

COMMITTEE ON THE MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

112th meeting, Tuesday 24th November 2015
Skipton House, London

Present *Chairman:* Dr Chris Gibson

Members: Dr Jane Barrett
 Dr Paul Darragh
 Dr Frank de Vocht
 Professor John Harrison
 Professor Stephanie McKeown
 Dr Colin Martin
 Dr Tom Nunan
 Professor Mark Pearce
 Professor Kevin Prise
 Dr Mireille Toledano
 Professor Richard Wakeford
 Professor Peter Warwick
 Professor Catharine West

Assessors: DECC
 DH
 DHSSPS-NI
 EA
 FSA
 HSE
 NDA
 ONS
 PHE
 SEPA
 WG

Secretariat: Dr Simon Mann (PHE)
 Dr Emma Petty (PHE)
 Ms Kim Stonell (PHE)

112TH COMARE MEETING

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman opened the 112th meeting and welcomed members to his first meeting as Chairman. He advised members of the private nature of the meeting and that papers should remain confidential. Members were asked to declare any interests during the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Dr Mireille Toledano, Professor John Harrison, Dr Colin Martin and Professor Kevin Prise to their first meeting. He also noted that Professor Wil Evans would be retiring from the committee at the end of November. Professor Evans had sent his apologies for the meeting. The Chairman thanked Professor Evans for his contribution to the work of the committee.

The Chairman welcomed the additional assessor from FSA to the meeting.

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dr Brenda Howard, Professor Peter Marsden, Professor Roger Taylor, Mr Ian Robinson and Professor Wil Evans.

Apologies had also been received from the assessors for the MoD, SG, ISD, DCLG and DH.

The Chairman reminded assessors that substitutes may attend the meeting and should request that departments ensure representatives are present at the meetings to comment on items relevant to them.

ITEM 1 Welcome and introduction

- 1.1 The DH assessor introduced Dr Gibson as the new Chairman and gave a brief biography. It was noted that Dr Gibson was previously a member of COMARE up to 2010.
- 1.2 The Chairman invited all members and assessors to briefly introduce themselves.
- 1.3 The DH assessor introduced Professor John Harrison, Dr Colin Martin, Dr Mireille Toledano and Professor Kevin Prise to the committee and brief biographies were given.

ITEM 2 Minutes of the 111th COMARE meeting

- 2.1 The Chairman reminded members that the minutes of the meeting would be published on the COMARE website. Corrections to the minutes were agreed by the committee.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

ITEM 3 Matters arising

i) COMARE membership

- 3.1 The Chairman reminded members that there were two outstanding vacancies for a clinical radiologist and a cancer geneticist. Following the retirement of Professor Evans, there would also be a vacancy for a medical physicist. The DH assessor advised members that applications had been received for the vacancies and interviews had been arranged.
- 3.2 The Chairman noted that Professor Harrison has agreed to join the CWG and Mr Robinson has agreed to join the AWG. In light of Professor Evans' retirement, a new chair will be sought for the AWG. Volunteers should contact the secretariat.

[ACTION: Members]

- 3.3 The Chairman advised members that on 1st April 2015 Food Standards Scotland (FSS) came into being and has responsibility for food safety and standards in Scotland, including radiological food safety. It was agreed

by members that FSS has representation on the committee alongside the FSA. FSS would be invited to nominate an assessor.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

- 3.4 The Chairman drew members' attention to the web link for CoPSAC and in particular the section of the guidance notes regarding lay representation. Members were asked to consider including a lay person on the committee. Members discussed the selection process for a lay member, the attributes required and the benefits to the committee. The Chairman advised that DH's appointments process would have to be adhered to. The Chairman agreed to take this matter forward with DH to consider the formalities.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

ii) COMARE matters

- 3.5 The Chairman reminded members that the previous Chairman had been tasked with writing to DH on a number of issues, including the remit of the committee and the available resources. The DH assessor took the committee through the responses to each of the issues raised. The PHE assessor agreed to follow up the request for the CRCE organogram.

[ACTION: PHE]

- 3.6 DH has been in contact with PHE regarding the cancer registry concerns and further clarification is required. The DH assessor agreed to take this forward.

[ACTION: DH]

- 3.7 Professor Harrison noted that the restructuring of CRCE was essentially a cost cutting exercise, involving close consultation with DH and with specific organisations that might be affected. The importance of COMARE and other government committees and the support provided to them by CRCE was considered and the resulting changes were made such that the support would not be affected.

