



REPORT OF THE NICOLE WORKSHOP

Management of Contaminated Land towards a Sustainable Future: Opportunities, Challenges and Barriers for the Sustainable Management of Contaminated Land in Europe

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NICOLE (*Network for Contaminated Land in Europe*) was set up in 1995 as a result of the CEFIC “SUSTECH” programme which promotes co-operation between industry and academia on the development of sustainable technologies. NICOLE is the principal forum that European business uses to develop and influence the state of the art in contaminated land management in Europe. NICOLE was created to bring together problem holders and researchers throughout Europe who are interested in all aspects of contaminated land. It is open to public and private sector organisations. NICOLE was initiated as a Concerted Action within the European Commission’s Environment and Climate RTD Programme in 1996. It has been self-funding since February 1999.

NICOLE’s overall objectives are to:

- Provide a European forum for the dissemination and exchange of knowledge and ideas about contaminated land arising from industrial and commercial activities;
- Identify research needs and promote collaborative research that will enable European industry to identify, assess and manage contaminated sites more efficiently and cost-effectively; and
- Collaborate with other international networks inside and outside Europe and encompass the views of a wide a range of interest groups and stakeholders (for example, land developers, local/regional authorities and the insurance/financial investment community).

NICOLE currently has 156 members. Membership fees are used to support and further the aims of the network, including: technical exchanges, network conferences, special interest meetings, brokerage of research and research contacts and information dissemination via a web site, newsletter and journal publications. NICOLE includes an Industry Subgroup (ISG) – with 29 members; a Service Providers Subgroup (SPG) with 36 members; 77 individual members from the academic sector/research community; and 14 members from other organisations, including research planners, non-profit making organisations, other networks, funding organisations. Some members are involved in both the ISG and the SPG. For further general information, further meeting reports, network information and links to contaminated land related web sites, please visit NICOLE's web site: www.nicole.org.

Membership fees are currently 3,500 EURO per year for companies (1,750 EURO for smes), and 150 EURO per year for academic institutions. For membership requests please contact:

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Executive Summary

Management of contaminated land is an important issue throughout Europe, and one that involves many stakeholders: governments, regulatory bodies, the community, industry and the wide range of researchers and service providers who support the process. Over the last decade good progress has been made in developing and enhancing contaminated land management tools for site investigation, risk assessment, modelling and remedial techniques. The challenge for the future is to ensure that management of contaminated land, like that for any of the other complex issues which our societies face, sits within a framework of sustainability. NICOLE, the Network for Industrially Contaminated Land in Europe, held an interactive workshop in Barcelona in Spring 2003, to explore the opportunities, challenges and barriers posed by sustainable land management.

The workshop included a broad range of papers on how sustainable development and the remediation of contaminated land are linked, including some detailed case studies. The papers set a platform for a debate within NICOLE to set priorities for its activities over the next few years.

The meeting began with an overview of sustainable development, followed by a series of perspectives on what that meant in terms of “sustainable land management” from industry, regulators and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). The meeting then considered what the barriers, challenges, opportunities related to sustainable land management might be, in particular regarding waste issues and brownfields. The first day of the meeting concluded with discussions to identify the most pressing issues affecting the implementation of sustainable development principles to contaminated land management across Europe. The second (half) day used syndicate groups to further explore these issues, prioritise them and provide suggestions for activities that NICOLE could engage in to facilitate sustainable land management across Europe.

Discussion

The fundamental point is, of course, that land is a limited resource.

The meanings ascribed to terms such as “sustainable” or “sustainable development” vary widely. There is clearly not (yet) a common language for discussing contaminated land management in the context of sustainable development. It would be both a major challenge, and also a major achievement, for NICOLE to catalyse the development of a common framework, widely used across Europe in the same way that risk based decision making has become used.

Distinguishing land that is still being actively used for processes from land that has moved to a post-industrial phase may be useful because the funding, stakeholders, beneficiaries will all to some extent be different. Discriminating between the phases also eliminates confusion about who will/should provide funding for managing the land, what sustainable management means and who should be the problems holders and problem solvers.

Without clear definitions are pinned everybody can claim that they are acting sustainably when sometimes perhaps they are not. There were some differences in point of view between NGOs and businesses, with NGO delegates tending to equate sustainable development less strongly with sustainable business management.

The most important single outcome was the acceptance that NICOLE needs both to take a broader view in its discussions and to engage with a wider audience. In particular a strong synergy was seen between NICOLE’s interests and spatial planning. This broader view, in conjunction with some degree of clarity on the phases of land under consideration, should move the agenda forward for sustainable land management both for land which is still in commercial use or is to be returned to

commercial use, and post-industrial land such as that in the former mining region of Nord pas de Calais.

NICOLE's next steps are to establish the concrete needs of stakeholders for sustainable contaminated land management, perhaps using case studies to facilitate this process.

The full report provides summaries of the papers given, along with a discussion based on points raised during the meeting, and comments from a number of delegates after the meeting.

Papers Presented

- Overview on Sustainable Development, Phillip Roberts And Martin Bell, ICI, UK.
- Industry Views on Sustainable Land Management, Cees Buijs, Public Works Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- Management , Victor Dries, OVAM, Belgium
- NGO View on Sustainable Land Management, Jirina Jacksonova, CEC Projects Co-ordinator, Institute For Transportation and Development Policy, Czech Republic
- Waste Issues, Steve Wallace, Secondsite Property, UK
- CABERNET Network – Tackling Urban Brownfields and Economic Regeneration Issues, Kate Millar, CABERNET Project Manager, University of Nottingham, UK
- Solutions for the Sustainable Management of Contaminated Land – a Community / NGO Perspective, Malcolm Barton, Ibis Consulting, UK
- Regentif-Network for Regenerating Old Industrial Facilities, José María Lazaro, Labein, Spain
- Is Risk Based Land Management Sustainable? Joop Vegter, CLARINET
- Management of Contaminated Land – Towards a Sustainable Future: The Case of the Region North-Pas De Calais (France) Cécile Baudelet-Leclaire, Nord-Pas De Calais Regional Council