

Review of Welsh Government Policy on the Management and Disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Waste.

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Summary and Recommendation:

The Welsh Government is holding a consultation into the review of its current policy on the disposal of higher activity radioactive waste following the call for evidence in March of this year.

Recommendation: That Members consider the attached draft response and recommend approval to send as a consultation response.

1. Background

1.1 The Welsh Government held a call for evidence in March of this year into their current position on the management of Higher Activity Waste (HAW) which is currently to neither support nor oppose the UK policy.

1.2 Following the call for evidence they have now launched a consultation into the review of Welsh Government Policy. The consultation ask 3 specific questions:

Question 1: Policy Review:

- Should it seek to adopt a policy for HAW and spent fuel should it be declared a waste?
- Should it retain neutral position?
- Should it adopt a policy option opposing disposal of HAW?

Question 2: Should the Welsh Government adopt a policy for geological disposal?

Question 3: If the Welsh Government does not adopt a geological disposal policy should it adopt a policy for an alternative disposal route?

2. Impacts on Copeland

- 2.1** The policy in Wales indirectly impacts on Copeland. As Copeland currently hosts 70% of HAW at Sellafield we have a keen interest in the development of a GDF facility.
- 2.2** England adopted a deep geological facility policy after recommendations from the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) review in 2008. To date this investigation appears to present the most credible means of dealing with the disposal of HAW.
- 2.3** The Scottish Government decided not to follow the advice of CoRWM and have opted for near surface disposal.
- 2.4** As host community to 70% of the waste it is important that we stress the need for all of the UK to have a policy on the safe disposal of HAW.
- 2.5** Furthermore the Isle of Anglesey is one of the 8 sites selected to build a new nuclear power station, therefore it would be irresponsible of Wales to remain undecided on how to manage the future waste arising's.

3. Proposed Way Forward.

- 3.1** The Consultation closes on the 22nd Jan 2014. Appendix 1 is a draft response to the consultation process urging the Welsh government to adopt a policy on disposal of HAW and recommends following the advice of CoRWM and further recommends that any policy draws a distinction between HAW and spent fuel.
- 3.2** Councilors are asked to consider the proposed draft response and recommend its approval to be issued as part of the consultation process.

Appendix One: Draft Consultation Response.

Radioactivity and Pollution Prevention
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

14th November 2014

Dear Sir / Madam

Review of Welsh Government Policy on the Management and Disposal on the Management and Disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Waste.

Copeland Borough Council welcomes the Welsh Governments decision to carry out a review of its current policy on Higher Activity Waste (HAW) disposal. As stated in our response to the 'Call for evidence' Copeland Council is of the opinion that the nuclear waste issue is a national issue and we all have a vested interest in insuring that there is robust policy in place to deal with the legacy of nuclear waste currently contained within the UK and to manage any future arising's.

Question 1: The Welsh Government is reviewing its current policy on the disposal of higher activity radioactive waste and spent fuel declared as waste?

Of the 3 options considered the Council would urge the Welsh government to implement option 1 – 'to seek to adopt a policy for disposal for HAW and spent fuel should it be declared waste.' Furthermore, the Council would urge the Welsh Government to high light that there is a clear distinction between HAW and spent fuel. As stated spent fuel is not currently considered a waste and the Council is of the opinion that detailed characterisation and agreement on any GDF inventory is required. Copeland Council is of the opinion that spent fuel should not be classified as waste as it has the potential to be reprocessed and reused in the fuel cycle and would urge the Welsh Government that if it does decide to review its current policy on disposal of HAW that it considers adopting a similar position and makes this clear distinction.

Question 2: Should the Welsh Government adopt a policy for long term management of higher activity radioactive waste and spent fuel declared as waste?

Currently the English Government has adopted the recommendations put forward by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) for long term disposal in a deep underground Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). In

reaching this conclusion they undertook a technical assessment of options, ethical considerations, engaged with stakeholders and reviewed best practice from overseas. The Council believes that that the recommendations put forward by the committee are based on sound scientific fact and reasoning. The committee is an advisory body, members are appointed with a range of expertise and knowledge to offer in scientific, social, economic and environmental and as such the Council has full faith in the robustness of the assessment undertaken and confidence in the recommendations made by CoRWM.

This was an onerous and long process and the Council is unaware of any new information that has challenged their recommendation.

Question 3: If the Welsh Government does not adopt a geological disposal policy should it adopt a policy for an alternative route for higher activity radioactive waste and spent fuel declared as waste?

If the Welsh Government decided to adopt a policy that is against CoRWM recommendations it would need to be based on a vigorous assessment of all available information and provide a robust argument as to why they have decided to go against the recommendations of the CoRWM committee.

I hope that the Government will take the above comments into due consideration when determine any future approach to adopting a policy on the disposal of higher activity radioactive waste. We are all jointly responsible for the safe management of nuclear waste to insure the decisions we make today don't leave a negative legacy for our future generations.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Woodburn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cllr Elaine Woodburn
Leader of the Council