



Open Plenary Minutes – 19th May 2021

Venue:	MS Teams Video conference
Timing:	10.00-12.00
Chair:	Nigel Thrift (CoRWM Chair)
Members:	Claire Corkhill, Penny Harvey, Neil Hyatt, Ray Kemp, Mark Kirkbride, Derek Lacey, Geraldine Thomas, Stephen Tromans and Andrew Walters
CoRWM Secretariat:	Mariana Ghosh and Robert Heymer

Agenda:

1.	Meeting open, welcome and introductory comments (Chair)	10.00
	Chair's recent meetings	
2.	Declaration of Interests	10.10
3.	Approval of Minutes from the Previous Plenary	10.15
4.	Update on Subgroup Activities and Plans	10.20
	<i>Key topics:</i>	
	a) SG 1 Working with Communities (Penny Harvey)	
	b) SG 2 GDF Geology and Delivery (Mark Kirkbride)	
	c) SG 3 Planning and Regulation (Stephen Tromans)	
	d) SG 4 Scottish Government Activities (Andrew Walters)	
	e) SG 5 Welsh Government Activities (Gerry Thomas)	
	f) SG 6 Storage of Waste, Spent Fuel, and Materials (Derek Lacey)	
5.	Presentation	11.00
	Speaker: Penelope Harvey (University of Manchester)- “Nuclear Publics and Radioactive Waste Management”	
6.	Questions from the public	11.30
7.	Any other business	11.50
8.	Next Meeting: 14th September 2021, Cardiff	
	<i>Close of Meeting</i>	<i>12.00</i>



Minutes

Agenda Item 1. Meeting open, welcome and introductory comments

1. Nigel Thrift (NT) introduced CoRWM and their role as an independent advisory committee.
2. NT restated the position that CoRWM is only interested in radioactive waste management and is agnostic on the question of nuclear power.
3. NT stated that CoRWM's 2020-2021 Annual Report is about to be published, and that it sets out an active programme of outreach, advice and support to BEIS, NDA, RWM and the Scottish and Welsh Governments, regular interaction with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), Environment Agency (EA), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and production of at least three new Position Papers for publication in 2021-2022.

Agenda Item 2. Declaration of Interests

4. No new conflicts of interest were declared.

Agenda Item 3. Approval of Minutes from the Previous Plenary

5. The minutes from the March Plenary were approved.

Agenda Item 4. Update on Subgroup Activities and Plans

a) SG 1 Working With Communities

6. Penny Harvey (PH) stated that she and Gerry Thomas (GT) attended the NGO forum, also attended by Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan.
7. PH stated that the Copeland and Allerdale Working Groups were progressing through the Working With Communities process.
8. PH stated that CoRWM have made improvements to the website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/committee-on-radioactive-waste-management>



9. PH stated that CoRWM have produced a video to outline their role as an independent advisory body: <https://youtu.be/FQ0OnG2axrU>
10. PH stated that CoRWM plan to increase the scope of two Open Plenaries each year to include panels of speakers to discuss topics of relevance to Working Groups and/or to RWM, NDA and BEIS. The events will be held in-person and online. We aim to hold the first event in September if possible.

b) SG 2 GDF Geology and Delivery

11. Mark Kirkbride (MK) stated that the Cost Estimate Position paper has been finalised.
12. MK stated that a two-page summary on CoRWM's previous recommendation on retrievability has been drafted.
13. MK stated that SG 2 will review the radioactive waste aspects of the proposed review of UK Nuclear Decommissioning and Managing Radioactive Substances Policy once released.
14. MK stated that SG 2 maintain regular contact with RWM on the technical aspects of the site selection process.

c) SG 3 Planning and Regulation

15. Stephen Tromans (ST) stated that the Regulation Position Paper was published, available on the CoRWM website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/position-paper-on-regulation-of-a-geological-disposal-facility-and-management-of-radioactive-waste-published>
16. ST stated that SG 3 contributed to CoRWM projects on fusion and inshore GDF siting, which raise new areas of regulation.
17. ST stated that SG 3 continue to assist BEIS with regulatory aspects of radioactive waste.

d) SG 4 Scottish Government Activities

18. Andrew Walters (AW) stated that the Scottish Government are proposing a review of HAW policy. There has been little activity due to the pandemic and resource changes within the Scottish Government.



