

COMMITTEE ON THE MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

116<sup>th</sup> meeting, Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Richmond House, London

Present	<i>Chairman:</i>	Dr Chris Gibson	
	<i>Members:</i>	Dr Jane Barratt Dr Paul Darragh Dr Frank de Vocht Professor John Harrison Professor Ray Kemp Professor Stephanie McKeown Dr Colin Martin Dr Tom Nunan Professor Kevin Prise Dr Peter Riley Professor Roger Taylor Dr David Sutton Dr Mireille Toledano Professor Richard Wakeford Ms Helen Warner Professor Peter Warwick	
	<i>Assessors:</i>	BEIS DH DoH NI EA FSA HSE NDA SEPA SG	
	<i>Observers:</i>	BEIS DH	
	<i>Secretariat:</i>	Dr Simon Mann Dr Emma Petty Ms Kim Stonell	(PHE) (PHE) (PHE)

## 116<sup>th</sup> COMARE MEETING

### OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman opened the 116<sup>th</sup> meeting and welcomed members. He advised members of the private nature of the meeting and that papers should remain confidential. Members were asked to declare any interests during the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the new DH assessors, who would be representing DH at as many meetings as possible. He also welcomed the new assessor for Scottish Government, the substitute assessor for HSE and the observers from BEIS and DH.

### Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor Brenda Howard, Professor Mark Pearce and Professor Paul Pharoah. Apologies were also received from the assessors for HSE, SG, WG and EFA.

### ITEM 1 Minutes of the 115<sup>th</sup> meeting

- 1.1 The minutes were accepted with two corrections.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

### ITEM 2 Matters arising:

#### i. COMARE membership – Code of Conduct

- 2.1 The Chairman drew members' attention to the draft code of conduct to explain the various roles of the committee members. He noted that the committee has two tiers of assessors and recognises that tier 2 assessors might only wish to attend meetings when agenda items are relevant to them. Members approved the document for publication on the committee's web page.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

#### ii. COMARE matters

##### a. Draft Work Programme

- 2.2 The Chairman advised members that DH has approved the proposed work programme and this will be published on the committee's web page.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

- 2.3 Members were asked to consider possible areas of work for the longer term. It was suggested that COMARE might give a view on research needs, having noted that the last COMARE statement on recommended research was in 2006. The process for commissioning research has changed and the Chairman would ask DH for its view about COMARE advising on this.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

- 2.4 The Chairman advised members that the format for future COMARE reports is being reviewed. It is proposed that a lay person element would form part of each report, setting out the context of what the report covers and why it is of interest. Members discussed possible formats. It was noted that the key role of the COMARE reports is to provide advice to government and this will be considered in determining the best format.

## **b. Database access and cancer registry data transfer**

- 2.5 The Chairman reminded members of recommendation 10 of the 17<sup>th</sup> COMARE report relating to UK-wide governance of cancer registries. The PHE assessor advised that work on the harmonisation of data is continuing and an update would be provided at the next meeting. The DoH NI assessor updated members on the position in Northern Ireland.

[ACTION: PHE]

- 2.6 Members discussed patients opting out of cancer registration. PHE has produced a document that sets out information on cancer registration for patients and information on opting out. A large number of charities listed on the document support cancer registration. It was noted that Prostate Cancer UK was not included. Members discussed the numbers of patients known to have opted out of registration and what information is available for specific study areas. The PHE assessor asked members to provide lines/questions to take to NHS Digital in this regard.

[ACTION: Members/PHE]

- 2.7 Members also considered what information is provided to GPs to advise patients on registration. The Chairman agreed to check with colleagues at DH to determine what connections are made with GPs about cancer registrations.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

## **c. Thyroid research proposal**

- 2.8 The Chairman recapped on Recommendation 3 in the 17<sup>th</sup> COMARE report relating to a more powerful epidemiological study being undertaken using the Cumbrian birth cohort. The DH observer informed members of the current status of the project proposal. The accessibility of the Cumbrian birth cohort database is being investigated. Input from the committee will be required for the proposal in due course. The Chairman commented that some of the remaining uncertainties make this study even more important than previously thought.

[ACTION: DH]

## **d. NGO meeting request**

- 2.9 The Chairman reminded members that BEIS (formerly DECC) has a NGO forum that has expressed an interest for further engagement with COMARE. A representation from the committee previously met with the NGOs on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012. The NGO forum has proposed an agenda for a meeting between representatives of the forum and COMARE on the effects of radiation on health. The BEIS assessor provided members with the background to the forum. Members discussed the format of a future meeting and the objectives of the engagement. It was agreed that such meetings can be helpful if well organised and facilitated. Further discussions would be needed to agree an acceptable agenda, which does not exceed COMARE's defined remit. The Chairman would liaise with BEIS on possible proposals.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

## **iii. JEM project**

- 2.10 Dr de Vocht provided a precis of a JEM project funded through the DH research programme in 2012 and which was carried out by the University of Bristol, the University of Manchester, Sellafield Ltd and PHE. The project successfully achieved its aims and the JEM has the potential to be a valuable tool for future epidemiological studies of plutonium exposure risks. Members discussed the quality of the measurements and the use of JEM in other areas, such as exposure to chemicals.

### ITEM 3 Working group reports:

#### i. Contaminations Working Group

- 3.1 The Chairman drew members' attention to the beach particle updates received by the CWG since the last meeting. He noted that a further meeting of the CWG took place yesterday.

##### *Sellafield*

- 3.2 The EA assessor reported that Sellafield is on target for the financial year to monitor 150 hectares. There is nothing significant to report in terms of finds and find rates, or unusual particles. The CWG considered a number of issues being reviewed by the Sellafield Particles Working Party, including the work on trialling the monitoring vehicles, looking at detection limits and next year's monitoring programme. It was noted that PHE will be updating its risk assessments. Plans for the Moorside development adjacent to Sellafield were also discussed at the CWG meeting.

