Radioactive Waste Management

National Geological Screening

Public consultation response

When complete, please email to NGSconsultation@nda.gov.uk or send by post to: National Geological Screening Consultation, Radioactive Waste Management, Building 587, Curie Avenue, Harwell, Didcot OX11 0RH.

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Organisation	I am responding on behalf of the Water, Ground & Environment Division of Atkins Limited, Woodcote Grove, Ashley Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5BW.

Question 1:
To what extent do you think our proposed approach to providing national-scale existing information about geology relevant to long-term safety is appropriate? Please give your reasons.

We think that the proposed approach is appropriate, for the reasons given on our responses to Q2 and Q3 below.

However, we are concerned that:

- The general public may not understand the outputs of the screening and may therefore distrust the outputs or be unable to make decisions based on the outputs (or both of these).
- Local authorities and other interested organisations will have little or no relevant geological expertise to enable them to make informed decisions about the screening outputs and the reports etc. from people or organisations with differing views from those expressed in the Screening Output. From where will they obtain independent geological advice? From where will they find the funds to commission such independent advice?

We ask, therefore, to what extent the National Geological Screening has taken account of lessons learnt and research undertaken for other geological projects (nuclear waste, fracking, mining, etc.) and of research undertaken on the public understanding of science in the context of such projects (specifically geology/ geoscience)?

Question 2:
To what extent do you think that the proposed national information sources are appropriate and sufficient for this exercise? Please give your reasons.

The National Geological Screening recognises that a wide range of information will be needed and that (unavoidably) the information will be of varying detail and quality. The proposed methodology and outputs accommodate such limitations, including the choice of mapping scale (1:625,000) and the production of regional narrative summaries and simple geological columns. For these reasons, we think that the proposed information sources are appropriate and sufficient.

We are not certain that the proposed division of the UK (minus Scotland) into regions is always appropriate (Figure 4 in the Consultation document). The regions are those which have been long-established by the British Geological Surveys' publication of Regional Guides. They are for near-surface geology and to some extent also reflect administrative boundaries. We do not think that all of them are appropriate and sufficient for National Geological Screening purposes. For example, the Wales region has no compelling geological rationale and the regions in southern England seem to ignore the underlying deep geology (such as the Variscan Front).

Question 3:
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed form of the outputs from geological screening? What additional outputs would you find useful?

We agree with the proposed form of outputs from the National Geological Screening, i.e. maps, narratives and tables. As noted in Q2 above the map scale of the proposed maps (1:625,000) is appropriate because of the nature of the available input data described in the Consultation document.

Our response is from the perspective of a professional geologists, geoscientists, geotechnical and tunneling engineers and environmental specialists who investigate the ground and design engineering works on or in the ground. We ask, however, to what extent the general public and its representatives in local authorities will understand the outputs – see the last paragraph of our response to Q1 above?

Question 4:
Do you have any other views on the matters presented in the draft Guidance?

No.

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