

The Society for Radiological Protection – Incorporated by Royal Charter

How it was achieved

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Abstract. The Society for Radiological Protection (the Society) began to consider the potential for incorporation by Royal Charter, an important goal for many professional bodies in the UK, in the mid-1980s. Impetus grew during the 1990s; contributing to this in 1998 was the Society's new status as direct UK IRPA associate. In 2002, to emphasise that the Society is active over all sectors of radiation protection, sectorial committees were established, dealing with professional interests in the component sectors. Application for a Charter begins with a Memorandum to Her Majesty the Queen's Privy Council Office (PCO) with details of the Society, its achievements and why grant of a Charter would be in the public interest. The Society prepared a Memorandum and submitted it to the PCO in 2003. In 2004, the application was declined for several reasons, which were then considered. Contacts in Government Departments were briefed on the Society's activities. The Society and the Institute of Radiation Protection (IRP) had been considering amalgamation, and in 2005 the annual general meetings of the Society and IRP agreed to proposals for a merger. A new Memorandum was submitted to the PCO in 2005, and early in 2006 it was accepted. It was then necessary to draft a Charter and a Petition to HM the Queen in Council. One of the opportunities incorporated in the Charter is the provision to award the title "Chartered Radiation Protection Professional" with the post-nominal letters "CRadP" to suitable members. Draft documents were presented to the Society's 2007 annual general meeting, and passed through Society's governance procedures. Public consultation by the PCO took place during summer 2007. On 10 October 2007 an order granting a Charter of Incorporation was approved at the Privy Council held by the Queen. The Charter was presented to the Society on 11 December 2007.

KEYWORDS: *The Society for Radiological Protection; Royal Charter; Professional Qualification.*

1. Introduction

In the UK, incorporation by Royal Charter is an important goal for many professional bodies, conveying a special recognition by the Government, other bodies and people. The Society for Radiological Protection (the Society) was, after due process, granted a Royal Charter at the end of 2007. This has the following advantages for the Society:

- The Society is now incorporated as a body in its own right rather than being an association of individual persons;
- The Society has the full status of a professional society alongside other Chartered bodies;
- Radiation protection is a fully recognised professional activity in the UK;
- The Society is able to confer a professional title on those suitable to be recognised; the title used is Chartered Radiation Protection Professional with post-nominal letters CRadP;
- There is a stronger relationship with Government in terms of overview and responsibility to respond to consultation;
- The Society has a stronger responsibility to regulate the professional conduct of its members.

The Society began to consider the potential for Chartered status in the mid-1980s. It was recognised that gaining a Charter would be a long-term aim and success could not be guaranteed. After initial setbacks the process gradually gained momentum, until after more than 20 years, involving many developments in the Society's culture, organisation and relationships with other bodies as well as fulfilling the necessary procedures, the Society was granted a Royal Charter by order of the Queen in Council on 10

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October 2007. This paper presents the story of those >20 years. Related documents are at <http://www.srp-uk.org/servcharter.html>

2. Early moves

The Society, which had been founded in 1963 primarily as a learned society, began to evolve as a professional society during the 1980s. Already a Health Physics certification scheme was in operation jointly with other societies involved in radiation protection [1], but there was the question of extension to other areas of radiation protection, qualifications, and designatory initials. A working party was set up in May 1985 with these issues on the agenda, and an additional remit to consider the possibility of Chartered status. It was recognised that the latter might be difficult to achieve given the number of other societies in the field, and the Council of the Society felt it might be easier to apply for grant of the title “Royal”. An application for this was made in July 1991, providing the necessary detailed information to the Home Office. It was not until October 1992 that a letter was received rejecting this application on the grounds that such a Grant was now exceedingly rare.

