



Subject: New Nuclear Waste[†]

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1.0 NDA Waste Storage Review

1.1 CoRWM recommended in July 2006 a major research and development programme on robust radioactive waste storage, including on their security to see if they could survive a terrorist attack.¹ Interim storage will be needed for at least 100 years, even if an underground nuclear dump is built. A year later, the then CoRWM chair, Gordon Mackerron reported little progress in this area.²

1.2 The NDA's March 2006 Strategy made a clear commitment to hazard and risk reduction by ensuring that radioactive waste is managed and converted into a passively safe form and placed into interim storage. Within the strategy, NDA also made a commitment to review interim storage opportunities within the UK.

1.3 The NDA has now finally started reviewing storage regimes for Intermediate and High Level Waste across the UK at both NDA and non-NDA sites. Spent fuel and other nuclear materials which have not been declared as waste (such as plutonium) are not considered, but a separate review will address these.

1.4 The Scottish Government does not support deep geological disposal and is, according to the NDA, developing a policy of long term interim storage for higher activity wastes. The NDA says it will work with the Scottish Government in developing its policy and will take account of the implications of the policy for our long term storage requirements.

1.5 Following the UK Radioactive Waste Storage Review Stakeholder Workshop held in October 2008,³ the NDA has now published a draft of its Waste Storage Review.⁴ The review is mainly focused on ILW and other reviews are planned. Stakeholder engagement will form an important part of the work and plans are already underway to facilitate this. In addition, NDA is engaging with the reconstituted CoRWM including a specific working

¹ Managing our Radioactive Waste Safely: CoRWM's recommendations to Government, CoRWM, July 2006. <http://www.corwm.org.uk/Pages/Current%20Publications/700%20-%20CoRWM%20July%202006%20Recommendations%20to%20Government.pdf>

² Future R&D Needs, by Gordon MacKerron, CoRWM, June 2007. [http://www.corwm.org.uk/Pages/Archived%20Publications/Tier%202%20\(4\)%20-%20Making%20decisions/Tier%203%20-%20Scoring%20and%20sensitivity%20testing/2209%20-%20Future%20RandD%20needs.doc](http://www.corwm.org.uk/Pages/Archived%20Publications/Tier%202%20(4)%20-%20Making%20decisions/Tier%203%20-%20Scoring%20and%20sensitivity%20testing/2209%20-%20Future%20RandD%20needs.doc)

³ A review of the October Workshop is available here: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/NDA-UK-Radioactive-Waste-Storage-Review-Stakeholder-Workshop-Report-October-2008.pdf>

⁴ UK Radioactive Waste Storage Review, Draft. January 2009 <http://www.nirex.co.uk/documents/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&pageid=27276>

group on interim storage. The NDA says it wants comments on this draft version of the Review and another stakeholder workshop will be held in February 2009 to seek further views before final publication on 31 March 2009.

1.6 CoRWM has also been working on an interim storage report which it intends to publish in March 2009. It has been seeking comments on its outline report.⁵

1.7 Another document - the Strategy Management System - Stakeholder Issues Baseline Document - exposes the thinking of some non-NDA organisations and their views on waste management, for example the suggestion that some wastes might be disposed of on site.⁶

Recommendation: It is recommended that staff be asked to look at these documents in more detail and respond to the NDA's request for comments on its draft Waste Storage Review.

2.0 NDA Plutonium Options

2.1 The future of the UK's stockpile of over 100 tonnes of plutonium will be decided by the Government during 2009. The NDA began consultations on this in August 2008,⁷ with the publication of a plutonium options study.⁸ The Submission by NFLA (Scotland) was included in the papers for the December 2008 NSC meeting at Item 5 (Annexe A). This concluded that the creation of further plutonium stocks should be halted; the conversion of existing stocks to MoX fuel would be uneconomic; would fail to meet non-proliferation objectives; would involve safety and security risks, and threaten civil liberties. Selling plutonium to overseas customers would also be a threat to non-proliferation.

2.2 The NDA's finalized "Credible Options Paper" (redacted slightly) will be published on the NDA website early in the New Year and formally presented to the Government. Responses to the consultation document⁹ and workshop reports¹⁰ are already available on the NDA website.

2.3 A final strategy is unlikely to be ready much before 2012 or 2013.

Recommendation: It is recommended that staff be asked to report to the next NSC meeting on other Stakeholder submissions to the consultation; plutonium options workshops; and the implications of the finalized plutonium options paper, and engage fully in future stakeholder consultations.

