Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee

Minutes of 29th meeting: 3rd February 2021

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1. Welcome and approval of the draft agenda

1.1 The Chair, Professor Chris Collins, welcomed all attendees to the meeting (see annex A).

1.2 The draft agenda was approved with no additional items added under any other business.

2. Secretariat update on HSAC recruitment

2.1 Fatima Nasser (Defra) provided an update on the ongoing HSAC recruitment

2.2 HSAC recruitment closed on 3rd February and a Sift Pack consisting of applications is being created to send to the Panel for assessment. Interviews will be held in mid-March 2021.

2.3 Application numbers in light of Covid-19, and feedback received from potential candidates, was discussed.

3. HSAC Review of the prioritization and early warning system (PEWS) for chemicals in the environment: progress report

3.1 A progress report was provided by HSAC to Lorraine Hutt (EA) on the development of the paper. John Sumpter has been working with the Secretariat to produce a first draft containing a series of recommendations based off past HSAC discussions. The report will be circulated to HSAC by the lead for comments due back to the lead by 19th Feb.

Action: Chris Green (Defra) to send a copy of the HSAC PEWS paper to the committee. Members are requested to send their edits to John Sumpter by 19th February.

4. **HSAC response to the Consultation on the Revised National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. Progress Report**.

4.1 The committee provided feedback on the plan including:

- Considering how to manage the plan and relay messages to the farming community.
- To include a section on ‘lessons learned’ to show that the reduction of our reliance on persistent pesticides shows noticeable effects in the environment.

- Addressing integrated pest management and the rigorousness it is implemented with.
- The need to include anthropologists and sociologists to address how people actually practice using pesticides.

Action: Chris Collins to draft a response to the NAP Consultation and to circulate it to HSAC week commencing 15th February for comment and further development.

5. Collaborative work on copper with the Expert Committee on Pesticides. Progress Report

5.1 Chris Green (Defra) provided an update on the project. Due to other commitments, the development of this work has been limited and it was suggested that the project is delayed until April 2021 to allow the committee to focus on its current workload and the horizon scan.

5.2 In the meantime, a meeting will be organized with the HSAC lead, nominated ECP representatives and the Defra policy team to understand what output could be produced that will be of greatest policy relevance.

Action: This work will be postponed until April 2021. Chris Green (Defra) will set up a meeting with Defra Pesticides and the ECP to discuss what could be produced by the committees.

6. Introduction to new members of the Defra Chemicals Strategy team.

6.1 The newly formed Chemicals Framework team introduced their new members to HSAC. Mary Tomlinson (Defra) is leading the team on developing and implementing the Chemicals Framework/Strategy under the new Chemicals Hub policy team overseen by Melanie Foster (Defra). The hub also covers chemicals policy, trade and management of persistent organic pollutants.

6.2 The Defra team has shifted its thinking towards developing a Chemicals Framework that will be described in a Chemicals Strategy Document, although there is still work to be done to consider the right terminology around this. HSAC reflected the importance of the Chemicals Strategy work and noted the change in semantics from a “strategy” to a “framework” which was considered to be not insignificant and of interest for the path forward.

6.3 HSAC discussed the importance of continuity in discussions to develop a Chemicals Framework with staff turnover and the introduction of the new Defra leads for this area. Defra responded with the reassurance that records of previous

discussions and work have been kept and reviewed in detail to ensure there will be continuity with Defra officials new to the team.

6.4 HSAC discussed how the Chemicals Framework should be based on the principles that should be reflected in the Environment Bill, including the precautionary principle. Defra responded that Chemicals Framework would be developed in line with principles of the Environment Bill and the precautionary principle would be embedded into the Chemicals Framework.

6.5 HSAC discussed the feasibility of developing a strategy without the knowledge from the Environment Bill which, has been recently delayed, as both policies are closely interlinked. Defra responded that the team has a good understanding of the Environment Bill and it is hoped that this will be in place by the time that Defra consults on the Chemicals Framework. Defra continued to say that work on the Chemicals Framework is a long-term process with consultations on this expected to commence next year.

6.6 The Chemicals Framework team thanked HSAC for their comments on the first draft of a Call for Evidence at the 28th meeting in December 2020. These are being considered during redrafting of the document.

Action: HSAC members are requested to send any written feedback on the latest draft of the Call for Evidence by 10 am on 8th February.

