

Governmental Response to CoRWM's Report

By UK Government and
Devolved Administrations

The Response

- The open and transparent manner in which CoRWM has conducted its business has been ground breaking
- The reflection of a wide range of viewpoints, and a basis in sound science is key to:
 - Providing recommendations which inspire public confidence for managing the wastes in the long term
 - And providing protection for people and the environment
- Accordingly the Government welcomes the report and believes it provides a sound basis for moving forward
- Most recommendations can be acted on immediately
- Others require us to undertake more work

Geological Disposal

- Government accepts that geological disposal coupled with safe and secure interim storage is the way forward for the long term management of the UK's higher activity wastes
- Geological disposal is being adopted in the majority of other nuclear nations, including Belgium, France, Finland, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and the US
- CoRWM's work has shown that this is also the appropriate way forward for the UK
- Nevertheless, securing geological disposal represents a major challenge and will require commitment over many decades

In Detail

- The circumstances surrounding geological disposal of higher activity wastes are unique
- Government is supportive of exploring how an approach based on voluntarism and partnership could be made to work in practice
- There are also important issues of how this could be integrated with the assessment of the geographical and geological suitability of possible sites
- Government therefore proposes to undertake more work on these issues
- It will engage with stakeholders, including the nuclear safety and environmental regulators, to prepare an implementation framework on which it will consult more widely as soon as practicable next year

In Detail (2)

- It is clear that the implementation programme itself will have a number of stages at which decisions will have to be taken
- Therefore, Government also accepts CoRWM's recommendation that the process should be staged so as to incorporate a series of appropriate decision points
- This will allow the programme and progress to be kept under review, including on cost and value for money grounds, so as to allow further decisions to be taken at the appropriate points
- Equally, Government needs to set the desired end point and to make the intended direction of travel clear

Implementation of Stage 3 of Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Programme

- Government has been considering not only how it might take forward the next stage but also which bodies should do so
- This has been on the basis that the key immediate matters to be resolved are the identification of:
 - how the process will proceed, including how potential host sites would be identified, recognising that only sites which are deemed to be geologically suitable will be considered
 - the body which will have responsibility for the long term implementation of geological disposal and for an interim safe and secure storage programme which protects the environment
- Government has decided that it will further develop and consult on the process for implementation, including site selection criteria
- NDA will be given the responsibility for developing and ensuring delivery and implementation of the programmes for interim storage and implementing geological disposal

Timetable for MRWS Stage 3

2006

- Begin a programme of public and stakeholder engagement on the detail of implementation of geological disposal
- Including a voluntarist/partnership approach, and site selection process and criteria
- Development of an interim storage programme based on the NDA's current "forward stores" project as described in its Strategy (Mar 2006)

Timetable for MRWS Stage 3

2007

- Public consultation on:
 - the Government's framework on the implementation process, including a voluntarist/partnership approach and site selection
 - an outline geological disposal delivery programme
- Decisions on the interim storage programme

Timetable for MRWS Stage 3

2007/8

- Decisions on:
 - The siting process
 - the partnership approach
 - the geological disposal delivery programme.
- Begin Stage 4 of the MRWS programme
 - implementation of the interim storage and geological disposal programmes

Summary

- The development and implementation of future stages of the MRWS programme will require commitment by Government, other bodies directly involved in its delivery and continued public and stakeholder support over many decades
- CoRWM's report, and the proposals set out in this response, provide the basis for achieving the long term management of the UK's higher activity wastes
- Government is committed to taking forward this important and long-term task to ensure the safe and secure management of our radioactive waste