

Sustainable urban regeneration is a team effort, requiring specialists who can bring both their expertise and their respect for other professionals to the table.

How do you find such specialists?

Planning Guidance (in the form of PPS 23) advises that “all investigations of land potentially affected by contamination should be carried out by or under the direction of a suitably qualified, competent person” who “would normally be expected to be a chartered member of an appropriate professional body (such as the Institution of Civil Engineers, Geological Society of London, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Institution of Environmental Management) and also have relevant experience of investigating contaminated sites.”

PPS 23 goes on to point out that the Specialist in Land Condition (SiLC) qualification provides an accredited status for those responsible for signing off Land Condition Records (see www.SiLC.org.uk) and that considerable effort and expense can be saved if an applicant and local planning authority agree to rely on the expertise of a single impartial expert of this kind with regard to technical matters.

The SiLC qualification was designed to support the use of the Land Condition Record, launched by the Urban Task Force in 1999.

However, it has been taking on a broader function of providing clients with a supra-professional qualification, or ‘badge of competence’, in land quality management projects: many private and public sector tender documents now specify project directors should be a qualified SiLC.

A candidate for SiLC registration must be able to demonstrate the following:

- A minimum of eight years relevant full-time work experience after graduation.
- Chartered or equivalent membership of a professional body.
- Knowledge and understanding of the use and completion of the Land Condition Record document.

There are over 100 SiLCs and the number is growing as fast as limited assessor resources allow. Applying for SiLC registration involves submitting an application form, completing an openbook exam and attending a peer-to-peer interview.

The process seeks to ascertain an applicant's academic and professional background, the relevance of their work experience and their appreciation of the various multi-disciplinary aspects of land assessment, remediation and inspection/sale processes. Applicants are considered by the SiLC Professional and Technical Panel (PTP). The PTP comprises representatives from supporting professional bodies and was established to develop and implement the registration scheme.

SiLCs have demonstrated a thorough knowledge of their field in relation to the LCR. They have shown a familiarity and understanding of all sections of the Land Condition Record (LCR) and can complete an LCR and describe its uses. They should also be able to interpret the information contained in the LCR and give advice to landowners and other relevant parties based on that interpretation. They have demonstrated an awareness of other professions and can communicate well with clients and other interested parties. They are expected to know and demonstrate a willingness to comply with all sections of the code of practice, as set out in Guidelines for SiLC Registration.

The PTP summarised the SiLC vision statement thus: "To develop and maintain a high-quality, unifying qualification for the assessment of the condition and remediation of brownfield sites, which fulfils the needs of public and private sectors and society as a whole."

Training days provide information about the SiLC assessment process and the completion and use of the LCR. They are open to all considering applying to become a SiLC. The next training day for potential applicants is being held on 30 November in Birmingham. There will also be a date in June next year in York.