

Minutes of the 7th meeting of the 3rd Radiological Protection Advisory Committee (RPAC)

Irish Management Institute, Sandyford, Dublin

Thursday, 14th May 2026

Members present: Tom Ryan, Director, EPA (Chair)
John Tuffy, Health Information Quality Authority
Helen Hourihane, Health and Safety Authority
Heinz-Peter Nasheuer, University of Galway/Irish Radiation Research Society
Stephen Thomas, Environmental Pillar
Wayne Anderson, Food Safety Authority of Ireland
Michele Monahan, Irish Institute of Radiographers and Radiation Therapists
Luis León Vintó, Royal Irish Academy
Carol Robinson, DSA/Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority
Gareth Thomas, UK Office of Nuclear Regulation

EPA staff in

attendance: Pat Byrne, Director, ORM
Andy Fanning, Programme Manager, ORM
Carol O Sullivan, Programme Manager, OEE
David Fenton, Manager Radiation Protection Regulation, OEE
Patricia Hough, Inspector, OEE
Aisling O'Connor, Manager Radon, Citizen Science and One Health, ORM,
Alison Dowdall, Scientific Officer, ORM
Kevin Kelleher, Manager Emergency Preparedness and Nuclear Safety, ORM

Apologies: Andrew Bolas, Dental Council
John Upton, Irish Association of Physicist in Medicine
Carole Rousse, French Radiation Protection Authority (Autorité de Sûreté Nucléaire et de Radioprotection (ASNR)
Susan McCready-Shea, Society for Radiological Protection
Antony Bexon, UK Health Security Agency
Paul Dorfman, Nuclear Free Local Authorities

Secretary: Anne Reilly, (covering for Catherine Scully) ORM

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees, and a tour de table was conducted for introductions.

Declaration of Interest

There was no declaration of interest from the committee regarding any items on the agenda.

The Chair confirmed that this was the final meeting for the current committee. As a new committee will be established shortly, correspondence will follow. A revised ToR has been drafted, and the new committee members will need to sign Declarations of Interest and Confidentiality statements.

Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of the meeting of the 28th August 2025 and of the meeting on 8th December 2025 were approved, subject to the updates outlined below:

Updates from previous minutes

An update on matters arising from both the 28th August 2025 meeting and the meeting held on 8th December 2025 was provided.

Updates from Meeting of 28th August 2025:

National Thoron Survey and thoron remediation

Kevin Kelleher provided an update on the National Thoron Survey. The 6-month detector placement phase is complete, with analysis underway in Japan and results expected by end of the year. The EPA intends to apply the ICRP dose coefficient when assessing exposure in line with RPAC advice. A staff survey is currently taking place, examining seasonal variation. The EPA is engaging with the IAEA on reference levels and plans to raise the issue at RASSC. Once results are available, the EPA intends to meet DSA on remediation and raise thoron at a future Article 31 meeting.

Capability management and succession planning

Carol O'Sullivan informed the committee that this topic was brought forward as a policy discussion item with the IAEA as part of the recent IRRS mission. (IRRS presentation given during this meeting.)

EPA approach to AI and exchange of views on its use in radiation protection and regulation

Carol O'Sullivan advised that the EPA's Generative AI Policy was flagged as a good practice by the IAEA as part of the IRRS Mission. In addition to the Policy, the EPA has recently established an EPA AI Implementation and Innovation Committee to steer the strategic implementation of AI at the EPA.

Updates from special meeting of 8th December 2025:

Carol O'Sullivan informed the committee that following RPAC feedback, the EPA revised its draft procedure for assessing applications to justify new practices involving ionising radiation. The updated process and an application from the Irish Prison Service on the use of non-medical human imaging involving ionising radiation to detect concealed objects being smuggled into Irish prisons were presented to the EPA Board, which were noted as well as next steps for Ministerial and public consultation. Consultation closed on 1st May, with seven submissions under review; a recommendation will be brought to the Board for decision in due course.

Update from the Chair

The Chair updated the Committee on recent EPA Board changes: Dr Eimear Cotter has been appointed Director General, succeeding Dr Laura Burke; Roni Howe replaces Dr Cotter as

Director of the Office of Evidence and Assessment; Patrick Byrne and Darragh Page have been appointed Directors of the Offices of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring, and Communications and Corporate Services, respectively.

