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## **Stakeholder input to the development of the National Radon Control Strategy for Ireland**

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### **Introduction**

In November 2011 the Irish Government announced the establishment of an inter-agency group tasked with developing a National Radon Control Strategy for Ireland. This group comprises representatives from those state agencies that have a role in radon control. The role of the inter-agency group and the work programme used to develop the draft Strategy was outlined in a previous newsletter by David Fenton (RPII). The work of the inter-agency group was carried out in close consultation with stakeholders. This consultation was critical to ensure that the input of the public and key stakeholders is captured; that the Strategy is developed in as open and transparent a way as possible and to ensure that the Strategy recommendations are practical to implement. Stakeholder consultation was divided into three phases between January 2012 and March 2013. These are described below.

### **Phase 1 consultation**

Seven groups of key stakeholders were identified:

1. Radon measurement and remediation companies
2. Organizations related to the construction industry
3. Local authority building control staff
4. Employer and employee groups
5. Government agencies and public bodies with a specific interest in radon
6. Representative bodies for health professionals
7. Staff of the RPII
8. The general public

A tailored questionnaire was designed for each of these groups and these were distributed by email. The topics addressed in the questionnaire included awareness and testing rates, radon prevention in new buildings, building regulations, workplaces, measurement services, remediation services, the role of other public bodies and the role of health professionals.

There was an excellent response to this consultation with over 1,000 comments received from more than 160 individuals and representative bodies. Responses were reviewed, categorised

and themes identified. These results were then combined with the output of a number of recent consultations with members of the public and local authorities:

- Qualitative research with focus groups in High Radon Areas to explore homeowners' awareness of radon gas and barriers to getting their homes tested.
- A survey of RPII customers in to determine radon remediation methods and costs.
- A survey of RPII customers to determine radon remediation rates.
- A survey of local authorities regarding their approach to radon.

The output from all of these consultations helped put shape on the draft Strategy and fed directly into the initial discussions of the inter-agency group. Specific issues were identified for further exploration with key stakeholders in Phase 2 of the consultation.

### **Phase 2 Consultation**

During Phase 2 meetings were held with representatives from 32 government agencies, departments, employee representative bodies and measurement and remediation companies to further explore a wide range of issues identified during Phase 1. Examples of the topics discussed include:

- Training in radon preventive and remedial measures for undergraduates, site staff and professional staff
- Proposed improvements in radon preventive measures for new buildings
- Including radon during property transactions (sales and rental)
- The need for registration of remediation contractors
- The need for some type of validation scheme for radon testing services

The output from these consultations helped inform the final draft Strategy document.

### **Phase 3 Consultation**

The final phase of stakeholder consultation is a full public consultation on the draft Strategy. This consultation was launched by the Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government at the annual National Radon Forum in January 2013. The document was published on the [Department of Environment, Community and Local Government website](#), a press release was issued and an email regarding this sent to over 500 stakeholders. This final consultation will end on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013 and the output will be used to finalise the draft Strategy for submission to Government at the end of 2013.

### **Conclusion**

The RPII is confident that this 14 month consultation process will result in a National Radon Control Strategy that reflects the experience and opinions of all key stakeholders and is practical to implement. Ultimately this means that the overall objective of the National Radon Control Strategy to reduce the number of radon related lung cancers in Ireland will be met as efficiently and effectively as possible.