

The 1st meeting of the 2nd Radiological Protection Advisory Committee (RPAC) was held on Thursday 4th April 2019 at the EPA Offices, 3 Clonskeagh Square, Clonskeagh, Dublin 14

Members present: Micheál Lehane (Chair), Wayne Anderson, Andrew Bolas, John Harrison, Aidan Meade, Susan McCready-Shea, Sheena Notley, Mary O'Mahony, Stephen Thomas, John Upton, Luis Leon Vintro

In attendance: Stephen Fennell, Tanya Kenny, Stephanie Long, Ciara McMahon, David Pollard

Apologies: Anthony Bexon, Sean Curran, Paul Dorfman, Carol Robinson, John Tuffy, Michael Sadlier,

Scientific Secretary: Alison Dowdall

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chairperson, Micheál Lehane, welcomed the members to the first meeting of the 2nd EPA Radiological Protection Advisory Committee (RPAC). He said he was delighted to have such a wide representation on the Committee and was looking forward to working with them over their term of office. A tour de table was held.

2. Overview of ORM and Role of RPAC

Micheál Lehane gave an overview of the functions and activities of the EPA. He discussed the evolution of the EPA's Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring (ORM) and outlined the office structure and activities carried out in the office units. He then set out the role and composition of the Radiological Protection Advisory Committee (RPAC).

A committee member asked about the advisory role of the committee in terms of the topics to be advised on and the process to do this. Micheál welcomed the valuable input of the Committee and advised that agenda items to be considered by the committee will cover the broad remit of the ORM and be relevant to the wide range of expertise of the committee.

3. New Radiation Protection Regulatory Regime

David Pollard gave a presentation on the changes to the system of regulatory control in Ireland arising from the transposition of the 2013 Basic Safety Standards (BSS) Directive. These changes include: the introduction of graded authorisation, consolidation of risk based inspection, development of a code of practice approach, improved role clarity and the new interface with HIQA on patient protection.

A committee member asked if the move to 10 year licenses would diminish the visibility of the EPA as the regulator. David Pollard said that he did not believe this would be the

case. He explained that graded authorisation, which allows regulatory resources to be better aligned with risk, is intended to allow inspectors to devote more time to high risk sites. Tanya Kenny added that under the new regulatory model, EPA will use a broader range of compliance verification tools (such as self-assessment) in addition to inspections. A member asked if fees paid for existing licenses could be offset when renewal fees are incurred. Tanya Kenny advised that 2019 fees would be adjusted to take this into account. There was another query regarding the expiry date for registration and it was noted that registration is indefinite unless the registration is surrendered or revoked.

There was some discussion regarding the transposition of the BSS in the UK and it was noted that in the UK arrangements were broadly in line with those that had been in existence prior to the introduction of the Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017 (IRR17) legislation. The UK's Office for Nuclear Regulation have set out specific requirements in their Code of Practice and guidance.

4. EPA's role in nuclear safety advice and emergency preparedness

Ciara McMahon gave a presentation providing an overview of the EPA's role in nuclear safety advice and emergency preparedness.

Following the presentation, a committee member asked about the UK's involvement in the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) post Brexit and about the EPA's role in ESPOO. Ciara McMahon said that while the UK will no longer be a member of ENSREG, the group has previously facilitated observers from outside the European Union. In terms of bilateral fora, she said that existing arrangements between Ireland and the UK will continue and added that bilateral arrangements are in place with the Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN) the French regulatory body. With regard to the ESPOO convention which sets out the obligations of Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning, Ciara explained the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) are the designated authority to the convention and that the EPA's role is to make submissions to consultations, where relevant.

A member queried whether the policy at new nuclear builds in the UK is that no reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel will take place or if there are currently no plans to reprocess spent nuclear fuel. It was agreed that this will be clarified at the next UK-Ireland intergovernmental meeting.

5. National Radon Control Strategy – Review of Phase 1; Priorities and Knowledge Gaps for Phase 2.

Stephanie Long gave a presentation which set out the review of Phase 1 of the National Radon Control Strategy (NRCS) and the priorities for Phase 2 of the NRCS. Alison Dowdall gave a presentation on the priority knowledge gaps for Phase 2 of the NRCS. Following these presentations, it was agreed that the drafts of the National Radon Control Strategy Phase 2 and the Knowledge gaps phase 2 papers would be circulated to the committee for comments.

A committee member asked about guidance notes for underground workplaces. Stephanie said that developing guidelines for underground workplaces was a priority. A protocol for measuring above ground workplaces is available and the registration scheme for radon measurement services will be expanded to include workplaces.

A committee member expressed concern that in terms of public health, primary prevention has been shown to be the most effective way to reduce radon exposure but that this message was not being acted on. Stephanie said that the next revision of Technical Guidance Document C (which sets out the regulations relating to protecting new buildings from radon) provides an important opportunity to ensure that the latest research on protecting new buildings from radon is considered. A committee member asked about synergies with smoking cessation programmes given that most lung cancers occur in smokers. Stephanie said that links existed between the EPA and the Irish Cancer Society. She added that information on the Health Services Executive smoking cessation programme, QUIT, had been included in radon public awareness campaigns.

Another member enquired about landlord's requirements for rented accommodation and Stephanie advised that currently there is no requirement on landlords to test or remediate for radon. She explained that Radon was not included in the most recent revision of the Rental Regulations in 2016. She said that earlier this year a private members bill, Healthy Homes Bill 2019, called for mandatory radon testing and remediation in rented accommodation.

A committee member asked how the requirement for employers to test workplaces in High Radon Areas would be communicated. Stephanie replied that this information was on the radon.ie website and will be on the agenda for the National Radon Forum. She added that radon in workplaces is included in the Health and Safety Authority's (HSA) BeSmart tool, an electronic safety management and risk assessment tool. It was noted that radon is included in HSA workplace inspections and that the message could also be communicated through employer bodies and trade unions.

6. AOB and date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in late September or early October and a date will be circulated.