Call to Action

We call upon the government, devolved assemblies and other relevant bodies to undertake the following actions as the pillars of a coherent and ambitious future soils strategy.

1. **Long-term Strategy**
   Introduce a nationwide soil protection and recovery programme, underpinned by statute, that places soil at the heart of the UK and devolved governments’ environment policy - alongside that of air and water - and as an integral part of the upcoming 25-year Plan for the Environment.

2. **Economic Impact:**
   Invest in the tools and methods needed to evaluate in economic terms the societal and environmental benefits of healthy soil, as well as the consequences of reaching a soil degradation tipping point.

   Ensure that these benefits are identified and recognised across Government policy in all sectors and that the benefits of healthy soil are effectively and widely communicated.

3. **Monitoring:**
   i. Develop and implement local (e.g. landscape, catchment) and site (farm, forest, contaminated land etc) based regular monitoring:
      a) To identify whether soils are degraded, are being lost or are in good health, what the consequences are and what remedial measures are likely to be feasible where soil is becoming degraded.
      b) To inform current and future land management practices, such as the need for nutrients and other inputs.
   ii. Instigate and repeat at a 10-year interval, a replicable system of soil monitoring across the UK.
   iii) Integrate modelling, monitoring and data related to soil, water and flooding where these overlap.
   iv) Refine and establish national data and monitoring standards and protocols for soil monitoring.
   v) Develop and implement appropriate training, education and tools to aid those who will be involved in soil monitoring, such as farmers, other land managers and advisers, and soil scientists.

4. **Measures**
   Promote practical and financial incentives to encourage better farming practises for soil quality restoration including the benefits of longer rotations, leguminous leys and no, or minimum - tillage agriculture.

5. **Pollutant reduction**
   Create a coherent nutrient pollution reduction strategy for agriculture (linking soil-air-water) that includes emissions targets. Disseminate the benefits to farmers of alternative approaches that rely upon less use of nutrients. Ensure that sufficient measures are in place to support the achievement of pollution-reduction targets.
6. Innovation & Tools
Promote and disseminate innovative technologies for soil improvement and monitoring including a joined-up laboratory network, smart applications, remote sensing and open-source data. Develop a framework for continuous knowledge exchange and co-production between research and land manager communities.
Review and update Agricultural Land Classification Maps which can then be used to steer on-the-ground land management practice and demonstrate what land can sustainably be used for and its physical limitations.

7. Education & Training
i. Embed the science and understanding of soil and good soil care into the further and higher education curricula for agriculture and other land-based courses

ii. Introduce a nationwide programme of supported advice in good soil management and soil monitoring to existing land-based workers.

iii. Develop a professional body for farmers, other agricultural workers and agronomists that will set standards, develop career pathways and recognise competences in knowledge, understanding and practices relating to good environmental land management.

iv. Address the need for more soil scientists qualified at degree and postgraduate level.

8. Collaboration
Increase collaborative working at all levels by engaging organisations who play a part in land-related work, whether in the NGO, government, professional, industry/other private and education sectors.
Extend the understanding of and appreciation for soil beyond the farming and land-management communities to include other relevant professional bodies, such as those involved in urban soil use and the general public.

January 2018