

## JANUARY 2011 NEWSLETTER

This newsletter aims to provide an update on some of the Forum's activities to a wider readership beyond our membership. This form of communication is produced twice per year. The Amenity Forum (Amenity Landscaping Environmental Stewardship Forum) is an independent body to bring together professional organisations with an involvement in the amenity horticulture sector. For further information, please contact us. Our objectives and contact details are provided below. Also if you know of others who would like to receive our newsletter or indeed if you would like to become a member of this important Forum, please let Alan know. We certainly would welcome your support for the sector in challenging times.

*John Moverley*  
Independent Chairman

### OBJECTIVES OF THE AMENITY FORUM

The objectives of the Amenity Forum are:

- To act as the collective body representing the amenity industry, in relation to pesticide use
- To lead, coordinate and encourage achievement of "Best Practice" objectives in amenity pesticide use
- To coordinate and encourage the establishment of sustainable qualifications, training and CPD activity, specifically for the amenity sector
- To organise activities within the Amenity Forum membership and linked organisations, such that Amenity Forum objectives are developed in a coordinated way

For further information, please visit our website – [www.amenityforum.co.uk](http://www.amenityforum.co.uk)

### The Sustainable Use Directive (SUD)

We know that the sector has been frustrated by the delay in receiving further detail on implementation of SUD. Grant Stark gave an update to our very well attended Forum event in October and matters are developing very much as he described then. The Forum continues to provide technical support on implementation and we recently took part in a teleconference on the issue with CRD and related organisations. We understand that the case for retaining existing training requirements has been heard but, until the Statutory Instrument is published, nothing can be definite. The Forum continues to lobby hard for appropriate training and the implementation of CPD across the sector and as ever, will keep its membership fully informed on developments. The next phase with SUD will include the construction of a national action plan and the Forum will be closely involved in this process representing the views of amenity.

## Water

In all the discussion on SUD, the equally important issue of water and the application of the framework directive have not been ignored, nor can it be. Our Chairman is a member of the steering group for the Upper Avon catchment project and we have other members engaged with projects in their areas. The improvement of river water quality is a national priority and we need to ensure the understanding of those concerned with amenity is appropriate. The Government White Paper entitled '*Water for Life*' was released in December and the Forum is making contribution to ongoing discussion related to this.

## The Voluntary Initiative

As very much a parallel organisation, albeit differently constituted, the Forum values its link with the Voluntary Initiative and discussions have been held on ways of further strengthening this going forward. In December, I was invited to attend part of the Steering Group meeting for the VI and afterwards both our Secretary and I attended a reception addressed by Jim Paice to celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Subsequently I have met with the new VI Chairman, Richard Butler, with the objective of increasing his understanding of the work of the Forum but also to further consider ways of better integration in our activities. He has accepted my invitation to speak to the next full Forum meeting in March.

## BASIS

Our Chairman is a member of the BASIS Board and a meeting was held in December. There is commitment by BASIS to work with the Forum as part of our approach to increasing standards and qualifications in the sector. The Forum fully supports the Amenity Assured Standard. Indeed we work fully with all involved to ensure implementation of the CPD framework agreed by our training and skills committee.

## Training & Skills Group

Steve Hewitt, Chairman of this group, has made a major contribution to the work of the Forum. Unfortunately, due to a change in role within City and Guilds, Steve will no longer have as much involvement in land based work and consequently he has offered his resignation. City and Guilds are in discussion about who should represent the organisation in terms of the Forum for the future. Nominations for a new Chairman will be considered following the agreed process and, in the meantime, John Moverley will take on the reins.

There have been no further meetings of the Committee since the last full Forum. However, activity has continued especially in terms of SUD and CPD developments. The next meeting of the Group will be on February 7<sup>th</sup> in London.

## Quality & Standards

Over the late summer of 2011, the Forum conducted a widespread consultation amongst its membership. This was initiated following expressions of concern about potential reductions in standards in the offer of tenders for amenity work. It had been recognised that the economic pressures facing authorities and other organisations may be resulting in re-writing of tenders, increasing the emphasis on cost and consequently reducing the attention on standards and potentially health and safety. Whilst recognising the need to undertake amenity work efficiently and economically, it is important that those responsible for awarding contracts maintain current standards in terms of effectiveness of the operations and ensuring fully trained

and qualified staff are used to undertake the tasks. At the time, our Chairman wrote "The amenity sector is a very important one and covers a wide area including maintenance of our parks and pavements, our sports areas, our transport networks and much more. Members of the Forum have worked hard to drive up standards and through its good practice guides, sought to ensure essential operations required are undertaken both safely and effectively. We recognise that we need to continue this and reach an even wider audience of users. It is in this context that we express concern, having been made aware of some recent tenders which may be working against this aim"

A full summary of the outcomes is available on our website and received coverage in the press. The Amenity Forum has been encouraged to work with its members and the representative bodies in the amenity industry to try to encourage a balance between quality and price, not the reduction of quality against price and an agreed approach between customers and contractors in terms of maintain good practice. The Amenity Forum wants to work to ensure that contracts are based on Amenity Assurance standards and use wherever possible only Amenity Assured contractors.

