

Brownfield & Regeneration Network

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Brownfield Land Scotland 2026

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

The 19th annual Brownfield Land Scotland conference brought together local councils, regulatory bodies, environmental consultants, and contractors, for insightful discussions on assessing, remediating and developing brownfield and contaminated land in Scotland.

These takeaways, compiled by Jack Morgan, Environment Analyst content team, provide a comprehensive summary of every session at the conference. Whether you want to revisit a discussion, explore sessions you missed, or share insights with colleagues, this document captures the essential themes and standout ideas.

We hope you find this a valuable resource, and as always, we welcome your thoughts and feedback.

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Analyst**



Navigating the new WAT-G-071 guidance for assessing risks to ground & surface water

Isla Smail, Principal Hydrogeologist, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

The first presentation highlighted the key implications of the updated WAT-G-071 guidance for site characterisation and groundwater risk assessment. Smail outlined the guidance, including dealing with hazardous and non-hazardous substances, updated screening criteria, and reporting requirements.

- Although the new document appears different to the previous version, only small tweaks have been made, to achieve greater consistency between sectors.
- A robust Conceptual Site Model (CSM) is critical to effective risk management and relies on adequate site characterisation.
- Greater transparency regarding risk management is required, particularly in scenarios where it is not feasible to address all groundwater contamination.
- No site is perfect and there will always be uncertainty. It is vital to clearly explain the situation and clarify what assumptions have been made.



WAT-G-071: An industry perspective of implementing the guidance

Craig Laughlan, Principal Geo-Environmental Engineer, Fairhurst

The presentation discussed the methodology and approach that Fairhurst has undertaken when assessing the risk to the Water Environment in accordance with WAT-G-071.

Laughlan focused on the assessments undertaken as part of the regeneration of a large brownfield site within the central belt of Scotland.

- While there have been changes to the guidance, key elements such as the appropriate establishment of a Conceptual Site Model (CSM) and performing sufficient scoping remain valid.
- To meet the requirements of the new guidance going forward there will be a greater need for phased investigations.
- Gathering more data allows for more informed decisions on risk which can subsequently improve cost and programming for clients.

Achieving the Sustainable Management of Soils

Chair: Phil Studds, *Regional Director of Environment, Ramboll*

Dr Roy Neilson, *Group Leader Plant Soil Interactions, Ecological Sciences, The James Hutton Institute*

Sarah Hamill, *Contaminated Land Officer, West Dunbartonshire Council*

Peter Lang, *Specialist, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)*

Caroline Thornton, *Principal Policy Officer, Contaminated Land, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)*

Effective soil management ensures good soil health, aiding climate resilience, carbon sequestration and ecosystems, and provides cost-effective solutions to site restoration and resource management.

This panel discussed the value of soil as a resource and how improving its management is crucial to sustainable brownfield remediation and development.

- The industry is moving away from the traditional 'dig and dump' model, towards 'dig and decide'. However, investigating soil before excavation allows for better planning and more options for soil reuse.
- Soil is a non-renewable resource that currently accounts for around 25% of landfill material in some areas, which is unsustainable.
- Soil assessments frequently focus on geotechnical and chemical attributes while neglecting the biological and physical aspects that combine to determine holistic soil health.
- Soil has largely fallen through the cracks of UK policy. Comprehensive legislation to protect it as a whole system is lacking. It needs to be viewed as a valuable resource rather than just a risk to be managed.

Achieving a Place-Based Approach to Site Restoration and Development to Accomplish Climate and Social Goals

Chair: Heather Claridge, Group Manager - Strategic Spatial Planning, Glasgow City Region

Kevin Murphy, Director of Planning, Homes for Scotland

Tim Wilson, Director, OVERGROWN and Chair, Landscape Institute Scotland

Pauline Grandison, Head of Operations Scotland, The Coalfields Regeneration Trust

Site restoration is not just about 'cleaning-up' a contaminated site. Achieving purpose-driven development with a holistic approach increases the value of a site as an asset for all involved. It can help develop smaller or more challenging sites and influence longer-term changes.

This panel discussion explored solutions for unlocking sites and maximising land value.

