

CoRWM Open Plenary Minutes

Tuesday 12th March 2024

Timing: 10:00 – 12:00

Address: DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester, 1 Piccadilly, Auburn St, Manchester M1 3DG / Teams Video Conference

Chair: Nigel Thrift (CoRWM Chair)

Members: Penny Harvey, Ray Kemp, Mark Kirkbride, Derek Lacey, Stephen Tromans, Simon Webb, Claire Corkhill, Clare Bond, Malcolm Joyce and Barry Lennox

CoRWM Secretariat

(DESNZ): Adam Draude, Josie Carlton and Shubhnit Seera

External

attendees: 7 external attendees including representatives from NWS, Nuleaf, and members of the general public

Agenda:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Meeting open, welcome, and introductory comments (Chair)
Chair's recent meetings | 10:00 |
| 2. Declaration of Interests | 10:10 |
| 3. Approval of <u>Minutes from the November Open Plenary</u> | 10:15 |
| 4. Update on Subgroup Activities and Plans | 10:20 |

Key topics:

- a. SG 1 Working with Communities (Penny Harvey)
- b. SG 2 GDF Geology and Delivery (Mark Kirkbride)
- c. SG 3 Planning and Regulation (Ray Kemp)
- d. SG 4 Scottish Government Activities (Clare Bond)
- e. SG 5 Welsh Government Activities (Stephen Tromans)
- f. SG 6 Storage of Waste, Spent Fuel, and Materials (Derek Lacey)

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 5. Presentation: “5 Business Cases for Nuclear Waste Disposal”
Speaker – Professor Graham Winch, (Professor of Project Management at Alliance Manchester Business School) | 11:00 |
|---|-------|

6. **Questions from the public** 11:45
7. **Any other business** 11:55
8. **Next Meeting:** 20th May 2024, London

Minutes

Agenda item 1. Meeting open, welcome, and introductory comments (Chair)

1. Nigel Thrift (NT) welcomed attendees to this meeting.
2. There are a number of active developments in the nuclear sector that CoRWM have an interest in:
 - a. UK Government ambition for 24GW of new nuclear
 - b. SMR/AMR developments
 - c. The nuclear roadmap
 - d. Forthcoming policy paper on decommissioning and radioactive waste
 - e. The demand on interim storage before the GDF is finalised
 - f. Developments in community siting for the GDF
3. NT thanked the committee for its work on the new position paper on wastes from Small and Advanced Modular Reactors (SMRs and AMRs), namely Stephen Tromans, Claire Corkhill and Malcolm Joyce.

Agenda item 2. Declaration of Interests

4. CB is working on a new project funded by NDA, working with the National Decommissioning Centre, looking at just transition and its effects on communities in Caithness.
5. SW is working with Network Rail to look at a planned new rail for the Sizewell area.

Agenda item 3. Approval of Minutes from the November Open Plenary

6. Approved.

Agenda item 4. Update on Subgroup Activities and Plans

Key topics:

SG 1 Working with Communities (Penny Harvey)

7. SG1 met with Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) on December 6th, discussing:
 - a) Corporate Communications
 - b) Feedback on how NWS have been engaging with communities in the GDF programme

- c) The role of CoRWM in supporting communities
8. PH attended the following events:
- a) Geology Events in Millom and Drigg (31st Jan – 1st Feb)
 - b) Meeting with E. Lincs CP and local engagement teams (21st-22nd Feb)
 - c) Meeting with E. Lincs Parish Councillors meeting (6th March)
 - d) Research Support Office conference (10th-12th Jan)
 - e) Yonder briefing to NWS Community Engagement Advisory Panel (26th Jan)
 - f) NGO Forum (19th Jan)
9. SG1 met with NWS on March 5th, to discuss:
- a) Update on the GDF Portfolio
 - b) Community Partnerships- recent activity and outcomes, including:
 - i. Allerdale withdrawal
 - ii. South Holderness - closure of working group
 - iii. Community Partnerships – South and Mid Copeland, Theddlethorpe.
 - c) Updates on NWS' approach to engaging with communities
 - d) Feedback from CoRWM – CoRWM members reflections and feedback on events they have attended.
 - e) Updates to NWS Corporate Communications
 - f) Social Science in NWS – feedback on activity to strengthen social science capability in NWS.
10. PH provided a series of further updates:
- a) NWS' "meet the expert" events are well received by communities.
 - b) NWS are changing the way they are presenting how the GDF will be delivered by including more community-specific experiences.
 - c) There is a challenge in engaging the majority of people in a community. NWS are launching a youth forum to draw more young people in communities.
 - d) With communities working on their vision of what a GDF could do to a community, there are often multiple different variations on this theme in each community – it is not always clear on how these different visions connect and how they relate to the potential transformations a GDF can bring.
 - e) There is a sense of consultation fatigue across communities – more needs to be done beyond the general surveys from NWS. How can NWS better incentivise engagement?
 - f) NWS have appointed Stephen Brown as head of social science in their organisation.
 - g) An external attendee asked if change from 16 to 24GW of planned new nuclear affected the decision to withdraw from Allerdale. CoRWM explained that this is not the case – the withdrawal from Allerdale was due to insufficient volume of suitable rock available (even for 16GW) following geological investigations.
 - h) PH will see if there are any papers on social science that can be shared with CP members.

