143rd COMARE MEETING, Thursday 14th May 2026.

COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Hybrid meeting at 12 Bloomsbury Square, London and online

Present	**Chair:**	Professor John Harrison
	Members:	Professor Amy Berrington de Gonzalez Professor Russell Foster Dr Geoff Heyes Dr Mark Hill Professor Mark Little Dr Susan McCready-Shea Dr Richard McNally Professor David Read Professor James Smith Professor Mireille Toledano Dr Chris Westcott
	Assessors:	DHSC DoH NI EA FSA HSE NDA ONR PHS UKHSA SEPA SG WG
	Secretariat:	Dr Emma Petty (UKHSA) Mrs Samantha Watson (UKHSA) Dr Simon Mann (UKHSA)
	Observers:	UKHSA

Open Session

1. Welcome & declarations

1.1 The Chair welcomed members and assessors, attending in person or online, to the 143rd COMARE meeting and welcomed the new assessors for ONR and HSE.

1.2 Apologies were received from Dr Kemp, Professor Sperrin, Professor G Smith and Dr Terry, and assessors from Scottish Government and EA.

1.3 The Chair reminded attendees about confidentiality and the need to disclose any relevant interests to the Chair either at the beginning of the meeting or before the items concerned.

2. Minutes of the 142nd COMARE meeting

i. Minutes, actions & matters arising

2.1 The Chair asked for comments or corrections to the minutes from the 142nd meeting. No comments were made, and the minutes were approved without amendment. The minutes of the open session will be posted on the COMARE webpage, while the minutes of the closed session will remain confidential.

[Action: Secretariat]

2.2 The Chair noted that the actions from the 142nd meeting have either been completed or will be covered in today's meeting.

2.3 The Chair asked Dr Hill for an update on the Oxford Survey of Childhood Cancers database. Dr Hill reported that the holding and analysis of the anonymised data set and image files for the Oxford Survey of Childhood Cancers database will be supported by the Confidentiality Advisory Group through to December 2026. To assist with the analysis and future management of the database, arrangements are being made for Dr Gerry Kendall and Professor Mark Little to become visiting workers, which will allow them access to the data.

2.4 Dr McNally updated members on progress with the childhood thyroid cancer study. He reported that access was being sought for the national data, particularly pertaining to the cases that were diagnosed in the Northwest region. Funding is also being negotiated for use of a local cancer registry. No timescales have been currently set, but there should be more information later in the year.

3. Committee matters

i. Correspondence

3.1 The Chair informed members that correspondence regarding potential radioactive contamination at the site of a former airfield in Nottinghamshire had been directed to the Contaminations Working Group and would be covered later in the meeting.

3.2 The Chair referred to two emails that were received for the attention of the EMF and Health Working Group and asked Dr Mann to provide details. The first email highlighted some of the conclusions from the WHO's radiofrequency field systemic reviews. The second email concerned a critical commentary paper that was published in 2016 about the 2012 review by the Advisory Group on Non-Ionizing Radiation (AGNIR) on radiofrequency fields and

health. It was noted that the ongoing WHO review will look in more detail at the evidence, including more recent studies, and that the EMF and Health Working Group will consider the conclusions from WHO.

3.3 The Chair drew attention to correspondence received regarding sunbeds and the forthcoming COMARE report, some of which has been considered by the UV Sunbeds Subcommittee (USS). The British Association of Dermatologists provided a joint statement with the British Photodermatology Group advocating a ban on commercial sunbeds. The Association of Cancer Physicians also sent a letter to the USS advocating a ban of commercial sunbeds. Both groups have asked COMARE to recommend a ban in the report.

ii. 2025 Annual Report

3.4 The Chair asked members for comments on the 2025 Annual Report, which will be published on the COMARE webpage. A couple of minor typographical errors were noted, and the document was approved.

[Action: Secretariat]

iii. COMARE Work Programme 2026-2027

3.5 The Chair asked members for comments on the work programme for May 2026 – April 2027 and for any suggestions for additional areas of interest and other topics for the attention of the committee.

3.6 Suggestions were made that the committee might wish to consider light exposure and myopia, and also tritium, in particular in relation to fusion reactors. Members were keen to ensure that the committee's programme of work does not become too broad for the expertise available. The Chair noted that committee membership and recruitment will be reviewed at the end of the year and suggested that the expertise of the committee should therefore be discussed at the November meeting.

[Action: The Chair]

4. Updates to the Committee:

i. Contaminations Working Group (CWG)

4.1 The Chair asked Professor Read, the CWG Chair, to give a summary of the group's work and recent meeting on 17th April 2026.

