



Terms of Reference

March 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) is an Expert Committee of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, co-sponsored by the Welsh Government, Scottish Government, and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland. This document sets out the Committee's purpose, scope, composition, roles and responsibilities, and policies to ensure clarity, transparency, and accountability in all its proceedings.

Purpose and Scope

- 1.2. CoRWM was established in 2003 as a non-statutory advisory committee and reconstituted in 2006. Prior to November 2025, CoRWM was a non-departmental public body and is now an Expert Committee of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (See Annex A citation of cabinet office classifications). Its purpose is to provide independent advice to the UK Government, the Devolved Governments, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and its subsidiary Nuclear Waste Services (NWS), or other interested parties with the agreement of the Sponsor Group (see 5.10). The advice provided is to be based on scrutiny of the available evidence on the management, including storage and disposal, of radioactive waste arising from civil and, where relevant, defence nuclear programmes. CoRWM will also advise on the management of nuclear material that could be declared as waste at some point in future.

Aims

- 1.3. CoRWM's strategic aims are to
- Provide independent, evidence-based advice on scientific, technical, planning, legislative and regulatory issues relevant to radioactive waste management. This includes advising on government policy, and the

strategies of the NDA group, its programmes and processes, in particular NWS and the Geographical Disposal Facility (GDF) programme.

- Deliver this scrutiny and advice in such a way that does not duplicate the role already fulfilled by the statutory independent safety and environmental regulators.
- Report any matters of concern as well as maintain public confidence in the work under consideration. CoRWM will seek to engage and communicate openly and regularly with stakeholders and with the public whilst ensuring that ethical and professional standards apply, and that confidentiality is maintained as and when appropriate.
- Maintain an independent overview of the scientific and technical issues relevant to the delivery of UK Government and Devolved Administrations' radioactive waste management programmes. It should bring to the attention of the relevant Ministers' issues that it considers to be either positive and worthy of note, or concerns that in the Committee's opinion needs to be addressed.
- Hold four plenary meetings a year, including one in Scotland and one in Wales, as well as interim meetings as and when required.

2. Committee Composition

Membership

- 2.1. The Committee shall consist of a Chairperson and up to eleven members (including two deputy chairs), drawn from a diverse pool of expertise including science, engineering, public policy, health, environmental protection, and community representation.

3. Governance and Accountability

- 3.1. CoRWM shall operate proportionate internal governance arrangements that, so far as practicable and in the light of the other provisions of this ToR, or as otherwise may be mutually agreed, accord with good corporate governance practice and applicable regulatory requirements and expectations.
- 3.2. In particular (but without limitation), CoRWM should:
 - comply with the principles and provisions of the Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments Code of Good Practice¹ (as amended and updated from time to time) to the extent appropriate.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/corporate-governance-code-for-central-government-departments-2017>

- comply with Managing Public Money (MPM)².
- in line with MPM have regard to the relevant Functional Standards³ as appropriate and in particular those concerning Finance, Commercial and Counter Fraud
- take into account the codes of good practice and guidance set out in Annex A of this terms of reference.

4. Appointments to CoRWM

- 4.1. Members are appointed through an open and transparent process, based on merit, relevant experience, and commitment to the Committee's objectives. Appointments are made for a fixed term of four years, reappointment or extensions are possible, subject to performance review. The appointment process is overseen by the sponsoring department (secretariat team in Department for Energy Security and Net Zero DESNZ) to ensure fairness and inclusivity.
- 4.2. All appointments are made on merit, and political activity plays no part in the selection process. The appointment of the Chair, Deputy Chair and Committee members is recommended by the DESNZ responsible minister (see section 5.10) and approved by the Secretary of State. Devolved Governments are involved and consulted in the process and Devolved Government Ministers will jointly approve new appointments. The Devolved Government officials will still be consulted in the case of reappointments and official-level approval will be sought.
- 4.3. The committee Chair, Deputy Chairs, and committee members are appointed for a period of up to four years. The DESNZ Secretary of State, in consultation with Ministers from Devolved Governments retains the right to terminate appointments at any time considering: individual members' performance, changes in CoRWM's work requirements, or completion of the work required of CoRWM.
- 4.4. The skills and expertise which will need to be available to the Committee will vary depending on the programme of work. Sponsor Ministers may at any time review the membership of the Committee, and the skills and expertise required.

² [Managing public money - GOV.UK](#)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/functional-standards>

Budget

- 4.5. The budget allocated to CoRWM is part of the DESNZ budget and is published as part of CoRWM annual report. As the CoRWM budget is consolidated with the DESNZ budget, it is equally open to be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General on economy, efficiency or effectiveness. The main spending areas are members' fees and expenses and general administration.

Procurement of additional expertise

- 4.6. Members of CoRWM may not have all the skills and expertise necessary to advise Government. The Committee will need to decide how best to secure access to other appropriate sources of expert input during the course of its work. It will have the option of setting up expert sub-groups containing both CoRWM members and other appropriate co-opted persons.
- 4.7. The engagement of consultants will be dependent on sufficient funds being available to CoRWM and the necessary business cases being approved by relevant sponsors as appropriate.

