

COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

132nd COMARE MEETING, Thursday 7th July 2022

Online meeting

Present Chair: Professor John Harrison

 Members: Dr Teik Chooi Oh
 Professor Frank de Vocht
 Dr Mark Hill
 Professor Stewart Martin
 Dr Susan McCready-Shea
 Dr Richard McNally
 Professor Paul Pharoah
 Professor David Read
 Professor Lesley Rhodes
 Professor Graham Smith
 Professor James Smith
 Professor David Sutton
 Professor Mireille Toledano
 Dr Chris Westcott

Assessors: DHSC
 EA
 FSA
 NDA
 NI DH
 ONR
 SEPA
 SG
 UKHSA

Representative: UKHSA HPRU

Secretariat: Dr Simon Mann (UKHSA)
 Dr Emma Petty (UKHSA)
 Mrs Samantha Watson (UKHSA)

Open Session

1. Welcome & declarations

- 1.1 The Chair opened the 132nd meeting, welcoming members and assessors to the seventh online meeting for COMARE, noting that it is hoped that face to face meetings can recommence soon.
- 1.2 The Chair noted that the online meeting is not being opened to observers to ensure meeting security. The meeting would still be split into an open and a closed session due to the minuting requirements of specific items. The Chair reminded members of the online meeting protocols.

- 1.3 Apologies were received from Professor Malcolm Sperrin, Dr Ray Kemp and Dr Colin Martin, and the assessors for BEIS, HSE, NHS Scotland and WG. The Chair reminded assessors that substitutes may attend the meeting.
- 1.4 The Chair reminded members of the private nature of the Committee's proceedings and that papers marked "For Members Use Only" should be kept in members' own hands. Members were also reminded that they should disclose any relevant interests to the Chair.

2. Minutes of the 131st COMARE meeting

i. Minutes, actions & matters arising

- 2.1 The Chair asked for comments or corrections to the minutes from the 131st meeting. The minutes were agreed with no amendments. The Chair noted that the minutes of the open session will be posted on the COMARE webpage. The minutes of the closed session will remain confidential.

[Action: Secretariat]
- 2.2 The Chair provided members with an update from BEIS on the consultation on the draft policy on radioactive substances. BEIS is hoping to publish the consultation before the parliament summer recess. However, it may be delayed until after the recess. BEIS will provide details to the Secretariat when it is published.

[Action: BEIS]
- 2.3 The Chair informed members that the HSE assessor has provided the link to the 'EMF at work regulations' report, which will be circulated to members.

[Action: Secretariat]
- 2.4 The Chair noted that the previous action for members to discuss ideas for COMARE's work programme with him is closed, but he is happy to continue to hear from members at any time.
- 2.5 The Chair informed members that HSE is unlikely to start assessing the impact of changes to radon dose coefficients until autumn, and that the HSE approach to management of radon risk is being updated. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

[Action: HSE]
- 2.6 The Chair reported that a link to the published Goldacre review has been provided to members, and that the Journal of Radiological Protection will be reviewing the Goldacre review.
- 2.7 The Chair noted that the proposal to consider the ICRP recommendations is now included in the current work programme. He confirmed that Professor Read had provided text for the Contaminations Working Group section of the work programme and that the agreed work programme is now available online, along with the annual report.
- 2.8 Professor Rhodes provided an update on discussions with the Chair about environmental effects of UV radiation and how the relationship with global warming and disease is often missed. Professor Rhodes will draft a briefing note for the next COMARE meeting.

[Action: Professor Rhodes]

3. Committee matters

i. Correspondence and updates

- 3.1 The Chair informed members that no FOI requests have been received since the last meeting. COMARE was mentioned in the answer to a Parliamentary Question ([UIN 148449](#)) in April.

- 3.2 The Chair informed members that there have been several email enquiries for COMARE, which were handled by the Secretariat. The Chair also reported that a further letter has been received regarding EMF concerns. All the letters in this correspondence chain received by the Chair and the COMARE responses have been made available to members.
- 3.3 The Chair advised members that a response was submitted on 7th June to the UK NSC consultation on 'Screening for lung cancer in individuals at increased risk'. A copy of the submission has been circulated to members. Members were thanked for their contributions.
- 3.4 The Chair informed members that a short article he wrote on COMARE has been published in the Summer 2022 edition of the Society for Radiological Protection's magazine ([Radiation Protection Today](#)). The link will be circulated to members.

[Action: Secretariat]

- 3.5 The Chair advised members of a report released the previous week by the Health Council of the Netherlands on powerlines. Currently only the executive summaries have been translated into English. It is hoped that the full reports may be available in English for the November meeting. Professor de Vocht provided some background information on the report.

ii. Committee procedures

- 3.6 The Chair informed members that three pieces of documentation on Committee procedures have been updated. This documentation was last reviewed by the Committee in July 2019. The updated versions of the COMARE Code of Conduct; the Procedure for holding COMARE meetings in open session; and the COMARE open meeting application form have been circulated to members. No comments were made on the updates and publication on the COMARE website, replacing the existing files, was approved.

[Action: Secretariat]

iii. Proposed subgroups

- 3.7 The Chair brought members' attention to a proposal for the formation of a subgroup to report back to the main Committee on EMF health issues. The formation of an EMF subgroup was first raised in 2018. At that time it was agreed not to create such a group, with the caveat that it may be needed once the WHO has published its current reviews of exposures and effects from radiofrequency fields. As the WHO work is advancing, with some methodology elements already published, the proposal of a subgroup is being revisited. Members were supportive of creating this subgroup based on the progress of the WHO review. Formation of the new subgroup was approved, and members were encouraged to volunteer to join the group.

