Committee on Radioactive Waste Management
CoRWM Doc. 3955

PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK

2025-26

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1. Introduction from the Chair

I feel privileged to be able to present this Work Programme on behalf of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management. 2024/25 was an exceptionally busy year for the Committee and I am sure that 2025/26 will be as hectic, the result of the summons to action provided by the growth in the level of ambition for domestic nuclear power and the abiding importance of crucial elements of waste strategy -- most particularly the recurring issues of the siting process for the geological disposal facility (GDF).

The Committee currently has eleven members rather than the full twelve as a result of the resignation of Dr Catherine Mackenzie. An appointment process for her replacement is nearing completion.

Through the year, the Committee worked hard to communicate with its various constituencies, including especially UK government and the devolved administrations, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and Nuclear Waste Services (NWS), the relevant regulators such as the Office for Nuclear Regulation and the Environment Agency, the nuclear industry, local authority organisations such as the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (Nuleaf), various community organisations, and the general public. We have achieved this goal through in-person open plenaries which also provide the option of joining online, through the ongoing development of a range of position papers, a progress report on the GDF siting process, and through blogs. In addition, we have attended a number of GDF Community Partnership events. Our main aims are to disseminate our work and to provide informed advice to all those who require it.

Much of 2024/25 was again taken up with examining the progress being made in siting a GDF. Our latest assessment was published in the second of a series of progress reports. Other GDF-related strands of work continue to be prominent in our work programme, including on the management of radioactive waste and spent fuel arising from small and advanced reactors, on the need for an underground rock laboratory, on the particular characteristics of plutonium and graphite in a GDF, on legal and regulatory issues, and on retrievability of waste from a GDF. More general strands of work on radioactive waste will include explorations of waste transport, waste-burning reactors, and, in particular, interim storage. We can be sure that we will also have to respond to various government policy consultations, including from the Scottish and Welsh devolved administrations.

In order to advise and scrutinise to the best of our ability, an important part of our work continues to be to learn and understand how other countries are taking forward their disposal programmes and we visited Spain in 2024 to increase our knowledge of approaches to intermediate level waste disposal. In the UK, we undertook an extended visit to Wylfa in the same year.

Whatever the issue might be, CoRWM will continue to draw on the varied and deeply informed range of expertise of its members to provide well-evidenced and robust

position papers and to offer appropriate and impartial advice to both government and the general public.

Sir Nigel Thrift
Chair, Committee on Radioactive Waste Management

2. Summary

1. The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), with a remit to provide independent scrutiny and advice on the long-term management of radioactive wastes to Ministers across the UK and to engage and communicate with the public on these matters. The Committee normally consists of a Chair and 11 experts from various fields related to radioactive waste management.

2. CoRWM is sponsored by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Scottish Government (SG), Welsh Government (WG) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland.

3. This Work Programme sets out CoRWM's work plans and budget for the next year. CoRWM updates this document annually. It has been agreed by our sponsors. CoRWM's financial and working year begins on 1st April and ends on 31st March.

4. This document also describes: the Committee's background and remit; its methods of working and enablers; and its priorities and proposed deliverables for 2025 to 2026.

5. A good part of the Committee's work this year will again be focussed on activities related to the siting process for the GDF which involves evaluating Nuclear Waste Services' (NWS) processes, particularly in respect of community engagement, whether the process should include an underground research facility (URF), engineering and cost implications of a GDF far into the inshore area, and transport of radioactive wastes to a GDF.

6. The Committee also works on broader radioactive waste issues including: scrutiny of the storage and characterisation of radioactive waste; delving further into the nature of the wastes from small modular and advanced modular reactors; advising the Scottish Government on policy for near-surface near-site waste management and disposal; and examining the management and disposition of spent fuel and nuclear materials.

7. The current membership of CoRWM is given at Annex B.

3. Background to Our Work

8. CoRWM was established in 2003 as part of the UK Government's Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) programme. Its initial remit was to oversee a review of the options for the long-term management of the UK's higher activity radioactive waste (HAW) and to recommend an option (or combination of options) to Government. CoRWM reported in July 2006 (CoRWM doc. 700) and Government responded in October 2006, accepting most of CoRWM's recommendations. CoRWM's principal recommendation described geological disposal as the best available approach to the long-term management of higher activity waste and recommended progressing as soon as practicable.

