

AVSGF • UK

ASBESTOS VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUP FORUM

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Asbestos victims demand end to new public contracts for Altrad

AVSGF has written to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Leader of the Opposition Sir Keir Starmer to ask for a moratorium on new UK public contracts being awarded to global industrial services giant Altrad.

For more than a year now, we have been asking Altrad to pay £10 million towards research into life-extending treatments for mesothelioma.

Mesothelioma is a terminal cancer caused by asbestos. Cape was a leading manufacturer of asbestos products in the UK from the 1950s to the 1980s. Altrad is Cape's ultimate parent company, and purchased Cape in 2017.

A 2019 legal case won by AVSGF in the Supreme Court forced Cape to disclose documents. These proved that, from the 1960s, Cape withheld evidence on the risks its asbestos products posed to human life. They revealed the products were far more dangerous than previously disclosed by Cape.

Families were torn apart when their loved ones died from exposure to Cape's asbestos products. They, unlike Cape, were not aware of the dangers, but had to go to work to provide for their families. They ultimately paid with their lives, through no fault of their own.

The AVSGF have placed the documents on their website to allow the public to have free access to them, as they are extremely informative for public health and safety concerns.

On 10th May 2023, Altrad announced on their website that they had been awarded a major £30.8 million contract for decommissioning and asbestos removal at Berkeley Power Station in Gloucestershire.

Rob Rayner, Chair of AVSGF said: *"Cape's asbestos products are responsible for many deaths. Altrad has a moral obligation to put right some of the wrong that has been done. Until Altrad do the right thing, they should not be given any more taxpayer's money. Altrad is a global brand, and a major sponsor of the French and New Zealand rugby teams. It beggars belief that they cannot find £10 million towards mesothelioma research".*

Ian Lavery MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Occupational Safety and Health, said: *"Cape's asbestos products put people in harm's way, with devastating consequences. A significant donation to mesothelioma research would go a long way to atone for what they did".*

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Altrad's acquisition of Cape for £332m in 2017 was a sufficiently attractive commercial proposition to take on Cape's liabilities to meet negligence claims, for which Cape had already set up a fund. The fund is no more than a vehicle to cover Cape's legal liabilities in negligence. It has nothing to do with the request for a donation.

2. To contact Cape/Altrad for comment, contact Antoine Martinez (Head of Group Communications). Phone +33 (0)4 74 56 42 28. Mobile +33 (0)6 78 09 73 37. Email Antoine.Martinez@altrad.com
3. There were 2,268 deaths from mesothelioma in Great Britain in 2021, and asbestos-related cancers continue to be the UK's largest cause of workplace death. This is due to a latency period between exposure and illness which is typically between 10 and 60 years.
4. The #CapeMustPay campaign has gained cross party support, the backing of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Occupational Safety and Health, and the backing of the TUC.
5. To date, 39 MPs have signed Early Day Motion 93 (tabled 23rd May 2023) in support of the campaign. See: <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/59797/cape-holdings-and-asbestos-research>
6. On 10th July 2023, asbestos victims and anti-asbestos campaigners laid wreaths at the memorial to asbestos victims in Barking Town Square. Cape had an asbestos factory in Barking until 1968. Barking & Dagenham has one of the highest rates of mesothelioma in the country. The same day, Parliamentarians met Cape Must Pay! campaigners on Parliament Square to show their support.
7. At 1pm on Wednesday 16th August 2023, we are organising a peaceful protest outside the Altrad office in Rotherham (2 Fields End Roundabout, Thurnscoe, Rotherham, S63 0JF)
8. Mesothelioma is a terminal cancer caused by (sometimes very low) exposure to asbestos. Average prognosis is very poor, at around 12 months. Research into treatments for mesothelioma is chronically underfunded compared to that for other cancers.
9. Altrad's announcement of the £30.8 million Berkeley Power Station contract can be found here: <https://uk.altradservices.com/altrad-have-been-awarded-a-major-decommissioning-and-clean-up-contract-from-magnox-at-their-berkeley-nuclear-power-station-gloucestershire-south-west-england/>
10. Details of Altrad's sponsorship of the French & New Zealand rugby teams can be found here: <https://www.altrad.com/en/rugby-partnerships.html>. The two teams play each other at the Stade de France for the opening game of the Rugby World Cup on 8th September 2023.

Sign the online petition: <https://chnng.it/S55JzgJL>

To read more about the campaign & access the documents: <https://asbestosforum.org.uk/cape-case/>