

Radiotherapy Board

STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The 26th UN Climate Change Conference ([COP26](#)), hosted in Glasgow in November 2021, highlighted once again the enormous risks posed by climate change. It illustrated all too vividly the increasingly urgent need for action to reduce carbon emissions and find more sustainable ways of working and living in order to limit global warming. Action is needed as much in healthcareⁱ as it is in all other sectors of our economy and society. The NHS is a significant contributor to carbon emissionsⁱⁱ, and it is healthcare that will bear the brunt of all the health issues posed by climate change.

The Radiotherapy Boardⁱⁱⁱ is very aware of the environmental impact of radiotherapy treatment pathways. It believes that radiotherapy can play its part both in addressing the challenges of climate change by finding innovative ways to reduce the carbon footprint of the radiotherapy pathway, and in considering other environmental issues such as waste minimisation and encouraging best environmental practice during procurement. It commends and supports the early work being undertaken by the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine's Environmental Sustainability Committee^{iv} and encourages further such investigations in radiotherapy.

The Radiotherapy Board recognises that delivering a safe and high-quality radiotherapy service for patients with cancer in the UK is essential. However, it is also crucial that everyone in the radiotherapy community is aware of the importance of this issue and that we all consider what we can do in our workplace to safeguard the environment for our and future generations.

We encourage radiotherapy teams to look within their departments for any opportunities to work in a more environmentally-friendly way. Examples may include:

- *Machine maintenance* - challenging manufacturers to recycle and reuse machine parts wherever practicable. Where appropriate, changing the smallest replaceable part rather than the whole unit, whilst ensuring the integrity and safety of the unit. Any down-time resulting from this needs to be minimised and both patient and staff safety maintained.
- *Appointment planning* - considering timings of patient appointments to minimise distances travelled by hospital transport vehicles and reduce unnecessary travel (for example, by ensuring that CT/MR and consultations are scheduled on the same day). Provide information on local transport services to ensure patients are aware of public transport options to the hospital.
- *Radiotherapy rooms and energy usage* - undertaking an environmental review of any new or refurbished rooms to ensure that sustainable practices are as easy as possible for staff – for example, a single switch at appropriate height to turn off all monitors, a single switch to turn off all lights, consideration of air handling systems to maximise staff comfort whilst keeping equipment at the appropriate temperature and whether these too can be switched off or turned down overnight. Minimising concrete in bunker design where appropriate. Putting systems in place to monitor energy usage across the radiotherapy department, with provision of timely reports to enable decision-making on the efficiency of energy use and reduction of carbon emissions.
- *Waste minimisation* – aiming to minimise waste throughout the whole radiotherapy process and reserving single-use for when it is actually needed (rather than being the default).
- *Paperless radiotherapy* – implementing paperless or paperlite working in radiotherapy to reduce resource consumption^v.

- *Remote working* – ensuring flexibility to work from home where appropriate and for virtual attendance at meetings/conferences.

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ⁱ NHS (2020) [Delivering a “Net Zero” National Health Service](#), Carbon Trust (2021). [NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan 2021-2030](#).

ⁱⁱ The King’s Fund. Naylor, C. and Appleby, J. (2012). [Sustainable health and social care: Connecting environmental and financial performance](#).

ⁱⁱⁱ The Radiotherapy Board was established in 2013 by The Royal College of Radiologists, the Society and College of Radiographers and the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine to provide guidance, oversight and support for the continuing development of high-quality radiotherapy services for cancer patients in the UK. It has representation from across the four UK nations and from other organisations closely involved in radiotherapy services.

^{iv} Chuter R, Lowe, G, Dickinson N [Curing a Malignant Climate](#). Clin Oncol (R Coll Radiol) 2022 Mar; 34(3): 148-150.

^v [Top tips for implementing paperlite / paperless working in radiotherapy](#) Radiotherapy Board, September 2021