

Overview of NUSAC RG6 attendance at R5/R6 Panel Meetings, Barnwood, February 2008.

Background.

As part of the RG6 approach of 'sampling' selected technical areas in the national nuclear safety research programme in order to meet its 'monitoring and reporting' remit (See note from the Chairman Peter Manning of 25th January 2008), Paul Haigh observed two meetings in the structural integrity technical area over two days in February 2008. These notes review both meetings and comment on the status of coordination of the relevant R&D.

The meetings were held at British Energy, Barnwood, Gloucester on 5th and 6th February 2008. The visit relates to the Work Plan, specifically the item encompassed by 'Research' in 'On-Going Safety Operations'.

R6 Panel

General: The R6 Panel is concerned with residual stresses and fracture mechanics in structural steels and is thus a mature research area rather than a new field of work. Panel meetings are held every 6 months alternating between Risley (SERCO) and Barnwood (BE) and notes from the September 2007 meeting and an agenda were both available.

The R6 Panel comprises members from British Energy, Serco, Rolls Royce and TWI (The Welding Institute). Frazer Nash and Corus have applied for membership. There is normally an HSE observer present. The Chairman is Dr Peter Budden of BE.

In addition to the normal business items on the Agenda (Introductions, apologies, minutes, actions, courses, conferences, Newsletter and AOB) the discussions centred around substantive items on Progress Review, External Links and the Forward Programme. The routine items were dealt with in a business like manner, all outstanding actions having been cleared before the meeting.

Discussion on the substantive items is summarised as follows.

Progress Review.

Progress was judged against the objectives set in the previous years Programme Document and will be summarised in an annual Review Report, with an update provided on a task by task basis as appropriate. This 'check and balance' approach seemed good practice and worked well. An excellent system of (internal) technical authorship and (external) peer review appears to be in place and is effectively used to progress the agreed work programme. Extensive reporting and referencing is employed. Progress is also reviewed and reported on a quarterly basis (a copy of the most recent review is available).

External Links

The R6 Panel has links with a substantial range of related UK and international organisations/Working Groups and the interactions with each were reported and reviewed.

Forward Programme

The draft forward (5 year) programme had been circulated in advance and discussions took place and actions were placed in order to finalise the programme and document. The programme relates to the Research Schedules (with which RG6 is familiar). Members were invited to complete a 'quality check' on the definitive work programme and to report back.

Overview

This was a very efficiently conducted meeting with a good mixture of administrative material interspersed with in depth technical discussion. I had a high 'comfort factor'. My only 'concern' relates to the continued use of 'hard copy' for the R6 documentation. I was assured that the use of (for example) CD ROM had been considered but was thought to be too easily copied, leading to a potential loss of income.

Further Documentation Available

Minutes of 25th September 2007 and 5th February 2008 meetings

'Review of the R6 Procedures Development Programme 2006 - 2007 Newsletter

R5 Panel

General: The R5 Panel is concerned with creep and fatigue in imperfect structural steels and is thus also a mature research area rather than a new field of work. Panel meetings are held every 6 months alternating between Risley (SERCO) and Barnwood (BE). The meetings are usually held in tandem with the R6 meeting.

The R5 Panel comprises members from British Energy and Serco with an HSE-NII observer. The Chairman is Dr David Dean of BE.

Like the R6 Panel, in addition to the normal business items on the Agenda (apologies, minutes, actions, Newsletter and AOB) the discussions centred around substantive items on the R5 Documentation System, Progress Review and the Forward Programme. The routine items were dealt with in a business like manner. Discussion on the substantive items is summarised as follows.

R5 Documentation

Arrangements are in place for a major update of the R5 document. The same concern was expressed on the use of hard copy rather than (more easily updated) electronic format (see R6 meeting comments).

Progress Review

The draft R5 Progress report for the 9 month period to December 2007 was tabled and items discussed on a task by task basis. Actions to make further progress were placed as appropriate (most actions from the previous meeting appear to have been discharged so this is an efficient way of working). The financial situation was also looked at and the budget was currently underspent due to lack of effort within BE, however the situation was not judged to be critical.

Forward Programme

The draft 5 year forward programme was tabled for comment at the meeting and by a given deadline. The programme seems a logical extension of work in hand and reflects the maturity of the programme. More work is to be done externally (Imperial College and Bristol University in particular). An increase in budget and spend was anticipated.

Overview

This too was a very efficiently conducted meeting with a good mixture of administrative material interspersed with in depth technical discussion. Again I came away with a high 'comfort factor'.

Further Documentation

Minutes of 6th February 2008 meeting
Draft R5 Progress Report 04/07 – 12/07

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS

The agenda, meeting style and efficient working of both Panels reflects the maturity of the work areas and the ongoing enthusiasm of the participants. It was not possible, in such a short review, to penetrate the technical depth of the subjects, but the reviewer gained confidence in the overall approach being taken. The opportunity will be taken, if possible and if invited, to pursue the subjects in marginally greater technical depth at the September meetings.

In this instance the new RG6 approach of 'sampling' appeared to work well.

Paul Haigh