

HOUSE CONVEYANCING DRAFT STATEMENT

THE PROPOSED HOME INFORMATION PACKS (HIPS)

AND REVISION OF CON29

A delegation from the Radon Council met recently with Mr Elliot Morley MP, the Minister of State for Environment & Agri-Environment and representatives of DEFRA.

The purpose of this meeting was to explain the Radon Council's concern at the unnecessary and tragic wastage of 2,500 lives each year (official estimate) from the effects of radon in the UK alone and ways by which this figure can be reduced. It was explained that in the Council's thirteen years of existence numerous initiatives had been tried, by successive governments at a cost to the taxpayer of many millions of pounds. Unfortunately despite these best-intentioned efforts a disappointing number of properties had taken remedial actions. We feel that the time is more than right to shift the national emphasis from these programmes into support for the Radon Council, to make the minor revision to CON 29 and to include radon in the proposed HIPS. All homes should be required to furnish a valid radon test certificate at the time of conveyancing. By this simple means the radon problem will gradually be removed from the housing stock in the UK. This will save substantial sums of public money and more importantly begin to reduce the avoidable deaths and suffering from lung cancer, due to natural radon gas.

A letter to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) concerning the HIPS Contents Consultation Exercise has also been sent ,

Briefly these points set out the Council's position:-

1. A reduction in these deaths can increasingly be achieved by a simple yet complete change of government radon policies that have been pursued over the past twelve years. With the revision of CON 29 requirements in conveyancing property, every house both new and old should be subjected to radon testing as part of the survey process. In the event of such a test showing a need for remediation, it can be negotiated and carried out between the parties involved in the conveyancing. It would be a direct analogy with the existing and well-established test of drains, dry rot, damp rot, or roof leaks etc. dealt with successfully over many years.
2. Reliable and internationally accepted testing methods for measuring radon already exist. These can be as short as 7 days which is a timescale that does not delay the conveyancing process, or as long as 3 months, a test that can be conducted ahead of the sale.
3. It is important to appreciate that all essential techniques for testing and carrying out adequate radon remediation work are already in the public domain.
4. There is a small but adequate industry available to provide the services outlined in the previous paragraph. As a Regulatory Body and not a commercial trade association, this non-profit making Council publishes annually a "List of Contractors, Suppliers and Consultants Offering Advice and Services etc." Each company allowed entry on that list has to have at least one representative who has successfully completed a Radon Council training Course and passed the examination. In addition they are required to sign a written contract with the Council that it will follow our Code of Conduct, obey all relevant UK legislation and follow the procedural guidelines

published in the latest “Radon Manual”. A Disciplinary Group, including a legal advisor, can examine any complaints and report to the Council.

5. The passage of time shows the public and media has lost interest in this serious problem. This is partly due to a commendable avoidance of panic or emotive response by authorities concerning a natural radioactive gas being present in homes. Mortgagors, Estate Agents, Surveyors and other have deliberately kept silent to avoid any local blight on property values.
6. A policy requiring payment for geological map services for predicting the possibility of radon occurring in homes, that is currently available free of charge in the public domain can only be described as unnecessary. The Radon Council over the last two years has had a multitude of telephone calls and some correspondence from puzzled consumers asking what a 1% or 3% possibility of there being radon in their home can mean. The answer is quite frequently whether in ‘bad’ or ‘good’ areas it means nothing. Like drains, woodworm, dry rot or roof faults, **“To Test is Best”** is the only 100% reliable guide to any individual home and could be a lifesaver into the bargain.

THE LIFE YOU SAVE MIGHT BE YOUR OWN!