

Consultation on Strategy for the Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) waste in the UK.

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Summary and Recommendation:

On the 13th Feb 2014 a consultation was launched into the Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) jointly by the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment, it sets out the joint proposals for managing NORM.

The Scottish Government has led on the development of this consultation which is due to close on the 8th May 2014. Responses to be sent to: NORMStrategy@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Recommendation: Members review the initial comments and provide verbal feedback into additional issues followed a written response if required. Furthermore that Members agree that the Leader of the Council review and sign off on the final consultation response.

1. Background

- 1.1** As part of the National policy for the long Term Management of Solid low Level Radioactive Waste in the UK a requirement was to develop a strategy for the management of NORM. The Scottish Government has led on the development of this consultation document and will coordinate the consultation process.
- 1.2** The Consultation was launched in February and will close on the 8th May 2014. The Consultation document is too large to be appended to this report but can be downloaded from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/02/8435>

2. Relevance to Copeland.

- 2.1** As Members will be aware the Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) in Drigg is the only facility in the UK that can manage certain Low Level Waste (LLW) streams. Therefore it is pertinent that we remain vigilant as to the variety and quantity of waste arising's that the facility may be expected to manage in the future.
- 2.2** It is therefore proposed that the Council review the strategy and provide feedback focusing on the issues from a Copeland perspective.

3. Over View of Issues identified:

Potential Issues identified in the strategy for discussion:

- In Chapter 2 the strategy discusses the Regulatory framework section 2.34 states that *‘the planning system in the UK has traditionally not placed a significant emphasis on planning for radioactive wastes, including NORM’* this is something that Copeland council has flagged through other consultations including the Waste management Plan for England. It is therefore welcoming to see that a NORM waste strategy is now being considered. However, in order to do a just analysis a full understanding of the potential arising’s and waste disposal routes is necessary. The strategy states that there is enough capacity at the existing sites. The detail over the assumptions of volumes of waste produced that can go to permitted VLLW waste sites and which will need to be consigned to the LLWR at Drigg has not been made clear. Transparency in this area would allow there to be confidence in the assumptions and assertions being made within this strategy.
- Section 2.35 states that *planning authorities should work with the EA, non-nuclear industry producers / operators of facilities is shaping strategies for the management and disposal of non-nuclear industry LLW and VLLW.* – The problem that may arise is that certain Planning Authorities that do not have a nuclear facility in their patch may through ignorance overlook the necessity to plan for the management and disposal of LLW and VLLW. Therefore there needs to be some reassurance that this duty will be regulated in the policy plans and that inspectorate will enforce this approach.
- Section 2.39 alludes to the fact that there is no National Planning Statement (NPS) for LLW and 2.40 that old style plans have not explicitly addressed radioactive waste but does not explain how this is being addressed or ensuring that inspectorates are enforcing this at the plans level.
- In Section 3.13 it states that *NORM waste sent for management on shore in the period 2007 -2011 was around 160 tonnes* – the Council will be seeking further information regarding where this was sent to and how exactly was it managed.
- Chapter 6 Long –term developments and monitoring includes the topic of Shale Gas – Section 6.5 states *“As this industry has not yet materialised, there has been no decision about how it will dispose of wastes.”* Considering the current interest in this relatively new technology, the unknowns surrounding it and the potential to generate NORM waste this statement appears to show a lack of understanding and a laissez-fiare approach to planning. We would suggest that further efforts are made to establish baseline information into the estimated levels and types of waste (potentially) produced.
- Under the Duty –to-Cooperate – does this require waste planning authorities to ALL consult Cumbria County Council as the waste authority with the only LLW repository and all other Councils with a VLLW site in their locality. If so how will this be assessed, monitored and enforced? Is there evidence that inspectorates are regulating Planning Authorities duty to plan for and consult other Planning Authorities on their nuclear waste policy, at the examination stage.

- It also states Planning Authorities should actively consider scale of NORM and plan for it. Given that they go on to state that FRACKING is a relatively unknown how do they propose that Local Authorities plan for NORM – where is the information available of potential arising's and how do we ensure that all plans do not default to the LLWR at Drigg or the other handful of VLLW sites?

4. Way Forward

- 4.1** It is proposed that Members review the highlighted issues that have initially been identified and to provide a verbal update at the SNEB meeting on any other issues they wish to be included in the consultation response.
- 4.2** An additional SNEB meeting has been requested in April to allow an opportunity to present a draft of the proposed response for Members approval.
- 4.3** Members are also encouraged to read the full consultation document which is available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/02/8435> and provide any additional comments in writing to denice.gallen@copeland.gov.uk by the 4th April 2014, this will allow time for members comments to be included in the final consultation response due before the 08th May.