

advice

implementation

monitoring

regulation

Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland

Strategic Plan 2008-2010

strategy

2008-2010



Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland

An Institiúid Éireannach um Chosaint Raideolaíoch

In the three year period from 2008 to 2010 the **RPII** will grow the level of **awareness** and **implementation** of the measures needed to **protect people** in Ireland from the harmful effects of ionising (and non-ionising) radiation through scientifically based **regulation, monitoring** and **advice**.

mission

contents

intro

Welcome to the **RPII Strategy Document** for **2008-2010**. The RPII recognises that Ireland is now entering a time of **transition** and **change**, with many uncertain variables in economic and environmental issues emerging. Against this background, this strategy document seeks to ensure that the high level of **radiation protection** that already exists in Ireland is sustained and built upon over the next three years.

duction

The RPII looks forward to playing its role as an independent and authoritative voice on public health issues as they relate to radiation; as a trusted advisor to Government policy; and as a service provider to both the general public and private organisations.

Who we are

The Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) is the national organisation with regulatory, monitoring and advisory responsibilities in matters pertaining to ionising radiation. In particular, the RPII concerns itself with hazards to health associated with ionising radiation and with radioactive contamination in the environment.

The RPII was established in 1992 under the Radiological Protection Act, 1991 and is financed by a grant from the Exchequer and by income generated from radiation protection services, license charges and consultancy contracts.

What we have achieved

Since its establishment in 1991, the RPII, in line with Government strategy and policy regarding radiation protection, has implemented a range of regulatory, research and information programmes. The RPII also complies with the highest standards of corporate governance in all its activities.

A major research-based public health programme, undertaken in the 1990s, saw homes around the country assessed for the presence of the naturally occurring radon gas. Awareness of the harmful effects of high levels of radon has risen substantially among the public as a result of this programme. While there is a great deal more to do to further reduce exposure to radon in both homes and workplaces, the protection that the public and workers enjoy against the harmful effects of the use of controlled sources of radiation in medicine, industry and research can be considered very high in Ireland and is supported by a well-functioning regulatory infrastructure.

The RPII continues to assess the impact on Ireland of all inputs of radioactivity into the environment. These include not only the ongoing routine radioactive discharges from the Sellafield complex in Cumbria, but also previous inputs from the Chernobyl accident and the testing of nuclear weapons. Appropriate research is carried out to support the monitoring programmes that are in place.

The RPII has a key role in the provision of advice to Government and to the public on radiation protection matters. The success of our programmes to date indicates, we believe, an ability to meet the particular challenges that communicating the complex issues of radiation poses to a variety of audiences. The easy access to high-quality information through the existing RPII website and the support of other professional bodies and the media have been important elements in developing our strategy and in raising levels of awareness about the risks and benefits of ionising radiation.

The RPII is committed to a high level of customer service in all its activities. A Customer Service Charter is in place and surveys are undertaken to ascertain the extent to which customers are satisfied with our performance and to identify areas where improvement is possible.

Where we are going

The RPII's position as a trusted source of independent and expert information has been achieved by a commitment to a high-level of competency in our core areas of responsibility. Our achievements to date form the basis for furthering our operational plans into the future. The three-year strategy for 2008 to 2010 outlined in this document has been developed by a thorough review process which included inputs external and internal to the organisation and is underpinned by a longer-term vision for the role and relevance of the RPII over the next 10 to 15 years.

Strategic review findings

The achievements of the RPII over its last strategic period have given it a sound basis from which it now moves forward. In developing the strategy for 2008-2010, the review process included an assessment of RPII's activities based on its 2005-2007 strategy as well as a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis of the organisation. As a public body with a clear remit to provide authoritative and independent information, consideration of the values that underpin RPII's day-to-day operations were also felt to be an important part of the review process. The organisation's ways of working, and its response to its professional duty were studied and assessed within the review process and the findings are incorporated in this report.

