

COMMITTEE ON THE MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

118<sup>th</sup> meeting, Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017  
Skipton House, London

<b>Present</b>	<i>Chairman:</i>	Dr Chris Gibson	
	<i>Members:</i>	Dr Paul Darragh Dr Frank de Vocht Professor John Harrison Dr Brenda Howard Dr Ray Kemp Professor Stephanie McKeown Dr Colin Martin Professor Paul Pharoah Dr Peter Riley Dr David Sutton Professor Richard Wakeford Ms Helen Warner Professor Peter Warwick	
	<i>Assessors:</i>	BEIS DoH NI EA FSA HSE NDA PHE SEPA	
	<i>Secretariat:</i>	Dr Simon Mann Dr Emma Petty Ms Kim Stonell	(PHE) (PHE) (PHE)

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

### OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman opened the 118<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 advised members that this would be Professor Wakeford's last meeting after 10 years on the committee. The Chairman thanked Professor Wakeford for his significant contribution to the work of the committee, specifically with the working groups and the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> COMARE reports. The Chairman advised members that this would also be Professor Warwick's last meeting and thanked him for his contribution to the work of the committee, and for chairing the Authorisations Working Group.

### Apologies

Apologies had been received from Dr Jane Barratt, Dr Tom Nunan, Professor Kevin Prise and Professor Roger Taylor. Apologies had also been received from the assessors for SG, ONS, EA and FSS.

### ITEM 1 Minutes of the 117<sup>th</sup> COMARE meeting

1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were accepted without amendment.

### ITEM 2 Matters arising

#### i. COMARE membership

2.1 The Chairman updated members on current and future vacancies on the committee. Posts for two nuclear physicists/epidemiologists and one environmental geoscientist, ideally with an interest in radiochemistry, will be advertised. Members were asked to advise the secretariat of any suitable applicants.

[ACTION: AII]

#### ii. COMARE matters

##### a. Thyroid Research Proposal

2.2 The Chairman reminded members that a recommendation of the 17<sup>th</sup> COMARE report was to undertake a thyroid cancer incidence study using the Cumbrian birth cohort. A funding proposal has been submitted to DH for this study. Professor Wakeford informed members of the status of the birth cohort database. It is hoped that the study can commence in 2018.

##### b. NGO forum

2.3 The Chairman informed members that he, Professor Harrison and Dr de Vocht attended the NGO Forum on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017 as representatives of the committee. It was noted that the agenda for the forum was changed the week before the forum and included the addition of an extra presentation. The Chairman thanked Professor Harrison and Dr de Vocht for their contribution to the COMARE presentation and for responding to challenging questions. The forum minutes have been published on gov.uk. The Chairman informed members that he had written to Minister Harrington following the meeting. The BEIS assessor confirmed that the letter had been received and a response would follow in due course.

2.4 Dr de Vocht and Professor Harrison commented that the forum went as well as expected under the circumstances. The late inclusion of the additional presentation imposed time constraints and reduced the opportunity for responding to comments. One issue raised by an NGO representative was related to health effects from wind farm noise. COMARE is awaiting an official letter from the representative. The BEIS assessor acknowledged that the NGO meetings are often challenging in nature and reiterated the gratitude

of the BEIS co-chairman for COMARE's engagement. The COMARE representatives gave a very robust response to the raised arguments.

2.5 The Chairman thanked Professor Kemp for his advice on responding to challenges under pressure. Members discussed dealing with difficult situations and how to better engage with third parties.

2.6 Professor Harrison suggested that the issue of the underestimation of risk from internal emitters discussed at the forum is of interest for COMARE. The Chairman agreed that this issue could be considered for COMARE's work programme next year and he would discuss this with DH and the secretariat, together with reviewing the committee's communication strategies with the general public.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

2.7 Members discussed a recent article in the Ecologist by an NGO representative. The Chairman reminded members of the previous correspondence received by members and drew members' attention to a paper containing a summary of the responses received, including the response from COMARE.

c. **SAHSU update**

2.8 The Chairman reminded members that SASHU was supportive of undertaking further surveillance work around Sellafield and Dounreay. A meeting was held with representatives from COMARE to discuss proposals to take this work forward and which sites would be considered in the study. The secretariat would circulate the proposed list of sites to members. The Chairman agreed that this could provide some very helpful data relevant to the committee's remit and would request an update on progress.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

[ACTION: The Chairman]

2.9 The Chairman drew members' attention to a recommendation in the 17<sup>th</sup> report regarding prospective population mixing studies for future major development sites. It was noted that this would be a significant undertaking and would require additional funding; however the focus currently remains on the geographical incidence study.

**ITEM 3 Working group reports:**

i. **Contaminations Working Group**

3.1 The Chairman advised members that the CWG met yesterday and drew members' attention to the update on particle finds, considered by the CWG.

*Sellafield*

3.2 The EA assessor advised members that the current beach monitoring programme for this calendar year is on track to meet the 150 ha target for the programme. The total number of finds up to the end of September 2017 was 2917 in 2006 ha of beach area surveyed.

3.3 Members were informed of possible explanations for the location of the unusual large object at Allonby beach, noted at the July meeting. A beta-rich particle was retrieved from Sellafield beach in October 2017 that met the characterisation protocol trigger for further analysis, which is being undertaken by PHE. The Sellafield Particles Working Group (SPWG) is continuing to work towards establishing a routine monitoring programme. The start of this programme has been delayed by a year. PHE will be undertaking the review and update of the public risk assessment for use of the beach and consumption of shellfish, liaising closely with the FSA. The first draft is expected to be available in July 2018. Members were advised that the characterisation and intervention protocol has been published on gov.uk.

