

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 #8 (Telecon) - 13th September 2019

Overview

At its 8th meeting, SAG discussed two points of scope for Tier 2 of the investigation – 1) testing indoors and 2) testing of fruit and vegetables.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Indoor Testing

1. SAG advises that cleaning of properties is the most important step to be taken, for example to remove char or residual debris from the fire.
2. At present there is insufficient evidence to provide a sound scientific basis for the need for testing of the indoor environment, particularly based on the uncertainty of any chemicals related to the fire to be tested and the testing regime that would be used. The scientific literature base for understanding what to test for from a fire with more than two years elapsed is weak and identifying what to test for and interpreting results would be challenging. SAG does not recommend broad spectrum, untargeted, testing indoors because the significance, origins and interpretations of any findings would be unclear.
3. If indoor testing is deemed necessary:
 - a. SAG recommends that the Building Research Establishment (BRE) together with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) could be requested by MAP to provide advice on how this could be done. The design of any testing must be targeted towards chemicals or chemical-markers relating to effluents from the fire, and take into account time elapsed since the fire and the results of environmental testing in the area to date.
 - b. SAG would recommend initially identifying a small number of properties to undertake testing in. These could be selected on the basis of likely high exposure to the fire (considering air emissions, deposition or tracking of material as appropriate), as well as local resident concern. Control sampling should also be included as necessary and precise sites would require statistical advice. No testing should be done directly on fire debris as this would not provide meaningful results.

Fruit and vegetables

4. SAG agreed that soil in allotments and kitchen gardens should be tested in Tier 2, and that fruit and vegetables should only be tested if an issue was found. Soil should be tested in the root area of plants. It may be useful to store by freezing samples of fruit and vegetables from these same locations for later sampling if required.

Dialling in:

Sir Patrick Vallance, chair

Prof John Warner

Dr James Rubin

Prof Jose Torero

Dr Lindsay Bramwell

Prof Len Levy

Dr Alexandra Freeman

Prof Andrew Curran, Health and Safety Executive (in his capacity as Chief Scientific Adviser)
Government Office for Science secretariat

Apologies

Prof Ragnar Löfstedt

Prof Sir Munir Pirmohamed

Dr Paul Nathanail (Suitably Qualified Person)

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

Prof Robert Mokaya

Prof Sir Anthony Newman Taylor