

Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee (HSAC)

Meeting Minutes – 48th HSAC Meeting

27th March 2026

Item 1 Welcome by the chair

- 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.

Item 2 Approval of the minutes from the 47th meeting, and review of actions - Iseult Lynch, Chair

- 2.1 The minutes from the 47th meeting Paper 2.1 have been actioned and accepted without objections. The actions from the last meeting are as follows:
 - **The committee to provide written feedback to Brett Sallach following the discussion on PEWS (prioritisation and early warning system).**
This action item is completed.
 - **The committee to compile feedback on the questions from the water quality team with a focus on key publications, models or sources of data that might be useful.**
This action item is completed.

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

- 3.1 Yasmin noted that this was her final HSAC meeting and expressed her appreciation to all members for their support over the past 18 months. She mentioned that the traditional in-person meeting takes place in June and will be discussed later in the agenda, with Julia preparing the agenda for that session. Yasmin also took the opportunity to reflect on the significant achievements of HSAC during her time, highlighting that substantial progress has been made.
- 3.2 Julia noted that the agenda for the June meeting is not yet in place, explaining that she has not had the opportunity to conduct a full forward look with Ed due to recent work on the PFAS plan, which will be discussed later in the meeting. She highlighted that the PFAS plan is currently the major area of work for the division on the emerging chemicals side.

Item 4 A scoping review of fluorinated aromatic substances: their uses and potential environmental hazards – Lily Summerton, Environment Agency

- 4.1 Lily Summerton presented paper 4.1 to the HSAC and invited comments and feedback from members. She asked the committee to consider whether they agreed with the proposed approach of focusing the review on aromatic substances containing three or more fluorine atoms, whether they supported the conclusions and recommendations set out in the report, and whether there were any additional aspects that should be explored further.
- 4.2 Jason Weeks commended the report and highlighted the importance of monitoring transformation products, questioning whether they may be more toxic, persistent, or prevalent, particularly given the limited publicly available data. Jason also noted that while environmental and hazard data may appear scarce, such information is likely held within registration datasets of relevant organisations, suggesting that further investigation or data-sharing agreements could help access it. He concluded that while the report is strong, the topic will require continued monitoring going forward.
- 4.3 Luigi Margiotta-Casaluci noted that regulatory ecotoxicology data for sitagliptin are available in algae, daphnia and fish from his published work, should Lily require them. He highlighted that several transformation products identified in the report may already have toxicity information, with some classified as acutely toxic to fish despite low reported toxicity in mammalian systems. Given that data are often sparse and fragmented, he suggested that a deeper review of existing supplementary datasets could be worthwhile before undertaking new experimental work, acknowledging that such information can be difficult to locate but may still offer valuable insights.
- 4.4 Iseult Lynch raised a question about the limited availability of data on intermediates and how these substances are treated under UK REACH, noting that this gap might warrant reconsideration of whether additional information could be requested from industry beyond current requirements. She suggested that, although this may lie outside the scope to answer directly, it could be worth exploring mechanisms such as a call for evidence from UK companies, similar to the approach previously used for oxo-degradable polymers, to better understand what information industry already holds on these chemicals.
- 4.5 Ian Doyle noted that REACH sets lower information requirements for intermediates because they are generally not expected to be released into the environment, meaning companies only need to submit available data voluntarily up to certain tonnage thresholds, with mandatory triggers applying at much higher volumes. He explained that intermediates are often excluded from some evaluation processes, making it difficult to compel additional information, though options such as a call for evidence or accessing non-REACH datasets could help fill gaps.
- 4.6 Iseult Lynch asked Stuart whether, based on his experience with fluorinated and brominated flame retardants, he agreed with the report's proposed focus on substances containing three or more fluorine atoms. Stuart Harrad agreed that is an appropriate approach and praised the overall quality of the report. He

supported the recommendations for future monitoring, particularly for transfluthrin and sitagliptin, noting the high volume of sitagliptin prescriptions. He also suggested including both the carboxylic acid and hydroxy degradation products in future analytical work, as adding the latter would be straightforward from an analytical perspective. He noted that he would provide further detailed comments in writing.

- 4.7 John Colbourne followed up on the discussion about grouping substances, recalling the regulatory management options analysis (RMOA) on PFAS. . He noted that the analysis suggested investigating whether hazards of transformation products could be inferred from their parent compounds. John asked whether there were any updates on the outcomes of that earlier work and how it relates to the current assessment.
- 4.8 Ed Latter noted that the challenges around chemical grouping will be explored further in the upcoming PFAS plan discussion and that any grouping method inevitably creates grey areas and boundary issues.
- 4.9 John Colbourne suggested that group definitions should be treated as hypotheses that can be tested and, if necessary, rejected. He emphasised the importance of identifying who is responsible for scrutinising these grouping hypotheses and highlighted the value of stronger dialogue between regulators and industry to address uncertainties. John noted that using these substances as a case study could help develop a more proactive approach to resolving unknowns, motivating industry to contribute data that would clarify whether substances belong within or outside a proposed group, ultimately helping focus scientific efforts on addressing key knowledge gaps.
- 4.10 Iseult Lynch observed that the broad range of databases and information sources required for the assessment highlights the value of moving toward a one substance, one assessment approach, as being developed in the EU, to avoid fragmented datasets spread across different regulatory regimes such as REACH, biocides and pesticides. Iseult concluded that the group appears supportive of focusing on substances with three or more fluorine atoms and that no concerns had been raised regarding the report's conclusions or recommendations, aside from a few suggested areas for further follow-up.