SG 2 GDF Geology and Delivery (Mark Kirkbride)

11. MK and DL have worked on plans for CoRWM to regularly review published position papers. This has led to the identification of previous statements and recommendations in relation to the staged development toward a GDF, including R&D programmes and an underground research laboratory (URL).
12. SG2 are working on updating CoRWMs position on retrievability.
13. SG2 met with NWS on January 17th to discuss:
 - a) Cumbria Site Characterisation – this was a detailed and positive progress update in respect of the interpretation of seismic data and overall geological setting in the onshore West Cumbria zone of interest;
 - b) An update in relation to NWS' GDF Alternatives Report, following on from CoRWM comments;
 - c) Upcoming activity in relation to the site characterisation and associated work programmes, and
 - d) CoRWM updates/feedback: - including progress with the URL paper.
14. The CoRWM URL paper is being reviewed and updated following on from comments received from the Environment Agency (EA) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR). NWS's position on this topic is still being developed and so is not able to be incorporated into CoRWM's paper at this time.
15. SG2 will commence work on a retrievability paper later this year.

SG 3 Planning and Regulation (Ray Kemp)

16. In January 2024 SG3 developed a work proposal for a position paper on the Transport of Radioactive Waste. SW and RK are working together on next steps including planning meetings with interested parties.
17. SG3 met with EA and ONR in Birmingham on November 30th to discuss:
 - a) CoRWM's developing position on the need for a URL and the lessons learned from the recent visit to Bure.
 - b) CoRWM's review of its position on retrievability.
 - c) CoRWM's view on the need for regular publication of a developer's research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) report.
 - d) Topics on the CoRWM forward plan (23/24 and beyond) of relevance to regulators (which may well touch upon AMR / SMRs and radioactive waste management).
18. There was a very productive exchange of thinking at that meeting and work on the URL paper is continuing to be led by MK with support from SG3 members as required. A draft 2024/25 work plan for SG3 has also been prepared subsequently. Further meetings with regulators are planned.
19. SG3 and a wider group of CoRWM members met with NWS on February 16th, to discuss:
 - a) Near Surface Disposal (NSD), with a more detailed update on NWS' current work plans.
 - b) Transport and the GDF – an overview of current work programme and to discuss how NWS' technical specialists may engage with and provide information to CoRWM as the Transport Position Paper progresses.
 - c) URLs

- d) NWS legal activity – with an update on current and priority activity.
 - e) NWS regulatory activity – a summary of priority work with regulators was provided.
20. This was a thought provoking meeting and key topics will likely be taken up in more detail in forthcoming meetings with NWS.
21. SG3 members – in particular DL and ST – have been active in responding to the DESNZ new nuclear consultation on Alternative Routes to Market; and on Approach to siting.