9. In October 2007, CoRWM was reconstituted to provide continued independent scrutiny and advice to the UK Government and the devolved administrations on the longer-term management of radioactive waste, including storage and disposal.

10. CoRWM also advises the devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales on their radioactive waste policies and Northern Ireland when requested, including where they differ from that of the UK Government as, for example, the Scottish Government's policy of near-site near-surface storage and disposal of higher activity waste (HAW).[1]

11. Another important part of CoRWM's mission is communication to the general public of how radioactive waste can be managed safely and securely.

12. CoRWM's current Framework Document is available on gov.uk.[2]

13. Though CoRWM's membership and remit have changed over the years, CoRWM members continue to conclude unanimously that geological disposal is the best available approach to safely manage the most hazardous radioactive waste for the long-term and prevent it from becoming a financial and environmental burden to future generations.

[1] For the purposes of Scottish HAW policy, HAW includes: (1) Radioactive waste defined in current UK categorisations as Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) (2) Intermediate Level Waste is waste which has radioactivity levels exceeding the upper boundaries for Low Level Waste and which does not generate enough heat for this to need to be taken into account in the design of treatment or storage or disposal facilities.

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/committee-on-radioactive-waste-management-framework-document

4. How We Work

14. The Committee formulates its key advice and takes decisions by consensus in plenary session. It has normally held four open plenary meetings each year that the public can attend. The Committee also holds four closed plenary meetings to take evidence and enable discussions with government officials as well as an interim closed plenary meeting during the summer which allows it to catch up on any fast-moving issues and review outstanding business.

15. The Committee provides its advice through a variety of methods. Members' views on some issues may be communicated in person or as commentary on documents. Feedback is provided to key stakeholders such as NWS and NDA via presentations and regular workshops. More complex issues will often require the consensus of the Committee through discussion at closed plenary meetings and may be presented in a formal letter or report with recommendations.

16. CoRWM Doc. 3394 sets out a new system of categorising CoRWM advice. It describes how *CoRWM Position Papers* and *CoRWM Recommendations* always constitute a consensus committee view, where *CoRWM Advice Notes* always constitute the view of a subgroup unless clearly stated otherwise.

Table 1: Categories of CoRWM Advice

Category	Examples	Default level of consensus required
"Recommendation"		Consensus view of committee
Report	Consultation response, technical report, position paper	Consensus view of committee
Note	Advice note, meeting note, summary note	Consensus view of subgroup unless stated otherwise
Comments	Document comments, emails, meeting minutes	Consensus view of the subgroup unless stated otherwise

17. Much of the work of the Committee is carried out by six subgroups. Each subgroup focuses on an area of interest or aspect of a government or Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) radioactive waste management programme, and contains members with relevant knowledge, skills and experience. The membership and focus of these subgroups are given in Annex C.

18. The Chairs of the subgroups are responsible for preparing work plans to meet the requirements set out in this work programme. Subgroup chairs must also ensure the work of the subgroup is reported to the Committee in order for the Committee to formulate its advice.

CoRWM's Funding and Time Allocation

Table 2: CoRWM budget estimates 2025-26[3]. (This is an indicative budget, subject to annual budget settlement with DESNZ)

Item	Budget (£) 2024-2025
Members' Fees	226690
Accommodation, Travel, Subsistence, Visits	63310
Total	290000

Table 3: CoRWM members time allocations for 2025-26 by role

CoRWM Role	Indicative time allocation for role (days)	Number of Members in role	Total indicative time allocation for role (days)
Chair	78	1	78
Deputy Chair	49	2	98
Subgroup Chair	49	6	294
Member	49	3	147
All CoRWM Roles		12[4]	617

CoRWM Stakeholders

[3] These figures are indicative and the actual financial allocation will depend on future spending settlements.

[4] Actual number of members may vary due to membership changes and new appointments in progress.

19. CoRWM engages with a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure that CoRWM members have up-to-date information and access to a broad range of views.

20. In developing this work programme, the Committee consulted the following groups for their feedback:

- The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
- Scottish Government
- Welsh Government
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
- Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)
- Nuclear Waste Services (NWS)

20. The proposed indicative 2025-26 work programme reflects the comments that were received.

5. Our Tasks and Focus

Our Work Areas for 2025-2026. For further details see Annex A.