- 3.8 Members discussed COMARE's input into the Leinster review of CRCE. The Chairman confirmed that chairs of all relevant advisory committees had input, including Professor Elliott. It was agreed that a supporting letter would be sent from the committee, setting out how vital the work of CRCE is to COMARE and the effect of reorganisations on committee work programmes.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

- 3.9 With regard to the committee's remit, members were keen to understand the impact of incorporating AGIR and AGNIR's work. The option of bringing necessary expertise to working groups was discussed together with the breadth of expertise currently available on the main committee. Members emphasised again the importance of access to data. Dr Darragh advised members that he had received reassurance that there would be no issues with access to any data that was needed from Northern Ireland.

- 3.10 The Chairman summarised the committee's comments to each point:

- The proposal to change the committee's remit can only strengthen the scientific element of COMARE. However, where requests are generated from PHE, the committee would want to see them validated through DH. The work programme for 2016 will determine whether a standing group for non-ionising radiation is necessary.
- The committee is looking forward to receiving a current organogram for CRCE and will send a letter to Dr Leinster in support of the work of CRCE.
- The committee is reassured that when COMARE requires specific funding, it will hopefully be made available.
- Further clarity is required regarding access to data. The news from Northern Ireland was reassuring.

- 3.11 The Chairman advised members that previous COMARE statements are now more easily accessible from the COMARE web page through a linked box account.

3.12 Professor Wakeford advised members of a paper he is currently writing in conjunction with Dr de Vocht. The Chairman suggested that this would be useful to be circulated to members for information at the next meeting.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

ITEM 4 PHE updates

4.1 The PHE assessor provided a general update from PHE on the following aspects:

i) **EMF and health**

- WHO RF EHC report
- SCENIHR report
- The EMF Directive
- PHE EMF research activities:
 - Smart meter project
 - Mobikids study
 - Geronimo project
 - NIHR Theme 3 project – RF EMF exposure assessment and health
 - Dielectric properties

4.2 Members agreed the update was valuable, but suggested that future updates might be broadened to provide more context on how particular projects are developing. The PHE assessor agreed that this could be incorporated.

[ACTION: PHE]

ii) **Radon**

- UK wide:
 - EU Basic Safety Standards
 - UK Radon Forum
 - UK Radon week
 - Radon in water
 - UK Radon website
- England
- Shale gas
- Northern Ireland

4.3 The Chairman questioned how much remediation is taking place in response to the radon affected areas map, and whether there was any sense of the public health impact of raising awareness. The PHE assessor agreed to follow this up with colleagues at PHE.

[ACTION: PHE]

ITEM 5 Working group reports

i) **Contaminations Working Group**

5.1 The Chairman advised members that the CWG met yesterday and drew members' attention to the particle updates considered by the CWG.

Sellafield

5.2 The EA assessor provided a brief history of the programme for the benefit of new members and then continued with a summary of the report provided to the CWG. Updates were given on the beach monitoring programme and the analysis of the beta-rich strontium particle find on Seascale beach. PHE will produce a report on this analysis and update their advice based on the conclusions. Trials have been carried out to test

the Sr-90 capability of Synergy2. It was noted that Synergy2 performed as expected in its detection of Am-241 and Cs-137, but better than expected in its Sr-90 detection. The results give confidence in the long term monitoring of the beaches. A trial was also undertaken of plastic phosphor scintillators over the summer against existing detection equipment. The plastic phosphor system was not challenged with any Sr-90 particles during the trial; however, the trial did produce some useful data. PHE has updated and finalised the seafood risk assessment, which was made available to the CWG. The Chairman thanked the EA assessor for providing a valuable history for new members.

Dounreay

- 5.3 The SEPA assessor reminded members that a monitoring programme has been in place since the early 1980s. A significant amount of research work has been undertaken and the hazards and risks have been reported to COMARE. A routine monitoring programme is in place for Sandside beach, which is publically accessible, and for the foreshore, which is closed to the public. The offshore programme aimed to try to deplete any offshore caches directly in front of the site. It will be 3-6 years before the results are known. The monitoring programme continues to provide reassurance that the risk has not changed.

