

113TH COMARE MEETING

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman opened the 113th meeting and welcomed members. 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 David Sutton, Professor Paul Pharoah and Dr Peter Riley to their first meeting. He also welcomed the new EA and FSS assessors, together with the substitute SEPA assessor and the additional assessor from FSA.

The Chairman advised members that two of the DH assessors would be retiring from the committee. The committee wished them both well in their retirement.

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Professor Peter Warwick. Apologies had also been received from the assessors for SEPA, ONS, MoD, SG, ISD, DCLG and DH.

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

ITEM 1 Minutes of the 112th meeting

- 1.1 The minutes were agreed without amendment.
- 1.2 Regarding the actions from the previous meeting, the Chairman asked the PHE assessor to respond to the query on the level of remediation following the publication of the radon affected areas map. The PHE assessor advised members that radon maps have been published and updated by NRPB/HPA/PHE since the late 1990's. It is not possible to say exactly how extensive their use is, but the data are in regular use as part of land search processes when houses are bought and sold. There were around 300,000 unique visitors to the UK radon website (www.ukradon.org) in 2015 and the interactive radon map was one of the more frequently visited pages. It should also be noted that the radon maps have a role in identifying areas where new properties should include radon prevention measures. PHE will be publishing a report shortly to on the information provided to home buyers in relevant areas.

ITEM 2 Matters arising

- i) **COMARE membership**
 - a. **New members**
 - 2.1 The DH assessor introduced Dr Peter Riley, Dr David Sutton and Professor Paul Pharoah to the committee and brief biographies were given.
 - b. **Lay members**
 - 2.2 The Chairman was encouraged by members' responses at the last meeting relating to the introduction of lay members. DH has advised that lay members can be appointed through the standard process. Members were asked to consider the attributes/skill set to be included in the job description and several suggestions were made. The Chairman clarified that candidates should offer a genuine lay perspective. The Chairman thanked members for their suggestions and would proceed with recruitment accordingly.

[ACTION: The Chairman / DH]

ii) **COMARE matters**

a) **Database access and cancer registry transfer**

2.3 The Chairman reminded members that DH agreed to follow up the committee's concerns on the transfer of cancer registry data. The DH assessor advised members that Dr Rashbass has confirmed that most of the data has now been transferred to PHE and is available. He believed that the pre-1985 data was successfully transferred and also understood that the whole of the UK database had been transferred.

2.4 Members commented that those working in devolved nations see great benefit in maintaining the databases, but there were still concerns on the management of the data for the whole of the UK. The PHE assessor advised members that discussions were still ongoing and agreed to follow this up.

[ACTION: PHE]

2.5 The DHSSPS-NI assessor advised members that the Health and Social Care of Data Processing Bill was at its final stage and was awaiting Royal Assent. This would provide a statutory framework for the use of data in health and social care.

b) **Authorship requests for work associated with reports**

2.6 The Chairman informed members of PHE's stance on authorship for the provision of data for the thyroid cancer paper. Members discussed the requirements for authorship and agreed that solely supplying data was not sufficient, but that active collaboration would be necessary. Members also raised concerns about the importance of demonstrating the independence of conclusions. It was agreed that PHE's stance was not appropriate in this instance and that authorship should be considered on a case by case basis. Where an individual strengthens a paper, then it is right that they are included as co-authors. The Chairman has raised this issue with the lead assessor at DH, and informally with the new CSA for DH, and would defer back to both for a resolution.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

b) **CRCE review**

2.7 The Chairman reminded members that he had written to Professor Leinster setting out how vital the work of PHE is to COMARE and suggesting the CRCE review should take this into account when considering the role of key staff. The outcome of the review was very positive. The links between PHE and scientific advisory committees, such as COMARE, were recognised and a suggestion made that these should be strengthened.

2.8 The PHE assessor drew members' attention to the key summary recommendations and advised that a working group is being set up to take this forward, which would include various external stakeholders. Implementation is expected this financial year. He also noted the positive response on the work of CRCE from numerous stakeholders participating in the review, which was echoed by several assessors.

2.9 The Chairman noted that CRCE is UK-wide for its radiation work, whilst most of PHE covers just England. The PHE assessor advised that there is no change to that following the review. CRCE maintains offices in Glasgow and Cardiff and undertakes work with Northern Ireland.

iii) **COMARE work programme**

2.10 The Chairman reviewed the current work programme of the committee, noting the progress in each area. He asked for members to highlight other concerns/interests that would benefit from further assessment going forward. Members made several suggestions. The Chairman agreed to include these comments in discussions with colleagues at DH for the COMARE work programme for 2016. The secretariat would update the work programme accordingly and place it on the COMARE webpage.

[ACTION: The Chairman / Secretariat]

ITEM 3 Working Group Reports

i) Contaminations Working Group

- 3.1 The Chairman drew members' attention to the particle updates considered by the CWG and noted that the 7th meeting of the CWG took place yesterday.

Sellafield

- 3.2 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. An update was given on the current beach monitoring programme and the future monitoring strategy aim, which will result in a routine monitoring programme being put in place. Updates were also given on the Sr-90 detection trails of the Synergy2 system, the analysis of the Sr-90-rich particle find and the PHE advice on the triggers for different responses for finds. The focus of work for 2016/17 was also discussed.
- 3.3 Members asked about the vulnerability of LLWR at Drigg in terms of weather, in relation to the recent winter storms. The EA assessor advised that the environmental safety case demonstrated that the risk for that facility, including coastal erosion, was shown to be meeting the targets within the guidance.

Dounreay

- 3.4 The SEPA assessor provided a brief summary of the update given at the CWG meeting. Finds are as expected for both Sandside and the Dounreay foreshore and no further action is required at present. The SEPA assessor also drew members' attention to the recommendations of the draft PRAG(D) report with regards to monitoring and noted that the report would be published on the SEPA website.

