

COMMITTEE ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Minutes of Open Plenary Meeting held 16/05/2023

Venue: 1 Victoria St, London

Timing: 10am – 12noon

Chair: Sir Nigel Thrift (CoRWM Chair)

Members Attending: Penny Harvey, Ray Kemp, Mark Kirkbride, Derek Lacey, Simon Webb, Claire Corkhill, Clare Bond, Catherine Mackenzie, John Sutton, Flo Sawyer, Alison Guiney

DESNZ Attendees: Jess Parsons, Josie Carlton (CoRWM Secretariat)

Apologies: Stephen Tromans

Agenda

1. Meeting open, welcome and introductory comments
2. Declaration of interests
3. Approval of minutes from March open Plenary
4. Update on Subgroup activities and plans
 - Key topics a) SG1 Working with Communities (Penny Harvey)
 - b) SG2 GDF Geology and Delivery (Mark Kirkbride)
 - c) SG3 Planning and Regulation (Ray Kemp)
 - d) SG4 Scottish Govt. Activities (Clare Bond)
 - e) SG5 Welsh Govt. Activities (Stephen Tromans)
 - f) SG6 Storage of Waste, Spent fuels and Materials (Derek Lacey)
5. Presentation – Claire Corkhill on ‘Radioactive Waste from Small Modular Reactors’
6. Questions from the Public
7. AOB
8. Next Meeting 12/09/2023 in Cardiff

Minutes

Agenda item 1., Meeting open, welcome and introductory comments

Chair's recent meetings

1. Nigel Thrift (NT), the Chair of CoRWM, thanked and welcomed attendees to this meeting and provided updates.
2. The CoRWM website is being renovated and is currently being worked on.
3. The position paper on Uranium is near to completion
4. CoRWM's annual report (due in the summer) is nearly completed.
5. He noted the closed Plenary session and that he had recently held meetings with Corhyn Parr (NWS CEO) and Martin Walkingshaw (NWS COO).
6. NT discussed the appointment process, stating that there has now been one new member appointed with one more appointment to be made – this will lead to a full complement of members.

Agenda item 2., Declaration of Interests

7. Simon Webb declared that his company has won a contract with the NDA.

Agenda item 3., Approval of Minutes from the March Open Plenary

8. Approved

Agenda item 4., Update on Subgroup Activities and Plans

- i) *Key topics:*
 - a) *SG 1 Working with Communities (Penny Harvey)*
9. **Social Sciences:** PH reported that CoRWM in in conversation with senior staff in NWS about running an event with two social science scholars with international reputations to learn about the potential contributions to the siting and engagement process. We are looking for a date (probably September/October).
10. **Following Partnerships:** The three Cumberland Community Partnerships have used their full amount of Community Investment Funding for the financial year 2022-2023. The Theddlethorpe Community Partnership is about to start taking applications to use the funding. The Community Partnerships in Cumberland have been affected by the local authority reorganisation. Two wards in Mid Copeland are now formally located in South Copeland. They will retain non 'voting seats' on the Mid Copeland partnership.

11. NWS have been broadening their use of different venues to meet communities (e.g., they recently used a venue in an Allerdale Shopping Centre), to ensure that they are meeting communities in locations other than in formal meeting rooms.
12. Newsletters are being regularly circulated by the Community Partnerships. There are, however, potential issues with the content and monitoring of these, and this is currently being looked at. The Third Party expert view mechanism could be used to consider/review specific issues but not to arbitrate local disputes.
13. NWS have a new executive structure. Martin Walkingshaw talked this through with CoRWM when they met.
14. NWS conference was held in Bolton in April with 300 people attending. This was a good networking event with agencies, Community Partnerships, regulators, supply chain representatives and also included representatives from Finland, France and Canada. Topics discussed included sustainability (skills economy), Waste Hierarchy (how to treat materials for re-use – converting waste into assets).
15. Future plans for CoRWM include a trip to Bure in France and visits to all Community Partnerships.
16. NWS advisory board is to be held in June.
17. Jamie Matear – Siting Director in NWMO, the Canadian Nuclear Waste Management Organization, has arranged a meeting via Zoom to discuss's GDF processes (including Social Sciences)

b) *SG 2 GDF Geology and Delivery (Mark Kirkbride)*

18. The subgroup is scrutinising ongoing delivery with NWS, and meetings looking at the seismic programme and data recovered from the Irish Sea. This is looking positive with NWS using experienced data experts. Further updates on the work will be available June/July.
19. Work by CoRWM is continuing on the need for an underground research laboratory.
20. Retrievability of waste from a GDF – A comprehensive report is currently being finalised and will be issued later in this year.
21. The subgroup is planning to review the status of Deep Isolation's work, following their recently published report.
22. GDF Site evaluation – looking at progress, focusing on how NWS apply its evaluation criteria.

23. A visit to Boulby Mine is to be arranged for later in the year.

24. The CoRWM Annual report is due to be finalised in June.

c) SG 3 Planning and Regulation (Ray Kemp)

25. RK stated that planning and regulation cuts across work with other subgroups.

26. The subgroup held a meeting with NWS on the 13th April to discuss the underground rock laboratory (URL) and transport issues, and to get a general update on regulatory activity. NWS's intent appears to be to construct a GDF in parallel with a URL. There is a need to consider consenting under those arrangements and regulatory requirements regarding how would a URL be regulated?

