

To:

Dr Richard Smith CBE, FMedSci, Chair, UK Health Alliance on Climate Change

Dr Fiona Adshead, Chair, Sustainable Healthcare Coalition

Rachel Stancliffe, Chief Executive, Centre for Sustainable Healthcare

Dr Mark Hayden, Ride for their lives

Dr Fiona Brennan, Green Health Wales

Maria Carvalho, Climate Campaign Medact

Judith Anderson, Climate Psychology Alliance

Samantha Holmes, Clinical Fellow, BMJ

15 August 2024.

Sent via email to: chair@ukhealthalliance.org

Our reference: EH-337727-P4G6F7

Dear Dr Richard Smith and colleagues,

Sharmila Nebhrajani, chairman and Dr Sam Roberts, chief executive have asked me to thank you for your letter and to send this response on their behalf. We acknowledge your comments urging NICE to increase our contributions to helping the NHS reach its net zero targets. We agree that climate change and the destruction of nature are major threats to global health, and that action is needed urgently.

We acknowledge that the [environmental sustainability page on our website](#) has been a little out of date. This is due to a content freeze that was in place while we migrated the website to a new content management system, followed by a further content freeze due to the recent pre-election period. We have now updated the page and can share the following updates:

- Our [evidence summary on the clinical and resource impact use impacts of using desflurane](#) was published in March 2024. Our summary highlighted the lack of evidence to suggest that desflurane has any significant therapeutic advantage over other general anaesthetic agents. It was pivotal in informing [NHS England's desflurane decommissioning and clinical use guidance](#), which was published on the same day.

- We have now rolled out our new [NICE-wide topic prioritisation process](#), which uses a [prioritisation framework](#) that includes an environmental sustainability domain. This will help ensure that environmental considerations feed into our process for identifying and prioritising new guidance topics and updates to existing NICE guidance. It will help us to prioritise opportunities like producing an evidence summary on desflurane as and when those opportunities arise.
- We have now completed the options appraisal examining the feasibility, benefits and risks associated with different ways that we might request and use environmental sustainability data. Our findings reconfirmed that the data and analytical standards around environmental impact data about individual healthcare products are not yet sufficient for us to consider sustainability routinely in all NICE technology evaluations. However, we identified several potentially impactful activities worthy of further consideration in the short term.
- One such activity is being taken forward within NICE's [HTA Innovation Laboratory](#). We're exploring the feasibility of evaluating the environmental impacts of competing medicines or health technology products that have little or no expected difference in health or cost outcomes. If we can identify a suitable approach, we'll look to conduct a pilot evaluation.

We are also looking to pursue another activity identified in our options appraisal: citing company-level environmental impact information in our guidance outputs. We intend to communicate an update on this in due course.

We welcome scrutiny of NICE on this very significant issue.

Yours sincerely,

Janet
Communications Executive
Enquiry Handling