

Subject: Press release - Working with soil

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IPSS Upc

For immediate release

Defra Deputy Chief Scientific Advisor, Dr Miles Parker, today helped launch *Working with Soil*. Devised by the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists (IPSS), this new professional competency scheme identifies minimum qualifications, skills and knowledge for practising soils scientists carrying out a range of key tasks. IPSS aims to establish the scheme as the *de facto* standard for identifying competent contractors in the field of soil science. Miles stated that 'Defra welcomes initiatives, such as the IPSS Working with Soils Competency Statements, that aim to improve the quality of professional soils advice'.

"Soil is the very foundation of life; destroy it and we won't survive. Yet the numbers of young scientists choosing to study soil science is dwindling to the extent that it can no longer be studied at degree level in the UK. We must make it a more attractive career option" said IPSS Chair, Dr Bruce Lascelles. "Our *Working with Soil* professional competency scheme is designed to place value in achieving the qualifications and skills required to advise professionally on the management of soil for a variety of outcomes. As the scheme develops and becomes embedded in research and consultancy practice it will, we hope, help define a number of career paths in professional soil science."

"We expect our houses and offices to be designed by qualified architects and engineers. We go to qualified lawyers for legal advice. The same principles of professionalism should apply to those from whom we seek advice on the management of soil as a complex natural resource. IPSS calls on Government and industry to adopt *Working with Soil* and to only commission work on the use and management of soil from appropriately qualified and experienced soil scientists."

The Patron of the British Society of Soil Science, Lord John De Ramsey, stated that there was no better time to launch "working with soil" and highlight the importance of professional soil science to help us meet the challenges of future generations.

What is launched today is the first phase of IPSS's *Working with Soil* initiative. The Institute plans to expand the scheme and to develop a tailored training programme for those wishing to achieve the various standards. Says Dr Lascelles, "This is a new venture for us and we are very keen to hear back from users of the scheme on how *Working with Soil* can be developed to better fit their needs. We are pretty sure the scheme will evolve over time but we are also absolutely certain that it is needed. We need urgently to attract more young scientists into a career in soil science. It must be a more rewarding and worthwhile choice for our graduates and postgraduates and we need to identify clear career paths for those wishing to become professional soil scientists. Success in achieving a sustainable professional community and greater societal and industry recognition of the value of soil science will help deliver a well managed and sustainable soil resource to support current and future generations. That, ultimately, is what *Working with Soil* is all about."

Notes for editors

About the British Society of Soil Scientists

The British Society of Soil Science is a membership organisation and a charity whose mission is "to advance the study of soil and to promote a better understanding of soil, nationally and internationally". Together with its professional body the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists (IPSS), the Society will achieve this through:

- Promoting the understanding, relevance and use of soil science and the dissemination of research findings;
- Enhancing soil education and developing soil scientists;
- Supporting standards of practice

Please also see BSSS Strategic Plan 2010-2015 (<http://www.soils.org.uk/>) and Charity No. 1134456

(<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/SHOWCHARITY/RegisterOfCharities/CharityFramework.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1134456&SubsidiaryNumber=0>)

Documents can be downloaded at www.soilscientist.org/workingwithsoil

Supporting Organisations

50 organisations have signed up to support the "Working with Soils" Please see supporting organisations sheet at www.soilscientist.org.uk/workingwithsoil. Defra said 'Defra welcomes initiatives, such as the IPSS Working with Soils Competency Statements, that aim to improve the quality of professional soils advice'.



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