

Minutes of the 5th meeting of the 3rd

Radiological Protection Advisory Committee (RPAC)

Thursday, 28th August 2025 via MS Teams

Members present:	Tom Ryan, EPA (Chair) John Tuffy, Health Information Quality Authority Mary O'Mahony, Health Service Executive Helen Hourihane, Health and Safety Authority Sean Curran, Medical Council Heinz Peter Nasheuer, Irish Radiation Research Society Stephen Thomas, Environmental Pillar Wayne Anderson, Food Safety Authority of Ireland John Upton, Irish Association of Physicist in Medicine Paula Barry Walsh, Veterinary Council Michele Monahan, Irish Institute of Radiographers and Radiation Therapists Susan McCready-Shea, Society for Radiological Protection Carol Robinson, Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority Gareth Thomas, UK Office of Nuclear Regulation
EPA staff in attendance:	Andy Fanning, Programme Manager, ORM Carol O Sullivan, Programme Manager, OEE David Fenton, Manager Radiation Protection Regulation, OEE Kevin Kelleher, Manager Emergency Preparedness and Nuclear Safety, EMF, ORM Stephen Fennell, Programme Manager, OCCS Aoife Kinahan, Scientific Officer, ORM Anne Reilly, Programme Officer, ORM
Apologies:	Micheál Lehane, ORM Director, EPA Antony Bexon, UK Health Security Agency Luis Leon Vintro, Royal Irish Academy Andrew Bolas, Dental Council Paul Dorfman, Nuclear Free Local Authorities Carole Rousse, French Radiation Protection Authority (Autorité de Sûreté Nucléaire)
Secretary:	Catherine Scully. ORM

1. Welcome and Introductions

Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of the meeting of the 30th May 2024 and also on the 18th November 2024 were approved, subject to a small amendment to the topic justification of the handheld X-Ray units in item 3.

Declaration of Interest

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

The RPAC Terms of Reference will be revised to include a requirement for members to declare any interests related to topics under discussion

Update from the Chair

The Chair gave an update on matters raised at the meeting of the 18th November 2024:

At the last RPAC meeting, the committee suggested engaging with local champions such as farming organisations, sports organisations (e.g. GAA) and youth clubs as well as organisations such as An Post to increase participation in the 2025 surveys. The EPA advised that it was considering using a citizen science approach to address the potential for limited response in sparsely populated areas.

- Update: EPA did not use local champions, as proposed, for the survey as some of the statistical requirements for the sample made it impossible to use this approach (stratified random sample of homes). EPA is working on developing its inputs to the next National Radon Control Strategy and may seek to use this approach within the actions under that strategy.

A social media approach was used successfully in recruiting participants for the EPA's National Thoron Survey allowing the EPA to obtain a suitable sample size for the survey. At the same time the radon team were also recruiting 1000 participants for the radon survey and were able to avail of respondents in areas oversubscribed for the Thoron survey.

At the last RPAC meeting, the EPA asked if there are other physical characteristics of the buildings that could be included in the survey questionnaire that may give insights into the behaviour of radon in homes. None were identified by the committee members.

- Update: The survey questionnaire provided valuable insights into housing characteristics that may affect radon levels in Irish homes, particularly in homes where energy upgrades may have affected airtightness and ventilation.

A committee member noted the importance of the surveys to inform action to reduce radon exposure and emphasised that primary prevention in new builds is the most effective way of protecting the population against radon stating that preventive measures should be required in all new builds.

- Update: EPA continues to highlight the effectiveness of preventative measures for radon reduction in its engagements with government departments and other stakeholders.

Update on other previous agenda items:

At the last RPAC meeting, David Fenton, Senior Manager, Office of Environmental Enforcement presented on handheld dental X-Ray units and the challenges in terms of justification of such units. Advice was sought from the committee with regards to consistency with approving/rejecting such applications for these devices on the ground of

justification. The committee recommended outreach to dentists and dental suppliers to alert them to the costs of licences and the associated regulatory burden.

- Update: To this extent, the EPA have commenced discussions with the Dental Council with regards to the best way of outreach to these groups and agree some joint messaging. Radiation Protection Regulation (RPR) are currently looking to draft a short article on Handheld Dental units for the Dental Journals for publication later this year.

David Fenton also provided the committee with an update on the work done to date by the EPA in establishing a National Dose Register including shareholder outreach and challenges with application of a unique health identifier. A discussion was had with regard to the categorisation of workers by undertakings. RPR are progressing with ICT development of a register however we may need to look at alternatives due to ICT resource restrictions

Andy Fanning & Carol O Sullivan lead a session on Horizon Scanning bringing a number of items before the committee on radiological protection issues that may be of importance for the EPA to consider in its work going forward, including

- The National Radon Control Strategy
- Implications of any SMR Deployment in Europe e.g. EP arrangements.
- Support to the Department with International Reporting Obligations
- IRRS review.

Committee members identified that the implications of AI deployment as one of high importance and this topic has now been brought forward by the EPA as an agenda item for today's meeting. The committee also identified opportunities for learning from other organisations to enhance skills and knowledge set development, another item which will be further discussed today. The items arising from the RPAC discussions on horizon scanning will be brought to the Board of the EPA before the end of the year.

