

# **Science Advisory Group (SAG) for the review of potential environmental contamination in Grenfell and North Kensington**

## **Advice to Grenfell Tower Fire Ministerial Recovery Group**

### **Minutes of Meeting #1 – 21 November 2018**

#### **Overview**

1. The SAG has been established to give scientific advice to the Grenfell Tower Fire Ministerial Recovery Group. The members of the SAG are fully independent of government except for Sir Patrick Vallance, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser and SAG chair, and Professor Whitty, Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department of Health and Social Care and Deputy Chief Medical Officer.
2. At its initial meeting, SAG discussed: the background to the review; the purpose of the group and its terms of reference; the draft strategy for the soil sampling programme, written by the Environment Agency; and the draft community engagement plan.

#### **Conclusions and recommendations**

1. SAG agreed to make its membership, conclusions and recommendations, and actions public.
2. The primary focus of the soil investigation should be to obtain evidence of exactly what is present in the Grenfell area that could have impacts on the environment or on public health.
3. SAG supported the phased investigation model proposed by the Environment Agency (EA). Phase 1 involves an initial risk assessment and review of relevant background information to understand land use and historical sources of pollution. Phase 2 involves a more detailed risk assessment in Phase 2, including the main site investigation and sampling. SAG recommends that a call for any additional evidence should be issued under Phase 1 to understand the baseline levels of substances in the area and how these have been affected by the fire.
4. SAG recommends that the Multi Agency Partnership (MAP) leading the investigation should have early engagement with the community to understand land use and community concerns – to inform the investigation. Residents' concerns need to be understood by the MAP up front so that the investigation can be designed to focus on and reflect these where appropriate. A structured approach to gathering information on the community's concerns is essential.
5. In SAG's view, communications with the community following the investigation must address whether there is any absolute risk, or increased risk, to residents in the area from exposure to any substance found during the investigation, and whether this can be attributed to the fire. The investigation should seek to quantify the risk as far as possible. All data must be made freely available by the MAP.
6. Based on investigations to date (including information presented by Prof Stec) and information about the proposed approach to the risk assessment, it was the view of SAG that there is no requirement for immediate additional action on public health at this stage.

Additional quantitative data is required to determine actions that may need to be taken, which should be discussed at a future meeting.

7. SAG recommends that the MAP make results and conclusions of the Phase 1 study (including a map) publicly available – with an explanation of how the conclusions have been drawn from the results.

### **Actions**

ACTION 1 – Air quality data and smoke plume modelling reports from Public Health England (PHE) and the Met Office to be circulated to the SAG following the meeting.

ACTION 2 – Prof Stec to provide written details of her studies to the group in advance of the next meeting.

ACTION 3 – SAG Secretariat to seek expert advice on any plausible biological mechanism (uptake of toxins into plants) or behavioural mechanisms (e.g. turning of soil in allotments/vegetable patches) which could cause contamination of produce grown and reared (vegetables or livestock) around Grenfell.

ACTION 4 – Prof Whitty to report to the group on health monitoring carried out by the NHS in response to the Grenfell fire.

ACTION 5 – SAG to review the desk-based research as soon as it is available from the MAP.

ACTION 6 – SAG Secretariat to request information from PHE and NHS England detailing what health aspects have been looked at already in response to the fire, and what programmes have been put in place.

ACTION 7 – Prof Stec to provide the SAG with the list of possible effluents from the fire.

### **Members**

Sir Patrick Vallance, Chair

Dr Lindsay Bramwell

Dr Alexandra Freeman

Prof Len Levy

Dr Paul Nathanail

Prof Sir Anthony Newman Taylor

Dr James Rubin

Prof Sir Munir Pirmohamed

Prof Anna Stec

Prof Chris Whitty (in his capacity as Deputy Chief Medical Officer)

### **Apologies**

Prof Robert Mokaya

Prof Ragnar Löfstedt

### **Others**

Prof Andrew Curran (Health and Safety Executive)

Ian Martin (Environment Agency)

Suzanne Kochanowski (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government)

Government Office for Science secretariat