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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

HSC Coordinated programme of Nuclear Safety Research Advice from NuSAC on programme for 2006/07

**Note from Neville Moray
Chair of NuSAC Sub Committee of Research**

Board member lead: Dr M Weightman

Issue

1. I am submitting this note in fulfilment of the Nuclear Safety Advisory Committee's (NuSAC's) remit to consider and offer the Commission advice on the HSE's proposals for the HSC Co-ordinated Programme of Nuclear Safety Research for 2006/2007, set out in paper HSC/06/32. This advice is based primarily on the work of the NuSAC Sub-committee on Research (SCR).

Timing

2. Commission approval of the proposed 2006/07 programme is required to enable the HSE to commission levy funded research.

Recommendation

3. The HSC is advised by NuSAC to approve the HSE Levy Programme and endorse the HSC Coordinated Programme of Nuclear Safety Research for 2006/07 put forward in paper HSC/06/32.

Background

4. The HSC Coordinated programme of Nuclear Safety Research is overseen by HSE on behalf of HSC, under guidelines from DTI (published on the HSE website). It covers civil reactors operated by British Energy and Magnox Electric, and sites under the new Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, operated by BNFL and UKAEA. These NDA licensee research arrangements already cover Sellafield and the operating and decommissioning Magnox sites, and are being developed for the UKAEA sites.

5. The sub-committee met with HSE, the relevant licensees and other stakeholders in April 2005 to discuss the current and proposed programmes. HSE's proposal to HSC is contained in paper HSC/06/32.

Argument

6. HSE presented the proposed programme for 2006/2007 to the NuSAC SCR. For reactor safety research this comprised Levy and Licensee programmes totalling £5.0M, excluding management charges. (The cost of Sellafield licensee chemical plant research was not presented.) HSE advised that it is satisfied that the proposed Levy and Licensee programmes will:

- deliver a balanced and adequate programme of research that addresses priority reactor Nuclear Research Index issues and the Sellafield chemical plant safety research strategies (HSE's yardsticks);
- maintain the licensees' access to Essential Research Capability and HSE's access to Independent Technical Capability
- include participation in appropriate international activities.

7. NuSAC SCR recognises the extensive dialogues that have led to the proposed programme and advises HSC that the programme is well focused on the technical needs and should be approved. This is the fourth annual programme under the current arrangements, and the SCR notes that these arrangements continue to work well.

8. NuSAC SCR considers that the research needs for decommissioning plant are not significantly less than for operating plant and it is concerned that commercial considerations will lead to pressures on licensees to reduce safety research for decommissioning plant. However NuSAC SCR is pleased to note that the recently published NDA strategy had taken into account at least some of HSE's and NuSAC's concerns about the potential adverse effects of competition, although claims that there is evidence that competition has improved safety when introduced at nuclear sites abroad, appear to be largely unsubstantiated.

Consultation

9. NuSAC SCR discussed the proposed programme on 4th April 2006 with HSE and the Licensees. NuSAC SCR had previously seen the reactor Nuclear Research Index and the Sellafield Chemical Plant research strategies that were a major part of the drivers behind the programmes. They have also recently discussed the new arrangements for reactor and Sellafield nuclear safety research. Participation at the SCR meetings includes MOD, DTI, NDA, BE, Magnox Electric, BNFL Sellafield and UKAEA.

Presentation

10. HSE has its own communications strategy. NuSAC SCR papers and minutes are mainly open, and they are placed on the HSE website as far as they are open.

Costs and Benefits

11. The proposed programmed expenditure in 2006/2007 is £685k for the HSE programme and £4321k for the BE/Magnox programme plus management charges of £156k for the HSE.

12. HSE and Licensees' evaluations of the programme conclude that the HSC Co-ordinated Programme of Nuclear Safety Research is satisfactorily progressing safety research issues identified by NSD and contributes to securing high standards of nuclear safety.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

13. The costs of the research commissioned by HSE and management of this programme are recovered by a levy on the reactor Licensees. HSE also needs the staff to oversee the total programme and act as Project Officers for the Levy Programme. The costs of these Project Officers' time are recovered from the Licensees through the regulatory route.

Other implications

14. N/A

Next steps

15. NuSAC SCR recommends the approval of the HSC Coordinated Programme of Nuclear Research for 2006/07 put forward in paper HSC/06/32. It has some reservations that are recorded above, but these do not prevent an overall positive recommendation.

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