



The letter, sent to all English local authorities by Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Lord de Mauley, states that all funding for the scheme will cease from 1 April 2017; a move which has been sharply criticised by a number of experts.

Lord de Mauley's letter held up the publication of revised Part 2A statutory guidance in April 2012 as justification for the announcement: "This has resulted in a more stringent risk-based approach to identifying and remediating contaminated land. Given these changes, Defra will no longer be supporting the costs of investigating and remediating contaminated land under Part 2A through the Contaminated Land Capital Grants Scheme".

The letter continued: "Despite continuing economic pressures, from 1 April 2014 for a 3-year period, it is anticipated up to £0.5m could still be made accessible annually (subject to capital funding being available within Defra) for absolute emergency cases and to meet the requirements of on-going remediation projects where these are considered to be the highest priority. Funding will cease from 1 April 2017".

Contaminated land expert Andrew Wiseman OBE, a member of the CIWEM Contaminated Land Network, said the letter will cause "a real problem" for local authorities, commenting:

"Local authorities are still under a duty to inspect their area under the legislation and if the money is not available from grant funding, contaminated land officers will end up having to make a case to senior management for funding. This means going into battle against other frontline services.

“If they find out about contamination at a site, for example because of a voluntary investigation by a site owner, they will have to find the resources to investigate it further. Finding out who has liability to pay becomes even more important with no pot of government money to call upon. This announcement also means LAs need to think about their hardship policies and whether they need to be revised in light of this announcement.”

CIWEM President Mike Summersgill, Specialist in Land Condition (SiLC) and ground engineer, said:

“Combined with the recently announced 15% reduction in Environment Agency staff numbers over the next year, this gives further concern over the continuation of technical capability within local and regional government to deal with 'legacy' issues that continue to arise within their areas. We have already seen the combination of several EHO posts across Councils, and ground investigations delayed whilst funding was sourced locally after Capital Grants were cut back drastically; this announcement can only exacerbate such issues, delay regeneration, allow pollution to remain problematic, and place significant burdens on local taxpayers.”