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Dear Ms Smith

**Consideration of Petition PE812**

Thank you for your letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> May requesting a written response on specific issues related to consideration of Petition PE812.

In considering my reply I note that the Health Protection Agency (HPA) has responded to the Public Petitions Committee twice with respect to this same petition, most recently through my letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> March. We have also given advice to Scottish Government a number of times on specific aspects of this petition which started in 2004. However, the questions raised this time do address slightly different aspects than the previous ones and I will now consider these in the context of our previous correspondence with the Committee.

The HPA develops its advice in this area through the work of its Radiation Protection Division (RPD) which undertakes research to advance knowledge about protection from the risks of exposure to electromagnetic fields, including the electric and magnetic fields associated with the supply and use of electricity.

The main issue raised in your letter relates to a report from the EU Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on the health concerns associated with electromagnetic fields:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/file.jsp?id=5680652>

This report voices the concerns about the wide use of wireless technologies and other EMF emitting technologies and the continuing uncertainties about possible health risks. The Committee calls for better protection through "optimal placement of devices", and improvement of consumer information and information on EMF levels in the environment,

and also urges the Commission to review the scientific basis and adequacy of the EMF limits, as laid down in the European Recommendation 1999/519/EC.

I explained in my previous letter that the HPA recommends that restrictions on exposure to electromagnetic fields in the UK should be based on the guidelines issued by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). These guidelines form the basis of the EU Recommendation on public exposure as referred to above and the basis for a forthcoming Directive on occupational exposure. In the UK, the electricity industry complies with the guidelines on a voluntary basis.

The HPA advice is based on a review of the science carried out by NRPB (now HPA's Radiation Protection Division) and published in March 2004:

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb\\_C/1195733817602?p=1219908766891](http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1195733817602?p=1219908766891)

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb\\_C/1195733787839](http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1195733787839)

The concern about an epidemiological association between power frequency magnetic fields and childhood leukaemia was also acknowledged in the advice, leading to additional recommendations for research and the need for Government to consider the need for further precautionary measures. In the UK the latter is being taken forward through the Stakeholders Advisory Group on ELF EMFs (SAGE) process, and the HPA, as well as taking part in the SAGE process has commented on the various precautionary options that SAGE has suggested so far:

[www.rkpartnership.co.uk/sage/Public/SAGE%20first%20interim%20assessment.pdf](http://www.rkpartnership.co.uk/sage/Public/SAGE%20first%20interim%20assessment.pdf).

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb\\_C/1204276682532?p=1207897920036](http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1204276682532?p=1207897920036)

Regarding the main question raised in your letter, our advice is based on a review of the totality of the evidence and therefore not changed by the publication of any single piece of evidence or report. The current HPA advice is based on a comprehensive review of the science published in 2004. The process leading to this publication included input from individual UK and international scientific experts, a public consultation and input from published comprehensive reviews by expert groups, including the independent Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation (AGNIR). There have been a number of studies and reviews since the 2004 advice, which we continue to monitor carefully. As I indicated in my previous letter, our view is that the balance of evidence has not changed in a way that leads us to consider an update to our advice is necessary.

Addressing the second issue, the HPA is aware that some countries in Europe and elsewhere have chosen to implement precautionary measures in addition to the ICNIRP guidelines. We know about this from our various research activities, formal and informal liaison with colleagues in other countries, including those associated with our role as a Collaborating Centre in the World Health Organization's International EMF Project and through activities closer to home such as involvement with the SAGE. Activists and campaigners also alert us to these matters on a regular basis.

HPA places great importance on the comprehensive reviews carried out by international expert bodies with formal responsibilities for health risk assessment, such as ICNIRP and the WHO, and by the UK's independent Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation (AGNIR). These reviews, together with information from other reports and more generally from the scientific literature, help to inform our judgement on exposure restrictions and, where appropriate, the possible need for further precaution.

In my letter I have outlined the HPA position and provided links to various key documents which I hope will be helpful to the Public Petitions Committee in considering the issues raised.

Yours sincerely

Justin McCracken  
**Chief Executive**