27. The Environment Agency is updating the Guidance on Requirements for Authorisation for disposal facilities.

28. On the 13th June there will be a NWS regulatory stakeholder meeting.

29. The subgroup is looking at transport issues and lessons learnt from transporting materials from Dounreay to Sellafield. If the GDF is located on the East Coast, 200,000 packages may have to be moved, so it will be important to understand the regulatory aspects and planning of a multi transport solution.

30. CoRWM will be responding to the DESNZ and DA policy consultation on managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning which Stephen Tromans has pulled together.

d) SG 4 Scottish Government Activities (Clare Bond)

31. CB C indicated that in the cabinet reshuffle, post the change in First Minister, that the Cabinet Secretary for Nuclear remained as Màiri McAllan.

32. The next Scottish Site Stakeholder Group meeting is to be held at the end of August, organised by Diane Hamilton.

33. Last year there was a secondment to Scottish Government from the NDA and a new secondee from Magnox will be starting soon.

34. CoRWM are considering a visit to Dounreay in the autumn.

e) SG 5 Welsh Government Activities (update given by Nigel Thrift as Stephen Tromans gave his apologies)

35. ST has been liaising with James Gibbs regarding legislation relating to sustainable development and has drafted a paper (there are some differences to UK policy).

36. There is to be a visit by SG5 and SG6 on 13th Sept to Trawsfynydd.

f) SG 6 Storage of Waste, Spent Fuel, and Materials (Derek Lacey)

37. DL noted that SG6 activities relate to two main themes: safe and secure interim storage and the inventory for geological disposal. The recent focus has been on nuclear materials and the report on the “The UK Uranium Inventory, Management and Disposal Options” is in final preparation for publication.
38. The subgroup continues to monitor NDA’s approach to managing spent nuclear fuel and nuclear materials and the subgroup is starting to focus more on integrated waste management.
39. DL gave an overview of CoRWM’s activity in relation to waste storage looking back and looking forward.
40. In looking back he made the following points:
 - There has been a longstanding emphasis on interim storage.
 - The government provided a response to the 2009 CoRWM report on this subject, which included recommendations on co-ordination of waste management overall, making information available to the public (including options on higher activity waste, nuclear materials and spent nuclear fuel), security and public assurance and public and stakeholder engagement.
 - The debate during that period and the recommendations were symptoms of wider problems including enforcement action by regulators.
 - Significant progress has been made in the decade and a half since then, for example, the commencement of retrieval of ILW from legacy facilities, the big drive to improve civil nuclear security and NDA work on co-ordination of waste management.
41. In looking forward DL made the following points:
 - The current estimated date of first waste emplacement for the GDF is the 2050’s. Currently there is about 100 years of work to decommission and retrieve, treat, store, and dispose. This is a very complicated task with many waste streams. The NDA focus is on the most hazardous waste.
 - The regulators actively monitor safety, security and environmental (there is not the level of concern that existed 15-20 years ago).
 - DESNZ and DA policy consultation on managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning is in progress and aims to create greater clarity for the NDA and duty holders. The outcome of the consultation will inform the next NDA Strategy due in 2026.
 - CoRWM is interested in the opportunities to improve the policy framework and welcome the proposals including greater emphasis on the use of the waste hierarchy.

- CoRWM is specifically, interested in NDA'S work on waste treatment, the strategic storage review that NWS is conducting and the higher activity waste stores export schedule which links to the estimated first waste emplacement date for the GDF.
 - Until now CoRWM's emphasis has been on legacy waste, the subgroup is now also considering waste from new nuclear to ensure that the lessons of the past for waste management are understood and that new nuclear technology is designed to minimise waste and that arrangements are in place to cover liabilities.
42. DL also provided an up-date on a new CoRWM Report on "Progress Towards the Delivery of an Operational GDF" which is being prepared for publication. This is intended to be the first in a series of annual reports reports which will express CoRWM's view on the developer's organisational capability, the development of community partnerships, the suitability of sites and on matters related to policy and regulation. It will also state CoRWM's priorities.

Agenda item 5., Presentation

43. NT introduced the speaker for the open Plenary, Professor Claire Corkhill, and her presentation on 'Radioactive Waste from Small Modular Reactors', covering:
- Different types of reactors
 - Factors influencing the amount of waste created
 - Coolant/moderator types
 - Graphite waste
 - Fuel types
 - AMR/SMR vendors to consider waste management in advance
44. The presentation prompted the following questions and points:
- Does reprocessing create more waste? All waste is considered as a whole.
 - The carbon intensity of waste has not been considered for this presentation but may be considered by regulators, life cycle assessments.
 - Does increased fuel enrichment create more waste? – CC stated that this increases the fissile content so, considering this, it may create more waste.
 - Design and waste need to be considered by all. There needs to be an understanding around radioactive waste and it was confirmed that the process now with GDA includes considering waste, decommissioning is considered, technically and financially.
 - International considerations were discussed – including information and co-ordination from IAEA.

- Waste profiles could potentially affect the design of GDF – ie the footprint of GDF would be affected by the volume of waste and engineering barrier requirements.

Agenda item 6., Questions from the public

45. None.

Agenda item 7., Any other business

46. NT thanked Claire Corkhill once more for her presentation, along with all attendees at the meeting.

Next Meeting: 12th Sept 2023, Cardiff