

Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee (HSAC)

Meeting Minutes – 47th HSAC Meeting

11th December 2025

Item 1 Welcome by the chair and CPHW Deputy Director

- 1.1 The Chair, Professor Iseult Lynch, 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. No conflicts of interest were declared with items on the agenda.
- 1.3 Helena Busby, Deputy Director for Pesticides and EU Relations gave an update on the publication of the Environmental Improvement Plan on December 1. She also updated attendees on the current direction of travel for the department. There is currently an emphasis on the regulatory framework around water and EU reset.

Item 2 Approval of the minutes from the 46th meeting, and review of actions - Iseult Lynch, Chair

- 2.1 The minutes from the 46th meeting Paper 2.1 have been actioned and accepted without objections. The actions from the last meeting are as follows:
 - **Yasmin to share responses from the Environment Agency (EA) on the flame retardant scoping review.**
This action item is completed.
 - **Julia to contact Olivia Osbourne at the Food Standards Agency to provide an update.**
This action item is completed.
 - **The committee to provide written feedback on the latest EA paper.**
This action item is completed.
 - **HSAC next NAMs (New Approach Methodologies) paper - Yasmin to setup a meeting for the committee in a few weeks' time.**
This work is progressing in the background.

Item 3 Forward look, upcoming meeting topics & commissions in progress – Yasmin Wright, Secretariat

- 3.1 Yasmin highlighted that the recently published Government Replacing Animals in Science Strategy provides timely context for the next NAMs policy paper. She highlighted the recently published Environment Improvement Plan and that the PFAS Action Plan is expected to be published early next year and will be followed by a session with HSAC for feedback. Yasmin also thanked members

who volunteered to support the PFAS land contamination review, which is currently underway.

Item 4 Prioritisation and Early Warning System (PEWS) – *Brett Sallach, Environment Agency*

- 4.1 Brett Sallach presented an introduction to PEWS and opened the floor to discussion on how PEWS can be used more effectively.
- 4.2 Jason Weeks highlighted challenges in managing pharmaceuticals and pesticides in the environment, noting limited data and difficulties in prioritisation – particularly where Environmental Quality Standards are absent. He highlighted the need to differentiate between human and veterinary pharmaceuticals and raised concerns about how volatile chemicals from everyday products enter systems. He highlighted that there is a lack of data on pesticides killing non-target species, with the exception of specific cases like neonicotinoids. He emphasised the importance of developing surrogates and indicators of actual effects.
- 4.3 Laura Carter raised concerns about potential gaps or “unknown unknowns” in the current approach and suggested that future efforts should focus on developing computational and experimental pipelines, such as bioassays and AI exposure models, to generate large-scale datasets rather than working chemical by chemical. She highlighted the need to consider nonstandard endpoints and diverse species in research and in PEWS moving forward.-standard endpoints and diverse species in research
- 4.4 Luigi Margiotta-Casaluci suggested that incorporating mechanistic understanding and modes of action into the PEWS process could provide earlier, actionable insights by grouping compounds based on shared properties, such as psychotropic or oestrogenic activity. He highlighted the potential to link this approach with NAMs and the UK strategy to address data gaps. Luigi also noted the growing role of AI agents in identifying emerging compounds of concern with mechanistic and advanced models becoming more prominent.
- 4.5 Rosie Lennon raised the ongoing challenge of biodiversity data gaps and suggested that PEWS could examine common mixtures across the monitoring network to provide valuable insights.
- 4.6 Iseult Lynch asked whether substances within PEWS are rerun periodically as new data becomes available, or if they are only assessed once unless a new use emerges. Brett clarified that substances are currently only run once.
- 4.7 It was agreed that the committee would provide written feedback in response to the questions raised.

Item 5 Presentation on the NAMs survey results and current activity – *Natalie Burden, NC3Rs*

- 5.1 Natalie Burden presented the survey results and context around the programme to the HSAC.
- 5.2 Luigi Margiotta-Casaluci expressed concern that progress in some areas may be moving too quickly given the limited understanding of non-animal models. He

highlighted the importance of supporting the UK community in integrating scientific development with regulatory requirements.

Item 6 CLOSED TO NON-GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

6.1 This agenda item was closed and the minutes are not available.

Item 7 Emerging Evidence – *HSAC Members*

- 7.1 Stuart Harrad was quoted in an article that accompanied Panorama's programme on PFAS.
- 7.2 Iseult Lynch also congratulated Laura Carter on her recently published study on contaminants in soil.
- 7.3 Jason Weeks questioned how horizon scanning efforts are being advanced and whether intelligence sharing across committees is being consolidated. Julia Sussams explained that the joint secretariat meetings of chemicals-related committees currently focus on sharing updates and identifying subgroups for specific issues. She proposed highlighting cross-committee areas of interest and bringing in external expertise when needed.
- 7.4 Luigi Margiotta-Casaluci provided an update on an upcoming paper with AstraZeneca about incorporating non-regulatory data into pharmaceutical risk assessments. He expressed concern that the rapid shift from in vivo studies to NAMs may overlook valuable existing data, noting challenges in effectively using this information. The paper, expected after Christmas, aims to support wider discussions across related activities.

Item 8 AOB

- 8.1 The next meeting will be in March and then June. A Google poll will be sent around in due course to determine the exact dates.

End of meeting – 1pm

ANNEX A

ATTENDANCE LIST

HSAC:

- Iseult Lynch
- Jason Weeks
- Laura Carter
- Stuart Harrad
- Luigi Margiotta-Casaluci

Secretariat:

- Yasmin Wright
- Julia Sussams
- Iqra Raja

Defra Policy Officials

- Helena Bubsy (Deputy Director, Pesticides and EU Relations)
- Mark Chandler (Evidence & Analysis Team Leader, Pesticides and EU Relations)
- Ed Latter (Chemicals Policy Team, Chemicals and International)
- Sarah Heathcote Jones (Chemicals Hub, Chemicals and International)
- Antonia Osolos (Floods and Water)
- Hannah Moore (Floods and Water)
- Ellen Ronn (Floods and Water)
- Kate Barbier (Floods and Water)

Defra Agency Representatives

- Brett Sallach (Environment Agency)
- Ian Martin (Environment Agency)
- Sarah Jane Murphy (DAERA NI)
- Olivia Osbourne (Food)
- Rosie Lennon (Natural England)

External Stakeholders

- Roger Pullin (Chemical Industries Association)
- Stephanie Metzger (RSC)
- Natalie Burden (NC3Rs)