



South West Regional Office

1566 26 March 2002

HEALTH EXPERTS TO VISIT CAMELFORD

An expert group investigating the possible long-term health effects of the water pollution incident at Lowermoor in July 1988 will be hearing evidence in Camelford on 3–4 April.

The group will hear evidence from local health professionals and members of the public. A special public meeting will be held from 7 to 9pm on Wednesday 3 April at the North Cornwall District Council offices in Camelford.

The public meeting will explain the nature of the investigation, the ways in which evidence can be given and how the findings of the investigation will be reported.

The inquiry is being conducted by a sub group of the advisory Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT).

Welcoming the opportunity to visit Camelford, the sub group's Chairman, Professor Frank Woods CBE, said:

"Visiting Camelford is an essential part of this investigation. We want to meet with local people and health professionals and hear their views first hand. I am looking forward to working in Camelford over the two days and the sub group will be making further visits."

"We are keen to hear from anyone wanting to give evidence to the sub group as they will provide us with vital evidence in our consideration of whether there have been any adverse long term health effects following the pollution incident in 1988."

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Notes to editors

1. For more information please contact Matt Lenny at the NHS South West Regional Office on 0117 984 1874. If you want to book a time to conduct an interview with the Chairman of the COT sub group then please contact Matt Lenny to arrange a time.
2. The Lowermoor water pollution incident occurred in 1988 when a contractor's relief driver put 20 tonnes of aluminium sulphate in the wrong tank at the unmanned water treatment works owned by South West Water at Lowermoor, Camelford, North Cornwall.
3. The Lowermoor Incident Health Advisory group (LIHAG), which reported in 1989 and 1991, concluded that there was no convincing evidence that harmful accumulation of aluminium had occurred, nor that there was a greater prevalence of ill health due to the toxic effects of the contaminated water, but recognised that the incident and subsequent events had led to real suffering in the community. LIHAG also recommended peer review and scientific scrutiny of any Lowermoor studies with implications for public health policy, with assessment by Government expert advisory committees as appropriate.
4. The new investigation into the incident was announced on 14 August 2001 by Environment Minister Michael Meacher and Health Minister Yvette Cooper in DEFRA News Release 99/01.
5. Evidence can be submitted in to Khandu Mistry at room 692D Skipton House, 80 London Road, London SE1 6LH or at khandu.mistry@doh.gsi.gov.uk In addition, those who wish to submit oral evidence to the subgroup should contact Mr Mistry.
6. The Terms of Reference of the COT subgroup are:
 - To advise on whether the exposure to chemicals resulting from the 1988 Lowermoor water pollution incident has caused, or is expected to cause, delayed or persistent harm to human health; and
 - To advise whether the existing programme of monitoring and research into the human health effects of the incident should be augmented and, if so, to make recommendations.
7. The members of the subgroup are:

Professor H Frank Woods CBE (Chairman), University of Sheffield
Professor J Kevin Chipman, University of Birmingham
Mr Douglas Cross, Local Representative
Dr Lesley Rushton, MRC Institute of Environment and Health, Leicester
Ms Jacque Salfield, COT Public Interest Representative
Mr Peter Smith, Local Representative
Professor Stephan Strobel, Institute of Child Health, London

Dr Anita Thomas, Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust

More details can be found on the DH website at <http://www.doh.gov.uk/cotnonfood/lowermoor.htm>

8. The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment is a non-statutory independent expert advisory committee which advises the Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Health and the Chairman of the Food Standards Agency, and through them, the government, on a wide range of matters concerning chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment. Details of the committee can be found on the internet at <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/toxicity/>