Dalgety Bay

- 3.5 The Chairman advised members that the MoD provided an update at the CWG meeting. He noted that the MoD has volunteered to remediate the site and the project team and plan are in place; however, there is a delay with implementation due to issues with site access. There is support from SEPA, Fife Council, relevant local authorities and the local MP to resolve the issue. SEPA advised that it was content with the remediation plans, subject to more investigatory work, such that the detailed plans can be finalised. The SEPA assessor added that the monitoring by the MoD continues at Dalgety Bay, with periodic monitoring undertaken by SEPA.
- 3.6 The Chairman informed members that the CWG also discussed how to capture particle skin dose issues and how to express encounter probabilities.
- 3.7 The EA assessor reported on plans to develop a new power station adjacent to Sellafield and the preliminary work to take place in the area. Monitoring in the area will be adjusted to coincide with the work. As part of the initial health assessment (IHA), NuGen will assess the impact of disturbing potentially contaminated sediment.
- 3.8 The Chairman reminded members of the requirement in the new BSS directive for governments to consider how identification of contaminated land is handled. The DECC assessor advised members that DECC is responsible for the transposition to implement the requirements of the new directive, which must be in place by February 2018. Programme boards have been set up. DECC is also responsible for policy in relation to public exposures. There will be a public consultation on the proposed changes in January 2017. Members suggested that early involvement of COMARE with the consultation may be beneficial. A briefing would be provided in due course. The DECC assessor noted that a draft on how to respond to the recommendations in COMARE's 15th report is expected at the end of this month and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

[ACTION: DECC]

3.9 Members also raised the issue of the lack of a long term solution for storage of high level waste. The DECC assessor advised members that the government reviewed plans in 2014 and the implementation programme is well underway. The DECC assessor agreed to provide an update to the committee at the next meeting.
[ACTION: DECC]

ii) **Authorisation Working Group**

3.10 The Chairman informed members that Professor Warwick has agreed to be the new chair of the group. The AWG is not currently considering any consultations.

ITEM 4 Requests for advice

i) **DXA scanning**

4.1 The Chairman advised members that Dr Colin Martin has agreed to chair the group and progress with setting up the subcommittee. There is some urgency to take this forward as it relates to issues of justification for implementation in 2018.

[ACTION: Dr Martin]

ii) **Liaison with DECC NGO Group**

4.2 The Chairman advised members that there is interest from the DECC NGO forum for another meeting with COMARE. A small group of representatives from COMARE met with the NGOs on 18th October 2012 for a panel discussion. In 2015, the previous chair received a letter from Baroness Verma proposing further engagement of COMARE with the NGO forum, particularly regarding the 17th Report. It was suggested that this may be arranged following publication of the report. The DECC assessor provided members with the background to the NGO forum and noted the group is keen to engage COMARE in discussion. Professor Wakeford recapped on the previous meeting and the critical nature of the discussion. Members proposed that careful consideration should be given to the format of a future forum; however it was suggested that it was possible for such events to be well organised and well facilitated. The Chairman proposed that consideration was given to how a forum might be organised after publication of the 17th report. Given the relevance of the report, it was agreed that it should be in the public domain prior to any further meeting.

[ACTION: The Chairman / DECC]

iii) **Request for advice relating to the Health Impact Assessment for Wylfa**

4.3 The Chairman drew members' attention to the request for advice relating to the Health Impact Assessment for Wylfa and members were asked to consider key points for a response. Following discussion it was agreed that relevant publications in the public domain could be referred to and to note that the 17th Report would address this issue more fully when published.

[ACTION: The Chairman / Secretariat]

ITEM 5 COMARE publications in progress

i) **COMARE – 17th Report – Sellafeld and Dounreay Review**

5.1 The Chairman reminded members that final comments on the report had been requested by the end of January. Due to the unusual circumstances of two forthcoming election periods, the draft report had been submitted to Scottish Government and DH for approval. To accommodate a final detailed check, members were invited to provide a prompt review for factual corrections. Members were reminded of the embargoed nature of the draft report.

[ACTION: Members / Secretariat]

5.2 Professor Harrison raised some concerns over the reliability of assumptions used with the dose assessments. Professor Wakeford agreed that it was important for this issue to be addressed. The PHE assessor commented that models have changed over time to reflect latest scientific evidence. There has been some exploration of these changes and consideration is required as to whether a separate piece of work could be published. The Chairman agreed that this would be helpful.

[ACTION: PHE]

5.3 Members were informed that both the thyroid cancer incidence paper and population mixing paper had been submitted to a journal and were still under review. Professor Pearce agreed to follow up on the publication status.

[ACTION: Professor Pearce]

5.4 Dr Petty advised members that Professor Elliott would be taking publication of the report forward and has agreed there would be site stakeholder involvement. The Chairman would clarify the liaison arrangements with the site stakeholders for the publication in due course.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

5.5 The Chairman suggested that for each forthcoming report, a work plan and initial timetable is agreed.

[ACTION: The Chairman / Secretariat]

ii) **COMARE – 18th Report – Interventional Radiology Review**

5.6 The Chairman advised members that, following publication of the 17th Report, Professor Elliott is keen to restart this work. The Chairman would ask Professor Elliott to confirm membership.

[ACTION: MPS(IR) Chair / Secretariat]

ITEM 6 Any other business

6.1 Professor Wakeford noted the 30th anniversary of Chernobyl next month.

6.2 Dr Mann advised members that PHE and DH have reviewed options for taking forward Recommendation 4 of the 16th Report.

6.3 The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 20th July 2016. The venue will be confirmed by the secretariat in due course. He closed the meeting at 2.30pm.

[ACTION: Secretariat]