7. Developing a horizon scanning exercise to identify chemical issues of emerging concern through a Delphi Method.

7.1 Chris Green (Defra) provided a background on this work which has recently been authorized to begin.

7.2 The exercise will take place between 8th February – 31st March. A steering group has been set up to determine the path forward for the work, the methods, timeline and expertise needed. It will utilise the expertise of a multidisciplinary, multisectoral and multinational panel of experts to identify future issues that could have a positive or negative impact on chemical pollution in the environment in the UK or globally.

7.3 Antoaneta Bilyanska (Defra) introduced herself who is leading on the project. She explained that an approach similar to the methodology used in the Global Conservation Horizon scan will be used and panel members will submit two issues each which will then be collated. The task will be to score each issue in terms of significance which will then be ranked and shortlisted to a top 15.

Action: Chris Green (Defra) to provide documents for HSAC members to check prior to sending to panellists. Comments are requested by 4th February.

8. Consideration of a UK proposal for a new nomination to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

8.1 Ian Doyle (EA) presented a background on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the consideration of a new, UK led nomination to the Stockholm Convention. EA will also be seeking public comments on the draft proposal. He asked HSAC to consider two questions:

- Does HSAC believe that "chlorinated paraffin with carbon chain lengths in the range of C14-C17 and chlorination levels greater than 45% chlorine by weight" meet the screening criteria set out in annex D?
- Does HSAC believe there are any weaknesses to the proposal that need to be considered?

8.2 The committee strongly supported the nomination of "chlorinated paraffin with carbon chain lengths in the range C14-C17 and chlorination levels greater than 45% chlorine by weight" to the Stockholm Convention, considering that the evidence provided strongly justified their listing.

8.3 The committee provided feedback, including:

- Noting their concern that organic compounds with chlorinated paraffins were still on the market and surprise that they had not been restricted earlier, as experience from the past with organic compounds with multiple chlorines would indicate that they should be high on the list of chemicals of concern. The cited experience with organochlorine pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls as examples.
- Mentioning that a reductive dechlorination could act as a natural remediation process and this could be reflected in the document, although there may not be data on this for these compounds.
- Interest in the economic consequences of banning these compounds and whether this has been investigated and the responses of the chemicals industry. The EA noted that a risk management evaluation under the Stockholm Convention would consider economic impacts of the listing, the uses and what substitutes exist. Industry (manufacturers and end users) are able to reflect their views through the consultation
- Interest in whether safer substitutes are available. It was considered that listing these compounds would drive innovation in the development of plastics with their own in-built plasticising properties that do not need these chemicals, in line with the smart, sustainable plastic packaging remit.
- Questioning on whom the burden of proof lies and reflecting that in the current regulatory system it is taking a long time to take action when substances are very

likely to be causing environmental damage. It was hoped that following nomination, international regulatory action would be swift.

- Questioning whether the threshold of 45% chlorine weight is sufficient in relation to analytical challenges that might impact the reliability of data. The EA responded that a 45% threshold was decided as there is evidence of degradability below 45%.
- Reflecting that as some of the data comes from older studies from the 1980's it could be pertinent to comment on the reliability of this material given some of the analytical challenges described.

Annex A

List of attendees:

HSAC Members

Professor Christopher Collins (Chair)

Professor Michael Depledge

Professor John Sumpter

Professor Andrew Johnson

Professor Susan Owens

Professor Gary Hutchison

Professor Peter Matthiessen

Professor Tamara Galloway

HSAC Secretariat

Chris Green	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Fatima Nasser	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Kasim Ali	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team

Officials

Ed Latter	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Max Folkett	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Kay Williams	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Mary Tomlinson	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Liz Lawton	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Gintare Masiulyte	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Melanie Foster	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
Antoaneta Bilyanska	Defra – Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team
John Seager	Defra
Ian Doyle	Environment Agency
Lorraine Hutt	Environment Agency
Helen Shaw	Environment Agency
Ioanna Katsiadaki	CEFAS
Olivia Osborne	Food Standards Agency
Adam Wadding	Welsh Government
Eloise Proctor	Welsh Government
Janet Sheridan	DAERA

Peter Reid	Scottish Government
Rosie Driscoll	Welsh Government
Hollie Riddell	Welsh Government

Observers

Camilla Alexander-White	Royal Society of Chemistry
Noam Obermeister	University of Cambridge