The Chair updated the Committee on membership since the last meeting advising that:

Dr Paula Barry Walsh has finished her term with the Veterinary Council of Ireland so her term on RPAC also finishes.

Dr Mary O Mahoney retired from the HSE on 26th April.

The Chair acknowledged both members and thanked them for their valuable contributions.

In response to correspondence from a committee member regarding discussions in certain jurisdictions on the Linear No-Threshold (LNT) assumption and its implications for ALARA/ALARP, the Chair noted that, while the EPA Board is not currently seeking advice on this matter, it has an interest in developments at the European level and the topic may be considered for discussion at a future meeting. It was also noted that HERCA has issued a statement supporting the continued use of the LNT approach.

1. Results of Attitude to Radiation Survey & next steps

The committee was given a presentation by Anne Reilly outlining the results of the EPA's most recent public's attitude to radiation survey and requesting the committee's advice on how to promote awareness of radon among younger cohorts of society (>34) and across the social classes. It was noted that the survey questions were updated taking into consideration the feedback received from the committee at the meeting in August. The key findings from the survey were:

- Radon awareness continues to decline, persistent lack of concern about radon exposure and reluctance to carry out radon testing
- Just over 3 in 10 adults (31%) are concerned about radiation
- Almost 50% agree that generating electricity from nuclear power is better for the environment than generating electricity from fossil fuels
- Radioactive waste, nuclear facilities abroad and radon gas are perceived as posing the greatest health risks
- More than 50% of respondents believe that medical and non-medical imaging present little to no health risk
- EPA is the most trusted source for radiation information, and there is strong willingness to follow government and scientific advice during nuclear emergencies

The committee queried whether respondents who considered themselves to be in low-risk radon areas were, in fact, located in such areas. The survey does not provide sufficient detail to confirm this.

The following were some of the committee's suggested approaches to raise awareness of radon across younger cohorts of society (>34) and social classes:

- Committee members noted that social media is key to reaching younger audiences, especially Instagram and TikTok. It was noted that radon messaging to younger audiences needs to be carefully crafted and relevant. FSAI's short explanatory videos on social

media perform well. The EPA has created videos in the past on Instagram and LinkedIn and is expanding its social media presence. It was noted that C2DE groups may favour Instagram over LinkedIn. While neither the EPA nor other members use TikTok, during Radon Awareness Day 2025, the EPA reached out to others to share messages and a user created their own video using EPA content on TikTok.

- It was suggested that EPA consider the use of influencers (other voices) to spread the message. FSA UK does this.
- It was suggested that EPA engage through educational institutions and events (e.g. school science days, Young Scientist Exhibition). The EPA supports YSE awards, but none are currently specifically related to radon.

The committee recommended a review of how the radon information is being delivered. Low engagement among younger people may be due to perceived lack of relevance. A suggestion was to focus on homeowners in high radon areas over younger cohorts, as low engagement by the latter may reflect lack of relevance as they are unlikely to be homeowners. Despite declining awareness, a number of positives from the survey were highlighted by the committee which the EPA should build on;

- Increased likelihood to test for radon
- High concern about environmental impact of radiation
- Strong public trust in the EPA.

The committee suggested that EPA consider building campaigns around the EPA's high credibility. Limited understanding of radon risk suggests a need for stronger education efforts, especially targeting owners of older, single-storey homes (high radon levels) and renovation companies. The committee also suggested exploring partnerships with local DIY retailers in high-risk areas, using their online presence to promote radon awareness.

Aisling O'Connor outlined that Department of Justice has prepared conveyancing guidelines for homeowners which reference radon. The guidelines are currently undergoing a soft launch, but once there is publicity EPA will be promoting. EPA is also conducting a baseline survey on radon for those involved in conveyancing. The Chair highlighted the fact there is no hard regulation in this area, so it remains a challenge.

2. IRRS Mission 2026: Overview of recommendations and proposed approach to implementation

Carol O'Sullivan presented the findings of the IRRS Mission to Ireland and sought input from the committee on implementation. She noted the value to Ireland of the mission.