➤ **HSAC to compile written feedback based on the questions.**

Item 5 The PFAS Plan – Highlights and Innovation – *Ed Latter, Defra*

- 5.1 Ed Latter presented slides outlining the PFAS Plan and the forthcoming steps and invited the HSAC to provide views on where future efforts should be focused.
- 5.2 Luigi Margiotta-Casaluci welcomed the publication of the PFAS Plan and declared a potential conflict of interest due to his work with pharmaceutical companies. Luigi noted that the plan makes only limited reference to toxicity in the main text and suggested that toxicity will be critical for prioritising PFAS, particularly as many technically defined PFAS - such as pharmaceuticals and their metabolites - currently show no evidence of environmental or human health risks. He asked how toxicology will inform grouping decisions, prioritisation, and

the interpretation of monitoring and exposure data, emphasising that toxicity is likely to vary widely across PFAS and should therefore play a central role in delivering the plan.

- 5.3 Susan Chilton thanked Ed for the clear presentation and cautioned that society risks being overlooked and suggested the PFAS Plan should include a more formal framework for assessing societal impacts—moving beyond brief references to health and environmental effects. Susan highlighted the need to account for exposure inequalities, place-based impacts and socio-economic factors, noting that relying solely on public communication is insufficient given the scientific literacy required. She emphasised the importance of integrating these broader societal considerations into the plan to ensure they are not lost and to support a more holistic approach to PFAS management.
- 5.4 Iseult Lynch asked whether human biomonitoring is planned as part of evaluating the effectiveness of future measures, noting this raises wider questions about how to respond if high exposure levels are found in populations without access to adequate treatment. She agreed that Sue's suggestion for a broader framework would be valuable given the significant societal and ethical issues involved.
- 5.5 Jason Weeks suggested that the PFAS Plan's 49 actions may be too numerous and that clearer prioritisation is needed, distinguishing what can be delivered in the short term from longer-term aims. Jason highlighted a major gap regarding end-of-life management for existing PFAS-containing products, such as firefighting foams and extinguishers, and stressed the need to address legacy PFAS and waste-stream management. He recommended considering a more joined-up, cross-agency task-force model to overcome structural barriers and ensure effective delivery of the plan.
- 5.6 John Colbourne argued that actions focused on simply gathering more toxicity data are misplaced, as the key need is understanding risk, identifying who is most harmed, and addressing issues of justice, accountability and remediation. John suggested the plan should more explicitly consider how regulation needs to change—particularly around grouping approaches—and how industry can be incentivised to develop alternatives, emphasising that a more decisive and outcome-focused implementation strategy will be essential.
- 5.7 Rosie Lennon asked whether consideration had been given to how these diverse data sources will be integrated to produce the robust, coherent evidence needed to support future regulatory or policy decisions, and whether this forms part of the plan's innovation work or requires new data-infrastructure arrangements across the involved organisations.
- 5.8 Stephanie Metzger explained that upcoming Royal Society of Chemistry activities will focus on identifying both existing and novel substitute materials while avoiding regrettable substitution, with plans to run events later in the year to showcase UK innovation.
- 5.9 Iseult Lynch suggested organising a roundtable ahead of the June meeting where members share information on PFAS-related projects they are involved in, similar to approaches used in OECD nanomaterials groups. This would help consolidate knowledge across ongoing UK and EU research activities and

identify opportunities to build on existing work.

- **Julia Sussams agreed to work with Ed's team to explore how a PFAS roundtable could be resourced and set up.**

Item 6 Pharmaceuticals in the Environment – Jason Weeks, HSAC

- 6.1 Jason Weeks presented slides on Pharmaceuticals in the Environment (PiE) The Interagency Working Group to the HSAC. Anyone that would like to get in touch or would like to know more about getting involved with the group can drop Jason an email.

Item 7 Discussion on recruitment for HSAC member 2027/8 – Yasmin Wright, Secretariat

- 7.1 Julia Sussams informed the committee that Iseult and John will reach the end of their terms next March, meaning a recruitment round will begin later this year. She outlined that a fuller discussion will take place in June and asked questions about how best to advertise the committee roles, particularly how to attract early career researchers, and clearly communicate the benefits of serving on HSAC. Julia will bring a draft advert to the June meeting (in a closed session) for feedback and noted the need to consider how to ensure the committee remains a rewarding and engaging place to work, especially as around half the membership - including the Chair - will need to be replaced.
- 7.2 Iseult Lynch suggested that recruiting early career researchers may not require different outreach routes, but clearer evaluation criteria to ensure they feel confident applying, supported by HSAC members promoting opportunities through their own networks. She noted that current early career members could share what encouraged them to apply and proposed creating short testimonials - such as brief videos highlighting how serving on HSAC has benefited members, to strengthen engagement and attract new applicants.