3.4 The Chairman drew member's attention to the alleged particle in the Ravenglass Estuary. EA has requested a copy of the report by Professor Jones for circulation to the CWG.

- 3.5 It was noted that information on the current Sellafield Ltd website will be moved into gov.uk. The EA assessor agreed to check whether the existing Sellafield website will be archived.

[ACTION: EA]

#### *Dounreay*

- 3.6 The SEPA assessor advised members that the monitoring programme is continuing and the CWG continues to receive updates on particle finds. In 2017, nine minor particles from Sandside and three from the Dounreay foreshore were recovered. The monitoring programme footprint will be circulated to the CWG.

[ACTION: SEPA]

- 3.7 Members were informed that the ownership of Sandside Beach has now changed and contractors continue to monitor the beach regularly. It was also noted that an unusual particle was recovered in December 2016. Non-destructive analysis is being carried out, prior to destructive analysis being undertaken. The site has been carrying out a BPEO study and aims to submit a report to SEPA early next year.

#### *Dalgety Bay*

- 3.8 The SEPA assessor advised members that the monthly monitoring by the MoD is continuing. SEPA undertakes a check monitoring programme and there is also monitoring of mussel beds every six months. Contractors for the MoD undertook ground investigation during September and October and SEPA was on site during the investigations.

- 3.9 The SEPA assessor advised members that as a result of recent correspondence, SEPA has formally requested an update of the epidemiological analysis of cancer incidence in the area around Dalgety Bay. The Chairman reminded members that a recommendation of the 15<sup>th</sup> report suggested a review should be carried out in 5-10 years' time and it might therefore be timely to update the analysis. Members agreed that the Chairman should put this to DH for consideration. SEPA would liaise with the Chairman on this issue.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

[ACTION: SEPA]

#### ii. Authorisation Working Group

- 3.10 Professor Warwick drew members' attention to the details of a consultation by the EA on an application for a permit variation made by Sellafield Limited. Three variations have been requested. He cited COMARE's response to the consultation.

- 3.11 It was also noted that COMARE had submitted a response to the consultation on the BSSD. The BEIS assessor confirmed that the submission had been received and a formal government response would follow in the New Year. The Chairman advised members that he and Dr Mann attended a recent workshop in Birmingham on implementation of the BSSD. Members discussed the UK position and the timing for the implementation.

- 3.12 The Chairman noted the helpful guidance from SEPA presented to the CWG on monitoring for radium and questioned whether it might be possible to disseminate guidance to responsible local authorities through guidance being prepared by PHE. Members were advised that PHE is working with BEIS and will be including some signposting of relevant guidance.

#### ITEM 4 COMARE publications:

##### i. COMARE – 17<sup>th</sup> report - Hereditary effects

- 4.1 The Chairman reminded members of the careful review by the committee of the scientific relevance of the additional evidence presented in correspondence sent to members last year. He drew members' attention to a recent publication, which provides a very helpful overview of health effects of low level radiation. The

Chairman re-iterated his request for members to provide any other papers or research on the question of internal emitters and hereditary effects.

[ACTION: AII]

## ITEM 5 COMARE publications in progress

### i. COMARE – Interventional Radiology issues

5.1 The Chairman advised members that, following the last subcommittee meeting, several organisations were contacted requesting information. A number of responses have been received, in particular, from IPEM and PHE, and further information is awaited from BSIR. The responses are being considered and the work will be taken forward once the DXA report has been finalised. Members were asked to consider whether there were other bodies that could provide helpful information.

5.2 Dr Martin noted that an ICRP report on occupational exposure was due to be published in next few months and that the IPEM working party report on dosimetry is almost complete. Dr Sutton advised members that there was a working party from IPEM and BIR to look at paediatric optimisation with a specific focus on interventional radiology. The Chairman suggested it would be helpful to make contact with the paediatric subgroup. He would also request a further update from the Chair of the subcommittee

[ACTION: MPS(IR)]

[ACTION: The Chairman]

### ii. COMARE – DXA scanning issues

5.3 The Chairman drew members' attention to the draft report and thanked Dr Martin and the subcommittee for their work. Dr Martin advised members of the response from the Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine (FSEM) on the use of DXA scans for sports performance assessments. The Chairman requested that comments on grammar/spelling in the draft report are sent to the secretariat.

[ACTION: AII]

5.4 Members offered suggestions on each chapter to help clarify and strengthen the report. A specific focus of discussion was on the balance of benefit and risk from the practice. Members discussed the application of regulations to this type of assessment. The Chairman summarised the committee's discussions and the recommendations. Dr Martin would update the report in light of comments from members.

[ACTION: Dr Martin]

## ITEM 6 PHE updates

6.1 The PHE assessor provided a general update from PHE on the following aspects:

### i. EMF and health

- WHO RF EHC report
- ICNIRP Guidelines
- COSMOS
- NIHR HPRU Theme 3 Project – RF EMF exposure assessment and health
- PHE Smart metering project
- Mobikids Project
- GERoNIMO Project

6.2 Members discussed the possibility of having more frequent updates on individual studies and whether COMARE should consider a working group for non-ionising radiation issues.

ii. **Radon**

- Implementation of the EU-Basic Safety Standards Directive
- Shale gas
- Radon in schools
- Targeted radon campaigns
- Public information

**ITEM 7 Any other business**

- 7.1 The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018 (venue to be confirmed). He closed the meeting at 3.15pm.