4.2 Professor Read informed members of the beach monitoring reports from the EA and SEPA. The 2025 beach monitoring programme at Sellafield has been completed, with 49 particles and 3 larger objects recovered. The find rates remain low and risks remain very low. So far in 2026, 28 hectares have been monitored and 8 particles recovered. As risks remain very low, the CWG has discussed the frequency of monitoring, with review and consideration of an end state expected after a further 2 to 3 years. One particle has been recovered from the foreshore at Dounreay, and a minor particle from Sandside Beach. The CWG had a presentation on the TAPIS project, (Transport of Alien Particles In Sand beds mobilised by waves) – a lab experiment studying particle transport by different waves, with different particle densities, sizes, to gain a better understanding of long-term trends and impacts of storms. As with Sellafield, there is currently no clearly defined end state for Dounreay, though this may change when the PRAG(D) (Particle Retrieval Advisory Group (Dounreay)) report is released later this year. Monthly monitoring continues at Dalgety Bay and will

continue through 2027. Four particles were found in January 2026, a decrease since 2024, but signage and restrictions will remain in place until the verification monitoring is complete. Some members from the CWG are visiting Dounreay and Dalgety Bay in June 2026.

4.3 Professor Read also reported on further correspondence on the former RAF site near Nottingham about a potential site of concern for the group. An online discussion was held with the main correspondent in December 2025 to explain COMARE's role and to give some reassurance. The CWG members were informed that planning permission for the site is now subject to conditions, including the requirement of investigation of potential contamination. UKHSA has advised the local authority that a survey would be beneficial. Professor Read agreed to provide an update at the next COMARE meeting.

[Action: CWG Chair]

ii. Authorisations Working Group (AWG)

4.4 The Chair asked the AWG Chair, Dr McCready-Shea, for an update on consultations considered by the working group since the last meeting. Dr McCready-Shea reported that there have been no consultations in that time period.

iii. EMF and Health Working Group (EAHWG)

4.5 In the absence of the Chair of the EAHWG, the Chair asked Dr Mann to provide an update on the work of the group and its 11th meeting held on 2nd March 2026. Dr Mann referred to two items of correspondence that have already been mentioned, which were considered by the working group. Dr Mann also informed members that the working group had discussed the debate on whether the animal cancer studies included in the WHO review showed significant effects, and whether a review commissioned by WHO is rigorous or has anomalies in its approach. Published correspondence and critiques on the studies have been circulated with the information papers. It was noted that the BfS, the German Federal Office for Radiation Protection, are also reviewing the studies and that there are more recent studies trying to replicate the results. Until the WHO review is available, the EAHWG continues to screen an extensive number of publications. Many of the publications are deemed of poor quality, according to the working group's appraisal of evidence. Members discussed the issue of large numbers of low-quality studies masking the high-quality studies, and conclusions being made on weight in terms of numbers of publications, not their quality.

iv. ICRP Recommendations Working Group (IRWG)

4.6 The Chair asked the IRWG Chair, Dr McCready-Shea, for an update on the working group's work. Dr McCready-Shea informed members that the working group is moving to having four meetings per year. The group has discussed the draft report from ICRP Task Group 111 - Factors Governing the Individual Response of Humans to Ionising Radiation. It was noted that the report was difficult to navigate in some sections, in part due to its size. The IRWG submitted a substantial response to the consultation on the report. The working group is not aware of any forthcoming consultations for the next few months.

4.7 Members discussed the role of this report in laying foundations towards new recommendations. It was reported that Task Group 128's report is in progress, which will consider individualisation in the system. Members discussed the arguments for applying

age and sex specificity to effective dose or using population averaged considerations. It was noted that this issue may be covered in the Cancer Risk Subcommittee (CRS) report.

v. UKHSA update - Radon

4.8 The Chair asked the UKHSA assessor to present the update on radon to members, postponed from the last meeting in November 2025. The UKHSA assessor reported on the key points from the briefing note. This included an update on engagement with HSE over radon exposures in HMP Dartmoor. The UKHSA Radon Group is providing expert opinion and support in terms of dose assessments in various scenarios and corresponding lung cancer risks. There were also updates on targeted radon campaigns and public information, laboratory services provided by UKHSA, international collaborations and standards and the UKHSA radon work programme.

4.9 Regarding the item on HMP Dartmoor, the HSE assessor added that work continues with the Ministry of Justice and the prison service and HSE may be able to provide an update at the next meeting.

[Action: HSE]

4.10 Members discussed the national radon and gamma survey and the details of the measurements and the possible inclusion of radon in the CRS report.

