COMMITTEE FOR RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT (CORWM) - DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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Summary: To inform members of the Executive of the draft recommendations for the storage of nuclear waste arising from the deliberations of the Committee for Radioactive Waste Management.

Recommendation:	That the Council come to a view on whether they support the recommendations of CoRWM as outlined in the Appendix of this report.

Impact on delivering the Corporate Plan:	Key decisions need to be discussed as national Low Level Waste policy may have significant impact, both beneficial and detrimental on the Council's objective to "create and sustain a healthy local economy".
Impact on other statutory objectives (e.g. crime & disorder, LA21):	None
Financial and human resource implications:	None
Project & Risk Management:	None
Key Decision Status	
- Financial:	N/A
- Ward:	Yes
Other Ward Implications:	All. The CORWM recommendations may have significant implications for West Cumbria with regard to radioactive waste management.

1.0 Introduction

The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) announced on 27th April 2006, an integrated package of draft recommendations for the long-term management of the UK's radioactive waste. The recommendations apply to the estimated 470,000 cubic metres of waste that currently exist or will arise through decommissioning of current nuclear sites. Much of this waste is currently stored in Sellafield.

Both the County and Allerdale Borough Council will have views on the consultation, and in line with previous consultations on nuclear issues, a joint response will be more powerful. Given the short timescale to respond to this consultation, this report has not yet been subject to consultation with either Council but a verbal update on their responses could be given at the meeting. In addition, the Council(s) are part of NuLEAF, the LGA sponsored special interest group for nuclear authorities, and their views will form part of the consultation response.

2.0 Consultation and proposals

CoRWM undertook a substantial programme of work prior to drafting its recommendations, including engagement with specialists, stakeholders and the public.
Key steps in this programme included:

- A workshop on ethics and decision-making for radioactive waste
- A workshop on implementation issues
- CoRWM's third period of public and stakeholder engagement
- Completion of a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis
- Discussion of option combinations
- The draft recommendations will now be subject to a short period of public and
- Stakeholder comment during May prior to a final announcement in July 06.
- Consultative processes that CoRWM have put in place include:
- Opportunity to comment on the draft recommendations via the CoRWM website (from May 8 to May 28)
- Events for invitees from CoRWM's Citizens Panels and stakeholder meetings.
- Bilateral meetings with stakeholders.

The series of recommendations - which the Committee regards as interdependent - envisages that, in the long term, radioactive waste will be disposed of deep underground, an option known as geological disposal. It recognises, however, that the process leading to the creation of suitable facilities for disposal may take several decades and should therefore be underpinned by robust interim storage. The location of sites is not part of the CoRWM remit, but the Committee believes that host communities should be identified on the basis of a willingness to participate and an equal partnership approach to decision-making.

At a recent meeting in Brighton, the independent Committee agreed that the Government should move as quickly as possible to implement its recommendations once they are finalised by the end of July. The facility or facilities would be located several hundred metres underground, making use of the surrounding rock as well as specially engineered structures to protect the environment. Around one third of the land in the UK could be geologically suitable for this purpose.

Experience suggests that the development of a disposal facility could take several decades or possibly one or two generations. CoRWM also believes that there needs to be a contingency in the event of any technical problems that emerge during design or construction, or any delays arising from social or ethical challenges related to finding a host community. For these reasons, the Committee also believes that the interim storage facilities available must be robust enough to house waste for a significant period of time before it can be transferred into an underground repository.

The Committee's draft recommendations argue that to identify a site for geological disposal the Government will need to secure from potential host communities a willingness to participate and that it should offer a package of measures to support participation. It calls for a partnership approach to working with local communities with the right to withdraw from the process and the eventual decisions subject to the ratification of the relevant elected bodies.

The Committee has reached its draft recommendations after an exhaustive three-year process that has examined the technical, scientific, ethical and social aspects of all the potential options. It has consulted with over 200 technical experts and listened hard to the views of thousands of members of the public and key stakeholders. A number of these stakeholder meetings and round table events have been held in West Cumbria.

The recommendations will now be subject to further consultation with interested parties before CoRWM delivers its final report to DEFRA, and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales in July 2006.

3.0 Implications for Copeland to consider

The Council, if so minded, should make a response to the draft proposals by 28th May, the end of the short public consultation period. Members may wish to consider the following questions in their debate: -

- Does the Council support the CoRWM proposals to deal flexibly and incrementally with the long-term storage of high level waste?
- Should the Council consider the potential for Copeland to "volunteer" to be a host community for long-term geological storage options?
- What impacts, if any, will the proposed continued interim storage of waste have on Copeland?
- What burdens would the draft option pass on to future generations?
- Does the option lend itself to a retrievable process?
- How far into the future should we be concerned?
- Should we deal with radioactive wastes now or leave it till later?