HIQA highlighted the cross-working relationship with the EPA and noted the establishment of a national oversight group. They observed that HIQA has a similar focus to the EPA, with an emphasis on maintaining momentum. While some recommendations, such as documentation requirements, can be addressed relatively quickly, these must be balanced against more substantive actions to ensure work is prioritised appropriately. It was also noted that certain longer-term recommendations could be progressed at an earlier stage. A member of the committee noted the importance of sustaining momentum and the partnership, emphasising the value of the process. The Chair highlighted the strong HIQA-EPA relationship and encouraged its continued development.

It was queried whether the IAEA monitors the implementation of IRRS recommendations. Carol O'Sullivan advised that there is a follow up mission expected in 4 or 5 years that will look at implementation. It was noted that having the IAEA strength behind the report was recognised as helpful in progressing actions.

Ireland's review represented its second full-scope mission. Andy Fanning noted that there may be a shift towards a narrower scope for Round 3 IRRS missions, with some countries already considering this approach. He further indicated that while some actions can be delivered internally by the EPA, others require external input and more time needs to be assigned to these tasks. He commended the IRRS Chair for a balanced and considered approach.

Carol O'Sullivan added that the EPA welcomed the recommendations, with approximately 60% already identified through self-assessment, and has developed a lessons learned document to inform the management of future missions.

3. Development of an EPA Roadmap for the Radon Work

Andy Fanning presented the EPA's Radon Roadmap and requested advice from the committee on actions to promote more uptake of radon testing and the proposed EPA viewpoint with respect to radon preventative measures.

The committee queried whether any SEAI grant schemes had requirements to test for radon gas, like the requirement for a BER assessment for energy grants. Currently there is no requirement for radon testing as part of any SEAI grant scheme. EPA is working with SEAI and Local Authorities (LA) to understand the impact of retrofitting on radon levels in LA homes.

It was noted that radon membranes are required for extensions in high radon areas when planning permission is required; however, they may be overlooked where planning permission is not required or where works are undertaken directly by homeowners.

It was suggested that employers who had carried out radon testing at a workplace could share information with their employees. It was highlighted that HSA inspectors are not limiting their inspections to high-risk areas.

It was noted that prosecution of high-profile institutions helped raise public awareness of radon in other jurisdictions.

A committee member supported the EPA's proposed preventative measure of using fully sealed radon membranes nationwide not just in high-risk areas but recommended installing pumps in high-risk areas, as people may still not test. They also suggested encouraging developers to fund post-occupancy radon testing as a selling point.

It was suggested to promote radon awareness/training as a CPD topic for surveyors, as recommendations to test in building surveyor reports may carry greater weight with householders.

The committee suggested using Cancer Day/ Work Lung Cancer Day as well as national radon day to promote radon awareness.

4. Possible expansion of diagnostic nuclear medicine facilities situated away from traditional hospital environments

David Fenton outlined a recent licence application received by the EPA for a PET/CT and X-ray diagnostic facility in a shopping centre. Normally PET/CT facilities are located on a hospital

campus or other dedicated medical centres. While noting that the National Cancer Strategy calls for dedicated cancer imaging centres separate from inpatient and emergency services, the committee's views were sought on whether location (hospital vs. non-hospital) should be a factor where all design requirements are met, whether additional considerations apply, and whether a patient discharge dose rate should be specified.

Committee members raised issues concerning the potential for patient contact with vulnerable individuals (e.g. children or pregnant women) that would need to be taken into consideration in any authorisation process. In hospital settings, such facilities are typically sited away from sensitive areas (e.g. paediatric and maternity wards). It was advised that location should not be a determining factor if design requirements are met, but that additional controls should apply, including specifications for patient management to ensure dose constraints are met.

Close

Prior to closing, the Chair noted that the current mandate concluded at this meeting and that the Terms of Reference, including governance and confidentiality provisions, will be finalised shortly.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to Committee members for their contributions over the past three years. He highlighted the value of RPAC's input in supporting board submissions, noting that it was particularly beneficial for the board to see that matters had been considered by RPAC. He further noted the privilege of drawing on both national and international expertise and acknowledged that these contributions have been sustained in the absence of any statutory requirement. He advised that he would write to the nominating organisations in due course.

END.