One perceived stumbling block was that of BRadPA, the umbrella association formed from all the UK societies with interests in radiation protection to be the single UK Society recognised by IRPA. BRadPA’s existence emphasised that there were several (at that time, 8) UK bodies with interests in radiation protection, and although the Society was the largest in terms of members with radiation protection interests, the multiplicity detracted from the Society’s role. BRadPA was clearly contrived and unwieldy, and in the mid-1990s a review of arrangements, initiated by the Society, was carried out. This resulted in the other 7 bodies becoming “Partner Societies” of the Society; their members who wished to be members of IRPA became “International Members” of the Society, and an “International Committee” was established to conduct IRPA business. These new arrangements, including recognition of the Society as the UK IRPA-affiliated Society, took effect in January 1998 [2].

In July 1995 the Council of the Society held a workshop to review the Society’s direction, resulting in the setting out of a list of objectives and related strategies. These have been reviewed since then on an annual basis. A prime objective, indeed the first in the list, was “achieve Chartered status”; however this was still recognised to be a long-term goal. The workshop also endorsed the work of the Society’s Long-term Planning Committee and changed its name to the Strategic Planning Committee (StPICom). In 1998, the StPICom made a renewed proposal to the Council of the Society that Chartered status be further investigated. The Council accepted this and set up a working group, an “ad-hoc” Chartered Status Group.

3. The ad-hoc Chartered Status Group

One of the first tasks of the ad-hoc Group was to obtain advice from a specialist solicitor on the Society’s position relevant to a potential Charter application. A solicitor who had had experience of other cases was located and briefed, and a meeting was held in November 1998. The subsequent advice was that to improve the Society’s position it should:

- Have permanent offices and staff;
- Be more monopolistic and exclusive;
- Reduce “sharing” of radiation protection with Partner Societies, and to try to amalgamate at least with two bodies whose interests were in non-medical radiation protection, the Association of University Radiation Protection Officers (AURPO) and the Institute of Radiation Protection (IRP).

This advice was debated and investigated over some time. Having a permanent office base and staff would be expensive and raised the question of appropriate location. Meetings were held with the two Partner Societies to consider amalgamation; the meetings were cordial, but it was clear the time was not right. However the door was left open. The AURPO later indicated that whilst it did not wish to amalgamate, it would not object to an eventual Charter application by the Society.

At the Society's annual general meeting in March 1999 the members were informally asked if they approved the further investigation of Chartered status; whilst a vote was not taken, there was a broad consensus that Chartered status should be pursued.

Whilst this gave the Group confidence to carry on, other events overtook pursuance of Chartered status for a while. These events stemmed from international developments, in European Council Directive 96/29 EURATOM [3], and the need for national governments to bring their legislation into line. The UK response, which became the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999 [4], introduced "Radiation Protection Advisers" as the necessary qualified experts. The UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) would not accept the existing joint Societies' scheme as it was not seen to have central management. The Society offered to manage it, but this was not acceptable to all other participating societies. Adopting the solicitor's advice with Chartered status in mind would mean running a separate scheme; this would have had a divisive effect, and the Council of the Society decided against it. Instead was adopted a solution which HSE would accept: to set up a Company, jointly sponsored by participating societies, to manage the scheme. This Company was RPA 2000 [5]. Despite a perceived weakening of the Society's extent of pre-eminence, and the solicitor's advice, resolution of this issue reinforced the partnership approach with other UK societies involved in radiation protection. Partnership and inclusivity has been a key feature of relationships with other societies, and successfully so, ever since.

4. The Strategic Planning Committee

In January 2001 the work of the ad-hoc Chartered Status Group was absorbed into the wider issues addressed by the Society's Strategic Planning Committee (StPICom). Following a review, the membership of StPICom was strengthened to include the Society President, Past President and President Elect, and to ensure a wider representation of radiation protection interests, two members with a Medical Physics background were included. To further engage members of the Society on the subject of Chartered status, a survey was carried out by means of the newsletter and e-discussion group to elicit views. Whilst the response was limited numerically, on balance there was a positive desire to proceeding with further investigation of Chartered status.