21. Much of CoRWM's work has been and will be focused on activities related to the process for seeking a suitable location for a GDF, a process that was launched in December 2018 in England and January 2019 in Wales. CoRWM will continue to scrutinise and advise on the documentation, technical challenges, and implementation of these policies, as well as commenting on NWS's community engagement and siting process, and advising communities as and when needed. CoRWM has published two reviews of GDF progress so far, and will continue this series periodically as the GDF programme develops. The first two reports are published on gov.uk.[5]

22. This year, CoRWM will also be involved in many other dimensions of radioactive waste policy and implementation, including:

- Advice to the Scottish Government on their near-surface near-site storage and disposal policy for HAW, including aspects of retrievability, as well as advice to the Welsh government as and when needed. The Committee has not allocated a specific task regarding Northern Ireland. The Committee will continue to provide advice to Northern Ireland at the Northern Ireland Executive's request

- Reviewing the NDA's assumptions and strategy for managing the majority of radioactive wastes in the UK, with a focus on the implications of long-term interim storage of radioactive waste, spent fuel and nuclear materials. CoRWM will also review the NDA's fifth quinquennial strategy when it is released for consultation.

- Continuing to provide independent advice to the UK and Welsh Governments on the nature of radioactive waste outputs from small modular reactors (SMRs), and also advanced modular reactors (AMRs), particularly those which would generate novel wastes and spent fuels.

23. CoRWM will continue to undertake outreach activities, including with those communities involved in the GDF siting process.

[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivery-of-an-operational-geological-disposal-facility-gdf-progress-report-2023

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24. Collaboration across the Committee and its subgroups will continue, with consensus sought in quarterly plenary meetings.

25. The scope of this indicative work programme is built on the assumption that current levels of Secretariat support will continue to be put in place. The Committee is supported by a small team within the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Annex A – Work Areas, Tasks and Deliverables for 2025-26

26. Table 5 Provides a description of each proposed Work Area for 2025-26 together with specific tasks and indicative deliverables or records.

27. Some of these will produce new CoRWM documents, and some reflect ongoing stakeholder engagement in key areas of focus. In addition, CoRWM will produce an Annual Report for 2024-25 for publication in summer 2025 and provide ad hoc advice when requested or where it deems it appropriate to bring particular issues to the attention of its sponsors.

Table 4: Proposed work areas, tasks and indicative deliverables for 2025-26

Work Area	Tasks and Deliverables
1. Scrutiny of and advice to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Welsh Government, NDA and NWS on communication strategy and activities related to the implementation of Working with Communities policy, and related GDF and engagement documents, and also in relation to the near surface disposal for intermediate level waste concept.	**1A** To scrutinise implementation of the Working with Communities policies in England and Wales.
	1B To act as a source of independent information to communities in the geological disposal facility siting process and the wider public.
	1C To engage with other CoRWM subgroups to ensure a focus on community engagement across the full range of CoRWM's work.
	1D Scrutiny and provision of advice to NWS on public engagement and communication of technical matters. This might include site investigations, engineering options and the safety case in collaboration with other CoRWM sub-groups.
	1E Inform and update NWS/NDA of the ways in which social sciences and humanities research can support their mission.
	1F International site visits and conference participation to be informed of comparative siting and engagement practices
2. Scrutiny of and advice to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and NWS on the GDF siting process, including technical evaluation criteria & plans	**2A** Scrutiny of, and advice to, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and NWS, on the technical site evaluation approach. This includes site selection criteria, methods of investigation (including data sampling and testing regimes), timescales for carrying out site selection in different rock types and the overall value for money relating to proposed siting options.

