

# AVSGF • UK

## ASBESTOS VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUP FORUM

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### **AVSGF renews demand for Cape/Altrad to pay donation of £10m to mesothelioma research**

AVSGF entered into negotiations with Cape/Altrad to discuss our demand that they 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. We first made our demand in March 2022.

Sadly, an agreement could not be reached, and consequently our campaign has restarted. We are holding a protest outside the Cape/Altrad office in Warrington at 1pm on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

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.

Cape/Altrad fought relentlessly to keep the documents from the public domain. The documents revealed that Cape's products were far more dangerous than previously disclosed by Cape. For "public health" reasons, Cape should have agreed to hand them over.

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.

Following the legal victory, AVSGF has campaigned for Cape/Altrad to donate £10 million towards mesothelioma research, to atone for providing misleading information on the real dangers of its asbestos products. The campaign successfully brought Cape to the table, and as a goodwill gesture AVSGF postponed further protests planned for April 2023.

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.

*Rob Rayner, Chair of AVSGF said: "Cape's asbestos products are responsible for many deaths. Their products are in many of our schools, hospitals and other public buildings, and so will continue to expose people to asbestos. Any donation by Cape towards medical research needs to reflect this devastating impact on so many people's lives. Any agreement needs to be a game changer for mesothelioma research. Asbestos victims need to be given hope that one day there might be a cure for this terrible disease."*

*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".*

Harminder Bains, a lawyer whose father died from mesothelioma said: *“The barristers and I represented the AVSGF for over three and a half years, pro bono, in order to force Cape to disclose documents which revealed the extent of their persistent attempts to hide the dangers posed by their asbestos products which have led to many unnecessary deaths. Altrad, the parent company of Cape, is a blue-chip company with a global brand and sponsors the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team. In their 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023 news release, Altrad announced “strong inorganic growth with announced and completed acquisitions adding c. €1.8 billion of annualised revenue and 20,000 new employees”. It beggars belief that they cannot agree to pay £10 million towards medical research. In addition, Forbes published an article on 13 December 2022 that the billionaire Mohed Altrad, was convicted in the French courts on counts of bribery, influence peddling and misuse of corporate assets. He was given an 18-month suspended prison sentence and fined more than 50,000 Euros.”*

#### 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](mailto:Antoine.Martinez@altrad.com)
3. Cape/Altrad’s Warrington office: Appleton Thorn Trading Estate, Lyncastle Way, WA4 4ST
4. There were 2,544 deaths from mesothelioma in 2020, 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.
5. 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.
6. To date, 37 MPs have signed Early Day Motion 93 (tabled 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023) in support of the campaign. 7 have signed in the last fortnight. See: <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/59797/cape-holdings-and-asbestos-research>
7. On 10<sup>th</sup> 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.
8. On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023, Parliamentarians met Cape Must Pay! campaigners on Parliament Square to show their support.
9. 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.

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

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