



Cross-Institute Programme for Sustainable Soil Function SoilCIP

2007 Christmas and New Year Newsletter



SoilCIP ISPG

I am delighted to say that the SoilCIP Institute Strategic Programme Grant (ISPG) is complete and has been sent to Swindon Office. Thanks to all who contributed to it. It will be assessed in February and, if all is well, run from 1st April 2008. The focus for us must now be the delivery of what we have promised ready for an assessment in 2011.

DTG PhD proposals

The SoilCIP Management Board met on 7th December and considered the proposals for next year's BBSRC Quota studentship. We had some good projects – thank you. The proposers have been notified of any changes needed and successful proposals will be advertised in the New Year. The selection, as always, will be of the best student to apply, so make use of any contacts to identify good students. We also have some bids in for PhD studentships funded by the Lawes Agricultural Trust, one at Reading and one at Nottingham. NWRRes CIPers will be able to bid for these from April 2009.

Cross-Institute visits and links

I attended the launch of the Climate Change Task Force report 'Part of the Solution: Climate Change, Agriculture and Land Management' at Church House in London on 10th December. The report was launched by the Minister for Climate Change, Biodiversity and Waste, Joan Ruddock MP. Chris Pollock presented a short paper on opportunities and challenges for agriculture, focusing on the need for integrated solutions. He warned that perfect answers to all the questions being asked of sustainable agriculture – adapting to and mitigating against Climate Change, preventing air and water pollution, increasing biodiversity, maintaining food supply, supplying bioenergy – are unlikely. He illustrated his points with some data from SoilCIP projects.

I attended the launch of the Environment Agency's Science Review, 'Turning science into environmental improvements', at the Royal Geographical Society on 13th December. There are lots of opportunities for the SoilCIP to deliver research that informs EA policy, especially for the Water Framework Directive and Climate Change.



Grant proposals

The recent proposal to BBSRC by Steve McGrath and Penny Hirsch for work on Park Grass was rejected. It was rated well but, because so many proposals were received in that round, fell into the 'grey zone'. Steve and Penny are considering how to take this forward. Roland and other's proposal on livestock-derived carbon was also rejected, so a disappointing round.

On the other hand, Steve McGrath's BBSRC-DFID proposal on arsenic was successful, a start up meeting has already been held in India, and Brian Kerry has been awarded a BBSRC-DFID grant on nematode control that will fall into the expanded SoilCIP remit.

Two outline LoLas (Longer and Larger grant proposals; nothing to do with the song by The Kinks!) have been submitted – one by Murray Lark and another by John Crawford at Abertay that will involve Andy Whitmore; others are being planned. Richard Whalley, Andy Whitmore, Phil Haygarth, Steve McGrath Kenichi Soga (Cambridge), David Manning (Newcastle) and others are working on cross-Council bids on C capture, engineering and wastes, engineered soil-plant systems, and mechanical control of soils.

I aim to be on leave from 22nd December until 2nd January, inclusive.

With Season's Greetings – have a good holiday!

Keith Goulding, 21st December 2007



The Russell Building, Rothamsted.