

**Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
Policy brief for NuSAC meeting of 26 October 2007**

1. **Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS):** A framework for implementing geological disposal.
- 1.1 In October 2006 the UK Government and the devolved administrations published a response to the recommendations made by the independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM). In their response, the UK Government and the devolved administrations accepted CoRWM's main recommendation that geological disposal, preceded by safe and secure interim storage, was the way forward for the long-term management of the UK's higher activity radioactive wastes, and said they would consult on a framework for implementing geological disposal.
- 1.2 A consultation on the Government's proposals was launched on 25 June and will end on 2 November 2007. The consultation document sets out the Government's proposals for:
 - the technical programme and aspects of design and delivery of a geological disposal facility; and
 - the process and criteria to be used to decide the siting of that facility, including:
 - development of a voluntarism/partnership approach; and
 - the assessment and evaluation of potential disposal sites, including the initial screening-out of areas unlikely to be suitable for geological disposal.
- 1.3 Following the announcements by UK Government and the devolved administrations, in October 2006, a new CoRWM is being appointed under revised terms of reference designed to meet the future needs of the Government's MRWS programme. The Committee will be jointly appointed by UK Government and relevant devolved administration Ministers.
- 1.4 The role of the reconstituted CoRWM will be to provide independent scrutiny and advice to UK Government and devolved administration Ministers 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 the 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.
- 1.5 The new chairman has been selected and appointed to the reconstituted CoRWM, Professor Robert Pickard. A recruitment process is currently underway for the selection of the remainder of the new CoRWM committee, and appointments are expected to be made in the near future.
- 1.6 Professor Robert Pickard is Chairman of the Consumers' Association Which?, Director-General of the British Nutrition Foundation, Emeritus Professor of Neurobiology at the University of Cardiff, Visiting Professor at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, and Fellow of the Institute of Biology and the Royal Society of Medicine. For the Department of Health and the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, Professor Pickard is also Chairman of the national Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Forum, which facilitates the interface between government policymakers and 94 NGOs working for health improvements. He is an international

authority on the biology of honeybees and pioneered the development of solid-state, neural microbiosensors in the UK.

2. Redfern Inquiry: Post-mortem procedures for the nuclear industry

- 2.1 The Redfern Inquiry on post-mortem procedures in the nuclear industry was announced in April 2007 following reports in the media about the removal of tissue samples from individuals who had worked in the nuclear industry, mainly at Sellafield. The inquiry is continuing, and visits have been undertaken by Michael Redfern QC and his Inquiry team to a number of nuclear facilities including Sellafield, Dounreay and Harwell. John Hutton, the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, looks forward to receiving Mr Redfern's report in due course and has no plans to comment on the inquiry before then. It is expected that the Inquiry report will be published.

3. Nuclear Consultation

- 3.1 At the time of writing, we are currently approaching the end of a 20 week public consultation which was launched in May and ends on 10 October 2007. This consultation asks whether nuclear power should be allowed to play a role alongside other low carbon technologies as part of the UK's future electricity generating mix.
- 3.2 The Government has set out a clearly stated preliminary view – that it does have a role to play, but has also promised to undertake the fullest public consultation before a final decision is made.
- 3.3 The consultation was launched because the Government's conclusion last year that nuclear should have a role to play was successfully challenged by Greenpeace in February 2007 and ruled unlawful. We can expect further challenges.
- 3.4 The consultation document includes questions around a number of "facilitative actions" which will be carried out on a contingent basis until a decision on the principle of new nuclear is taken to address regulatory hurdles to possible investment in new nuclear, namely:

Justification (as required under EU law)

- 3.5 The purpose of the consultation on justification is to seek views on the proposed justification process for new nuclear in the event that Government confirms its preliminary view that nuclear generation has a role to play.
- 3.6 The Justification consultation asks specific questions about the proposed process; sets out an indicative timetable; a call for applications; how Government will consider applications, the steps it will take; and the information an applicant would be expected to submit.