- Taking a place-based approach, that includes communities and considers the unique characteristics of a site, produces the best outcomes.
- Coordinating site-wide strategies with remediation, rather than beginning design after remediation is complete, avoids constraints and leads to better results.
- 'Patient capital' is essential, as brownfield projects take time; rushing decisions can compromise outcomes, while meaningful early engagement builds necessary trust.
- 'Meanwhile' uses of sites can be effective in maintaining value and activity while longer-term development work is being carried out.
- Deallocation some sites could help landowners realize that options other than housing designations might be more appropriate and viable.

Interested in being a part of Brownfield Land Scotland 2027?

We will be announcing the venue and date for the 2027 conference very soon! Get ahead and take a look at how you can get involved



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Position your business in front of brownfield industry leaders. Generate leads and build your brand.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Attend

Take part in the event for professionals dedicated to transforming and unlocking brownfield and contaminated sites in Scotland.

WHY ATTEND?



Speak

We are always looking for interesting and engaging speakers to add to our diverse conference and events programme.

SPEAKER ENQUIRIES



Exploring New & Emerging Contaminants of Interest - Tyre-Derived Contaminants as Emerging Pollutants

Dr Ken Scally, Technical and Quality Director, Normec DETS and Normec Latis Scientific Laboratories

6PPD-quinone (6PPD-q), an oxidation product of the tyre antiozonant 6PPD, has emerged as a high-priority environmental contaminant, due to its acute toxicity to aquatic species at very low concentrations.

Scally said growing evidence of persistence and toxicity underscores the need for improved monitoring, regulatory attention, and innovation in tyre formulation and urban runoff mitigation.

- 6PPD-quinone has emerged as an environmental contaminant of concern due to its acute toxicity to some aquatic species at low concentrations.
- A study successfully narrowed down thousands of chemicals present in urban runoff to identify 6PPD-quinone as the specific cause of urban runoff mortality syndrome in fish.
- Growing evidence of persistence and toxicity underscores the need for improved monitoring, alongside innovation, in tyre formulation and urban runoff mitigation.
- Although the US EPA set limits for this contaminant in 2024, the bioaccumulative effect on humans remains unknown despite evidence of general population exposure.



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Minding the Gap for Biodiversity – Combining Novel and Traditional Methods to Assess Brownfield Biodiversity

Dr Jennifer Dodd, Associate Professor, Centre for Conservation and Restoration Science, School of Applied Sciences, Edinburgh Napier University

Minding the Gap for Biodiversity is a partnership project between Edinburgh Napier University, Balfour Beatty and National Highways.

Dodd said the project has used a holistic approach to measuring biodiversity across a suite of brownfield sites within the Historical Railway Estate.

- The project combined traditional methods such as vegetation surveys with emerging eDNA technology to take a holistic approach to measuring biodiversity.
- Study results challenged assumptions by finding that in some contexts brownfield sites can support more species diversity than ancient woodland.
- Brownfield sites provide essential connectivity and corridors within urban landscapes, while regular disturbance from maintenance activities can often actively support biodiversity.
- Current habitat rankings may need reviewing. The study questions whether open mosaic and ancient woodland should automatically be valued three times higher than brownfield land.

Maximising Nature & Biodiversity Net Gain in Site Remediation and Restoration

Chair: Karen Sutherland, *Director of Operations, Green Action Trust*

Charlotte Grant, *Ecology Business Partner, Keepmoat*

Dr Jennifer Dodd, *Associate Professor, Centre for Conservation and Restoration Science, School of Applied Sciences, Edinburgh Napier University*

Vikki Patton, *Head of Department, Nature Positive Services, Ramboll*

This session outlined how the impact and opportunities of biodiversity on brownfield land development can be managed, and what is next for BNG in Scotland.

- While BNG is not mandatory in Scotland, many organisations are voluntarily adopting nature metrics, and the National Planning Framework 4 is providing a strong policy framework to push biodiversity forward.
- There is currently a significant green skills gap in the sector, particularly regarding the availability of specialists with specific taxonomic identification skills.
- Maximising nature requires appropriate governance and getting the right people, including local authorities, around the table as early as possible to ensure connectivity and wider landscape context are considered.
- Digital tools and AI are becoming critical for streamlining processes, such as modelling impacts of development on habitats, and will be key for scaling efforts.

UK Brownfield Regeneration Summit

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UK Brownfield Regeneration Summit 2026

18 June 2026 | The Lowry Hotel, Manchester

Explore the latest policy direction, remediation techniques, and practical strategies that accelerate site delivery while protecting environmental and community outcomes.

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