

Open Plenary Minutes

Thursday 12th September

Timing: 10:00 – 12:30

Chair: Nigel Thrift (CoRWM Chair)

Members: Penny Harvey, Mark Kirkbride, Stephen Tromans, Simon Webb, Claire Corkhill, Clare Bond and Malcolm Joyce

DESNZ: Jessica Parsons, Adam Draude, Josie Carlton and Shub Seera

Welsh Government: James Gibbs, Candice Boyes

Guest speaker: Sasha Wynn Davies (Chair, Wales Nuclear Forum)

Apologies: Barry Lennox, Ray Kemp, Derek Lacey

Attendees: Representatives from Nuleaf and NWS, South Copeland CP and members of the public.

Agenda:

Arrival and refreshments

Chair's opening remarks (**NT**)

Declaration of interests

Approval of Minutes from the May Open Plenary

Update on subgroup activities

- SG1 - Working with Communities (**PH**)
- SG2 - GDF Geology and Delivery (**MK**)
- SG3 - Planning and Regulation (**RK**)
- SG4 - Scottish Government Activities (**CB**)
- SG5 - Welsh Government Activities (**ST**)
- SG6 - Storage of Waste, Spent Fuel, and Materials (**CC**)

Questions from the public

Presentation: Sasha Wynn Davies, Wales Nuclear Forum

Q&A

Meeting close and lunch

Wylfa site visit

Minutes

Chair's opening remarks, Nigel Thrift (NT)

1. NT welcomed attendees to this meeting.
2. NT reported recent meetings with Corhyn Parr, as well as meeting with members on the South Copeland Community Partnership (CP).
3. Rt Hon. Lord Hunt of Kings Heath OBE has been appointed Minister of State for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).
4. The Deputy Director at DESNZ responsible for the CoRWM sponsorship has recently left his position. CoRWM thanked him for all his work and wished him the best in his new role. CoRWM looks forward to working with the interim replacement.
5. NT thanked Stephen Tromans (ST) for recently giving a talk to DESNZ on nuclear law.
6. It was noted that the new UK Government listed a new Bill in the King's Speech which would require all public servants, CoRWM included, to be held to an updated duty of candour.
7. Claire Corkhill has recently taken part in various features for the BBC.

Declaration of interests

8. ST provided the secretariat with details of:
 - a. Work with EDF on an application to amend their DCO.
 - b. Work in relation to Capenhurst for Urenco.

Approval of Minutes from the May Open Plenary

9. Approved.

Update on subgroup activities

Subgroup 1: Communications and Working with Communities (Penny Harvey)

10. A number of CoRWM members will be attending a CP meeting in Theddlethorpe in October, 2024.
11. Theddlethorpe have a new Chair for the CP, David Fannin (member since 2022 and lead for Community Investment Funding), as announced on their CP website.
12. Visioning work has been the focus across the community partnerships, with discussions on what the significant additional funding would involve.
13. South Copeland have explored initiatives to obtain independent research on the impact of local development projects.
14. NWS Youth Forum is in the process of being set up, with hurdles arising from data protection issues.
15. NWS will be running more "meet the expert" events on safety and the environment following good engagement on geology events.
16. CoRWM had an interest in the statistical data from Yonder – Yonder is responding to partnerships request for data, with CPs able to commission their own surveys.

17. NWS have appointed Stephen Brown as Social Science lead, who has been working on embedding social science ideas into the 3 main areas in the research support office: Engineered Barriers, Waste forms and Migration Pathways.
18. NWS have published the details around the property value protection scheme on their website.

