

West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group Meeting of 6 July 2006
Report from Environmental Health Subcommittee

This report is an update on selected topics from the subcommittee's Spring meeting on 25 May.

At this meeting, EHSC gets a first look at the site operator's monitoring results for the previous year. These are subject to confirmation in greater detail at the Autumn meeting. The representative dose to the highest consumers of seafood was estimated as 210 microsieverts in 2005 - about 10% lower than in 2004.

Tim Parker (BNGSL) reported developments on contaminated land. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority require a definitive assessment and it was anticipated that a contract for an enhanced ground water programme would be placed in September. He noted that implementation of the Sellafield Monitoring Objectives and Principles (previously consulted upon) had released resources for this work.

Ms J Allis-Smith asked about evidence of non-cancer diseases in atomic bomb survivors and how this might be relevant to the radiation worker compensation scheme. The chairman agreed to look at the evidence and report back at the next meeting.

In response to a question about times of meetings, members discussed sparse public attendance. It was recognised that meetings during the working day are not likely to be attended by members of the public in full-time employment. However, the cost in additional time and money of assembling professionals outside their working day is hard to justify while they outnumber the members of the public who attend.

In order to break out of this circle, it was suggested that public communications first be improved. EHSC exists to deal with an important specialist topic in greater detail than would ever be possible in the main Stakeholder Group but this does not make its work easy for the public to appreciate or the media to report. It is therefore proposed that the chairman drafts a press statement ahead of each meeting for approval by EHSC members and immediate release afterward. In this way we hope to raise the profile of our work, create a clearer message and make it worth reporting.

John Haywood
05 July 2006