



document 2403

Committee on Radioactive Waste Management

Your invitation to comment on our work

July - October 2008

CoRWM invites your comments

Government Ministers have just agreed our programme of work. Our terms of reference state that our advice to Government should be based on the best available evidence and informed by the views of stakeholders and the public. So we would like to summarise what we shall be doing over the next year, and invite your comments and suggestions.

In this document,

- section 1 summarises what we are doing,
- section 2 invites your views on interim storage,
- section 3 invites views on research & development,
- section 4 invites views on geological disposal,
- section 5 invites views on public & stakeholder engagement,
- section 6 gives sources of further information, and
- section 7 says how you can comment on these or other issues.

We would particularly welcome your views by 30 October 2008. In some cases, we are inviting your initial comment by **30 September**.

1. Summary of our programme

The Committee was first set up in 2003 to recommend a long-term management strategy for the UK's higher-activity waste. The Committee reported in July 2006. Government re-appointed CoRWM, with revised Terms of Reference, to provide independent scrutiny of UK radioactive waste management and in particular its plans to implement CoRWM's recommendations.

The programme closely reflects CoRWM's 2006 recommendations, including:

2006 recommendations:

- Geological disposal as the end point for the long term management of radioactive wastes, via a flexible and staged process including partnership with communities willing to participate in the siting process.
- Robust storage in the interim period and clarity

2009 proposed reports:

- A report to Government in June 2009 on the implementation of the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely programme and progress on geological disposal. Position papers during 2008-9 on regulatory processes, waste conditioning and packaging standards, funding, and other issues including lessons from international experience.
- A report to Government in March 2009 on the interim storage of radioactive

2006 recommendations:

2009 proposed reports:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Intensive research and development into the long-term safety of geological disposal, including pursuing developments in alternative management options. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A report to Government in June 2009 on research and development, including skills capacity and development. Position papers during 2008-9 on the NDA research and development strategy and other issues such as peer review and international collaboration. |
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These are currently the three main elements in our programme because they each result in a "scrutiny" report to Government. But we shall be producing a number of papers and doing other things in our programme. Public and stakeholder engagement is a fourth element of our programme, designed to reinforce the other three. We shall engage people in our work, and scrutinise the engagement work carried out by others, including the Government and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the UK's main waste management organisation. (See section 6 for more information.)

We report to all our sponsor Governments in the UK including Ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

2. Interim storage

We shall report to Government in March 2009 on the UK's radioactive waste storage programme. As part of this we shall scrutinise plans for retrieval of untreated wastes; consider the safety, security, capacity, longevity of existing and planned stores ; and scrutinise plans for waste handling and transport. We shall also scrutinise management plans for materials that may be declared waste at some future date, that is spent nuclear fuels, plutonium, and uranium.

Key steps include

- summer 2008: examine the NDA report on its national waste storage review; discuss it with the NDA, other waste owners (e.g. British Energy, Ministry of Defence), regulators and others;
- summer 2008: gather data on different types of spent fuels, uranium and plutonium, e.g. quantities and characteristics; discuss management strategies with NDA, other fuel owners (BE, MoD), regulators and others;

- autumn 2008: draw on NDA stakeholders' views from a public workshop it will be holding; produce a first draft report to Government on radioactive waste storage, including our views on the plans of NDA and other waste owners to rectify any deficiencies in the storage programme;
- winter 2008/9: invite comments on the draft report, then revise and add sections on spent fuels, uranium and plutonium, and findings on research & development issues (see section 3), issue full draft report for comment, review and present to a CoRWM plenary meeting for approval;
- spring 2009: report to Government.

This will be the first of several reports to Government over the next few years. The handling and transport of wastes, to storage or disposal facilities, is a subject we plan to cover in more detail in 2009-10.

