

CoRWM Statement on Geological Disposal

CoRWM

1. DECC asked CoRWM to consider whether it would issue a statement endorsing the committee's commitment to geological disposal.
2. We have looked at the recommendations in *Managing our Radioactive Waste Safely: CoRWM's recommendations to Government* (CoRWM Doc. 700) and reiterate and endorse the following:

CoRWM recommendation 1

Within the present state of knowledge, CoRWM considers geological disposal to be the best available approach to the long-term management of all the material categorised as waste in CoRWM's inventory when compared with the risks associated with other methods of management. The aim should be to progress to disposal as soon as practicable, consistent with developing and maintaining public and stakeholder confidence.

3. Geological disposal is a form of the more general concept of 'Disposal'. We define 'Disposal' and 'Geological disposal' as follows (Glossary, CoRWM website):

Disposal - In radioactive waste management the term "disposal" is only used to mean placing radioactive waste in an appropriate facility with no intention of retrieving it. Plans for disposal facilities always involve sealing the facilities at some time after they are full, whereas storage facilities are kept open throughout their lifetimes, until the wastes or materials are removed.

Geological disposal – disposal underground at a depth of more than about 200 metres (also called "deep geological disposal"). The depth is chosen so as to provide a geological barrier against the escape of radioactivity and protect the waste from disturbance. This disposal method is appropriate for high level and intermediate level wastes.

4. CoRWM also reiterates that its original recommendations (Doc. 700, chapter 14) were an integrated set of recommendations, covering three interdependent strands. It recommended geological disposal as the end point for the long term management of radioactive wastes (strand 1), preceded by robust storage in the interim period, with provision of contingency against delay or failure in reaching the end point included in this (strand 2). The third strand focused on implementation, including the need for a staged process, flexibility in decision making (including developments in alternative management options being actively pursued through monitoring of and/or participation in national or international R&D programmes) and partnership with communities willing to participate in the siting process.