5. COMARE reports

i. 20th Report - Risks of cardiovascular disease from exposure to ionising radiation

5.1 The Chair reminded members that the 20th report was published on 14th April 2026 on the COMARE webpage and that it is reported to have been discussed by ICRP. Professor Little informed the committee that ICRP Task Group 119 are likely to hold a public consultation on their report towards the end of 2027. It was noted that the UNSCEAR report on this topic is expected next year.

ii. 21st Report - Health effects of ultraviolet radiation from artificial tanning devices in the UK and their control

5.2 The Chair informed members that following the meeting on the report in March, permission to publish the 21st report was granted by the four UK health departments, and the publication date is set for Monday 8th June.

5.3 The DHSC assessor reported that DHSC will be launching their consultation on sunbed control towards the end of May. The consultation is likely to be live for 12 weeks, with DHSC's response to the consultation expected in November 2026, and if appropriate secondary legislation may be made in 2027. DHSC will provide details of the consultation to the COMARE secretariat.

[Action: DHSC]

5.4 Professor Toledano noted that DHSC has asked the Health Protection Research Unit on Radiation Threats and Hazards to undertake a large epidemiological study on sunbed use and cancers. The HPRU has put together a set of questions about sunbeds and natural sunlight exposure, which will be sent to two large cohorts that include almost half a million people in the UK. The study, which also involves UKHSA, should be completed in a few

months and will feed into DHSC's work. Members discussed the design of the study and the information that will be gathered from the survey. The survey questions will be sent to the COMARE secretariat for circulation. Professor Toledano agreed to provide an update at the next meeting.

[Action: Professor Toledano]

5.5 The Chair thanked the members of the UV Sunbed Subcommittee for the production of the report and the UK health department assessors for their input into the project. It was felt that the report strikes a reasonable balance in updating the science, representing the recommendations of the 13th Report and addressing the pros and cons of a complete ban of sunbeds, whilst adhering to our remit as a scientific advisory committee. The Chair also drew attention to the publication of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Beauty, Hair and Wellbeing's report making a case for a national UV strategy. Seven of the 26 recommendations in the APPG report relate to sunbed use; however, the report does not recommend a complete ban but considers strengthening controls.

6. Information papers.

6.1 The Chair drew attention to the information papers provided to members. A paper by Alwadi et al[1] was highlighted, concerning analysis of cancer mortality and proximity to nuclear power plants in the United States. There was discussion on the quality of this paper and the value of individuals commenting on low quality publications. It was noted that the Small Area Health Statistics Unit (SAHSU) is planning an extension to the cancer incidence study around nuclear installations in Great Britain[2]. The original study was initiated from a COMARE recommendation.

6.2 Members discussed study design and results of epidemiological studies provided in the ionising radiation information papers. The various findings of the Million Person Study were also discussed. It was noted that the strengths of these studies would be considered by the CRS.

6.3 One non-ionising radiation paper[3] was highlighted by the EAHWG. This paper found no significant association between personal radio use and risk of cancers among police officers in Great Britain. Dr Westcott offered to approach Thames Valley police to establish whether this important finding was known by police forces.

[Action: Dr Westcott]

7. AOB

7.1 Professor Read asked if it is possible for the CWG to see the data of radon measurements at Dartmoor prison. The HSE and UKHSA assessors said they will look into this.

[Action: HSE and UKHSA]

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[1] Alwadi et al - National analysis of cancer mortality and proximity to nuclear power plants in the United States. Nat Commun. 2026 Feb 23;17(1):1560. PMID: 41730864

[2] Davies et al - Childhood cancer incidence around nuclear installations in Great Britain, 1995–2016. Int J Epidemiol. 2025 Jun 11;54(4): dyaf107. doi: 10.1093/ije/dyaf107. PMID: 40664398.

[3] Di Gravio et al - Personal radio use and risk of cancers among police officers in Great Britain: Results from the airwave health monitoring study. Int J Cancer. 2026 May 1;158(9):2289-2297. PMID: 41251127.

Closed session item

8. Studies in Progress

i. Light and Health Subcommittee (LAHS)

8.1 The minutes for this item was considered as reserved business as it concerned pre-publication material.

ii. Cancer Risk Subcommittee (CRS)

8.2 The minutes for this item was considered as reserved business as it concerned pre-publication material.

The Chair reminded members that the next meeting would be held in person at 12 Bloomsbury Square, London, on 10th November 2026. He thanked members for their attendance and contributions to the meeting. The Chair then declared the meeting closed.