The RPII Strategy Document been developed by the management team of the RPII with the support and input of its twelve-member Board, and through a process of consultation with employees, management and key external stakeholders. All participants were asked to rate the RPII's performance on key indicators and give input on future priorities and issues. The output of these processes was carefully considered over the strategic review period and, from these, the goals and priorities of the new strategy were developed.

Learning from existing strategy

An honest and thorough evaluation of previous strategy was considered critical to formulating the new approach and the RPII was pleased to find views, both externally and internally, to be largely positive with regard to its operations and achievements. The assessment process confirmed a common perception that the RPII had delivered on many of its key performance indicators and achieved most of its main objectives in the years since its establishment.

For the future, however, it was noted that the organisation would benefit from greater clarity in the setting and measuring of future objectives and by dedicating greater resources to its communications and advocacy role. Among the issues of concern raised was the fact that the degree of action undertaken by others as a result of the RPII's influence was lower than hoped for. The organisation's ability

to deal with unforeseen events was compromised by budgetary and resource constraints and this was seen to place severe pressure on the organisation on an ongoing basis. The review process indicated that future plans needs to employ management information systems to a greater extent, allowing the Board and the management team to monitor the progress of its activities more closely. It also found that the human resource strategy and internal development work already completed has put the organisation in a strong position to enhance its performance in the next phase of development.

Impact of developments externally and internally

External

An analysis of the external factors which will impact on the RPII's future strategy was undertaken and the following key issues were identified:

- Greater emphasis on public health and the environment at Government level will see greater demands being placed on the RPII's advisory role as it continues to undertake its regulatory and monitoring activities.
- Global concerns about the environment and energy sources mean the debate about nuclear energy is emerging in Ireland again. The RPII's expertise on technical issues will receive greater prominence and the organisation must ensure it remains independent and scientifically credible in what may be a contentious issue of debate.
- The economic environment is not as positive as it has been. Forecasts for 2008 are significantly weaker than in recent years, although the economy is predicted to recover significantly within the time span of this strategy. Public service expenditure will certainly come under greater scrutiny in the short term and this may have implications for the RPII's resources and the readiness of stakeholders to undertake projects such as radon remediation work.



- Public sector performance and value for money continue to be at the forefront of the agenda, placing greater emphasis on accountability and reporting.
- As the range of environmental issues confronting Ireland steadily grows, gaining the attention of decision makers at the appropriate time becomes a greater challenge. Often a 'crisis management' approach is adopted instead of appropriate longer-term planning. One example of this is the management of radioactive waste in Ireland.
- Decentralisation is a challenge for organisations whose overseeing departments are moving out of Dublin. The RPII is among these.
- The Government has recently decided, in principle, to extend the responsibilities of the RPII to include aspects of non-ionising radiation. The exact details of the remit and resources made available to the RPII have yet to be decided.
- Progress has been made in highlighting the radon issue among the general public, but the numbers of people making measurements in their homes and remediating when high levels are found is still unacceptably low.
- Internationally concerns are rising about nuclear proliferation. While the RPII's role in this regard is clearly limited, it must provide credible advice and information on a wide range of nuclear-related issues, stretching already limited resources.
- The threat of terrorism using radioactive materials is an important consideration in many countries, including Ireland. The RPII must play an information and advisory role in the context of international co-operation on this issue.
- Lower numbers of graduates in science in general and the retirement of many university-based experts in radiological protection is a cause for concern as suitably qualified graduates may no longer be available to the RPII.
- The extremely rapid growth in the provision of radiotherapy services by both private and public hospitals is stretching the RPII's regulatory resources.

