

**Soil** becomes controlled waste if the holder of it discards it, or intends to or is required to discard it. Soil may be discarded because it presents a risk to the environment or current or new users of the land as a result of contamination, or because it is surplus to requirements. It is essential that the appropriate route for dealing with the waste soil is selected. This information leaflet details the available routes and indicates factors to be considered when assessing risks to the environment, including humans.



DISPOSAL OF  
**Waste soils**

## Routes for dealing with waste soils

Where waste soil presents a risk to the environment and/or users of the land as a result of contamination, then it should be either treated to address the risk, or taken to an appropriately licensed waste management facility. A waste management licence will be required where waste soils are treated on site (refer to the SEPA leaflet "Licensing the Remediation of Contaminated Land"). Before taking waste soil to a licensed waste management facility, verification should be obtained from the facility operator that their licence permits that particular waste soil to be accepted. If acceptance of the waste soil is not permitted, then the person who wishes to discard the soil should seek an alternative licensed waste management facility or the facility operator may choose to contact SEPA for a modification to their licence.

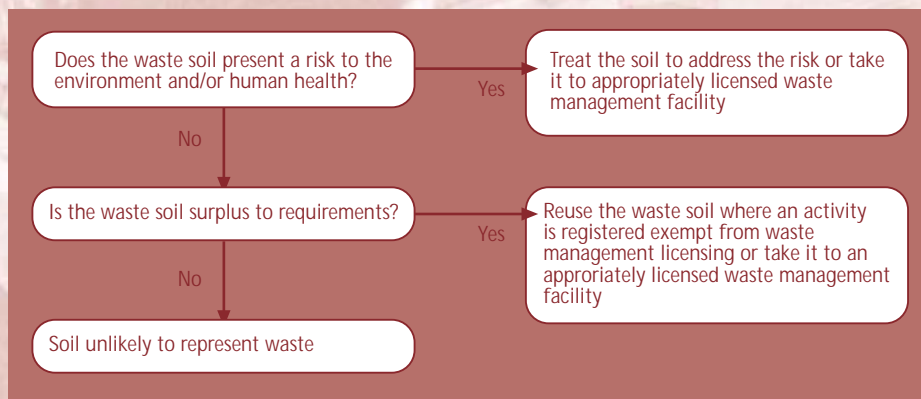
In circumstances where the soil is surplus to requirements, and it does not present a risk to the environment and/or users of the land, the soil may be reused for an activity which is registered as exempt from waste management licensing. Waste soil reused under exemption must meet the requirements of Schedule 4 of the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994 as amended, in that it should be:

"disposed of without endangering human health and without using processes or methods which could harm the environment and in particular without:

- ◆ risk to water, air, soil, plants or animals; or
- ◆ causing nuisance through noise or odours; or
- ◆ adversely affecting the countryside or places of special interest"

It should be noted that waste soil removed as part of a risk management strategy carried out in connection with a planning condition or in relation to Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is unlikely to be suitable for reuse under exemption.

An overview of the decision making process is present in the following flowchart.



## Assessing risks associated with waste soils

It is not possible to make general statements about what does and what does not present a risk. Risks are not solely related to contamination and due attention should be given to ensuring that reuse under exemption does not cause water logging, soil compaction or deprive existing vegetation of conditions for growth. When considering contaminated soil, it can be generally assumed that the ambient background concentrations of chemicals in soil present a negligible risk. Soils associated with contaminative uses are likely to present a risk. The risk associated with any chemical concentration elevated above background concentrations should always be assessed to ensure that the objectives of Schedule 4 are met. Any risk assessment criteria used should be appropriate to the circumstances under consideration: ICRC values are unlikely to be appropriate, particularly when considering risks to water. Typical indicators of a potential risk to key receptors are detailed below:

### Water

- ◆ Close proximity to surface water and groundwater
- ◆ Potential for run-off from land surface
- ◆ Potential for leachate generation and movement of leachate through unsaturated zone
- ◆ Leachate concentrations exceeding drinking water standards or environmental quality standards

### Humans

- ◆ Close proximity to human populations
- ◆ Potential for exposure to soil (direct or windblown) and consumption of contaminated foodstuffs
- ◆ Human intake exceeding the tolerable daily intake

### Ecosystems

- ◆ Proximity to ecosystems
- ◆ Exposure pathways and transfer to higher organisms in ecosystem
- ◆ Ecosystem intake exceeding the no observed effect concentration

For further information on assessing the risks posed by waste soils, reference should be made methods established for assessing risks associated with contaminated land (see [www.sepa.org.uk/contaminated-land](http://www.sepa.org.uk/contaminated-land)). Relevant information is also contained in the code of practice 'Prevention of Environmental Pollution From Agricultural Activity', published by the Scottish Executive and available from SEPA.

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