

# **STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP ON ELF EMFS (SAGE)**

Summary of the

## **SCIENCE FORUM MEETING**

10<sup>th</sup> July 2009

**Baldwins Gardens, Holborn, London EC1**

**DISTRIBUTION:**

Copies to       - Meeting Participants, Apologies, and SAGE Website  
1 copy           - Golder Associates (UK) Ltd

September 2009

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### SECTION

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

##### 1.1 Nature of the Report

This document is the report of the third meeting of the SAGE Science Forum (SF), held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009. A summary version is also available.

*NOTE: Nothing in this report should be taken as representing a collective SAGE view. The views recorded are for the most part expressed by individual participants and even where the report indicates that an agreement has been reached, this has the status only of a working agreement for the particular meeting or work stream and should not be quoted as a SAGE view.*

##### 1.2 Attendee List

Anthony Barker	Institution of Engineering and Technology
Roger Coghill	Coghill Research Laboratories
Mike Dolan	Mobile Operators Association
Caroline Hampden-White Roberts)	CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA (replacing Chantelle
Patricia Keep	Department of Health
Mike O'Carroll	Independent
Jill Meara	Health Protection Agency
Caroline Patterson	Stirling / Scotland Before Pylons
Graham Philips	Electromagnetic Radiation Research Trust
David Renew	National Grid
Anne Silk	Independent
Brenda Short	Powerwatch
John Swanson	National Grid
Adrian Todd	Kilmorack Community Council
Facilitator	Nigel Westaway
Technical Reporter	David Collier
Monitor	Pete Wilkinson

Apologies were received from Peter Roberts (Energy Networks Association) and Alasdair Philips (Powerwatch).

### **1.3 Objectives of the Meeting**

Objectives for the meeting were circulated in advance and agreed on the day as the following:

- identify the scientific differences on which the Forum will focus and agree a framework for examining them;
- respond to any Main Group comments on the SF's work programme and develop this in more detail;
- agree any information gaps and an expertise required;
- receive and respond to a personal presentation.

### **2.0 UPDATES**

Updates, including government response and the SAGE website, were covered at the Main Group meeting, which preceded the Science Forum.

### **3.0 LAST SCIENCE FORUM**

There were no further reflections on the May SF meeting and no further comments on the reports. The new, shorter, summary format was preferred.

### **4.0 CHOICE OF TOPICS**

The meeting noted the Science Forum Draft Work Programme, July 2009, previously circulated by the facilitators which provisionally defined two key task areas (*why people hold different views of the science in relation to ELF EMFs & health and how different levels of evidence are used for policy formulation*). This was thought to be a helpful starting point, subject to clarification and development once the case study topics had been chosen and work had begun in earnest.

#### **4.1 The Initial List**

An initial list of potential topics was considered added to during the meeting, to give the following:

- Strength of evidence on childhood leukaemia (CL)
- Strength of evidence on other health impacts (CL+)
- Strength of evidence on CL compared to strength of evidence on CL+
- Magnetic vs. electric fields
- High level vs. low level fields
- Effects of other field parameters e.g. pulse rate
- Threshold or progressive effects (dose/response)

- Biophysical plausibility
- 'EMC' approach applied to human health
- Health impacts of static DC
- 'One review body vs. another'

Potential health effects included:

- adult leukaemia
- Alzheimer's; depression
- breast cancer; suicide
- miscarriage
- amyotrophic lateral sclerosis / motor neurone disease (ALS/MND)

## **4.2 The Final List**

There was a general consensus that the Forum needed to identify 2 – 3 items from the list to begin with. It was suggested that the evidence for CL could to some extent be regarded as a baseline and that comparing this with the evidence for two other health conditions on which there was less agreement could be useful.

The meeting agreed to work with Alzheimer's and breast cancer and recognised that this combination had two advantages:

- it included a health impact (Alzheimer's) which many advocates of 'CL+' believe may be linked with EMF, and
- it included one condition that was cancer-related and one that was neurological.

## **5.0 TASK FRAMEWORK & INFORMATION NEEDS**

There was some discussion about research and review papers for the different case study topics, and how to make these available. The consensus was that it would not be helpful to simply start making detailed lists of information and collecting papers until there was a clear framework for discussion.

## **6.0 ADDITIONAL EXPERT INPUT**

There was a discussion concerning the need for specialist external expertise to help the SF in its work. Possibilities mentioned included epidemiology, animal / in-vitro life science and EMF hypersensitivity. It was also suggested that a psychologist might contribute to understanding differences in risk perception and precautionary response.

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Although there were constraints, a wide range of mechanisms for obtaining input was nevertheless possible, including short or longer term co-opting, commissioned work packages, and seminar papers.

Some participants felt the need for an epidemiologist in particular was already clear, but the general consensus was that the necessary expert contributions could best be identified once the task framework and information needs were clear.

## **7.0 PERSONAL PRESENTATION**

Jill Meara gave a presentation on how she arrived at her personal viewpoint with regard to the science of EMF. She described typical perspectives on risk within the public health community, the prioritisation of action according to the level of risk and numbers affected, and the balance of benefits and detriments resulting from an activity. Additional topics included the process by which the HPA develops guidance, what HPA guidance says about precaution, the HPA's view of SAGE's science base and recent reviews, and its response to SAGE's First Interim Report.

## **8.0 NEXT SCIENCE FORUM MEETING**

The next SF meeting will be Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October, provisionally at the St Albans Centre.

## **9.0 ACTIONS**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When by</b>
Prepare SF process plan with initial information requirements	Mike O'Carroll, John Swanson, Graham Philips (but see note to Section 5)	Before next SF meeting
Members to pass ideas for potentially useful experts to Nigel Westaway	All	asap
Put SF process issues on the Process Group agenda.	Facilitators	