SG 4 Scottish Government Activities (Clare Bond)

22. The Higher Activity Waste in Scotland Strategy Implementation Group (HAWSSIG) has been re-established.
23. HAWSSIG met on February 28th in Edinburgh:
- a) The meeting was well attended with representatives from NWS, Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS), NRS Dounreay, Scottish Government, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), ONR and DESNZ.
 - b) Given the length of time since a previous meeting the Terms of Reference for the newly constituted group were discussed alongside the key strategic focus for the group in the coming years. The group will help the Scottish Government review and implement its Higher Activity Radioactive Waste (HAW) Policy and Strategy.
 - c) In 2026 it will be 10 years since the publication of the Implementation Strategy and the group will develop plans for review of the Policy and Strategy. The group will meet biannually.
24. The Near Surface Disposal concept work that Scottish Government had commissioned with the NDA was completed in the autumn, and the full report will be released in due course. Scottish Government and the NDA have been holding workshops with the site stakeholder groups to report and discuss the findings ahead of the full report release.
25. Scottish Government undertook a nationwide poll on perceptions of nuclear waste at the end of 2023, commissioned through a Scot Polls survey.
26. Màiri McAllan, Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for nuclear waste in Scotland had her portfolio expanded in the cabinet reshuffle at the start of 2024. She will have a period of maternity leave starting in summer 2024, so there will be an interim replacement.

SG 5 Welsh Government Activities (Stephen Tromans)

27. Vaughan Gething has been appointed as new First Minister, announced on 16th March and started in office on 20th March.
28. The NDA held a roadshow at Bangor University to coincide with the latter's Science Week. The Roadshow promoted decommissioning as a career and will focus on innovation.
29. Great British Nuclear have purchased the land at Wylfa (and Oldbury) for purpose of new nuclear generation.
30. Trawsfynydd is seen as a lead and learn site as decommissioning progresses. Potential future uses of the site include to host a medical isotope reactor or SMR.

31. ST led CORWM's efforts in the newly published paper on the wastes from potential AMR/SMR technologies. This is relevant to Wales, given plans for possible use of sites in Wales for new nuclear technologies.
32. ST and BL have joined the Wales Nuclear Forum.
33. Plans are progressing for a CoRWM site visit to Wylfa in September.

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

34. SG6 are commencing a review on interim storage of radioactive waste, starting with a review of past position papers and recommendations made by CoRWM.
35. These reviews will feed into engagements with NDA and NWS over the coming months. Particular work from NDA will help CoRWM with this work:
 - a) Generational Stores Export schedule – a scenario-based planning activity looking to generate a handshake between site operators and the GDF team. This can inform on pressures on stores, address uncertainties from wastes from SMR/AMRs, and the way NSD proposals could affect the disposal schedule.
 - b) Consolidation opportunities for wastes of a similar type to be gathered together in stores. NDA and CoRWM are interested in further opportunities for consolidation and how that benefits radioactive waste management.
 - c) Thermal treatment of wastes to get wastes to a suitable condition for disposal in a GDF. Currently, the main process for treatment involves cementation which has large volume and carbon footprint implications, which could be alleviated through thermal treatment techniques.
36. CoRWM published the SMR/AMR paper on the CORWM website on February 9th, 2024. The paper can be found using this link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-of-small-modular-reactors-smrs-and-advanced-modular-reactors-amrs-corwm-position-paper>.
37. The paper was written to consider the spent fuel and radioactive waste implications of potential designs, such that legacy mistakes are not repeated.

Agenda item 5. Presentation: “5 Business Cases for Nuclear Waste Disposal”

38. Professor Graham Winch (GW) shared a presentation on “5 business cases for Nuclear Waste Disposal”, covering several business cases for a GDF. Prof Winch also discussed reasons why major programmes fail or go overbudget, and the idea of ‘natural pace’ in project management. The structure of the presentation was as follows:
 - a. The Challenge of Radioactive Waste Disposal
 - i. What kind of project do we have?
 - b. 5 Business Cases Framework
 - i. Strategic Case
 - ii. Economic Case
 - iii. Financial Case
 - iv. Commercial Case

- v. Governance Case
- c. Is Nuclear Waste Services a Capable Owner?

Q&A

- 39. CoRWM thanked GW for his presentation, and discussed how natural pace could be defined for a project reliant on community consent like the GDF.
 - 40. CoRWM and GW discussed the role of the community within the project, comparing the GDF programme as set up within the UK to other countries without this requirement for community consent.
 - 41. The role of regulators in the GDF project was discussed, who can be labelled as stakeholders for the project owner to engage with.
 - 42. The role of the GDF as an enabler for new nuclear power was discussed, and a member of the public noted that some studies, including the work of Prof Mark Jacobson, suggest that a 100% renewable energy grid is feasible.
 - 43. The division between pro and anti-nuclear groups within Cumbria, and difficulties in incentivising community engagement, were discussed.
8. **Next Meeting:** 20th May 2024, London