⁵ Outline of CoRWM Interim Storage Report (March 2009). December 2008 Version.

<http://www.corwm.org.uk/Pages/Involving%20People/2500%20-%20CoRWM%20Interim%20Storage%20Report%20Outline,%2019%20December%2008.pdf>

⁶ Strategy Management System; Stakeholder Issues Baseline Document

<http://www.nirex.co.uk/documents/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&pageid=25290>

⁷ Times 18th August 2008

http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/utilities/article4553489.ece

⁸ <http://www.nda.gov.uk/stakeholders/newsletter/plut-options-study.cfm>

⁹ <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&pageid=26498>

¹⁰ See Workshop Reports: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/Plutonium-Options-Stakeholder-Workshops-Report-October-and-November-2008.pdf> AND NDA response to the October Workshop. <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/NDA-Response-to-Plutonium-Workshop-Report-Executive-Summary-October-2008.pdf>

3.0 Managing Radioactive Waste Safely

3.1 As reported verbally to the December Steering Committee meeting, Cumbria County Council has now agreed to make an “*expression of interest*” for those parts of the County covered by Copeland Borough Council and Allerdale Borough Council.¹¹

3.2 Bob Loux, the former director of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects, appeared on local radio to tell Cumbrians in no uncertain terms what he thought about Cumbria’s plan to volunteer for a high-level nuclear waste dump. The State Government in Nevada has been campaigning against the Yucca Mountain nuclear dump.¹²

3.3 The decision to turn down the invitation to store nuclear waste in Cornwall was questioned by some county councillors. Cornwall County Council's executive voted narrowly in support of a recommendation that no expression of interest should be submitted for the geological disposal facility for nuclear waste in December. Councillors were attracted by the substantial financial benefits package on offer.¹³ However, plans to re-open the subject had to be scrapped. Opponents claimed it was a victory for people power. One of the leading campaigners against the nuclear waste plans said that the dozens of comments left by readers on the local newspaper’s website played a part in forcing a u-turn by councillors.¹⁴

3.4 Former Labour cabinet minister Chris Smith, now Lord Smith of Finsbury, who was appointed as the new chairman of the Environment Agency in May 2008, says the long-term storage and disposal of high-level nuclear waste is the “*great unsolved issue*” of nuclear fission. “*It is an absolute necessity if a new nuclear programme goes ahead that the issue of high-level waste is properly resolved.*”¹⁵ In November 2008, Lord Smith called on the government to follow US president-elect Barack Obama and launch a multibillion pound “green New Deal” to boost clean energy and create jobs. He called for a comprehensive long-term strategy to cover investments in renewable energy, green technology, energy efficiency and developing new technologies such as carbon capture and storage.¹⁶

4.0 Low-Level Waste

4.1 Drigg and Carleton parish – population around 600 – have received £50,000 thanks to having the country’s only radioactive low-level nuclear waste disposal site on its doorstep. The parish will receive the windfall every year for the next 60 years because it bears the greatest impact through having the repository as its near neighbour. It comes out of the massive cash injections Copeland will share as a whole for supporting the long-term

¹¹ Guardian 10th December 2008 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/dec/10/lake-district-nuclear-waste-dump> Whitehaven News 10th December 2009 <http://www.whitehaven-news.co.uk/news/business/1.282959>

¹² See Radiation Free Lakeland.

<http://web.mac.com/mariannebirkby1/iWeb/Radiation%20Free%20Lakeland/Dump%20Diary/80EF1570-C615-4A76-B1B6-83F459C4B337.html>

¹³ West Briton 6th Jan 2009 <http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/westbriton/Councillors-decision-nuclear-waste/article-589760-detail/article.html>

¹⁴ West Briton 12th Jan 2009

<http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/westbriton/Nuclear-waste-invitation-scrapped-thisiscornwall-uk-direct-influence/article-606858-detail/article.html>

¹⁵ Making Local Connections on a Global Threat, Publicservice.co.uk, October 20, 2008

http://www.publicservice.co.uk/feature_story.asp?id=10661&topic=

¹⁶ Guardian 25th November 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/nov/25/climate-change-renewable-energy-government>

operations of the LLWR site on the outskirts of the village. The formal setting up of The Copeland Benefit Fund now enables the first money to be released.¹⁷

4.2 It has now been announced that another £30,000 a year is to flow into Copeland, directly from the operation of the low-level repository in addition to the annual £1.5 million under an agreement with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). The funding is linked to Vault 9, a massive £20 million project now under construction.¹⁸

4.3 One of the major concerns surrounding the repository is how it might be affected in years ahead by coastal erosion. A huge safety case which will eventually cost millions of pounds is being put together with a view to allaying the Environment Agency's concerns. The Company which manages the dump, LLWR, believes coastal erosion is manageable.