Subgroup 2: GDF Geology and Delivery (Mark Kirkbride)

19. The CoRWM URF paper has been through a series of reviews and updates following on from an NWS presentation on their current strategy (for an in-situ facility), as well as comments received from the EA and ONR and also introducing the historical CoRWM recommendations. The updated paper has subsequently been reviewed by other CoRWM committee members and is approaching final form for sharing with the whole committee and then seeking review by DESNZ and factual review by NWS.
20. GDF retrievability paper being renewed, examining CoRWMs previous position.
21. SG2 met with NWS on 3rd July to discuss:
 - a. Site Characterisation plans
 - i. Progress update, including the Site Descriptive Model.
 - ii. Update on the approach to offshore exploration drilling and the long-term monitoring of instrumentation within the boreholes.
 - iii. The intended suite of studies; and
 - iv. The tests to be conducted and how it will be delivered.
 - b. Site Evaluation planning
 - c. Update on the progress of various studies and what comes next

Subgroup 3: Planning and Regulation (Ray Kemp)

22. Cross CoRWM work, main work between SG2 and 3 being the URF paper. MK, CC, ST have considerable input. The paper will examine how a URF fits into the overall process in obtaining planning permission.
23. SG3 are exploring transport considerations of the movement of waste packages, and the planning and regulatory aspects thereof. SG3 members will be having a site visit and meeting with Nuclear Transport Solutions in early October.
24. SG3 will be having a meeting with the EA and ONR in October on numerous regulatory aspects. EA are also preparing to release consultations on staged permitting and more – major workstream for SG3 when those documents are sent for review.

Subgroup 4: Scottish Government Activities (Clare Bond)

25. SG4 have provided written comments to Scottish Government on their Higher Activity Waste in Scotland Strategy policy document ahead of the main consultation period and policy review. These comments and others from members of the Higher Activity Waste in Scotland Strategy Implementation Group (HAWSSIG) will form the basis for discussion to input into the review at the next HAWSSIG meeting scheduled for September 25th 2024.
26. SG4 member Derek Lacey attended the Scottish Nuclear Sites Stakeholder Group meeting on August 14th, this meeting was held virtually due to ongoing building work at Victoria Quay. The Higher Activity Waste policy was discussed in groups – including non-NSD appropriate wastes and meaning of near surface, near site. Derek highlighted the importance of strengthening interim storage options and NDA work.
27. The next cross-party group on the Civil Nuclear Industry is September 11th 2024.

Subgroup 5: Welsh Government Activities (Stephen Tromans)

28. Thanked James Gibbs and Candice Boyes from Welsh Government for the help, and assistance in organising the CoRWM site visit to Wylfa after the Open Plenary.
29. ST reported on developments at Trawsfynydd, a lead and learn site. A recent consultation on proposals for changes to a permit over decommissioning work from Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) to Natural Resource Wales (NRW) has closed.
30. Trawsfynydd is no longer seen as a leading site for an SMR but are proposals for a new medical radioisotope facility, under the name of Project ARTHUR. Luci Gleeson, Deputy Head of Science at Welsh Government, presented to CoRWM on this in early September. CoRWM have an interest in:
 - a. The waste from such a facility, with not much known publicly on that.
 - b. The link with decommissioning, how compatible will building a new facility be with decommissioning the existing site.
31. Decommissioning is underway for Wylfa, with several projects of interest to CoRWM:
 - a. Ongoing project for ILW characterisation on site.
 - b. New ILW Ductile Cast Iron Container storage facility.
 - c. Leak of water into the dry storage facility, leading to a number of fuel elements becoming wet and corroded – presenting a challenge on how to deal with those.
32. Wylfa was seen by the previous government as a favoured site for a new GW scale nuclear reactor – remains to be seen if pursued by the current government.
33. ST and Barry Lennox have joined the Wales Nuclear Forum. ST attended a meeting recently, with a discussion on skills and lack of opportunities at Wylfa and Traws – with a movement of skills away from Wales.

34. As part of strengthening links in Wales and CoRWM outreach generally Stephen Tromans will be attending and speaking at a joint Wales Nuclear Association/Nuclear Industry Association conference in Cardiff on 2 October on decommissioning. This will be preceded by a site visit to the decommissioned Aberthawe Coal Fired Power Station, which is in the running for locating advanced nuclear technologies.