Following the update from the Chair, a committee member took the opportunity to strongly recommend supporting primary prevention as a way of reducing radon levels. In response, the EPA advised has also been advocating for primary prevention and have agreed to share the results of the recent radon survey. The EPA propose to bring a memo to the Board on this subject and suggest that this will be an item on an RPAC meeting.

2. National Thoron Survey and thoron remediation

Aoife Kinahan, Scientific Officer, gave an overview of thoron in Ireland, focusing on our national survey efforts and considerations for remediation. This presentation covered recent and historical data, measurement approaches, and areas where the EPA is seeking expert advice. The committee was asked the following for advice on what dose coefficient should the EPA use to determine thoron exposure in dose assessments and for advice on remediation options for high thoron levels. At present there are two thoron dose coefficients recommended, one by UNSCEAR and the other by ICRP.

In relation to the question about dose coefficients, the Committee stated that the ICRP dose coefficient is the one that should be used. The committee noted, apart from using acrylic paint and wallpaper, and using ventilation, as recommended by the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that there was very other little information regarding remediation options out there.

There was a recommendation that as Norway has high Thoron levels, a bi-lateral meeting between the two agencies should be scheduled. EPA arrange this bilateral meeting at a suitable time when the thoron survey is further progressed.

3. Capability management and succession planning

Following the Horizon Scanning presentation at the RPAC meeting on 18 November 2024, Carol O’Sullivan provided an update on capability management and succession planning within the EPA—one of the key themes highlighted during the horizon scanning discussion. In her presentation, Carol outlined existing initiatives already in place and then invited the committee to suggest additional internal and external measures the EPA could take to maintain and future-proof our knowledge and skills in the area of radiological protection.

The committee commended the work already in place by the EPA on capability management and succession planning. Regarding the EPA’s engagement with the 3rd level institutions, a committee member suggested that if not already done, a survey could be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the engagement and how we might rate against our competitors.

The committee recommended reviewing the structure and qualification requirements of the Radiation Protection Adviser (RPA) registration model, in light of the current shortage of qualified RPAs. Another suggestion was to appeal to potential future staff who are motivated by a desire to contribute to public service, by focusing on the intrinsic benefits such as the rewarding nature of the work, the opportunity to influence policy, and the potential for international scope and reach. It was also mentioned that the IRRS (Integrated Regulatory Review System) visit in early 2026 might have some recommendations that could be used to support succession planning.

Other suggestions included providing other incentives including working suppressed hours, 4 day week, remote working, and job secondment. Another suggestion was to establish a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for retiring staff, enabling them to formally transfer their knowledge to incoming recruits. This would help address the challenge of posts being filled only after a retirement has occurred. The Committee also acknowledged both the advantages and challenges of staff working in regional locations.

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

Stephen Fennell briefed the Committee on the EPA’s journey with AI. He outlined how the Board approved the Generative AI Policy, which sets out seven key ethical considerations and outlines the data protection requirements associated with the use of AI technologies. The policy also includes a formal approval procedure and provides clear guidance on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use. As part of the implementation, a trial of Copilot for Microsoft 365 was carried out with staff, involving 25 users across two separate trial phases. In addition, Copilot Chat has now been made available to all staff. The committee were then asked to share their experiences, if any, or plans for using AI in the regulatory context. Feedback from the Committee was that they

were all broadly on a similar journey/path and have done similar steps. Recommendation is to bear in mind AI's limitations.

5. Advice on survey of the Public's Attitudes to Radiation

The Committee were given a presentation by Anne Reilly outlining the EPA's upcoming survey of the public's attitude to radiation. This will be the 5th survey – the first was carried out in 2004. The purpose of the survey is to assess the level of awareness of radiation in Ireland; identify the specific aspects of radiation the public is concerned about; compare the results with previous surveys to identify trends in public concerns and to inform the future direction of EPA's awareness and public information strategies. The committee was asked for views on the survey methodology (online/Face to Face/Telephone), for additional questions and for the minimum age of survey participants. The Committee recommended that the questions be formulated in a manner that prevent biasing the responses received. Rather than using the time during the meeting, the Chair invited the members to share any additional views with the team via email.

6. Close

Before closing the meeting, the Chair highlighted an emerging issue regarding justification of new practices using ionising radiation, He emphasised the importance of consulting with committee members on this matter ahead of the next meeting, which is scheduled to be in person in Q1 of 2026 and advised that a meeting of the committee might be called on this specific issue.

The Chair then formally closed the meeting, expressing gratitude to the Committee for their attendance, valuable time, and insightful contributions, which continue to support the work of the EPA. He also extended his thanks to the presenters for their thorough preparation and excellent presentations.

Finally, the Chair acknowledged the upcoming retirement of Dr Micheál Lehane, the previous Chair of the Committee, and took the opportunity to recognise Micheál's significant contributions to radiation protection and to the group over the past several years.

7. Date of next meeting

It is proposed that the next meeting (in person) of the Committee will be held on 23rd April. However, it was noted that the Convention on Nuclear Safety was also scheduled for the same time, so that date will be reviewed.

Actions

Amend minutes of the 18th November with sentence about justification on handheld X-Ray units (complete)

Set up Bi-lateral meeting between Norway (Carol Robinson at DSA) and Ireland regarding Thoron.