4.0 Conclusion

The long awaited draft proposals from CoRWM could have significant effects on the West Cumbria area and will be an important issue likely to be discussed over coming generations as incremental steps are taken to arrive at a long term solution to the nuclear waste issue. The attached Draft Response has been prepared based on existing key Council statements and policy.
Member's comments will be forwarded to CoRWM by the 26th May prior to their formal announcement in July on the results of consultation into their recommendations.

List of Appendices

APPENDIX 1 - CORWM's DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS
APPENDIX 2 - DRAFT RESPONSE TO CORWM's DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

List of Background Documents:	CoRWM's Draft Recommendations – April 2006. CoRWM's Radioactive Waste and Materials Inventory – July 2005 - CoRWM Document No: 1279 FINAL.
List of Consultees:	Cllr Elaine Woodburn, CBC Nuclear Working Group, F Mc Morrow, F Duffy, S Crisp, Z Bergmann

Appendix 1

CoRWM's Draft Recommendations

Since 1997, there has been a vacuum in UK policy on the long-term management of long-lived and more highly active radioactive wastes. CoRWM has drafted the following integrated package of recommendations. This is the start of a process, leading to CoRWM's final recommendations. Once made, they should be acted upon urgently.

1. Within the present state of knowledge, CoRWM considers geological disposal to be the best available approach for the long-term management of all the material categorised as waste* in the CoRWM inventory when compared with the risks associated with other methods of management.

2. CoRWM recognises that there are social and ethical concerns that might mean there is not sufficient agreement to implement geological disposal at the present time. In any event, the process of implementation will take several decades. This period could last for as long as one or two generations if there are technical difficulties in siting or if community concerns make it difficult, or even impossible, to make progress at a suitable site.

3. These uncertainties surrounding the implementation of geological disposal lead CoRWM to recommend that a programme of interim storage is required as a contingency and therefore must play an integral part in the long-term management strategy.

4. Therefore, CoRWM recommends a staged process of implementation, incorporating the following elements:

a. A commitment to the safe and secure management of wastes through the development of an interim storage programme that is robust against the risk of delay or failure in the repository programme. Due regard should be paid to:

- Reviewing and ensuring security, particularly against terrorist attacks.
- Ensuring the longevity of the stores themselves.
- Minimising the need for re-packaging of the wastes.
- Addressing other storage issues identified during CoRWM's public.
- Stakeholder engagement process, such as avoiding unnecessary transport of wastes.

b. A commitment to an intensified programme of research and development aimed at reducing uncertainties at a generic and site-specific level in the long-term safety of geological disposal, as well as better means for storing wastes in the longer-term. Appropriate R&D should be undertaken into alternative management options.

c. A commitment to ensuring that flexibility in decision-making within the implementation process leaves open the possibility that other long-term management options (for example, borehole disposal) could emerge as practical alternatives.

* CoRWM's reference position is that reactor decommissioning wastes within CoRWM's inventory will be treated the same as ILW, destined for geological disposal. However, we recognise that management options taken forward for LLW on reactor sites may also be appropriate, if a safety case could be made, for some reactor decommissioning wastes.

d. A continuing public and stakeholder engagement process aimed at building trust and confidence in the proposed long-term management approach, including the siting of facilities.

e. A set of decision points providing for a review of progress with an opportunity for re-evaluation before proceeding to the next stage, or before foreclosing alternatives.

5. CoRWM has not yet decided whether to make recommendations regarding the precise form of geological disposal. This will be an element in the next round of public and stakeholder engagement.

6. If a decision is taken to manage uranium, spent nuclear fuel and plutonium as wastes, they should be added to the inventory and immobilised for secure storage followed by geological disposal. There must be clarity about the inventory that is to be disposed of by the time that communities are invited to express a willingness to participate in the implementation process (see below). Any additions to that inventory should be the subject of an additional stage in the process.

7. Community involvement in any proposals for the siting of long term radioactive waste facilities should be based on the principle of volunteerism, that is, an expressed willingness to participate. Participation should be based on the expectation that the well-being of the community will be enhanced.

8. Willingness to participate should be based on the provision of community packages that are designed both to facilitate participation in the short term and to ensure that a radioactive waste facility is acceptable to the host community in the long term.

9. Community involvement should be achieved through the development of a partnership approach, based on an open and equal relationship between the potential host community and those responsible for implementation.

10. At the end of each stage of the decision making process there should be provision for a review and the right of communities to withdraw from the process before proceeding to the next stage, up to a pre-defined point.