Subgroup 6: Storage of Waste, Spent Fuel, and Materials (Claire Corkhill)

35. SG6 continue to gather information on interim storage of radioactive waste. Specific areas of interest include the NDA's stores export strategy, which is a scenario-based approach to scheduling the final disposal of waste currently in interim storage and the NDA's thermal treatment strategy, which has the potential to bring benefits of volume reduction for both interim storage and disposal.
36. SG6 maintains an interest in the inventory for disposal and is currently focused on the implications of the deployment of SMRs and AMRs for waste management including disposal in a geological disposal facility. This work contributed to the CoRWM response to the government consultation on alternative routes to market for new nuclear. Malcolm Joyce is preparing a technical note on "waste burning" reactors – with a lot of misconceptions circulating on this concept.
37. SG6 had an update on 21st August from DESNZ on the HTGR programme which enabled CoRWM to gather information on disposability of wastes. Early work ongoing to examine their disposability. CoRWM are also preparing papers on the disposal of coated particle fuels, as well as the disposability of graphite.
38. SG6 had an update on 29th August from DESNZ/NDA on new guidance for vendors to build decommissioning into their designs following recommendations in CoRWM's SMR/AMR paper.

Questions from the public

39. John Sutton submitted the following question statement and questions to CoRWM:

If I understand correctly, the current planning assumptions are that a GDF will only start taking intermediate level waste from 2050, and high level waste not until 2075.

1. Could CoRWM advise on whether such a timescale is justified by the science and / or engineering?

CoRWM answered it would make sense to dispose of the ILW before the HLW, to start off disposing the waste of lower hazard to ensure the disposal mechanisms are fit for purpose. Furthermore, in the decommissioning of Sellafield, a lot of space is needed, and removing the ILW, which takes up the most space, is crucial. The HLW at Sellafield are in buildings designed to last for a long period of time.

2. In the light of Sweden's use of interim storage c. 30m below ground, could CoRWM advise on whether a similar option should be considered in the UK?

CoRWM reported Sweden's facility (Central Interim Storage for Spent Nuclear Fuel) is to store spent fuel until it can be disposed of into a GDF. The UK store their spent fuel at Sellafield (Thorpe facility), similarly until it can be disposed of in a GDF, with the facility designed to do this for 100 years.

40. Philip Mathews (Nuleaf) provided several updates:
 - a. Nuleaf have commissioned independent consultancy work on local authority/community engagement the around nuclear waste and decommissioning industry, comparing to international experiences and comparable industries in the UK (oil, gas, renewables, etc.). This will be published late 2024.
 - b. NDA have been doing a review of site stakeholder groups, as well as commissioning the University of Aberdeen to do a study on "deliberative democracy" as it relates to nuclear communities.
 - c. Nuleaf, with invitation from the Group of European Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF), have a visit to Oskarshamn in September, looking at the rock and canister labs. A senior officer from Lincolnshire will be attending.
 - d. IAEA is holding a technical meeting on community engagement in Vienna in October. CC will be attending on CoRWM's behalf.
41. A guest attendee recently attended a CPG at Scottish Parliament, asking a question on the workforce loss at Hunterston B once the defueling is completed. EDF reported the majority of those are retiring or moving to other sites, and NRS stated they will need to recruit once they are in place.

Presentation: Sasha Wynn Davies, Wales Nuclear Forum (WNF)

42. NT welcomed Sasha Wynn Davies (SWD) and thanked her for presenting today. "The Wales Nuclear Forum & the future for Nuclear in Wales".

Q&A

43. In addendum to the presentation, CoRWM mentioned the importance of the role of bringing together various people across the supply chain.
44. CoRWM and SWD discussed the transformative benefits a GW scale reactor with a Hydrogen generating facility, similar to Sizewell C, would bring to Wylfa and the UK's future.
45. SWD stated the importance in the integration of nuclear with other net zero projects, such as hydrogen generation or carbon capture and storage. How Great British Nuclear fits into the newly formed Great British Energy and the function thereof will be of interest to the UK.
46. CoRWM discussed how there is investment going into parts of Wales into storage related to solar panels and batteries. This would be a factor in developing a new facility in Wylfa. SWD mentioned that this is not something the WNF has spoken about but should do in future.

47. SWD spoke on the initial concerns from communities around the wastes involved with nuclear facilities in the area. The community in North Anglesey are very informed around nuclear and know the questions to ask and how to foster good discussions around waste. SMR investment may raise more questions due to its novel nature, CoRWM agreed that it's important to be transparent and upfront on the life cycle.