In 2001-2 one of the wider duties of the StPICom remitted by Council was to review the structure and management of the Society. There were a number of recommendations from this review; one of the most important was to set up sectorial committees to cover the diverse professional needs of members in the sectors of radiation protection. The Society set up four such committees in 2002, to cover nuclear; non-nuclear; medical; and research and teaching sectors. This was also a positive move in respect of Chartered status, demonstrating that the Society is active in all sectors of radiation protection. To maintain partnership with other societies involved in the subject, the terms of reference of the sectorial committees included the need to liaise closely with other relevant bodies, and to avoid unnecessary overlaps.

In 2002 the StPICom began to consider what would be needed for an approach to the Privy Council Office (PCO), the Government Department concerned with the affairs of bodies who are incorporated by Royal Charter. Since the previous experience with the solicitor, more information on criteria and procedures had become available via the appropriate website [6]. Thus it was decided to proceed without a solicitor to the extent practicable. It was felt that the Society could meet all of the criteria except for the necessary size, normally 5000 members or more. At that time the Society had about 2000 members, including International Members. However further information was that provided other criteria were well met, smaller size was not of itself an obstacle. The first application step required a Memorandum to the PCO, containing the following information: history of the body; the body's role; numbers of members, grades, management and finance; qualifications needed; the body's achievements; its educational role; dealings with government; the extent of pre-eminence; why it should be granted Chartered status; and why this would be in the public interest.

A draft Memorandum was compiled by StPICom members during late 2002-early 2003, and after approval by the Council of the Society it was submitted to the PCO in June 2003 [7]. The Society did not receive a reply until April 2004, and this rejected the application on the grounds that "Although some of the comments were encouraging - for the Society is a well regarded body - the consensus was that it did not make an indispensable contribution in its field. Nor was it seen to represent a discrete profession or body of opinion..." [8].

Whilst this was disappointing, the Society had tested the procedure and gained experience. The StPICom considered alternatives to Chartered status. One option was for the Society to affiliate to the UK Science Council, then apply to award the Chartered Scientist (CSci) qualification. However it was decided not to follow this route at that stage, as many members of the Society practising radiation protection do not consider themselves scientists as such. Further, this route would only raise the status of radiation protection in a limited way.

The StPICom realised that the Privy Council relied for their views on their advisers in the Government Departments; it was possible that the work of the Society was generally not well enough known and valued by them. In the field of radiation protection there are a large number of UK Government Departments with interests.

Thus on 6 May 2004 StPICom suggested to the Council of the Society that the Society might usefully ask the PCO if the Society could see the detailed comments of the Privy Council advisers in order: (a) to see if there is any basis for a request for a review; (b) to give the Society more information on where its case had failed; (c) to help the Society to plan; and (d) to help the Society in any future application. The Council of the Society agreed to this suggestion and the PCO secured the agreement of the advisers.

The Society learned that:

- the published criteria are guidelines, not rules, and that the main factor in deciding on the grant of a Charter is likely always to be the extent to which the Government's policy aims will be taken forward by the grant of the Charter;
- The PCO had asked the Privy Council advisers whether they would be prepared to countenance the grant of a Royal Charter to the Society;
- Of the five advisers, two made a judgement (for), one opted out of judging, and two could not judge.

The comments were crucial to what the Society did next. Some members of the StPICom set up communication with the appropriate contacts in a range of the most relevant Government Departments, exchanging correspondence on the role of the Society and how it can help the work of the Department, for example by responding to Government consultation documents.