5. Roles and responsibilities

The Chair's role and responsibilities

- 5.1. The Chair is responsible for leading the Committee in the delivery of its aims. Such responsibility should be exercised in the light of their duties and responsibilities as set out in their appointment letter, the priorities in the Chair's Letter issued to them by the Sponsorship Team, this document, and the documents and guidance referred to within this document.
- 5.2. An annual Chair's Letter issued to the Chair by the senior sponsor (the Deputy Director for Nuclear Decommissioning in DESNZ) will set out the department's expectations of the Chair in terms of both good governance and strategic objectives of CoRWM.
- 5.3. The Chair has the following leadership responsibilities:
- delivering high standards of regularity and propriety
 - representing the views of CoRWM to the general public
 - Ensuring that CoRWM's advice is of high quality, is independent and evidence based.
 - Ensuring that the work of the Committee is performed in an open and transparent manner.
- 5.4. The Chair also has an obligation to ensure that:
- the work of CoRWM and its members are reviewed and are working effectively including ongoing assessment of the performance of individual committee members with a formal annual evaluation and more in-depth

assessments of the performance of individual committee members when being considered for re-appointment

- when conducting assessments that the view of relevant stakeholders including the Sponsorship Team are sought and considered

The Deputy Chair's Responsibilities

5.5. The Deputy Chair's responsibilities are to:

- Support the Chair in formulating CoRWM's Strategy, work programme and annual report;
- Conduct meetings/activities where the Chair is not available; and
- Support the Chair in the discharge of their leadership responsibilities and obligations.

Individual Committee members' responsibilities

5.6. Individual CoRWM members should:

- comply at all times with the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies, which covers conduct in the role and includes the Nolan Principles of Public Life as well as rules relating to the use of public funds and to conflicts of interest
- demonstrate adherence to the 12 Principles of Governance for all Public Body Non-Executive Directors as appropriate, not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political profit, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons or organisations
- comply with DESNZ rules on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality, expenses, and of business appointments
- act in good faith and in the best interests of CoRWM

The role of the sponsorship team

5.7. The CoRWM Sponsorship Team, which also functions as the secretariat for the Committee in DESNZ, is the primary sponsor for CoRWM. The responsible senior civil servant (the "Senior Sponsor") for this relationship is the Deputy Director for Nuclear Decommissioning. The senior sponsor is the main source of advice to the responsible Minister on the discharge of their responsibilities in respect of CoRWM.

5.8. The Senior Sponsor is responsible for annual evaluation of the Chair's performance.

5.9. Officials of the CoRWM Sponsorship Team in the sponsor department will liaise regularly with Committee members to review performance against plans, achievement against targets and expenditure against its budget allocation. The Sponsorship Team will also take the opportunity to explain wider policy developments that might have an impact on CoRWM's work.

5.10. The Sponsorship Team is also responsible for liaising with sponsor officials in the devolved administrations via the Sponsor Group. The Sponsor Group is a

forum for all CoRWM business to be discussed between the UK Government and the Devolved Governments.

The Responsible Minister

- 5.11. The Minister of State in DESNZ with responsibility for nuclear policy is accountable to the UK Parliament for all matters concerning CoRWM (the ‘responsible minister’).
- 5.12. The responsible Minister is also responsible for the policy framework within which CoRWM operates in England. Radioactive waste policy is a devolved matter, and the appropriate minister sets the policy framework for this in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

6. Annual Report and Work Programme

Annual Report

- 6.1. CoRWM must publish an annual report of its activities after the end of each financial year. The report must outline main activities and performance during the previous financial year.
- 6.2. The annual report should be submitted to sponsor officials by 31 May each year. The report may contain both recommendations and opinions

Work Programme

- 6.3. CoRWM’s deliverables will be set out each year in a proposed annual work programme. The work programme will be submitted to DESNZ sponsor officials by 30th April each year for discussion and agreement. Any in-year changes will be the subject of agreement by CoRWM and the Sponsor Group.
- 6.4. The plan shall reflect CoRWM’s overarching objectives, the annual Chair’s Letter, and the priorities set from time to time by the sponsor Ministers (including decisions taken on policy and resources in the light of wider public expenditure decisions). The plan shall demonstrate how CoRWM’s advice contributes to the achievement of the UK Government’s and Devolved Administrations’ priorities.
- 6.5. The workplan will include details of specific areas of work, reports which the Committee intends to produce, the proposed role of sub-groups and any other activities or events, including proposals for stakeholder engagement. The workplan should be published on CoRWM’s website.

Outreach Programmes

- 6.6. Subject to funding and agreement with appropriate sponsors, CoRWM may undertake range of outreach activities designed to inform, engage, and consult with the public, local communities, industry representatives, and other stakeholders. These may include public meetings, workshops, educational seminars, and participation in national forums.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

- 7.1. Proactive engagement with stakeholders is central to the Committee's work. Members regularly meet with government officials, regulatory bodies, industry representatives, non-governmental organisations, and community groups to gather input, share information, and foster mutual understanding.

8. Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- 8.1. CoRWM are subject to FOI and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests. Any requests will be handled to ensure that CoRWM comply with the requirements and legal obligations of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004. All FOI and EIR requests must be acknowledged and responded to within 20 working days of receipt. Requests can be submitted to corwm@energysecurity.gov.uk.

9. Review and Amendment

- 9.1. These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed biennially, or as required, to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

Contact Information

For further information or to contact the Committee, please email:
corwm@energysecurity.gov.uk

Annex A

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74d700e5274a59fa715592/Classification-of-Public-Bodies-Guidance-for-Departments.pdf>

[Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees and Councils: CoPSAC 2021 - GOV.UK](#)