

NuSAC Paper			NuSAC(2008)P13
Date:	3 July 2008	Open Gov. Status:	Open
Type of Paper:	DISCUSSION	File Ref:	TRIM 1.14.2.9/
Exemptions:	None		

NUCLEAR SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Liaison between the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) and NuSAC

A paper by Marion Hill
Member of NuSAC and CoRWM

Summary

1. This paper outlines the reasons why there should be liaison between the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) and the Nuclear Safety Advisory Committee (NuSAC), the topics on which liaison could most usefully occur, and the options for the form that liaison could take. The paper is for discussion at the CoRWM plenary meeting on 9-10 June 2008 and at the NuSAC open meeting on 3 July 2008. Each committee is invited to agree that liaison is desirable and to decide on the most appropriate liaison arrangements.

Why should there be liaison between CoRWM and NuSAC?

2. CoRWM was set up in 2003 to recommend a long-term management strategy for the UK's higher activity radioactive wastes. It reported to Government in 2006 and its recommendations were largely accepted. It was then reconstituted in 2007, with the following terms of reference:

3. "... The role of the reconstituted CoRWM will be to provide independent scrutiny and advice to UK Government and devolved administration Ministers¹ on the long-term management, including storage and disposal, of radioactive waste. CoRWM's primary task is to provide independent scrutiny on the Government's and Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's proposals, plans and programmes to deliver geological disposal, together with robust interim storage, as the long-term management option for the UK's higher activity wastes."

4. In delivering its work programme, and "where there is a common interest", CoRWM is required to "liaise with appropriate advisory bodies, including Health and Safety Commission advisory bodies, and any advisory bodies established by the environment agencies". Since CoRWM's terms of reference were drawn up, the Health Safety Commission (HSC) has merged with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The HSE advisory body that has the most interests in common with CoRWM is NuSAC.

5. NuSAC's terms of reference are:

¹ The Ministers to whom CoRWM reports are those of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, and the environment ministers of the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

- "to advise HSE on matters which are referred to it or which it considers require attention regarding nuclear safety policy and its implementation at nuclear installations; and,
- to advise HSE on the adequacy and balance of HSE's nuclear safety research programme."

6. All existing and planned interim storage facilities for higher activity wastes are on nuclear-licensed sites and it has been agreed that any geological disposal facility will be a nuclear-licensed site. Thus the safety of both storage and disposal facilities are within NuSAC's terms of reference, as is research related to their safety.

7. Liaison between the two committees would make the best use of resources. There are also precedents in that the predecessors of the two committees, namely the Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMAC) and the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (ACSNI), collaborated on a number of studies.

On what topics should there be liaison?

8. Examination of the current work programmes² of CoRWM and NuSAC shows that the following topics are of interest to both committees at present:

- existing and planned storage arrangements for higher activity legacy and committed wastes³
- management plans for spent fuels, including storage arrangements
- management plans for uranium and plutonium, including storage arrangements
- conditioning and packaging standards for wastes and materials that may be declared wastes
- R&D related to the management of higher activity wastes, including infrastructure
- maintenance of skills for waste management over long time periods
- regulatory framework for geological disposal
- coherence of regulatory processes and coordination between regulators for interim storage and geological disposal
- management of new build wastes.

9. There are also other topics on which CoRWM and NuSAC interests are related. In particular, NuSAC has an interest in NDA funding arrangements, from the point of view of their impact on the short-term and long-term safety of existing nuclear facilities. CoRWM has an interest in overall funding arrangements for interim storage and geological disposal, including the relevant parts of the NDA funding arrangements.

How should liaison occur?

10. To identify options for means of liaison, it is necessary to be aware of the similarities and differences between CoRWM's and NuSAC's ways of working. CoRWM has about six plenary meetings per year, all of which are held in public, and for which papers are published in advance on its website. It has seven working groups, which meet in private but reports on their discussions are made public. Notes of discussions between CoRWM and its stakeholders (eg regulators, local authorities, NDA, NGOs) are also published. CoRWM has a policy of openness and transparency and a public and stakeholder engagement programme.

² At the time of writing the CoRWM work programme is with Ministers for approval. The NuSAC work programme is given in its 2007-08 annual report, to be published in July 2008.

³ Legacy wastes are those that have existed for some time; committed wastes are those that are certain to arise in the future from current civil and defence nuclear programmes.

11. NuSAC has three plenary meetings per year, of which one is in public (in July of each year). It has six “review groups” on different aspects of its remit and five “task forces” on cross-cutting topics. NuSAC papers are posted on the HSE website, after NUSAC business has been conducted. Some notes of discussions of review groups and task forces with NuSAC’s stakeholders (the nuclear industry, regulators, Government departments) are closed papers but available on request from Secretariat. NuSAC is due to be reconstituted in October 2008, along with all other HSE advisory committees. This may result in changes to its remit, membership and way of working.

12. The following seem to be the main options for how liaison between CoRWM and NuSAC could occur:

- i) progress reports at plenary meetings by the person who is a member of both committees
- ii) informal ad hoc contacts between members of the two committees, as the need arises
- iii) more formal meetings, for example:
 - there could be meetings between working groups, review groups and task forces on topics of mutual interest
 - members of CoRWM and NuSAC could jointly hold meetings with other organisations (regulators, NDA, nuclear site licensees etc)
 - chairs and secretariats could meet at intervals.
- iv) NuSAC members contribute to CoRWM papers, and vice versa
- v) joint studies and reports on various topics.

13. The need is for an effective means of liaison that will not deflect either committee from its remit or work programme, nor take up additional time or money. The arrangement also has to be flexible, so that the committees can respond to events such as requests for advice (from Ministers in the case of CoRWM, and HSE in the case of NuSAC).

14. Relying on one common member of the two committees (ie (i) above) would not be effective. Joint studies (ie (v) above) would be time-consuming and expensive, as would any type of regular formal meeting (ie (iii) above). The best courses of action appear to be informal ad hoc contacts (ie (ii) above), and contributions to papers (ie (iv) above). The informal contacts could include one or two members of one committee participating in a visit to a site or organisation by members of the other committee. The contributions to papers would be made where this does not involve extra effort (eg a paper for one committee could be made available to the other committee to use in a report).

15. To comply with CoRWM’s policy on openness and transparency, all contacts and contributions would be on the basis that notes of discussions and papers are published. Publication would be on CoRWM’s website, or NuSAC’s website with a link from the CoRWM website, or on both websites.

Conclusions

16. CoRWM and NuSAC are each invited to agree that:

- i) liaison between the two committees is desirable
- ii) there is a range of topics on which liaison should occur
- iii) the most effective and efficient means of liaison will be informal contacts between members and the making of contributions to each other’s papers
- iv) all notes of discussions and papers should be published on the website of one or both committees.