5. Amalgamation with the Institute of Radiation Protection (IRP)

Later in 2004 the Society had some good news. Following the discussions in 1999 a standing invitation had been left with the IRP to consider amalgamating; the IRP now indicated that it was ready to resume discussions. In October 2004 the terms of a merger were worked out: IRP would participate in the Council of the Society during an initial 2 year period, and would contribute to the work of the Practical Radiation Protection Topic Group. Further, the finances of the IRP would be used to fund a suitable award for work in radiation protection. The name of the Society would not change, but for a period there would be a subtitle under the Society letterhead: "Incorporating the Institute of Radiation Protection". These proposals were put to the annual general meetings of both the IRP and the Society, and were overwhelmingly supported. This was an important step in the approach to Chartered status, as amalgamation would reduce the number of bodies whose interests were in non-medical radiation protection.

6. The second application to the Privy Council

With the advances presented by the knowledge of the need to take the Government's policy aims forward, the comments of the Privy Council advisers, improved communications with Government Departments and the amalgamation with the IRP, and the passage of 2 years from the previous application, the StPICom and the Council of the Society felt that a further application should be made to the PCO. Thus the second half of 2005 was spent redrafting the Memorandum to include: sections on how the Society provides an "indispensable contribution" in its field and how it represents a "discrete profession and body of opinion"; extensive coverage of dealings with some specific parts of Government, relating the Society's activities to Government policy areas; and an enhanced "extent of pre-eminence" following the merger with the IRP. The revised Memorandum [9] was submitted to the PCO on 9 December 2005.

On 30 January 2006 the Society received an e-mail to the effect that the Privy Council's advisers had given broad support in principle to the prospect of a Charter for the Society, and the Society was invited to submit a draft Charter and Bylaws. This was excellent news, but much work still needed to be done, and success could still not be guaranteed.

7. The draft Charter, Bylaws and Chartered Title

Much of 2006 was spent in preparation of the draft Charter and Bylaws, abstracting from the Society's existing Rules and using experience in appropriate clauses from other Chartered Bodies and Acts of Parliament. The Society was also now able to pursue its longstanding wish to create a Chartered Title for members with appropriate professional competence. What to call the Title was the subject of much discussion, first within the StPICom, secondly by the Council and then by members, it having been decided to hold a consultation on the options; this was launched at the annual general meeting in 2006 and conducted by postal questionnaire to all members.

The options for the Title were fivefold: Chartered Member or Fellow of the Society with the initials CMSRP or CFSRP; Chartered Radiation Protection Practitioner; Chartered Radiation Protection Professional (the last two with initials CRPP or CRadPP or CRad); Chartered Practitioner in Radiation Protection; or Chartered Professional in Radiation Protection (these last two with initials CPRP or CPRadP or CRad). The last four options would be in addition to the existing initials MSRP or FSRP (member or fellow of the Society). The response from members was mixed, being about 50% in favour of the first option, and 50% for one of the other options.

8. Partnership and inclusivity

At that stage a further consideration was brought into play, which had been in the background for some time, and now became an issue. The Society was aware that later in the Charter process was a consultation step, initiated by publication of the proposals in the London Gazette. It would be at that stage that any objections to the proposals could be formally made; and any Charter proposals which become controversial are unlikely to succeed. Therefore, appropriate liaison with collaborating societies, including Partner Societies, was important. In September 2006 a policy statement was drafted by the StPICom, and approved by the Council, expressing that the Society's Charter proposals were not intended to cut across the partnership and inclusivity approach that was now a key feature of relationships, and it was the Society's intention to foster this approach for the benefit of the practice of radiation protection in the UK. Further, as had been intimated to Partner Societies previously, the Society would seek to develop a route by which Partner Society members can qualify for use of the Chartered Title without being a member of the Society.

How to award the Chartered Title to non-members of the Society was discussed. One option was to approve each Partner Society to award the Chartered Title to suitable members, in an analogous manner to the award of CSci by bodies approved by the Science Council. However this would have meant a rather bureaucratic process, and not necessarily efficient for a body with only a small number of relevant members. Instead it was decided to directly use the status of International Member as a

class of Society member who could apply for the Title. However any means of awarding the same Chartered Title to a non-corporate member of the Society would rule out the use of CMSRP or CFSRP, and clarified that the Chartered Title should be separate from the indication of Society membership.

