

135<sup>th</sup> COMARE MEETING, Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Online meeting

Present	Chair:	Professor John Harrison
	Members:	Professor Frank de Vocht Dr Mark Hill Dr Colin Martin Professor Stewart Martin Dr Susan McCready-Shea Dr Richard McNally Professor David Read Professor Lesley Rhodes Professor James Smith Professor David Sutton Dr Chris Westcott
	Assessors:	DESNZ DHSC EA FSA NDA NI DH ONR SEPA SG UKHSA WG
	Secretariat:	Dr Simon Mann (UKHSA) Dr Emma Petty (UKHSA)

## Open Session

### 1. Welcome & declarations

- 1.1 The Chair opened the 135<sup>th</sup> meeting, welcomed members and assessors and noted that the meeting is split into an open and a closed session for the minutes.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed the substitute assessors for DHSC and the new SG assessor to the meeting.
- 1.3 The Chair reminded members of the private nature of the Committee's proceedings and that those 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.
- 1.4 Apologies were received from Professor Graham Smith, Dr Ray Kemp, Professor Malcolm Sperrin and Professor Mireille Toledano, and assessors for DfE, DHSC, HSE, NDA, NHS Scotland, SEPA and SG. The Chair reminded assessors that substitutes may attend the meeting.

## 2. Minutes of the 134<sup>th</sup> COMARE meeting

### i. Minutes, actions & matters arising

2.1 The Chair asked for comments or corrections to the minutes from the 134<sup>th</sup> meeting. One amendment was agreed, and the minutes were approved. 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 reminded members that the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero opened a consultation on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and the AWG were actioned with drafting a response. The response was agreed by the main committee and submitted in May 2023.

2.3 The Chair asked the DHSC assessor to update members on the sunbeds research project being considered. Members were informed that the DHSC Research and Development Committee had advised that funding a project on sunbed use was not considered to be a priority and research would not currently be commissioned.

2.4 Professor Rhodes provided an update on the action to report on the community view of the sunbed issue. Cancer Research UK (CRUK) responded that they are not aware of any further evidence that would significantly change their position on sunbeds. CRUK agrees with IARC's position that artificial tanning devices are a Group 1 carcinogen and recommend against their use. CRUK also agrees that current regulations banning use by people under 18 must continue to be enforced. CRUK's focus is where they can have the greatest impact and an update on the COMARE report would not be a priority at this time. The British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) Skin Cancer Prevention Subcommittee is also not in support of pursuing an update of COMARE's report as there is little new evidence and the original report had achieved the banning of sunbed use for under 18s. It was felt that the government had other current pressing priorities to consider.

2.5 Members discussed the available evidence and agreed that there was no call for an update of the 13<sup>th</sup> COMARE report at present, but that this decision may be reviewed in the future.

2.6 The Chair reported that Professor G Smith was leading on a statement on standardisation of terms relating to low doses / low activities of ionising radiation. It is expected that the draft document will be reviewed by the main committee at the next meeting.

**[Action: Professor G Smith & Members]**

2.7 The Chair noted that the other actions from the last meeting would be covered in later agenda items.

## 3. Committee matters

### i. Correspondence

3.1 The Chair drew members' attention to the briefing note on correspondence since the last meeting. There have been no FOIs received and COMARE has not been mentioned in any Parliamentary Questions during this time. One email was received requesting information on the number of DXA machines in the UK. The enquiry was handled by the Secretariat.

3.2 COMARE provided a letter of support to Professor Toledano supporting the extension of funding of the COSMOS study for a further two years.

3.3 The Chair informed members that he had received a request from Professor Agius, the Co-Chair of the Occupational Medicine Committee for the British Medical Association (BMA), for COMARE to consider the paper by Pilkington et al - *Protecting female healthworkers from*

*ionising radiation at work*. The paper, together with several responses, has been circulated to members. The Chair asked Professor Sutton and Dr Martin to comment on the documents. Members were informed that the regulatory framework in place in the UK should be robust enough to ensure that appropriate protection is provided as required. It was noted that the paper did not address protection such as the use of ceiling-suspended shields. COMARE will respond to the BMA on the issue.

**[Action: Chair & Members]**

## ii. Consultations

- 3.4 The Chair noted that two consultation submissions were made by COMARE since the last meeting. The first was to the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) for the consultation on ‘Managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning’ and the second was to ICRP for the consultation on ‘Dose coefficients for intakes of radionuclides by members of the public: part 1’. The response to the ICRP consultation was submitted jointly with the Society of Radiological Protection and is available from the [ICRP consultation website](#). Professor Read noted that he had withdrawn from participating in the response to the DESNZ consultation due to a conflict of interest.

