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Directorate B  
Environment Directorate-General  
European Commission  
B-1049 Brussels

28 August 2009



*for the advancement  
of soil science*

Dear Sir,

The very slow progress toward a European Soil Framework Directive was recently discussed by the governing councils of both the British Society of Soil Science and its sister organisation the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists. The BSSS is probably well known to you as owners of two high profile peer-reviewed soil journals, the European Journal of Soil Science and Soil Use and Management. IPSS is a smaller organisation that represents the interests of professional scientists consulting on soil matters and offers a route to chartered status as a licensed body for the UK Science Council.

As serving Presidents, we are writing to you on the instructions of our respective Councils. We wish to express our support for the European Commission in your endeavours to establish a Soil Framework Directive for Europe. You will be aware that both our organisations were signatories to a previous letter to the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs encouraging him to look favourably on the Directive.

It is our view that the Directive is needed and will have a number of beneficial impacts. We do not need to rehearse the range of ecosystem services that soil provides but it is our view that these are currently given insufficient weight in land use planning policy. As a result soil resources are insufficiently valued and continue to be destroyed by development, be it housing, industrial/retail development or infrastructure such as road schemes. Only regulatory protection will alter this situation and invest soil resources with the equality to water and air they so urgently need.

We are also concerned over the dwindling numbers of trained and experienced soil scientists that will be available to implement the Directive when it does eventually pass into legislation. IPSS conducted a survey of its members in 2007. Nearly a half were over the age of 55 while only 5% of respondents were under 35. It is no longer possible to study soil science at undergraduate level in the UK. Our subject has been relegated to a minor constituent of individual modules within environmental science, agriculture or geography courses. A regulatory framework will lead to much greater interest in the subject, a renaissance of courses at tertiary education level and a proper career structure for scientists entering our profession.





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Our wish is to assist in any way possible and we are happy for this letter to be used publicly if that is of any help. In the meantime, it would be valuable to us to have an update from you on negotiations at European level relating to the Directive.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Keith Goulding**  
*President, British Society of Soil Science*



**Mr Rob Askew**  
*President, Institute of Professional Soil Scientists*

**Cc Dr Kathryn Allton**  
*Joint Administrative and Policy Officer, BSSS/IPSS*