for site investigation and characterisation.	**2B** Scrutiny and provision of advice to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and NWS, on activities relating to the continued development of a GDF safety case. This to include the role of a URF and the siting of any proposed GDF.
	2C Provision of advice to Working Groups and Community Partnerships involved in the GDF siting process.
3. Scrutiny of and advice to the Department for Energy Security Net Zero and NWS on activities related to GDF licensing and the implementation of the Geological Disposal programme	**3A** General scrutiny and advice to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and NWS on legal, regulatory, and planning and permitting issues in relation to the geological disposal programme.
	3B Legal and regulatory issues involved in the development of an inshore GDF beneath the seabed but accessed from land, including an updated report on waste retrievability in conjunction with subgroup 2
	3C Legal and regulatory issues involved in the development of a possible URF, including finalising a report on this in collaboration with subgroup 2
	3D Legal and regulatory issues involved in exploring the near surface disposal (NSD) concept for Intermediate Level Waste (ILW).
	3E Legal, regulatory or policy issues arising from radioactive waste streams located in Scotland (in conjunction with Work Area / Subgroup 4).
	3F Legal issues relevant to the implementation of the Working with Communities siting process.
	3G Legal, regulatory and planning permitting aspects of radioactive waste transport to a GDF, including finalising a report on transport challenges and opportunities that arise.
4. Scrutiny of and advice to the Scottish Government (SG) on the management	**4A** Advice and input into the review of the Higher Activity Waste Radioactive Waste Policy 2011 and its associated Higher Activity Radioactive Waste Implementation Strategy 2016. SG4

of radioactive waste in Scotland.	will work through the Higher Activity Waste in Scotland Strategy Implementation Group (HAWSSIG) to inform the 2011 Policy and 2016 Implementation Strategy review currently taking place, advising on concepts and options for Near Surface Storage and Disposal options and sharing any associated cross-nation knowledge.
	4B Scrutiny of and advice to the Scottish Government on the management of radioactive waste in Scotland. Specifically in 2025 we will advise on retrievability as part of the Higher Activity Waste review.
5. Welsh Government (WG) activities	**5A** Scrutiny of and advice to the Welsh Government on the management of radioactive waste in Wales. With particular emphasis on considering Trawsfynydd as a "lead and learn" site. It is intended to make a site visit to Trawsfynydd to follow up the visit from 2023.
	5B Provide advice on likely management of radioactive waste issues with possible development of SMRs or AMRs at sites in Wales, including the proposed Last Energy micro reactor project at Bridgend.
	5C Continued liaison with the Wales Nuclear Forum and the Senedd Nuclear Cross-Party Working group.
6. Scrutiny of and advice to the Department for Energy and Net Zero and NDA on the management of radioactive waste, spent fuel and nuclear materials that may be destined for disposal	**6A** Monitoring and providing advice on NDA Integrated Waste Management developments including boundary wastes, difficult wastes in Scotland, and strategic direction.
	6B To advise on the implications of a UK programme of SMRs and AMRs for radioactive waste management. Including finalising a report started in the previous performance year on 'waste burning' reactors and their implications for geological disposal
	6C To prepare a report on interim storage of the radioactive waste currently destined for a GDF.

	6D To advise DESNZ and NDA on options for management of activated graphite from research facilities, Magnox reactors, advanced gas cooled reactors and advanced modular reactors.

Annex B CoRWM Members

Chair

Sir Nigel Thrift was appointed Chair of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management on 2 July 2018.

Until 2017, Sir Nigel was the Executive Director of Schwarzman Scholars. He is one of the world's leading human geographers and previously served as Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Warwick and as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University of Oxford. He is a Fellow of the British Academy.

Current term of office ends: July 2026

Deputy Chair

Penny Harvey is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester. She is an elected Fellow of the British Academy, and of the Academia Europaea, Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences (UK), and an elected member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. Penny has an extensive history of research on the social transformations of large-scale infrastructure projects, with a particular focus on the relationship between local communities, government agencies and corporate bodies.

Current term of office ends: **November 2027**

Deputy Chair

Derek Lacey was appointed to the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management in November 2019.

Derek has recently completed a term as a Director at the International Atomic Energy Agency. He previously had roles as Deputy Chief Inspector in the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and Head of Nuclear and Radioactive Waste Management Policy at the UK Department for Energy and Climate Change.

Current term of office ends: **November 2027**

Clare Bond was appointed to the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management in January 2022.

Clare is a Professor in Earth Sciences at the University of Aberdeen, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Clare has academic, industry, policy and third sector experience.

She specialises in understanding biases and uncertainties in subsurface data interpretation, as well as rock deformation and fluid flow in the Earth's crust. She applies her research to a range of subsurface challenges including CO_2 and nuclear waste storage. Clare is interested in the communication of

science and engineered subsurface solutions, and the engagement of publics.

Current term of office ends: **January 2029**

Claire Corkhill was appointed to the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) in January 2020.