## 4. Updates to the Committee:

### i. Contaminations Working Group (CWG)

- 4.1 The Chair asked the CWG Chair, Professor Read to update the committee. The CWG Chair reminded members that a small group from the CWG visited Sellafield and the LLWR at Drigg last November. A briefing note has been produced on the visit and members agreed that this note could be shared with CoRWM. A joint meeting will hopefully be arranged between CoRWM and a small contingent from COMARE.

**[Action: CWG Chair]**

**[Action: Chair]**

- 4.2 The CWG Chair provided an update on the last CWG meeting. The reports on the beach monitoring programmes by EA and SEPA were summarised for members. It was noted that the remediation at Dalgety Bay was nearing completion and SEPA would produce a project closure report. Consideration of non-radioactive substances at the site will be included in the closure report. The SEPA assessor added that it is hoped that the remediation will be completed by the end of August. Members were informed that the CWG also discussed other radioactively contaminated sites within the UK at the meeting.

- 4.3 The SEPA assessor gave a presentation to members on approaches to the treatment of radioactively contaminated land in the UK, highlighting differences between administrations. Members discussed the gaps identified with the processes and the planning remediation criteria used.

### ii. Authorisations Working Group (AWG)

- 4.4 The AWG Chair, Professor Sutton noted that the only item for the AWG was the drafting of the response to the DESNZ consultation (item 3.ii). The Committee will be interested to see the DESNZ response to the consultation submissions when they are released.

### iii. EMF and Health Subgroup (EAHS)

4.5 The EAHS Chair, Professor de Vocht, reminded members that the second meeting of the group had been held on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and a third meeting was held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Several published papers on EMF and health issues were discussed at the last meeting, which included papers on 5G exposure assessments, smart meters, potential health effects and mechanistic reviews. Two papers were selected as information papers for the main Committee. A paper will be produced on the selection procedure for the next main meeting.

**[Action: EAHS]**

4.6 Dr Mann informed members of an [inquiry into the effects of light and noise pollution on human health](#) by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, which has been hearing evidence from experts. The issue of health effects from light pollution may fall within the remit for COMARE. It is not clear yet what direction the findings of the review will take.

### iv. ICRP Recommendations Subgroup (IRS)

4.7 The Chair advised members that he had chaired the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the subgroup on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in Dr McCready-Shea's absence. Several consultations were discussed at the meeting, including two recently closed consultations. The subgroup will consider the level of response for each consultation on a case-by-case basis. The Chair noted that the ICRP are running a series of open seminars, some of which are linked with forthcoming reports.

4.8 It was noted that the ICRP International Symposium will be held in Tokyo from 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Some of the COMARE members will be attending and will provide feedback to the IRS on the symposium.

**[Action: Members]**

## 5. Information papers

5.1 The Chair brought the nine information papers and the one digital link to the Committee's attention. Members were reminded that the aim of the information papers is to provide the Committee with strong reviews and new, high quality scientific studies, relevant to the Committee's work programme.

5.2 The two EMF papers were highlighted to members. The paper by Lai & Levitt contained an overview of research topics related to cellular stress mechanisms and the Addison et al paper contained measurements made by UKHSA of EMFs from smart meters. It was noted that the review by Little et al ties in with the CCES report on cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease following radiation exposure and demonstrates that there is still uncertainty on the interpretation of evidence. The accompanying editorial by Auvinen was also flagged to the Committee. The UV paper by Neale et al was the product of a quadrennial meeting considering the latest evidence of the risks and benefits of solar radiation and the impacts of global warming.

5.3 The Chair commented on his paper on effective dose and the risk for medical exposures. It was noted that the ICRP are setting up a task group on effective dose and the potential for individualisation of risk.

## 6. AOB

6.1 Members noted the media interest in the IAEA report on Fukushima water treatment.

6.2 The Chair informed members of on-going discussions, particularly in the USA, of the replacement of the linear no-threshold (LNT) model for stochastic effects at low doses with

thresholds below which there would be no risk. A short article drafted by the Chair and Professor Richard Wakeford summarised evidence in support of the LNT model. Members suggested an amendment to the article and agreed to the use of the Chair's COMARE affiliation.

## 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 date of the next COMARE meeting will be moved from 8<sup>th</sup> November due to the clash with the ICRP symposium. The new date will be confirmed in due course. The Chair closed the meeting.