

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Independent Research Board

Terms of Reference

Background

Cmd 5552 (Managing the Nuclear Legacy: a Strategy for Action) and more recently the Energy Act 2004 charge the NDA with responsibility for ensuring appropriate research is carried out to underpin its short, medium and long term decommissioning and clean-up activities. This responsibility can be carried out by various means ranging from funding work directly, indirectly through the Site Licence Companies (SLCs) or working with other government (e.g. Research Councils) or non-government (e.g. Universities) organisations to encourage investment in relevant R&D.

In response to this requirement, The Research Board on Decommissioning and Clean-up in the UK was formed in 2006. Since that time NDA has been given additional responsibilities by UK government including the development of a national strategy for LLW and implementation of a Geological Disposal Facility.

More recently the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) presented a report to government recommending improved coordination of research and development in the field of radioactive waste management, across the full range of interested organisations in the UK.¹ In particular, recommendations 1 and 6 of the CoRWM report are:

- Recommendation 1. *CoRWM recommends to Government that it ensures that there is strategic co-ordination of UK R&D for the management of higher activity wastes. Such co-ordination is required within the NDA, between the NDA and the rest of the nuclear industry, amongst the Research Councils and between the whole of the nuclear industry, its regulators and the Research Councils.*
- Recommendation 6. *CoWRM recommends to Government that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that a wider range of stakeholders than to date will be involved in establishing R&D requirements for the long-term management of higher activity wastes and that accessible information will be made available to the public about R&D needs, plans and progress.*

¹ Report on National Research and Development for Interim Storage and Geological Disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Wastes, and Management of Nuclear Materials, CoRWM 2543, October 2009.

The UK government and the Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales published their response in November 2010:²

- In replying to recommendation 1, paragraph 3.10 of this response says, *“Government is of the opinion that there is a requirement for a hierarchy of co-ordination and is of the opinion that there is potential for the Research Board [of the NDA] to take a broader strategic role for the UK...”*.
- In replying to recommendation 6, paragraph 8.2 says, *“Government and the NDA are aware of the importance of this issue and significant steps have already been taken by the NDA with the setting up of a Research Board. As highlighted in the response to Recommendation 1 Government believes there is potential to extend the membership and role of this group and charge it with finding the right way to take this issue forward and understand how it could be achieved...”*.

The purpose of this document is to outline the terms of reference, membership and modus operandi for this revised group.

Terms of Reference.

As an independent advisory body to the NDA, reporting to the NDA Board via the Director of Strategy & Technology:

- Promote strategic coordination, a common understanding and collaboration between relevant bodies across the UK with respect to research & development needs, risks and opportunities in the fields of site decommissioning and remediation, spent fuels and nuclear materials management and radioactive waste disposal.
- Review R&D strategies and identify research & technology needs, risks and opportunities that impact the delivery of the decommissioning and site remediation, radioactive waste management, spent fuel and nuclear materials management and radioactive waste disposal agenda in the UK.
- Prioritise research needs, risks and opportunities for the short, medium and long term.
- Identify individual organisations that should be involved in such work and facilitate their collaboration.
- Communicate with the relevant bodies in order to promote investment in and a broader appreciation of these activities.

² Response of the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management’s (CoWRM) report on *“National Research and Development for Interim Storage and Geological Disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Wastes, and Management of Nuclear Materials”*, November 2010.

- Identify and promote opportunities to collaborate and co-ordinate with international programmes to enable effective use of UK investment and maximise the UK benefit obtained.

Proposed Membership

To provide the Research Board with a wide range of inputs and expertise, the following organisations should be invited to be members:

- NDA
- Independent national input via chief scientific advisors e.g. HMG, BIS, DECC, MOD and Scottish Government
- Regulators:
 - ONR, EA, SEPA.
- SLCs via Nuclear Waste and Decommissioning Research Forum Chair
- Research Councils
- Industry (Nuclear Generators, Rolls Royce Nuclear, AWE)
- International review and collaboration via EU and CEA (France)
- Independent chair of RWM Technical Advisory Panel on Geological Disposal
- Independent observers (CoRWM and NIRO/NIRAB)

Modus Operandi

- The Board's role is advisory only; it has no executive authority.
- While the Board is expected to work cooperatively with the NDA and other relevant organisations it will maintain its independent status. In particular, its chosen programme of work, any conclusions that it may reach and any recommendations it may make are matters for the Board only and will not be subject to veto or agreement by any other body.
- Independent chair appointed by NDA.
- Twice yearly meetings unless otherwise agreed as an exception by the Research Board.
- Independent Chair to provide summary of outcome from Research Board meetings to;
 - NDA Board
 - Government Departments as requested
 - Key National Strategic Meetings
- The Board will be open and transparent and its outputs will be published (the intention is to publish agendas, papers, etc on the NDA web site).
- Working groups may be established or seminars held on specific topics that might draw upon a broader participation, in addition to specific members of the board.