

COMARE – Annual Report 2018

1. Membership

Professor Kevin Prise completed his term of office in July. Mr Graham Smith and Dr Richard McNally joined the committee in September. At the close of 2018, there were 16 appointed expert members, two appointed lay members and two vacancies on the committee.

2. COMARE Meetings

Main committee:

119th meeting – 13th March

120th meeting – 3rd July

121st meeting – 22nd November

Subcommittees and working groups:

1st MPS(IR) Subcommittee teleconference – 18th July

2nd MPS(IR) Subcommittee teleconference – 11th September

11th Contaminations Working Group – 12th March

12th Contaminations Working Group – 21st November

3. Progress on work programme

SUBCOMMITTEES:

Interventional Radiology Issues

COMARE was asked by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to produce advice on issues concerning radiation doses from interventional radiology in the UK. A subcommittee has been established to respond to this request. The subcommittee has requested information from various sources, including submitting a survey to interventional radiology departments, and is in the processing of reviewing the results.

DXA Scanning Issues

COMARE was asked by DHSC to produce advice on medical radiation dose issues associated with DXA scans for sports performance assessments and other non-medical practices. COMARE's report was submitted to DHSC and agreement to publish has been received.

WORKING GROUPS:

Contaminations

The Contaminations Working Group (CWG) met twice in 2018 and considered updates on the respective beach monitoring programmes submitted from Dounreay and Sellafeld, noting the particles detected at each site. The working group also followed the monitoring work and remediation programme being undertaken at Dalgety Bay.

The CWG also submitted a response to the consultation by the Scottish Government on the proposed changes to the current guidance for the Radioactive Contaminated Land (Scotland) Regulations.

Authorisations

In 2018, the Authorisations Working Group (AWG) responded to two consultations, both from the Environment Agency. The first was regarding an application for a permit from the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Aldermaston under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 and the second was regarding a Sellafield Ltd Radioactive Substances Activities Permit Variation.

4. Requests for advice

In November 2017, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) formally requested that COMARE update the analysis of cancer incidence around Dalgety Bay, which formed part of the 15th COMARE report. During 2018, COMARE has continued to work with the Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland on progressing this request.

5. Additional items under consideration by the committee

- COMARE receives annual updates from Public Health England on electromagnetic fields and radon issues. The last update was given on 22nd November 2018. Public concerns on the health issues associated with electromagnetic fields were also brought to the Committee's attention through 2018.
- An epidemiological study to investigate any association of thyroid cancer incidence with Sellafield discharges, in particular associated with the Windscale nuclear reactor fire in 1957, using the Cumbrian birth cohort was commissioned by DHSC in 2018. This study was proposed in recommendation 3 of the 17th COMARE report. COMARE understands that the study commenced on the 1st October and will be following its progress.
- COMARE continued to work with the Small Area Health Statistics Unit (SAHSU) on the surveillance of childhood cancer incidence around nuclear installations in Great Britain.

6. Correspondence

The Committee received and responded to correspondence regarding public concerns on the health issues associated with infrasound and with electromagnetic fields.