

Update Note on the ‘Waste Acceptance Criteria and Development of Soil Trigger Values for Soil Recovery Facilities’ Guidance

In 2017 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed a draft guidance document on [‘Waste Acceptance Criteria and Development of Soil Trigger Values for Soil Recovery Facilities’](#).

EPA licences granted for soil recovery facilities generally include a condition requiring the licensee to propose maximum concentrations and/or trigger levels for relevant contaminants in soil and stone from greenfield and/or non-greenfield sources. The draft guidance document was produced to assist licensees to develop waste acceptance criteria that may be acceptable to the EPA. It was published on the EPA’s website in December 2017 and was open to public consultation until 16th March 2018.

Unlike landfills, soil recovery facilities are not required to have an engineered basal liner, nor are they required to install an engineered cap following completion of restoration or land raising. As such there are no engineering controls to protect groundwater from contamination that may be present in soil used as backfill at these facilities. Because of this, it is important that precautions are taken by operators of these facilities, both prior to accepting soil from individual source sites and while soil is being received, to ensure that only uncontaminated soil and stone is accepted.

The public consultation on the draft guidance document led to feedback from multiple stakeholders (from both public and private sector). Many of the submissions raised concern that the proposed single set of trigger levels for metals was not practical, given the high degree of variation in the naturally occurring metals content of Irish soils.

To consider this issue further the EPA is working with Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) to carry out a study on the geochemical characterisation of soils in the locality of two licenced soil recovery facilities. The objective of this work is to develop an approach for establishing ‘*Geochemically Appropriate Levels*’ for greenfield/non-greenfield soil and stone that may be accepted into soil recovery facilities.

The programme of works for the study has commenced and is scheduled to be completed in late June 2019. Following completion of this study, the EPA intends to refine the guidance and publish the finalised version early in quarter three 2019.

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