Respondent Details	
Name:	David Boath (Chief Engineer) Heather Beaumont (Head of Profession for Physics)
Organisation:	AMEC

Please select the category below which best describes who you are responding on behalf of.

☐	Business representative organisation/trade body
☐	Central Government
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X	Large business (over 250 staff)
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☐	Local Government
☐	Medium business (50 to 250 staff)
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The consultation document sets out the Government's proposed approach to the longer term management of the UK's plutonium stocks for public scrutiny and consultation. Comments on any aspect of this issue are welcome, but the key questions posed in this consultation are:

No	Question
Q1	Do you agree that it is not realistic for the Government to wait until fast breeder reactor technology is commercially available before taking a decision on how to manage plutonium stocks?
Response	Plutonium (together with the large quantities of depleted uranium available in this country) is an energy source with the potential to provide electrical power for a few thousand years if used in fast reactors. It is not sensible to develop a policy that would prevent plutonium being used as an energy source because it might take two or three decades before fast reactor technology is fully commercialised. In this context, it should be noted that France has recently made a significant commitment to the development of fast reactor technology. France clearly considers that its stockpile of plutonium is a useful energy source, even though some MOX recycle is currently undertaken in LWRs. The DECC report talks of plutonium being a burden to future generations. A loss of opportunity caused by permanent disposal of plutonium could prove to be a far greater burden. A recommendation from the report of the House of Commons Innovation, Universities and Skills Committee consultation on Engineering: turning ideas into reality (reported in March 2009) was that the UK Government should re-engage with some of the Generation IV technology development activities, including fast reactor technology. This would assist the commercial development of the technology for potential future UK application and support the development activities of UK industrial partners, such as AMEC, to raise the UK competitive position.
Q2	Do you agree that the Government has got to the point where a strategic sift of the options can be taken?

Response	A sift of the options can only be undertaken in the context of a sound, long-term energy policy which considers the availability of energy sources world-wide and the significant increase in energy demand that will result from the development of India, China and other countries. It is not clear that such an energy policy exists, together with the studies required to support the decision.
Q3	Are the conditions that a preferred option must in due course meet, the right ones?
Response	Yes
Q4	Is the Government doing the right thing by taking a preliminary policy view and setting out a strategic direction in this area now?
Response	The government should be taking a preliminary policy view and setting out an initial strategic direction, provided that issues such as security of energy supply are fully considered.
Q5	Is there any other evidence government should consider in coming to a preliminary view?
Response	Security of energy supply and the role that plutonium can play in this is a very important factor that should be considered. Of course, at this stage, there are some significant uncertainties in future energy demand and resources both in this country and world-wide. Uncertainty is a reason to keep open the option to use plutonium for energy production in fast reactors.
Q6	Has the Government selected the right preliminary view?
Response	Once through MOX and then disposal of the spent fuel is not the best way of maximising the usefulness of plutonium. In reaching any conclusion, a review of the security of UK energy supplies, to which plutonium can provide a significant contribution, should have been undertaken. It seems to have been assumed that, because commercialisation of fast reactors is not yet complete, plutonium is a waste rather than a valuable resource.

Q7	Are there any other high level options that the Government should consider for long-term management of plutonium?
Response	There is only one long-term option for plutonium and that is its use in the production of electricity. (Only if a currently unforeseen technology were to be developed in the future would there not be a need for plutonium in fast reactors).