11. In order to ensure the legitimacy of the process, the key decisions at each stage should be ratified by the appropriate democratically elected body(ies).

12. CoRWM considers that an open and transparent process is an essential precondition to successful implementation of these recommendations.

NOTE:
CoRWM takes no position on the desirability or otherwise of nuclear new build. We believe that future decisions on new build should be subject to their own assessment process, including consideration of waste. The public assessment process that should apply to any future new build proposals should build on the CoRWM process, and will need to consider a range of issues including the social, political and ethical issues of a deliberate decision to create new nuclear wastes.

APPENDIX 2
Draft Response to CoRWM's Draft Recommendations

Geological Disposal Option

Copeland Borough Council fully supports the option of geological disposal as a method for the long-term management of the UK's Radioactive Waste as categorised in the CoRWM inventory. However, we are disappointed that a 'phased approach of 300 years' has not been recommended, as this would add a dimension of flexibility and retrievability to the option. We feel it is important that we ensure that if future generations decide to manage the waste differently, or if there are problems, they could retrieve the waste before the chambers are sealed off We would like to seek clarification on this omission as an element in the next round of public and stakeholder engagement.

Furthermore, burying the wastes deep underground would make this option more safe and secure, e.g. from terrorist attack or theft of nuclear material, However, we understand that the site would need to be of a suitable type of geology, which would limit it to fewer places in the UK.

Interim Storage

The Council agrees that notwithstanding the many technical challenges the option will create we understand there may be ethical and social barriers for implementation that may take a long period of time to resolve. However, the siting of interim storage for a period of 'several decodes' would have a similar reaction to the public at large as potentially 'several decades' is a long time to ask a community to host that waste without the principles of volunteerism, veto and community benefit being undertaken. Furthermore, the Council would have serious concerns if Copeland were used as a centralised interim storage location, without a similar process, as this would prejudice a future siting decision for a repository or other permanent waste facilities and concentrate perceived hazard and risk and associated stigma in our area to our further detriment. Increasing the amount of the UK's waste stored locally will increase the likelihood of a disposal facility being in West Cumbria. Copeland Council has maintained a consistent policy in recent years that additional LLW and ILW from outside this area should not be moved to Copeland.

However, the Council welcomes CoRWM's recommendation of using a staged process of implementation as it is clear a robust process of research and development, both in the areas of technical viability and social science/ decision making is vital to a successful outcome.

Waste Currently Unclassified in the CoRWM Inventory

The Council believes it is important that a community is aware of the inventory before they enter into the hosting process. Any additions or changes in scope of the waste management arrangements proposed would need to be agreed by the community undergoing the hosting process. This should be done by a mutually agreed, clear system of change management

with appropriate additional stages included. It should be understood that the additional waste or waste types would have an impact on ethical and social barriers and that 'community packages' would need to be reviewed accordingly. Bearing this in mind it would be beneficial to have the inventory as clear as possible before entering into the siting process.

Volunteerism, Veto and Community Benefit

The Council fully supports the concepts of volunteerism, veto and community benefit and welcomes CoRWM's recommendations to that effect. We believe that a willingness for a local community to participate is born-out of the understanding that it is able to withdraw from the process, as no community should be an unwilling victim. The Council understands that the ability to withdraw would only be up to a specific point in the process, however it is important that this is predefined and mutually agreed by all parties involved in a truly transparent way. We strongly believe that the way forward is via local empowerment and working in partnership and we welcome the statements presented in CoRWM's draft recommendation document.

It is the Council's view that it is key to the process of volunteerism to have prior agreement of an 'off-set package' or 'community benefit package'. Due to the long-term nature of the burden and its effect on future generation, we feel this could take the form of an inter-generational community endowment to ensure long-term local community sustainablity for the lifetime of the waste. This endowment would be held in such a way as not to be affected by any change in central government, political party, local government and/or boundary

Safety & Environment

It is the Council's view that public safety should not be compromised by any of the disposal options. Indeed the risk to the public over the short, medium and long-term (and indeed the workforce) should be kept to a minimum and based on thorough public radiological health research. In addition the option should be flexible enough to accommodate any future public health developments.

Furthermore, security is directly linked to public safety and it is of paramount importance that the facility be inherently safe against terrorist attack and misappropriation of nuclear material.

The minimisation of environmental burden, both from an anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric vista is key to a sustainable future, as detrimental impact to the environment could lead to public health concerns or potential loss of biodiversity or other ecological negative impact to flora and fauna. Furthermore, it is important that the option creates a 'light-footprint' and is not intrusive to the local community, which needs to be achieved by sympathetic design.

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