provide a framework for action by government bodies and stakeholders to ensure the sustainable management of England's soils
- To set priorities and next steps
- To provide flexibility to allow us to respond to emerging priorities



Vision

Our vision is that England's soils will be protected and enhanced to optimise the varied functions (or ecosystem services) that they perform for society in keeping with the principles of sustainable development and in the context of climate change



Objectives

Key objectives have been set in order to achieve our vision. These objectives are yet to be finalised following analysis of consultation responses: In broad terms they will relate to:

1. Ensure we have a good understanding of the potential for and means of contributing to climate change mitigation as well as the steps that are needed to adapt to climate change.
2. Reduce the loss of soil carbon, or halt this if possible, through protecting peat soils as well as enhancing levels where appropriate.



Objectives

3. Ensure that farmers manage their land sustainably addressing key threats to soil, the need to ensure resilience, and impacts on other environmental media such as water and air.
4. Reduce the adverse impact of construction on soil functions including sustaining food and fibre and biodiversity as well as storing and filtering water.



Objectives

5. Understand and keep to an acceptable level the risks of diffuse soil pollution to human health and the environment, especially from waste to land.
6. Reduce the risk to human and health and the environment from contaminated land.



Priority areas

Five priority areas mapping onto the objectives:

- Climate change and soils – mitigation and adaptation
- Sustainable soil management in the agriculture and forestry sector
- Sustainable soil management in the built environment
- Prevention of diffuse soil pollution
- Contaminated land

Supplementary Areas:

- Evidence
- Stakeholder engagement
- Monitoring and evaluation



Soil biodiversity

Defra recognises the importance of soil biodiversity for healthy functioning of soils. Under the strategy we will address two key issues:

- seek to understand the impact of climate change on soil biota and ensure adaptation as appropriate.
- seek to understand and keep to acceptable levels the impact of diffuse pollution on soil biota.
- Expect Research Councils and other institutions to assist in funding work in this area that contributes to delivery of wider policy objectives.



Biological indicators of soil quality

- Seeking to develop better indicators of soil quality to enable soil monitoring
- One of the ways of doing so is to use biological indicators that relate to essential functions
- Work currently being undertaken by Defra in conjunction with partners to identify useful indicators



State of play

- Public consultation ended on 23rd June 2008
- Summary and analysis of responses
- Amending Strategy and considering responses
- Minister approval
- Published before end of 2008