Dalgety Bay

- 5.4 The SEPA assessor reminded members that the MoD is undertaking the programme of remediation works on a voluntary basis and that SEPA is not active as regulator at present. The MoD has a programme to develop a long term plan for the site and to continue to recover sources in the interim. SEPA recently detected two sources that exceeded the threshold and a separate particle was found in a mussel bed. Because of the FEPA ban currently in place for the Bay, no further precautions were necessary. The particle found in the mussel bed is currently being characterised.

- 5.5 Members asked about the remediation work and were advised that SEPA is content that the risks to the public remain acceptable and is keen for the situation to be brought to a close. If the remediation work undertaken by the MoD is successful, SEPA has agreed to undertake a programme of monitoring to provide reassurance. The MoD will then no longer need to monitor the area and remove sources. The Chairman advised members that an action was placed on him at the CWG meeting to request an update from the MoD assessor on the current monitoring and status of the remediation programme for the next meeting.

- 5.6 The Chairman advised members that, in the interim, he will continue to chair the CWG meetings. The following points were noted at yesterday's meeting:

- The publication of the latest report from the Dounreay Particle Recovery Working Group is hoped for at the end of this year/early next year.
- The Sellafield workplan will be made available to the CWG.
- COMARE supports the continuation of the FEPA ban at Dalgety Bay.
- Non-fatal skin cancer risk should be included in risk estimates, and assumptions used for the modelling should be clear in reports.

- 5.7 The Chairman added that the CWG noted the requirement in the BSS regulations for governments to consider how contaminated land is handled. DECC is looking at this in England and would provide an update at the next meeting.

[ACTION: DECC]

ii) **Authorisation Working Group**

- 5.8 The Chairman addressed this agenda item in the absence of Professor Evans. Since the last meeting responses have been submitted on the application by LLW Repository Ltd under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 to carry on radioactive substances activities at the Low Level Waste Repository near Drigg and the two-part consultation by SEPA (i. the MoD application for

approval to transfer LLW from laid-up submarines to Rosyth Royal Dockyard Limited (RRDL) and ii. the RRDL application to accept and dispose of these wastes under SEPA authority in accordance with the Radioactive Substances Act 1993).

ITEM 6 Requests for advice

i) DXA scanning

- 6.1 The Chairman advised members that the scope is likely to widen into radiological assessments. A new chair is being sought for the subcommittee following the retirement of Professor Evans. Once confirmed, membership will be finalised and work will be initiated. Volunteers should contact the secretariat. Members suggested that membership of the subcommittee should include an expert in sports medicine. The DH assessor reminded members of the background to the request.

[ACTION: Members]

ITEM 7 COMARE publications in progress

i) COMARE – 17th Report – Sellafield and Dounreay Review

- 7.1 Professor Pearce drew members' attention to the updated draft of the Sellafield and Dounreay report, which included the two additional pieces of work on thyroid cancer analysis and changes in population mixing.
- 7.2 Professor Wakeford informed members on the importance of the thyroid cancer analysis. It was hoped that the paper on this analysis would be submitted by the end of the year. Members also discussed the revisions to the aerial radioiodine discharge values used in the report.
- 7.5 It was noted that following publication, various departments and agencies could receive media enquiries regarding the report. An advance notice period of the publication date was requested. The Chairman advised members that for the publication of this report, Professor Elliott would lead on queries. As soon as a publication date was confirmed, the committee would be advised.
- 7.6 The recommendations from the report were discussed in detail and comments were offered by members. The timescale for publication was questioned, but no details could be given. It was suggested that the report would be signed off at the next meeting. The new draft would be sent in advance of the meeting for members' approval.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

ii) COMARE – 18th Report – Interventional Radiology Review

- 7.10 The Chairman advised members that no further meetings have been held for the subcommittee and this work has been on hold for the completion of the Sellafield and Dounreay Review. The aim is to restart this work shortly. Members asked for previously submitted work on this to be reviewed.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

ITEM 8 Any other business

- 8.1 The current EA assessor advised members that this would be his last meeting and informed the committee of his replacement. The Chairman thanked the assessor for his longstanding contribution to the committee.
- 8.2 Professor Wakeford noted that next year marks the 30th anniversary of Chernobyl and the 5th anniversary of Fukushima.
- 8.3 The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 15th March 2016 at Richmond House, London. He closed the meeting at 2.36 pm.