Internal

The analysis of internal factors as they impact on the RPII's development resulted in the following observations:

- The RPII staff form a committed and motivated team, which has the expertise, knowledge and experience to deal with the changing circumstances and challenges we confront.
- The RPII is respected nationally and internationally for its authoritative work and its independent positioning. Consequently, it is consulted with on all areas where it is expert and has responsibility. This credibility derives from a number of factors including the RPII's independence, scientific knowledge, measurement and monitoring activities, research activities, regulatory powers and the quality of the advice it offers.
- The RPII's organisational culture is considered to be open and adaptive to change. It values critique as a mechanism to facilitate greater delivery of services.
- The RPII has underlined its adaptive nature by making significant improvements to its internal capabilities and effectiveness leading to a more robust organisational structure, which facilitates its role as a quality service provider.
- The organisation's resource capacity, though stretched, has been improved significantly with approval for the filling of a number of posts recently granted.
- The RPII recognises that its culture and skill set may need to be augmented to support the new strategy. The area of advocacy and public communications is one priority in this regard.
- The RPII has strong links nationally with some key partners and is in the process of developing links with other key departments and agencies.

Strategic review findings

Organisational values: an assessment

The strategic review process identified the following values as central to the ethos of the RPII and as the basis on which it will move forward effectively.

Scientific integrity:

As a scientific organisation, the RPII keeps itself up-to-date with current scientific thinking and developments in the field of radiation protection. The RPII undertakes its own research, supports research elsewhere in Ireland and regularly reviews the international scientific literature. All advice from the RPII to Government and to the public is based on the best and most up-to-date scientific evidence available at the time.

Commitment to the task at hand:

Radon kills people. The misuse of radioactive substances or X-ray machines can cause serious injury or death. The inappropriate release of radioactive material can cause environmental damage. Ignorance in the event of a radiological or nuclear accident can cost lives. This is what we know.

The RPII works for the protection of people in Ireland and against these outcomes. We believe that this is fundamentally important work.

Public service ethos:

The RPII is motivated by a belief that its work brings positive outcomes for its stakeholders. It judges its achievements according to the degree by which its actions are beneficial to the public and to the individuals it interacts with.

Independence:

Independence from external influence is a fundamental requirement of all regulatory bodies regardless of their sphere of operation. Government legislation has established the RPII in such a way that it is independent from the organisations/entities it regulates. In practical terms, the advice provided to Government and the public by the RPII is based on the best-available scientific

data and is not tempered by any particular stance. This means that, on occasion, the RPII may make statements that appear to be in conflict with prevailing public opinion.

High standards and integrity:

The ethos of the RPII is to deliver all advice, information and project-based research, in a manner that is courteous, professional and considerate. As a science-based organisation, the RPII ethos is towards accountability and transparency in all external and internal interactions.

Customer service:

A Quality Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter underline the RPII's commitment to providing a high quality of service to its customers.

Positive work environment:

The RPII works continuously to maintain excellent employee relationships through processes such as partnership, staff meetings, PMDS, the provision of a dedicated HR function and occasional social events.

Strategy 2008-2010

Where we go from here

Goals

Following from the review process, the RPII has set a number of goals by which its success in the period 2008-2010 can be measured:

- Information about radiation protection must be readily available, accessible and understandable to a non-scientific audience, so that the public is confident of its ability to be protected from its harmful effects.
- The information provided by the RPII must be scientifically based and accurate at all times. It will seek to sustain its position as a trusted source of information to public and professional audiences in Ireland on this area.
- The national regulatory infrastructure for practices and work activities involving ionising radiation must be complete and must function effectively. Identified gaps in the infrastructure, such as a national policy on radioactive waste disposal, must be successfully resolved.
- A national strategy for addressing high radon levels in homes must be developed and implemented. This strategy needs to target, in particular, those who have not participated in previous studies and the many new homes built in the last decade.
- Following the Government decision to give responsibility for non-ionising radiation to the RPII (including the allocation of resources), these new work streams must be successfully integrated into the work of the RPII.
- The RPII will continue to provide high-quality scientifically based advice on radiation protection issues as an input to Government policy. A targeted research programme will support this advisory role.

Impact

In the three year period from 2008 to 2010, the RPII will grow both the level of awareness and implementation of the measures needed to protect people in Ireland from the harmful effects of ionising (and non-ionising) radiation through scientifically based regulation, monitoring and advice.

