

Report on the Environment Agency, published 11 May 2006 – inclusion of a memorandum submitted by Mr Michael Ryan

I am writing to you regarding the Committee's Seventh Report, Session 2005-06, on the Environment Agency, published on 11 May. My concern specifically relates to the inclusion of a memorandum submitted by Mr Michael Ryan, a copy of which is enclosed for ease of reference.

I have been contacted by Mr Simon Conolly, the Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust, regarding the Committee's inclusion of Mr Ryan's memorandum. Mr Ryan has been pursuing a campaign for some considerable time based on the allegation that the population down-wind of the Ironbridge Power Station has been adversely affected by emissions. He has repeatedly made allegations concerning adverse health effects despite:

- The absence of any evidence that the power station emissions are outside the approved limits granted by its operating license.
- The absence of any evidence of ill effects on a population basis which are or could be consistent with emissions.
- The absence of any support for these claims from either the Environment Agency or the Health Protection Agency.

The PCT have been concerned not to dismiss the claims out of hand and the matter was exhaustively investigated by Dr Woodward, the PCT's Director of Public Health. I enclose a copy of her summary report dated the 9th May 2006 which found that Mr Ryan's allegations were unfounded.¹

Dr Woodward's original investigation report was, at her own request, subject to an expert independent assessment by Professor Roy Harrison, OBE, BSc, PhD, DSc, who is widely recognised as a leading authority on environmental health, and has been quoted in the past by Mr Ryan, amongst others, as an expert in the field. His assessment of Dr Woodward's report, a copy of which is also enclosed, found that overall the results were very reassuring in demonstrating that there is nothing abnormal about the rates of mortality and morbidity in either Telford & Wrekin as a whole, or in the four wards down-wind from the power station.

The report has subsequently been accepted by the Board of the Primary Care Trust who intend to publish it on their website. They have full confidence in Dr Woodward and are dismayed at the wholly unwarranted attacks on a dedicated professional. In these circumstances, you will understand the astonishment of the Board that a parliamentary committee published a report which contains a highly inaccurate, highly critical and, in other circumstances, libellous diatribe by Mr Ryan, repeating allegations that have been investigated and rejected. Indeed, these serious allegations were published

¹ Not printed

(without any reference in the body of the report) and without first contacting the PCT about Mr Ryan's allegations.

The most offensive comments are as follows:

1. Paragraph 3.6 where Mr Ryan suggests that Dr Woodward is **“responsible (through her negligence) for more deaths than Dr Harold Shipman”**.
2. Paragraph 3.10 where Mr Ryan suggests that the rates of sickness and premature deaths down-wind of the power station are being covered up and that it is reasonable to assume that public health officials, i.e. Dr Woodward, are being bribed to do nothing. He makes a further reference to this being akin to a police officer continuing to allow a Shipman-like character to murder their patients.
3. paragraph 3.1.1 alleges that the data held by Dr Ryan, which justifies his scientific case, leaves no course but for the PCT to “sack” Dr Woodward.

The publishing of Mr Ryan's memorandum can only undermine the public's faith in its local health service as well as causing worry about a “medical scandal” in respect of a cover up at the power station, which simply does not exist. The PCT is concerned that the publication of the memorandum in your report may give the appearance that the committee is in agreement with Mr Ryan's views. The PCT is aware from local press that he is now citing the inclusion of his memorandum as direct evidence of the credibility of his claims.

I appreciate it may be the case that you were not consulted about the inclusions of the memorandum in your committee's report. However, I am sure you will understand that the continued publication of this material should not continue given Mr Ryan's completely unfounded accusations against Dr Woodward.

I understand that the committee are not obliged to include every un-requested submission and have wide discretion to withdraw appendices. I would therefore ask that, if necessary in consultation with the other members of the committee, you exercise that discretion and remove the part of the report containing Mr Ryan's memorandum.

I would be grateful if you would confirm when this action will be taken.

David Wright MP