We should welcome your views on any aspects of the interim storage of radioactive waste. It would be particularly helpful to have your ideas about what constitutes a "robust" storage programme. For example, is it one in which stores are designed and built to have longer lives and bigger capacities than are expected to be needed, even if a geological disposal facility is somewhat delayed? Or is it one which is more flexible and in which it is planned to build more stores only if it is found that they are really needed? We would welcome your views by 30 September so we can take them into account in the first draft of our report.

3. Research and development

We shall report to Government in June 2009 on UK R&D related to geological disposal and interim storage, including availability of necessary skills and infrastructure.

CoRWM's 2006 report said: "If the public are to have confidence in the proposals for the long-term management of radioactive waste, it is essential that the areas of uncertainty and the plans for addressing them are clearly identified from the outset. Wherever possible, uncertainties should be reduced through further research. Where this is not possible, the implications for the success of the programme should be explained along with proposals for managing the programme in the face of these uncertainties."

Our reading and meetings with stakeholders shows the general concern about the need for R&D to be done. We believe that R&D is essential to solve the difficult technical problems that will need to be

addressed both for storage of current and future wastes and before geological disposal can be implemented.

Innovation can achieve substantial cost savings in treating and disposing of waste, because building safety cases on good science is an essential element in winning public confidence, and because a thriving R&D programme is essential in attracting high quality people into the industry.

For interim storage we think that R&D must identify and reduce:

- the main risks or uncertainties relating to operation and long-term safety of current storage facilities and wasteforms;
- the main risks or uncertainties relating to construction, operation and long-term safety of planned future storage facilities and waste forms.

For geological disposal we believe that R&D must:

- identify and mitigate the main risks or uncertainties relating to the construction, operation, closure and long-term safety of the facility;
- include appropriate generic and site-specific topics.

CoRWM in 2006 also recommended that "developments in alternative management options should be actively pursued through monitoring of and/or participation in national or international R&D programmes."

The result of our R&D work will be a report with four main elements. These are:

1. R&D for interim storage, including condition monitoring and the state of currently stored wastes, and options for potential repackaging.
2. The health of the NDA and UK programme for geological disposal including any key gaps.
3. UK R&D infrastructure and its ability to deliver the UK's needs.
4. UK skills development and training.

Key steps include:

- Summer 2008: gather information on the plans of NDA and other bodies; speak to Research Councils, national science academies, professional bodies, regulators and others.
- Autumn 2008: seek public & stakeholder views (see section 5)
- Winter 2008/9 onwards: start drafting report and discuss in plenary, with successive drafts on our website for comment.
- Spring 2009: include R&D element in interim storage report.
- Summer 2009: report to Government.

We should welcome your views on research and development. For example, what are your views on the main risks and uncertainties

relating to interim storage and geological disposal, and how these are being, or should be addressed in the UK?

4. Geological disposal

We shall report to Government in June 2009 on the implementation of its *Managing Radioactive Waste Safely* programme including progress on geological disposal and the regulatory process.

We have two strands of work leading up to that report. The first is mainly concerned with policies and programmes, the second mainly addresses technical issues. These are summarised below.

1. We shall look at the policies and programmes of Government - including Scottish, Welsh and other administrations - and how they are implemented including the effectiveness of regulators. We shall look at plans, roles and responsibilities, funding arrangements, including the overall programme and the help to local communities, the planning process, systems for identifying and reducing risks in the programme and the implementation and working of the partnership approach. In particular, we shall look at issues that arise from Government's 12 June White Paper and invitation to local communities to express an interest in discussing the possibility of hosting a geological disposal facility, and how they respond to this. We shall present initial reports on the issues at our 16 September plenary meeting. We shall also be looking at issues such as the coherence of the regulatory process and the regulation of how waste packages are produced.

2. We shall look at technical implementation issues including the national inventory of wastes needing disposal, the process of selecting a site from among any communities that express an interest, including its proposed "sub-surface" screening criteria for identifying any unsuitable areas within those communities, and design concepts for geological disposal facilities.