The Forum is in consultation with the Department for Communities & Local Government and is pursuing a number of other ways to influence and ensure proper maintenance of standards. A full set of guidelines are available on our website and plans for further development in this area are in hand.

### **Communications Group & Conference 2012**

The Communications Group fulfils a vitally important role for the Forum. Further to discussion within the membership, the planned website developments have taken place and further improvements are planned. Please do visit our website and encourage others to do so. We always welcome contributions. Please forward these to our Secretary. A key objective for 2012 is to get even more people to visit the site and see it as a key resource. The date set for the next meeting of the Group is February 9<sup>th</sup> at York.

Following our highly successful event in October 2011, plans are already in hand for our conference in 2012. This is rapidly becoming a must attend event for those involved with amenity.

### **ACP Open Meeting**

Our Chairman attended this meeting along with other members of the Forum. The main items included a presentation and discussion on the response made to government by ACP regarding the impact of climate change. This encompassed issues of the impact of cold winters, of the migration of vectors for disease and the increasing need for research and development of pesticides to meet the new challenges. There was also a presentation and discussion on bees and pesticides given by the principal scientist at CRD. He gave an update and referred to the introduction of further trigger values restricting the use of certain pesticides. Further information can be found on the SETAC website

The substantive item was the presentation of a draft report from the pesticide adverse health working group. This group, initiated by ACP, is to be presented to government for consideration. As the report is at a draft stage, it is inappropriate to widely circulate the recommendations. In the discussions, we stressed that any such study should focus on the positives of pesticide use as well as any negatives. We were informed that the draft will now be finalised and, as copy becomes available, we will make response as appropriate.

## **Product Labelling & Hand Lances**

CRD new label requirements for use of pesticides on non porous hard surfaces were issued in November. The Forum made its views on the thinking behind these proposals and we believe that the requirements issued can be worked within by the sector.

The debate on the use of hand lances took place during the year. In case of any remaining doubt, the Forum position as agreed at our last full meeting was to support best practice in this area as set out in the issued Guidance Note and Addendum.

## **Communication Strategy**

The Forum has established clear objectives and target actions and elected its two main groups with clear reporting structures. A key priority is communication and we are seeking to do this in a number of ways including:

- Members to continue to receive regular updates of issues etc by email and also receive a quarterly Chairman's update
- In addition, we seek to produce a half yearly newsletter for wider circulation to our ever increasing circulation list.
- The Forum to continue to hold at least one significant event/ conference per year
- Seek to further develop links with related organisations especially the Voluntary Initiative and fully co-operate on common issues
- Issue of press releases and other links with the press
- To grow our impact through the appropriate use of social media and other communication developments

## **Items from the Secretary**

Alan Spedding writes:

Through regular emails and postings, members are kept informed of news and other items of interest. The dedicated email also acts as a medium for exchanging views and comments. We also now have an established group for amenity within LinkedIn and continue to increase our following on Twitter. For information on how to be part of these social network sites, please do contact me. Of course, to get full benefits and access, you need to be a member.

## **A Note from Danny Hayward, JSD Rail**

Amenity Forum members, we are all feeling the pinch with the cutbacks. Amongst our clients we notice that many of the old names in our industries are going; we are losing the experienced old hands. New contacts often transferred from other unrelated departments have new responsibilities and we no doubt need to be brought up to speed with the practicalities and laws governing our industry. The job of education can be hard as there are less people doing more work, and there is less time to get the message across. Don't despair! There is a wealth of experience, within the Amenity Forum, organisations and people who are more than willing to give their support.

There is one very positive aspect to our line of work remember the old adage "1 years seed, 9 years weeds". Street pavements left unsprayed for a season, a football pitch, tennis court, golf green that is not maintained will all require extensive remedial work at some point. If we can just survive the economic drought, there will be plenty of restoration work hard on the heels of this recession.

Let us hope for a better 2012 and beyond.

## Health & Safety

Readers may well have seen the recently issued HSE's annual Report on Pesticide Incidents. The web reference is <http://www.hse.gov.uk/fod/pir1011.pdf> . It will be an item on the agenda for the next Communications Group of the Forum.

## Membership

As said previously, the Forum strives to ensure its membership includes all the relevant groups so it truly reflects the sector views. The Forum works hard for its members and offers many benefits. Since the Forum was established, we have significantly increased the profile of the amenity sector. However, there is much more to be done and it is important that the Forum speaks from the strongest possible position in terms of the membership represented. If you or your organisation are not already members, please consider it and contact the Secretary.

We are delighted to have welcomed a significant number of new members in the last 6 months

We very much welcome them.

## Newsletter

Have you items of news or views of interest to members. Please do let us know. Alan Spedding aims to keep circulating electronically such items so do let him know.

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