Putting in place provisions for Waste and Decommissioning funding

- 3.7 The Government is actively working to deliver a solution to the waste issue.
- 3.8 The CoRWM report concluded that, for existing waste, deep geological disposal of radioactive waste in a repository, coupled with safe and secure interim storage, was

the best approach. The Government accepted this view and launched a consultation on 25 June setting out Government proposals for an implementation framework.

- 3.9 If the consultation concludes that there should be new nuclear power stations, the Government considers that both new and legacy waste should be disposed of in the same geological disposal facilities.
- 3.10 Owner / operators of any new nuclear power stations will have to cover the full costs of decommissioning and their full share of waste management costs. If, as a result of the consultation, the Government decides to confirm its preliminary view, it would put in place a robust financing framework to ensure industry covers the costs.

Strategic Siting Assessment including Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.11 The Government believes that landscape impacts of new nuclear power stations would not be significantly different to other forms of electricity generation.
- 3.12 Given the UK and European requirements in place to assess and mitigate the environmental effects, these impacts are manageable.
- 3.13 Therefore, the Government believes that they do not provide a reason to prevent the private sector from investing in new nuclear power stations

Nuclear Consultation process/events

- 3.14 We have incorporated a number of different strands to the consultation process to ensure that we listen to a wide range of views:
- A consultation document, 'The Future of Nuclear Power', was published on 23 May electronically, in hard copy, in Welsh, Braille, audio and large print.
 - A dedicated interactive website went live in parallel – www.direct.gov.uk/nuclearpower2007.
 - A series of twelve stakeholder events were held across the UK which aimed to capture the views of various stakeholders including local authorities, green groups, energy companies, business, consumer groups, unions, faith groups and academics.
 - Meetings with existing nuclear site stakeholder groups to hear from those who live near existing sites.
 - Ministerial roundtable events were held in September to hear from leaders of business, City investors, unions and environmental groups about their views.
 - Direct mail was distributed to more than 5,000 grassroots and community organisations to raise awareness of the consultation.
 - An information advertising campaign in national and regional newspapers was dispersed to inform members of the public about the consultation and how to respond.
 - Other ad hoc engagement with relevant organisations, took place for example attendance at the Youth Parliament in Strathclyde to hear from its members.
 - In total it is expected that 1,500 people will have been directly consulted at the events (on top of this we are consulting the public at large via the and online paper consultations). The Government will make a decision on the issue of new nuclear power later this year.

Nuclear New Build- General Key Facts/Messages

- 3.15 International concern about climate change caused by man made emissions of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide is growing. Fossil fuel-fired power stations are major producers of carbon dioxide. The government believes that the life-cycle carbon emissions from nuclear power stations are low and that nuclear can therefore make significant contribution to tackling climate change.
- 3.16 Nuclear contributes around 18% of the UK's electricity mix, is currently considered an important part of our energy, and is an essentially carbon dioxide-free means of generating electricity. Most of the UK's power stations are set to close over the next two decades.
- 3.17 Currently around 74% of UK electricity comes from high carbon fossil fuel generated electricity (37% coal, 36% gas and 1% oil).
- 3.18 Around 22% comes from low carbon forms of electricity generation (18% nuclear and 4% renewables).
- 3.19 By 2025, all but one of the UK's nuclear power plants is scheduled to have closed and in total around 30 -35 GW of investment in electricity generation will be required within the next two decades.
- 3.20 This means that we need to replace around 30% of existing capacity and will need additional capacity to meet increasing demand over the next two decades, and we need to replace this with low carbon generation.
- 3.21 UK Government has reached a preliminary view that it would be in the public interest to allow private sector energy companies option to invest in new nuclear power stations, as existing power stations are retired and in the longer term, and as carbon dioxide emissions targets become more challenging and supplies of fossil fuels become increasingly politicised.
- 3.22 The Government will consider all the responses it gets as part of this consultation. It will give greater consideration to the arguments and evidence than to simple expressions of support or opposition to new nuclear power stations. The consultation will contribute to the shaping of Government policy on the role of new nuclear power stations.