

NDA Research Board – NDA Response to Position Paper Recommendations

NDARB019

NDA Response to Recommendations – Review of Radioactive Waste Management Directorate’s (RWMD) R&D Programme (NDARB011)

Issue 1

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About the Independent NDA Research Board

Despite its title, the Research Board has terms of reference which cover the Research and Development (R&D) interests for waste management and decommissioning of the UK, not just the that of the NDA. Given the scale of the NDA’s work in this sphere however, much of its time is dedicated to the NDA’s own programme. Although the Board works cooperatively with the NDA, which provides the secretariat, it is independent. Neither its programme of work or published opinions have to be agreed with the NDA. Its membership comprises experts in the field and senior representatives of key stakeholder organisations such as Government departments and regulatory bodies. Its role is advisory only, reporting to Government departments via their Chief Scientific Advisors and to the main NDA Board. Further information on the Board can be found on the NDA public website (www.nda.gov.uk).

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1 Introduction

The following text details the NDA responses to the recommendations published in NDA Research Board Position Paper 'Review of Radioactive Waste Management Directorate's (RWMD¹) R&D Programme' (NDARB011). The original review document and further information on the NDA Research Board can be found on the NDA public website (www.nda.gov.uk).

¹ As of 1st April 2014, RWMD became a wholly owned subsidiary of NDA, Radioactive Waste Management Ltd (RWM). RWMD is therefore used in NDARB011 but any future actions will be carried out by RWM.

2 NDA Response

Recommendation	Detail	Response
1 (Page 5)	Further engagement by RWMD with technical stakeholders on the development and adoption of the Scientific Readiness Level (SRL) approach is recommended. A comparison with existing approaches (e.g. Technology Readiness Levels) should be considered.	<p>In Radioactive Waste Management Ltd (RWM)'s published Science & Technology (S&T) Plan they requested feedback from stakeholders. Approximately 250 copies have been distributed in hard copy and the document has been available electronically since September. RWM have received positive verbal support on the use of SRLs, but no written feedback.</p> <p>RWM have presented their rationale for SRLs to regulators, who were supportive of this approach.</p> <p>Prior to publication of the S&T Plan RWM commissioned usability reviews from two UK academics. A specific question was posed regarding the application of SRLs (one reviewer supported their use the other suggested a third option).</p> <p>The S&T Plan includes a reference to work published by NNL in conference proceedings, providing peer review of the application of SRLs. RWM also recognise that further acceptance of the SRL concept will be beneficial and will continue to seek opportunities to publish in peer reviewed journals.</p>
2 (Page 5)	The Research Board encourages the further development of this approach to establish a fully prioritised programme with timescales set out against the needs at each stage of the overall GDF delivery programme.	Programme published September 2014 in S&T Plan. Future S&T Plans will also be published; the next issue is due in September 2015.
3 (Page 6)	The creation of yet another body to monitor RWMD's work is at best unnecessary.	No action required by NDA.

Recommendation	Detail	Response
4 (Page 7)	<p>The Research Board suggests that the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) considers exploring two topics further with RWMD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The approach to non-radiological toxicity issues (i.e. potential chemotoxic exposure) in the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) safety case. • Societal issues: what R&D could usefully be undertaken and how this is best managed and funded (e.g. via academia)? 	<p>Chemotoxicity tasks have been identified in S&T plan.</p> <p>Current documentation of the RWM knowledge base in chemotoxicity is identified in status reports (currently in production) and will be further developed in the 2016 update to the generic Disposal System Safety Case.</p> <p>RWM's S&T Plan includes a task addressing a review of social science research needs and opportunities; this task is currently being tendered with a report scheduled for Summer 2015.</p> <p>The TAP will continue to review future development and progress with the S&T Plan.</p>
5 (Page 8)	<p>Consideration should be given to producing more accessible and visual communications (e.g. brochures, displays, web site videos and other internet tools, modules for teaching establishments etc) to communicate the programme, more appropriate to a non-specialist audience. The availability of such material would seem to be especially important as the government's revised GDF siting process takes off.</p>	<p>While the long-term graphics detailing RWM's future research activities provide an overview of the future activities, and the Technical Programme Document is being re-issued in a more accessible form during 2015, it is also recognised that more public facing material is required. This will be developed as part of RWM's preparation for engagement with potential host communities (which starts in 2017, after the 2014 White Paper "initial actions" are completed).</p>