Item 8 Committee update on other activities e.g. the next NAMS paper, any other research updates – HSAC members

- 8.1 Iseult Lynch provided an update on activities related to the NAMS report, noting that although substantial progress had been made last year—particularly in expanding the case studies that fed into the government's replacement of animals strategy—the follow-up work had stalled due to successive periods of illness among key contributors. She suggested that now would be a good time to refocus efforts, especially following a recent successful workshop examining economic drivers for NAMS, and invited John to share thoughts on how the group might re-engage and resume development of the follow-up report.
- 8.2 John Colbourne recalled that a PhD cohort had previously been engaged to help gather information on technological innovations related to NAMS and suggested this could be used. John also highlighted that many earlier HSAC recommendations have now been incorporated into the government's strategic plan for replacing animals in research, with an associated MRC-led funding call

underway, indicating rapid and encouraging movement in the UK and a sense that the initiative is now headed in the right direction.

- 8.3 Luigi Margiotta-Casaluci suggested that HSAC could build on the strong impact of the previous NAMs report by producing more targeted follow-up reports, particularly in areas highlighted as priorities in the government's final roadmap, such as fish, reproductive and acute toxicity. He noted significant current activity in the NAMs space, including major engagement across London universities and the establishment of a new centre for 3Rs and translational innovation at King's College London, which will launch in May. Luigi also highlighted upcoming NC3Rs and British Toxicology Society events with dedicated NAMs sessions. He concluded that continued HSAC follow-up work would help steer progress and recognised the substantial influence the committee's earlier report has already had.
- 8.4 John Colbourne observed that upcoming funding calls show a noticeable shift, with new methodologies now being applied far beyond chemical testing and extending across broader areas of biology and medical science.
- 8.5 Susan Chilton highlighted an opportunity for HSAC to build on its NAMS work through an ESRC React Awards pilot, which could help address the current gap around socio-economic and societal considerations in NAMs adoption. She suggested that establishing public acceptability thresholds—via a large-scale quantitative survey examining risk–risk or choice-based trade-offs—would provide policymakers with valuable evidence on attitudes toward human-safety versus animal-testing trade-offs across different NAM types. Susan proposed forming an interdisciplinary academic team, supported by HSAC, and emphasised that the scheme requires a UK public-sector partner capable of implementing the findings, noting previous discussions about securing Defra involvement. She invited the committee's views on whether this is a worthwhile avenue to pursue.
- 8.6 John Colbourne welcomed Susan's proposal, noting that gathering the kinds of socio-economic data needed to support policy has long been difficult, with much of the relevant information either unavailable or inaccessible.
- 8.7 Julia Sussams noted that before considering Defra's involvement in the proposed ESRC project, it is important to establish whether Defra is the appropriate lead department, as the UK's strategy for reducing animal use in science is driven primarily by DSIT. She suggested the project would be more viable if led by DSIT- with Defra contributing expertise where relevant - given that NAMs extend well beyond chemical risk assessment and cover multiple sectors.

- **Julia to setup meeting with DSIT to discuss their appetite for getting involved in this bid.**

Item 9 Emerging evidence – HSAC members

- 9.1 Iseult Lynch noted that she had already shared in the chat a link to the European Commission's report on the costs and impacts of PFAS during the earlier PFAS discussion.

9.2 Julia Sussams took a moment to acknowledge that this was Yasmin's final day working with her, expressing deep appreciation for Yasmin's hard work, organisation and good humour throughout the past 18 months. She congratulated Yasmin on her well-deserved promotion to leading her own science-focused policy team, while noting how much she will be missed within HSAC.

Item 10 AOB

- **Action – Iqra to confirm a June date for the next in person meeting**

End of meeting – 1pm

ANNEX A

ATTENDANCE LIST

HSAC:

- Iseult Lynch
- Jason Weeks
- John Colbourne
- Stuart Harrad
- Luigi Margiotta-Casaluci
- Susan Chilton

Secretariat:

- Yasmin Wright
- Julia Sussams
- Iqra Raja

Defra Policy Officials

- Mark Chandler (Evidence & Analysis Team Leader, Pesticides and EU Relations)
- Ed Latter (Chemicals Policy Team, Chemicals and International)
- Helena Richards (Chemicals Policy and Regulation, Chemicals and International)
- Kathie Coverley Naylor (REACH Chemicals Programme, Chemicals and International)

Defra Agency Representatives

- Olivia Osbourne (Food Standards Agency)
- Rosie Lennon (Natural England)
- Ian Doyle (Environment Agency)
- Lily Summerton (Environment Agency)
- Ovnair Sepai (UKHSA)
- Ioanna Katsiadaki (CEFAS)

External Stakeholders

- Roger Pullin (Chemical Industries Association)
- Stephanie Metzger (RSC)
- Charlie Stevenson (Cruelty Free International)
- Wang Mengjiao (Greenpeace)
- Milnes Thomas (DAERA NI)
- Sarah Jane Murphy (DAERA NI)