Impact will be measured by:

- user compliance with regulatory requirements.
- effective co-operation with relevant regulatory bodies and partners with a role in radiation protection.
- enhancement of the RPII's profile with key decision makers.
- ease of access for the public and Government to high-quality information and monitoring data on all radiation protection issues of concern.
- a better understanding by the public of radiation protection issues.

To 2020 and beyond

In the next 10 to 15 years, the RPII will continue to position itself as a trusted source of independent and expert advice on radiation issues in Ireland. Building and maintaining relationships on a range of levels are pivotal to this. The RPII will develop and enhance all its services on a platform of scientific accuracy, operational best practice and communicative excellence. It will sustain the position of trust and credibility it enjoys among the general public, continue to develop its excellent working relationship with Government – both its 'parent' Department, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government – and other Government bodies and agencies. It will also enhance the esteem it enjoys among peer organisations internationally.

The RPII recognises independence as a key value in maintaining its advisory credibility. It also understands the need for communication strategies that raise the issues of radiation protection among the public and other stakeholders to their due

Where we go from here

Strategy 2008-2010

prominence. As other pressing environmental issues come to the fore, the RPII will ensure that the harmful effects of ionising and non-ionising radiation are not sidelined. In meeting these challenges and including among them those that are currently unforeseen, the RPII considers its greatest single resource to be its people. RPII employees are recognised for their skill base both nationally and internationally and the high levels of individual and group motivation within the organisation as well as its current state-of-the-art technology resource are central to RPII achieving the goals it has set for itself in the medium to long term.

Assessing the strategy's success - key performance indicators

The following are the key performance indicators by which the RPII will assess its achievements over the three-year period. More detailed targets are identified under the 'Specific objectives' section which follows in this document.

- The standard of regulation in place is high by international standards.
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and other stakeholders value the role of the RPII and have a high level of confidence in the advice it issues.
- There is greater internal integration within the departments of the RPII and the new responsibilities in relation to non-ionising radiation are fully addressed.
- The RPII exerts greater external influence and impact, which is demonstrated in observable/measurable action and behaviour changes.
- Sufficient resources are attracted to achieve project goals and to manage unforeseen circumstances. The implementation of effective staff training and development will support the deployment of resources in the most effective manner.

Strategy deliverables – six areas of action

To achieve the goals outlined in its Strategic Plan 2008-2010, the RPII has identified six main areas of action. Three relate directly to its activities as a public body:

To **regulate** all users of ionising radiation.

To **monitor** radiation levels and assess health impacts through direct measurement and through the provision of radiation protection services.

To **advise** the Government, the public and other State organisations.

To achieve these aims most effectively, the responsibilities within the RPII have been identified as:

To meet the **organisational** challenges that ensure the resources, skills, finances, governance and compliance infrastructure is robust and that appropriate management information systems are in place.

To **communicate and influence** those in a position to act, based on sound scientific research and best practice.

To undertake **research** to support the RPII's work and to enhance the standing and knowledge of the RPII.

Specific Objectives

To meet the identified requirement for greater clarity in the RPII's strategic planning and in measuring its key performance indicators, the review process sought to identify the specific activities which should be undertaken over the three year period as well as the 'hard measurables' by which the strategy's success will ultimately be decided.

Specific objectives 2008-2010

- Ensure that the current gaps in the implementation of statutory regulatory provisions in the medical, industrial and educational sectors are addressed.
- Develop a regulatory enforcement policy.
- Prepare a full set of guidance documents/codes of practice relevant to Irish licensees.
- Ensure a consistent approach to the regulation of ionising radiation in the medical and dental sectors.
- Obtain accreditation for the RPII's inspection services.
- Work to ensure that relevant activities are co-ordinated through other bodies.
- Where necessary, review business processes and develop appropriate ICT support systems.
- Make arrangements for RPII programmes and publications to be peer reviewed, as appropriate.
- Ensure that monitoring programmes are implemented which are high quality, fit for purpose and efficient.
- Ensure that the necessary information on radioactivity in the environment and on radiation doses received by the Irish population needed to provide authoritative advice is available.
- Develop and maintain staff and technical resources in order to respond to customer needs.
- Increase awareness among all key stakeholders of the RPII's advice on radon.