19. AW stated SG 4 expect to meet with the Scottish Government next period and report at the next plenary.

e) SG 5 Welsh Government Activities

20. GT stated that as a result of the recent Senedd election, Julie James is the new Minister for Climate Change and Lee Waters is the new Deputy Minister for Climate Change.

f) SG 6 Storage of Waste, Spent Fuel, and Materials

21. DL stated that SG6 have further meetings planned with BEIS to discuss fusion. CoRWM will provide advice to BEIS on fusion which will be referenced in the Green Paper and will prepare a Position Paper on the topic later in the year.

22. DL stated that SG6 are working to explain the inventory based on clear succinct statements. NH stated he is developing the inventory paper into a public briefing paper, and will update on this at the next plenary.

23. DL stated that SG6 are working on three workstreams related to uranium: disposal options and sub-options, the safety case, and factors to be considered in assessment. DL stated he and NT met with Clive Nixon (NDA) on 14th May, who confirmed NDA interest in this work.

**Agenda Item 5. Presentation by Penelope Harvey (University of Manchester)-
“Nuclear Publics and Radioactive Waste Management”**

24. NT introduced Penny Harvey (PH). Her bio is available on the CoRWM website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/penny-harvey>

25. PH introduced social anthropology as “the comparative study of human social structures values and practices” and explained how it relates to the ways in which technology shapes lives and the future.

26. PH stated that she previously studied an international road construction project in Peru. Drawing on her experience of a small Andean town that she has known for several decades, she found that many more ‘publics’ were involved than just the communities living along the proposed route; campaigners, taxpayers, human rights activists, those looking for work,



speculators and regulatory bodies were all interested in different ways and formed different publics.

27. PH stated that radioactive waste management similarly affects a wide range of interested parties. In her current research on the Hinkley Point complex, she noted that EDF were also interested in how power stations impact people's lives. Cultivation of public acceptance is crucial for long term engagement.
28. PH stated that forms of engagement can be diverse, but public engagement in the nuclear industry is often limited by technical complexity and security.
29. PH stated that there are two contrasting modes of publicness: the public as collective subjects of democracy (where people bring concerns to the attention of others and take an active role in debate and/or decision-making) and the public as the collective object of democracy (where things are managed by the state on behalf of the public good).
30. PH introduced three conceptual approaches to the public. Walter Lippmann claimed that power lies with politicians rather than publics. John Dewey claimed that rule by experts produces unforeseen consequences for non-experts whose perspectives are thus fundamental to democratic systems. Jürgen Habermas claimed that public spheres were historically limited in scope, reduced to the arguments of men of business and privilege as a counterpoint to the state.
31. PH stated Habermas focused on the need for a common language and space for engagement, though these were considered ideals. Dewey focused on the intersections and confrontations arising from competing values and experiences. Material transformations of people's lives led to different kinds of public emerging.
32. PH stated that in the case of the Peruvian highway, public opinion formed in relation to dynamic understandings of past and future possibilities. In the small town where she was based the fear of local traders that they would be disadvantaged by the proposed by-pass was not unfounded. However, advantages arose for those with the resources to act of wholesalers for the region. The original promise for a national public good, that would enhance international trade from Brazil via Peru to international destinations was not met. Lack of funding, and subsequent state-level corruption resulted in a road that was not fit for this specific purpose.
33. PH stated that once built, the highway led to an influx of families moving from the hinterland to live alongside the road. Over time public focus on the road dispersed and emerged in new ways. Issues of interest change as circumstances change. PH compared this to how social media created divided



publics with the US election, or with Brexit, and the pandemic in the UK. Again these cases illustrate how publics form, dissipate and re-form over time.