Some of the key steps include:

- Discussing progress of the *Managing Radioactive Waste Safely* programme at our next plenary meeting (September 2008)
- Inviting public comments in a workshop (October 2008)
- Publishing "position papers" on topics such as
 - o the management of risks to the programme (September, 2008)
 - o the coherence of the regulatory processes (September, 2008)

- o funding of the *Managing Radioactive Waste Safely* programme: adequacy, reliability (January 2009)
 - o regulation of waste packaging and conditioning standards used in the "Letter of Compliance" process (March 2009)
 - o decision-making processes and responsibilities (April, 2009) and
 - o learning from international experience (April 2009).
- Starting to prepare our report to Government (November 2008 onwards) and developing it through plenary meetings (November & December 2008, January, March, April and June 2009) and opportunities for public comment, including a further workshop (February 2009).

We should welcome your views on any aspects of the geological disposal of radioactive waste in the UK, including Government proposals for implementing this via the *Managing Waste Safely programme*, or any issues which you think CoRWM should scrutinise or provide advice on.

5. Engaging with the public and stakeholders

CoRWM's engagement work is in two main strands – CoRWM's own work and its scrutiny of engagement programmes run by others. We need to obtain the views of the public and stakeholders in order to inform our advice to Government. We are trying to reach as wide a range of people and organisations as possible within the constraints of our resources and are employing a number of different engagement techniques:

- Bilateral meetings between CoRWM and individual stakeholder groups held mainly to enable CoRWM members to gain factual information, keep up to date with progress, and find out the opinions of stakeholders.
- A Workshop to be held in October. This event will enable invited participants to work together on specific issues relating to the main strands of CoRWM's work programme. You can get further details of the Workshop, including how individuals can nominate themselves for an invitation, from the secretariat (section 6 below).
- Opportunities to respond to specific questions raised by CoRWM, through our new website.
- General invitations to comment, such as this one. This invitation is being sent to around 1,000 people and organisations on our e-bulletin list, and will be available on the web site.

We would welcome your comments on how we might best engage with you and, in particular, whether you agree with us that our new website will provide the best way of reaching a wide range of people.

We would also welcome your comments on any aspects of other organisations' engagement programmes that you might have been involved in, and your suggestions for engagement activities that CoRWM should consider scrutinising.

6. Where you can find more information

You can find further information on our website at <http://www.corwm.org.uk> including our 2006 recommendations to Government (CoRWM document 700) and our 2008-11 work programme (documents 2266, 2369).

If you would like more information about these or other reports or future plans, you can contact our secretariat at:

- Area 4C, Ergon House, Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AL
- Phone: 020 7238 1721 / 1732 / 5916
Fax: 020 7238 6471
- E-mail: contact@corwm.org.uk

7. Sending us your views

We would welcome your comments and suggestions, either on CoRWM and our work programme, or more generally on radioactive waste issues that you see as important for our current work or for inclusion in our future programmes. You can post, fax or e-mail your comments to any of the addresses above. If you prefer, you can use the form on the next two pages.

We are holding bilateral meetings with a range of organisations. We shall report on all such meetings; so those organisations do not need to use this exercise to repeat their views - though they are welcome to send us further comments if they like.

We would particularly like your views by **30 October** as we shall start preparing our reports to Government during autumn. We would welcome your initial comments on waste storage by **30 September**. But we welcome comment on our work at any time.

Thank you for taking an interest in our work.

After October, we shall report on the comments we received and how they contributed to our work. We'll send you a copy.

Invitation to comment: my response

- On interim storage:

- On research and development:

- On geological disposal:

- On CoRWM and other issues affecting its work:

Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Address & postcode:

E-mail:

May we keep you on our database so that we can keep you informed about our work? Yes No

We may publish your response unless you want it kept in confidence. Do you wish it to be kept confidential? Yes No

Please post, fax or e-mail this to the address shown in section 6 above. Thank you for sending us your views.