Claire is currently a Professor at the University of Bristol. With an academic background in both geology and materials science, she has over 10 years of experience in researching nuclear waste material corrosion in geological environments. She has held research fellowships in both the UK and Japan and leads a team of researchers focused on determining the long-term behaviour of radioactive materials. Claire is an enthusiastic science communicator and has made numerous media appearances in relation to nuclear waste disposal and nuclear decommissioning.

Current term of office ends: **January 2028**

Ray Kemp was appointed to the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management in November 2019.

Ray is Chartered Town Planner, has a background in planning and is a specialist in risk perception, management and communication. He has been a Member of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (CoMARE) as Public Interest Representative at the UK Department of Health and Social Care from 2013. In the past, he has worked as an adviser to the Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) for the Australian National Radioactive Waste Management Facility Project. He was a Member, then Chair of the Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) between 2012 and 2015.

Current term of office ends: **November 2027**

Mark Kirkbride was appointed to the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management in November 2019.

Mark has been the Chief Executive Officer of West Cumbria Mining Ltd since 2014, having previously worked in a wide range of senior roles in the mining, engineering and construction industries. Mark is a Fellow of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining, a Chartered Engineer and holds a degree in mining engineering and a research masters in geomechanics (machine rock cutting). He has more than 25 years' experience of underground construction techniques and project delivery.

Current term of office ends: **November 2027**

Stephen Tromans KC is a barrister practising at 39 Essex Chambers, London.

He was Joint Head of Chambers from 2011-2015. He has worked as an academic at Cambridge (1981-1987) and as a solicitor (1987-1999). He became a barrister in 1999 and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2009.

His area of specialism is environmental, energy natural resources and planning law. He has extensive experience of advising companies and government and representing them in court and at public inquiries. He has a particular focus on nuclear law and is the author of the leading text, "Nuclear Law". He is also the author of leading works on environmental impact assessment and contaminated land and has spoken and written widely on these topics.

He has been a member of the UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA) since its formation in 1986 and has been Chair and a Council member of UKELA. He is also a member of the International Nuclear Law Association (INLA) and a director of INLA UK. From 1994-2002 he was a Council Member of English Nature, the predecessor of Natural England and from 2010-2014 was the Chair of the Environmental Law Foundation (ELF).

Current term of office ends: **November 2026**

Simon Webb CBE FICE specialises in major programmes and strategic change. An Executive Director at Nichols Group, he has led their work on nuclear decommissioning and warships for the last 10 years, at sites in England, Scotland and Wales. Simon was a non-executive Director of the Major Projects Association from 2010-21. He is a member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems.

Previously Simon was a Director-General in the Department of Transport and the Ministry of Defence, responsible for major projects and security policy.

Current term of office ends: **January 2029**

Malcolm Joyce is currently Distinguished Professor of Nuclear Engineering and interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) at Lancaster University. With an academic background in radiation detection and nuclear materials assay, he has over 30 years' experience in researching techniques for nuclear waste assay and decommissioning. He was Head of Engineering at Lancaster (2008-2015) and leads a team of 10 researchers focused on new measurement methods for radioactivity.

He is a Chartered Engineer, a Fellow of the Nuclear Institute, a recipient of a Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award and author of 'Nuclear Engineering: A Conceptual Guide to Nuclear Power'.

Current term of office ends: **June 2027**

Barry Lennox is Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and Professor of Applied Control and Nuclear Engineering Decommissioning at The University of Manchester. He holds a Royal Academy Chair in Emerging Technologies and is the Co-Director of the Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Collaboration (RAICo) in Cumbria, which aims to develop technology that will lead to the greater adoption of robotics in the nuclear decommissioning industry. He is Co-Director of the University of Manchester's Centre for Robotics and Artificial Intelligence and has been responsible for the deployment of a range of robotic systems into radioactive facilities in the UK and overseas.

Current term of office ends: **July 2027**

Annex C Glossary of Terms

AMR	Advanced Modular Reactor
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
GDF	Geological Disposal Facility
HAW	Higher Activity Waste
ILW	Intermediate Level Waste
NSD	Near Surface Disposal
NWS	Nuclear Waste Services
NDA	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
ONR	The Office for Nuclear Regulation
SG	Scottish Government
SMR	Small Modular Reactor
URF	Underground Research Facility
WG	Welsh Government