34. PH commented that the notion of public good as the object of democracy remains central to the ongoing legitimacy of state policy.
35. PH stated that the GDF siting process introduces many different publics.
36. PH discussed the public of public opinion, where the public is viewed as an object of statistical calculation from polls or surveys. These methods elicit views on a limited set of questions, with choices framed by those who seek to use the outcomes to take particular forms of action. This exemplifies Lippmann's point of view that in democratic systems, decision-making is effectively delegated to experts - or to politicians. To counter this tendency continual engagement with the public, and on-going efforts to prevent the spread of misinformation through open and transparent communication of reliable information is of utmost importance.
37. PH reported on a previous study of the NIREX process by Karen Bickerstaff who found that public perception of the process was primarily focused on the perception of a lack of institutional capacity for effective engagement with publics. Release of reports separates experts from non-experts and did not amount to effective engagement.
38. PH discussed the publics viewed as stakeholders – those who affect or are affected by a business. Engagement with stakeholders is oriented to a corporate good rather than a public good. The GDF siting process blurs the distinction between institutional goals and a more general notion of the public good. The stakeholder approach doesn't present the basis for a sustained commitment for collaboration on the GDF as an ongoing project however.
39. Thinking finally in terms of the aim to form Community Partnerships PH discussed the orientation to publics as active partners and discussed the use of the "hybrid forum" as an example of previous initiatives to produce active spaces for collaboration, as demonstrated in Pickering's flood defence strategy. The GDF siting process is not directly comparable because unlike the Pickering case, the GDF is already framed in policy as a public good. Community participation thus involves an oscillation between a space where publics are encouraged to take form as active partners, and a space where people are asked to accept and adapt to the GDF as a public good, an object of policy.



Agenda Item 6. Questions from the public

40. Terry Bennett asked why CoRWM has not announced a declaration of interest for Mark Kirkbride, Chair of CoRWM Subgroup 2 and CEO of West Cumbria Mining (Holdings) Ltd.

Marianne Birkby also asked why a declaration of interest for Mark Kirkbride was not announced, and whether boreholes drilled by West Cumbria Mining Ltd would be used to facilitate a GDF.

NT replied: *“There would only be a conflict of interest if there was a link between the Cumbria mine and a possible GDF. There is none – CoRWM’s remit is radioactive waste not coal - which is why there is no declaration of any conflict. Mark was appointed in 2019 because of his extensive knowledge of underground construction, knowledge which has already proved invaluable. The fact is that there is genuine disagreement on this issue. We cannot take it any farther, therefore.”*

41. Steve Smith commented that the perception of stakeholder engagement is important, and the way that communities receive communications from NDA and RWM can be confusing- an example of which is the proposed creation of the single waste division. This is of particular importance as the Working Groups progress to forming Community Partnerships.

42. NT asked how a hybrid forum would operate in the context of a larger community spread over a larger area for a GDF, compared to the small community exemplified in Pickering.

PH agreed that there is a contrast between Pickering, where the community came together in the absence of policy, and radioactive waste management. The ways that Working Groups and Community Partnerships are created produce interesting models. Making the process transparent is important.

43. Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong commented that she has been trying to create a hybrid forum with the Allerdale Working Group without knowing it. Stakeholder groups have been created with a purpose to respect non-technical expertise, and introduce this expertise to the Community Partnership. Incentivising other parts of the community to participate is difficult.

PH stated that trying to make it happen is important. RWM allowed flexibility within the Working Group / Community Partnership process as the way in which different communities may be incentivised which differ from each other. Immersion in different groups is important to gain full understanding.

44. Chris Shaw asked whether CoRWM commented on the last draft of the 2018 Working With Communities policy, which stated that the local authority makes



the decision to start and end the Community Partnership. The Community Partnership will not be made up of the same people when it starts and when it reaches the Test of Public Support. Chris Shaw asked how it can be justified that the Community Partnership can progress for ten years without community support because only the local authority has the power to end the partnership?

PH stated that if the view of the local authority isn't shared by the community, then the Test of Public Support will show that, and the GDF would be rejected. AW added that CoRWM commented in depth on the policy.

45. NT commented that active participation could be a challenge in rural communities.

PH stated that the community is often wider than expected, and that engagement comes once the projects begin nearby.

46. Francis Livens requested that CoRWM maintain contact with him, as he recently joined NDA as a non-executive director.

47. AW asked how the process of consultation would impact using the Planning Act to explore an open area, and how the hybrid model might translate to a regulatory process.

PH stated that the legally required consultations need to be done. The most dynamic engagement occurs once something happens after consent has been given. ST commented that there are three pillars to the system; democracy or fairness, efficiency, and legal robustness, and these must all be balanced.

Agenda Item 7. Any other business

48. The next Open Plenary will be held on 14th September in Cardiff.