4.4 Campaigners have slammed a decision by Energy Solutions to ship nuclear waste to the US. The firm that is decommissioning the Hinkley Point A plant in Somerset, has won approval from the Environment Agency to ship hundreds of tons of nuclear waste from a metal smelting process for recycling in Tennessee. The Low Level Waste (LLW) cargo will be sent from Hinkley Point to Liverpool docks, from where it will sail to Virginia and onwards by road to the Bear Creek smelting facility in Tennessee. Once smelted, the subsequent metal blocks are used within the nuclear industry as shielding.¹⁹

4.5 Plans for a £110m low level waste dump near the village of Buldoo, next to Dounreay, have been conditionally approved by Highland Council. Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd (DSRL) plans to build a series of disposal vaults.²⁰

5.0 Radioactive Discharges

5.1 Magnox Electric Ltd has been accused of operators unlawfully allowing radioactive waste to seep from a decontamination unit at Bradwell in Essex for 14 years, at Chelmsford Crown Court. Waste leaked into the ground from a sump at Bradwell between 1990 and 2004, the Environment Agency claimed. The Environment Agency, told the jury that leaks were caused by a combination of poor design and a lack of checks and maintenance.²¹ The radioactive cocktail of tritium, caesium, cobalt and americium that leaked from a decontamination unit was not discovered until the twin reactors were decommissioned five years ago.²²

6.0 Sellafield

6.1 The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) announced that Oldbury Power Station will continue to generate electricity into 2009 and beyond. Originally planned for closure at the end of 2008 Oldbury will now continue producing electricity for around two years. Reactor 2 will continue generating power into 2009 past its scheduled closedown date of December 31st 2008. Reactor 1 remains offline and awaits a safety case to be

¹⁷ Whitehaven News 17th Dec 2008 <http://www.whitehaven-news.co.uk/news/1.285939>

¹⁸ Whitehaven News 21st Jan 2009 <http://www.whitehaven-news.co.uk/news/1.502226>

¹⁹ Western Daily Press 7th Jan 2009 <http://www.thisissomerset.co.uk/news/Warning-Hinkley-waste-shipped/article-592583-detail/article.html>

²⁰ BBC 14th Jan 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/7828278.stm>

²¹ Independent 7th Jan 2009 <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/nuclear-power-station-owners-allowed-leaks-1230047.html>

²² This is Total Essex 8th Jan 2009 <http://www.thisistotalessex.co.uk/news/BRADWELL-Radioactive-leak-nuclear-plant/article-596452-detail/article.html>

approved by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) before it can restart.²³ This underlines the NDA's failure to close the Magnox Reprocessing Plant by the end of 2012 and meet commitments to achieving close to zero levels of radioactive discharges by 2020.

6.2 A government decision to rush through the scheme to indemnify the consortium which took over Sellafield from any liability for a nuclear accident is to be investigated, the Speaker of the Commons.²⁴ A complaint from Paul Flynn, the Labour MP for Newport, that former energy minister Malcolm Wicks had not properly consulted MPs when he granted the consortium, made up of the American company URS Washington, French firm Areva and the UK company Amec, an indemnity. Wicks used emergency procedures – and informed two select committee chairmen just before the parliamentary summer recess – because he said it was urgent to sign the deal. The consortium had threatened to walk away unless Britain waived its rights to charge companies the first £140m for the costs of any accident.²⁵ There are, of course, concerns that this will set a precedent and companies planning to build new reactors in the UK will also want an indemnity for the cost of accidents.

7.0 Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

7.1 State agencies, boards, commissions and quangos spent more than £1 billion on spin last year. State-run organisations admitted raising their spending on 'communications' - much of it devoted to lobbying and public relations puffs - by almost a quarter in 2008. The NDA has 17 staff in its communications department and spent £3,140,347, an increase of 57% over the previous year.²⁶

²³ NDA Press Release 18th Dec 2008

<http://www.nda.gov.uk/news/oldbury-power.cfm>

²⁴ Guardian 23rd January 2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/jan/22/sellafield>

²⁵ Independent on Sunday 4th Jan 2009

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/ios-investigation-officials-plotted-sellafield-coverup-1224473.html>

²⁶ Daily Mail 16th Jan 2009

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1118390/Quangos-spend-1bn-spin-year.html>