

## **CoRWM Response to Welsh Affairs Committee Inquiry on the future of Nuclear Power in Wales**

The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) provides independent advice, based on informed scrutiny of the available evidence, to UK Government and Devolved Administration Ministers on the long-term management of radioactive waste, including storage and disposal. Its primary objectives are:

- to provide independent evidence-based advice to sponsor Ministers on the Government's, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) and Radioactive Waste Management Ltd's (RWM) programme to deliver geological disposal (excluding Scotland), together with robust interim storage, for higher activity radioactive waste;
- to provide independent, evidence-based advice on other radioactive waste management issues as requested by sponsor Ministers, including advice requested by Scottish Government in relation to its policy for higher activity radioactive waste.

CoRWM expresses no views on the merits or otherwise of nuclear power generation, which is outside of the Committee's Terms of Reference (ToR). Its interest in nuclear new build is limited to consideration of the implications for waste management.

CoRWM has been actively advising Welsh government in the development of its higher activity radioactive waste (HAW) policy over the last two years leading to the publication of two policy statements:

- Welsh Government Policy on the Management and Disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Waste (HAW) (WG23160 May 2015).
- Geological disposal of HAW: community engagement and siting processes. (WG27313 December 2015).

These documents were produced following extensive consultation starting with a Call for Evidence, followed by a policy review and a consultation on the siting process for a geological disposal facility (GDF). CoRWM provided advice on these consultations.

As it presently stands, Clause 17 of the draft Wales Bill amends s 15 of the Planning Act 2008 to devolve to Welsh Government, planning consent for energy generating stations with 350 MW capacity or less. This amendment implies that Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) would not come within the definition of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) so will not go through the Development Consent Order process for planning approval as set out in the Planning Act. Instead, the consenting process would be governed by the Planning (Wales) Act and other relevant legislation. It is CoRWM's view that even if this is indeed the case, it will have no impact on the management of radioactive waste arising from such developments.

Radioactive waste management is already devolved, and the current Welsh policy, which is compatible with that produced by UK government for waste management in England and Northern Ireland, will remain appropriate.

One change to this view might be if SMRs were introduced which were not Light Water Reactor (LWR) designs and therefore could introduce spent fuel and waste which is different from existing LWR waste forms. CoRWM would clearly take an interest in any such proposals in their early stages.

Work on the implementation of HAW management policy is being taken forward by Radioactive Waste Management Ltd (RWM). The possibility of a Welsh community volunteering to be considered as a host community for a geological disposal facility (GDF) was allowed for prior to the Welsh Government's review of policy in this area and the new policy does not change this. CoRWM will continue to scrutinise the implementation of the policy and will provide ongoing advice to Welsh Government as required.