In focussing on the last four options in section 7, it was realised that an omission had been the initials CRadP, and this had been mentioned in response to the consultation. The StPICom warmed to this proposal and recommended it to the Council, who approved it forthwith. The necessary work to identify the procedures for award of the CRadP were put in hand by StPICom and then other relevant Society Committees.

9. Due Process

In accordance with the above considerations, the Charter and Bylaws were drafted, approved by the Council of the Society and submitted to the PCO in December 2006. Partner Societies were also sent copies, and offered the opportunity to discuss any points of concern further. Ultimately, two Partner Societies took advantage of this and meetings provided a useful forum to liaise and explain.

In February 2007 comments on the draft Charter and Bylaws were received from the PCO, incorporated, and a revised draft submitted [10]. During February and early March 2007 a petition to Her Majesty the Queen in Council was drafted [11]; this was then sent out to members of the Society with a notice of a special resolution to be put before the forthcoming annual general meeting on 24 April 2007, to give formal approval by the Society to proceeding with the Charter.

At the annual general meeting on 24 April 2007, the special resolution was passed *nem con*. The existing Constitution of the Society stipulated that there must then be a postal ballot of members. Preparations for this had already been made, and the ballot was carried out with a closing date of 25 May 2007. In the ballot, approximately 98% of respondees were in favour of proceeding with the Charter. On 31 May 2007 the Petition was submitted to the PCO, and at a meeting of the Privy Council on 13 June 2007 the Petition was referred to a Committee, following normal procedure, by Her Majesty the Queen. The public consultation step then began by publication of the proceedings in the London Gazette, with a closing date for comment by 10 August 2007. In the event, no objections were received, and at a further meeting of the Privy Council on 10 October 2007, Her Majesty approved the Grant of the Charter to the Society. The Charter was then prepared and printed on vellum, and the Great Seal of the Realm was attached on 10 December 2007. The following day it was presented to the Society at a ceremony in the House of Lords by the Head of the Crown Office (Fig. 1)

Figure 1: Presentation of the Royal Charter at the House of Lords, London, 11 December 2007

Left to right: Mrs Cathy Griffiths OBE (immediate past President of the Society), Mrs Wendy Bines OBE (Past President of the Society), Mrs Sheila Liddle (President of the Society), Mr Bryan Smith (Honorary Secretary to the Society), Mr Ian Denyer (Head of the Crown Office and Deputy Clerk of the Crown in Chancery), Dr Neil Lewis (member of the Strategic Planning Committee of the Society), Mr George Sallit (President elect of the Society), Miss Pauline Powell (past Honorary Secretary of the Society and member of the Strategic Planning Committee), Dr John Hunt (Past President of the Society and Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee).



10. Conclusions

This project, from the early vision, has taken over 20 years to come to fruition. A great deal of development of the Society and relationships with kindred bodies took place over this period; some of it was incidental to the direct Charter ambition, being driven by other needs, nevertheless the combined effect has been to assist the Society to qualify for its new status. A key factor has been the partnership approach with other UK societies involved in radiation protection. The beginnings of the charter process were relatively slow as there was greater uncertainty, both by the Society's members and its officers, of the procedures and the prospects of a favourable outcome. Gradually as more experience was gained and essential criteria were achieved so confidence grew, leading more rapidly to eventual success.

To conclude, the authors express their confidence in the words of the Petition, that:

“The work of the Society would be greatly enhanced by the grant of a Royal Charter of Incorporation. In particular it would strengthen the relationship between the Society and government, it would enhance the standing and recognition of radiation protection in business and the community, help develop, maintain and promote standards of competence and recognise professional progression within the field of radiation protection. The special recognition inherent in chartered status would have the effect of raising the profile of radiation protection as a discipline within the education and business sectors for the ultimate benefit of the public.”

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