[Action: Members]

- 3.8 The Chair also brought members' attention to a proposal for the formation of a subgroup to consider ICRP recommendations on protection from ionising radiation. It was suggested that it would be helpful to have a subgroup to follow the developments on the updates of the ICRP recommendations and to respond to relevant consultations. The group will focus on the ICRP recommendations, but also take account of other international opinions and developments. Formation of the new subgroup was approved, and members were encouraged to volunteer to join the group.

[Action: Members]

4. Working group reports:

i. Contaminations Working Group

- 4.1 The Chair informed members that the CWG last met in March and the next meeting is planned for November. Members were advised that Professor David Read has agreed to take on the position of Chair for the CWG.

- 4.2 The Chair reported that a small group from the CWG attended an online workshop on 5th July 2022 to review the Sellafield Beach Monitoring Programme. The current regime ends in 2024 and it was noted that a change was agreed in 2020 to reduce the area monitored from 150 hectares per year to 105 hectares per year. Details of the workshop will be discussed at the next CWG meeting.

[Action: Professor Read]

- 4.3 The Chair informed members that discussions are underway to arrange a date for a site visit to Sellafield for a small group of CWG members, hopefully in October or November.

- 4.4 The EA assessor provided the Committee with an update on the Sellafield Beach Monitoring Programme. Recent finds have been in line with previous find rates and there has been no requirement for any interventions. To mid-July 50 hectares of beach have been monitored, and 20 alpha-rich particles, 1 beta-rich particle and 3 beta-rich larger objects recovered.

- 4.5 The EA assessor also updated the Committee on the previously reported leak from the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo. The leak has been continuing at the same rate since October 2020, around 2.5 m³ per day. There are permit improvement requirements in place on Sellafield Ltd to determine the cause and stop the leak. The EA assessor provided estimates of the radioactive material lost to ground from the leak and the migration of material within the site. Members queried the level of uncertainty on the estimates and the EA assessor agreed to provide more information on the estimates.

[Action: EA]

- 4.6 The first retrievals from the MSSS, to allow the repackaging of waste into modern storage conditions, began in April but did not start with the leaking silo. A report on options to prevent, minimise or mitigate the leak is expected from Sellafield Ltd at the end of July and will be brought to the next CWG meeting.

[Action: EA]

- 4.7 The SEPA assessor provided an update on the situation at Dalgety Bay. Remediation work has commenced for a second season, including the ongoing retrieval of particles using the detection system. Beach monitoring is also continuing within the works area, with the highest activity find of 1.6 MBq. Monthly monitoring continues outside of the works, with the finds consistent with previous monitoring. Signage remains in place, and high activity areas remain fenced off. SEPA are happy that public protection is adequate. SEPA continue to carry out drone surveys to monitor the coastline.

- 4.8 The SEPA assessor also provided an update on the situation at Dounreay. There has been a significant upturn of finds on the foreshore, with 15 finds so far in 2022, with 4 finds classified as relevant and 11 classified as significant. This increased rate of finds has led to an analysis of the impact of winter storms by Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd (DSRL). The CWG will be informed of the outcome of this analysis. Sandside Beach had one minor find in May 2022. Beach monitoring trials using the Dounreay synergy system and the Sellafield fiddler system were completed during the summer 2021 with no particles found, and the Particle Retrieval Advisory Group (Dounreay) (PRAG(D)) group therefore agreed that the hazard from Americium-241 particles was negligible and there was no need to change the beach monitoring programme. PRAG(D) met in February and May 2022 and have been tasked with considering the impact of monitoring activities from 2012 to 2021. COMARE will be kept informed of this work. Members discussed the consideration of historical storm events.

[Action: SEPA]

ii. Authorisations Working Group

- 4.9 Professor Sutton, Chair of the AWG, reported that, since the last COMARE meeting, the AWG made one consultation submission on 21st March 2022. EA held a consultation on an environmental permit variation application for Barrow Shipyards. The application concerned an extension to the RSA site boundary, but with no changes to the wastes generated. The

AWG had no objections to the application; however, it was noted that complications can arise from different groups overseeing different aspects of radiation protection and regulations.

5. Information papers.

- 5.1 The Chair drew attention to the 18 information papers and 1 digital link, covering both ionising and non-ionising topics. Members were asked for comments on the circulated papers. It was noted that two of the circulated papers had linked papers connected to them.
- 5.2 It was noted that the paper on cost-effectiveness of banning sunbeds could be a useful paper to aid decisions if the Committee are asked to follow up on this area in the future. It was noted that this is a complicated societal issue.
- 5.3 The Chair reminded members that suggestions of relevant publications, in particular papers published by them or their institutions, would be welcomed for future meetings. A report on low doses radiation research was suggested for future inclusion with information papers.

[Action: Members]

6. AOB.

- 6.1 Attention was drawn to the Dunster Lecture from Professor John Boice at the recent SRP conference. The lecture considered links between radiation and Parkinson's disease, from the Million Persons Study in the US. A correlation was found, but causation is unclear. It was suggested that COMARE could look into the association, noting that this is still early work and more evidence is likely to emerge with time.

Closed Session

7. Studies in progress

- i. Thyroid cancer incidence study
- ii. SAHSU update

- 7.1 The minutes for these items were considered as reserved business as they concerned pre-publication material.

8. COMARE Subcommittee reports

- i. Cardio-/cerebrovascular effects

- 8.1 The minutes for these items were considered as reserved business as they concerned pre-publication material.

Close of meeting

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and contributions to the meeting. The next COMARE meeting will be held on Tuesday 15th November 2022. The format will be confirmed in due course. The Chair then declared the meeting closed at 12.12 pm.