- Make both employers and homeowners more aware of the dangers of radon and increase the number of radon tests carried out every year.
- Encourage the adoption and implementation of a National Radon Strategy by Government.
- Achieve a Government decision that recognises the need for a national radioactive waste store.
- Ensure that RPII takes over responsibility for certain aspects of non-ionising radiation with the necessary resources in place.
- Develop the website as the primary communications tool of the RPII and improve its functionality in line with customer expectations.
- Make the public and Government more aware of the actual risks following a nuclear accident and the actions that need to be taken.
- Ensure that the Government is kept up to date with key radiation protection issues.
- Provide efficient and effective corporate services that are in line with best practice, provide value for money and meet the needs of internal and external RPII customers.
- Undertake research to support the monitoring, advice and emergency planning functions of the RPII.
- Undertake research to maintain a high quality of measurement services.

Specific Performance Indicators 2008-2010

- The regulatory system covering the transport of radioactive materials will be fully up-to-date by the end of 2008.
- The physical protection of radioactive sources will be incorporated into all inspections by the end of 2010 with priority given to the most hazardous sources during 2008.
- Key regulatory guidance documents will be available by the end of 2010.

Specific Objectives

- Formal and regular contacts will be established with all relevant agencies involved in the regulation of ionising radiation in the medical and dental sectors by the end 2008.
- RPII inspection services will be accredited by the end of 2008.
- The RPII will develop an action plan seeking the adoption by Government of a national radioactive waste management policy.
- A peer review of the RPII's environmental monitoring programme will be undertaken in 2009 and of the RPII's regulatory activities in 2010.
- A compilation of RPII's monitoring data will be published annually and the monitoring data on the RPII's website will be updated on an ongoing basis.
- The first comprehensive assessment of the doses to the Irish population will be published in 2008.
- The RPII will actively promote the adoption of a National Radon Strategy during 2008.
- The RPII will establish formal arrangements with all Government Departments and agencies with whom it interacts by the end of 2010.
- The RPII's responsibilities in relation to non-ionising radiation will be fully integrated into its existing work programme. The timescale for integration depends on initial approval by Government.
- The RPII will undertake appropriate research and publish it in peer-reviewed journals.
- A new RPII website will be launched by the end of 2008 and this website will be subject to regular updating and further development.
- A centralised finance section aimed at improving service to customers will be established by the end of 2008.
- An electronic record management system will be implemented as appropriate in 2009.
- The human resource management system will continue to be updated in line with best practice.

Structure and culture

The RPII believes its current organisational structure will strongly support the implementation of the new strategy. Effectively delivering on the communication and influencing aspects of the strategy, which are central to its success and to strengthening the position of the RPII, will require greater cross-department work within the organisation. While new ways of working always pose challenges, the RPII believes the commitment and motivation of its employees, with the support of management, will allow it to meet the challenge and fulfil the promise and goals of the strategy.

Implementation and review

Each year, for the period of the strategy, the RPII will develop detailed business plans setting out the tasks to be undertaken to achieve the objectives in each areas of action. The strategy and business plans will require periodic monitoring and review. The senior management team will meet every six months to review progress against targets and goals. This review process will identify any changes that might be needed. An annual report to the Board will summarise progress against goals and objectives. It will also identify any significant changes in the external environment which warrant a change in the strategy, together with the senior management team's recommended changes.

Acknowledgements

The strategic process has been greatly assisted by the inputs received from staff, Board members, key contacts in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and external stakeholders who participated in the consultation process. The RPII would like to express its sincere gratitude to all who were involved in the process.



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