- 3.3 The CWG were informed that a local pressure group has taken some samples from the Ravenglass Estuary and sent them to the USA for analysis. The results are consistent with previous results showing sample heterogeneity in the estuary. The final report will be shared with the CWG.

##### *Dalgety Bay*

- 3.4 The Chairman noted the absence of the MoD assessor to report on this agenda item at the CWG meeting and would follow up with the MoD.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

- 3.5 The SEPA assessor advised members that current protection measures remain in place while the MoD develops a long term remediation plan for the site. An outline plan has been submitted to Fife Council for further access to the site and it is expected that permissions will be granted. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office invited a UN reporter to speak to local residents at Dalgety Bay. A public statement from the UN said that the work was welcomed and all stakeholders had been engaged at an appropriate level.

##### *Dounreay*

- 3.6 The SEPA assessor informed members that DSRL continues to monitor in accordance with their authorisations and there has been no significant increase or decrease in the find rates. Further characterisation of the <sup>241</sup>Am particle found in 2016 is being undertaken and the CWG would be appraised when the work is complete.

- 3.7 The Chairman noted that not all particle updates were reaching all CWG members. The secretariat would check the distribution list.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

- 3.8 The SEPA assessor advised members that the draft guidance by SEPA on monitoring criteria objectives for existing exposure situations would be published shortly. It has been widely welcomed by local authorities in terms of expectations of contractors. The Chairman suggested there should be consistency between England and Scotland on guidance for contaminated land.

- 3.9 The BEIS assessor advised members that BEIS is in the final stages of preparing recommendations for how to transpose the requirements of the BSSD and expects to launch a consultation in the first week of June. It is hoped there will be a further stakeholder event during the consultation period and representation from COMARE would be welcomed.

[ACTION: BEIS]

3.10 The Chairman reminded members that the committee is strongly encouraging a peer-reviewed publication of the PHE dose assessments from  $^{210}\text{Po}$  discharges for the 17<sup>th</sup> COMARE report.

ii. **Authorisation Working Group**

3.11 The Chairman noted that the AWG has not considered any further consultations since the last meeting.

3.12 The SEPA assessor advised members that a Dalgety Bay consultation is available on the Fife Council website and would provide the link to the secretariat.

[ACTION: SEPA]

**ITEM 4 COMARE publications**

i. **COMARE – 17<sup>th</sup> Report**

a. **Correspondence**

4.1 The Chairman recapped on the recent correspondence received by members. The subcommittee undertook detailed scrutiny of the additional references brought to its attention and determined there was no impact on the conclusions of the 17<sup>th</sup> report. A response has been drafted and sent to DH for approval. The Chairman would follow this up.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

4.2 Dr Toledano reminded members about the discussion at the last meeting with regard to ongoing surveillance. She was pleased to report that SASHU was strongly supportive of being able to undertake the work for the committee and could commence in the autumn. Further information is required and Dr Toledano would liaise with Dr de Vocht, Professor Pearce and Professor Wakeford on this work.

[ACTION: Dr Toledano]

b. **NDA report/historic iodine releases from Sellafield**

4.3 The Chairman reminded members that the NDA was actioned at the last meeting to provide the BNFL report referred to in the response to the recommendations of the 17<sup>th</sup> COMARE report. It was noted that earlier provision of the report may have resulted in a more precise estimate being made for the 17<sup>th</sup> report. The NDA assessor advised members that the NDA maintains the 10% value is a reasonable precautionary estimate. Members were also advised that, following discussion at the previous meeting regarding environmental measurements, it has been concluded tree rings could be used to measure  $^{129}\text{I}$ ; however, this would be unlikely to give the temporal accuracy required to reduce the uncertainties.

4.4 The Chairman also noted that both the thyroid cancer and population mixing papers have now been published in peer reviewed literature.

**ITEM 5 COMARE publications in progress**

i. **COMARE – Interventional Radiology issues**

5.1 The Chairman noted that the third meeting of the subcommittee would take place on 10<sup>th</sup> April. Members discussed the project outline and possible areas for consideration. Relevant publications from ICRP, IPEM and BIR were discussed and might be provided to the subcommittee.

[ACTION: Dr Martin]

ii. **COMARE – DXA scanning issues**

- 5.2 The Chairman asked members to consider the draft report sections. Dr Martin advised members that the first meeting of the subcommittee took place on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at which specific chapters were allocated to subcommittee members. He gave a review of the report sections. Members briefly discussed medical consent and questioned what the procedure for the use of DXA might be. Members were advised that a professor of law and ethics was reviewing this issue for the subcommittee. Members also discussed where the responsibility for interpretation of the scan lies. It was noted that there is a wide public concern about governance in sport. Finding a way that the data can be obtained and finding out what advice is given is fundamental.
- 5.3 Members discussed specific issues in the report sections. It was suggested that it would be helpful to draw a distinction between medical exposures and non-medical exposures under a legal framework. Dr Martin noted members' comments and advised that the next draft was expected to be completed in May for a June meeting of the subcommittee. The Chairman would welcome this draft at the July meeting.

[ACTION: MPS(DXA)]

**ITEM 6 Any other business**

- 6.1 The Chairman drew members' attention to the recent publication of the final AGNIR report – Ultraviolet radiation and vitamin D and health (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ultraviolet-radiation-and-vitamin-d-the-effects-on-health>).
- 6.2 The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017 (venue to be confirmed). He closed the meeting at 2.15pm.