

Lord Bruce-Lockhart
Chairman
Local Government Association
Local Government House
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

October 2006

In 2003 the UK Government and devolved administrations appointed the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) as an independent committee to make recommendations for the long-term management of the UK's higher activity radioactive waste.

CoRWM reported to Parliament on 31 July 2006 and I am writing to inform you of our response and to seek the assistance of any local authority who wishes to be involved in early discussions to help inform a framework for implementation which we will issue for consultation next year.

My announcement today accepts CoRWM's recommendation that higher activity waste, which includes waste from the nuclear and medical industries, military uses and academic research, will be managed in the long term through geological disposal. This involves placing radioactive waste in facilities deep underground, where the rock structure provides a barrier against radioactivity. Until geological disposal facilities are available there will be a continuing need for safe and secure interim storage.

We need to consider how potential sites for geological disposal will be identified and I am determined that the new approach will be carried out from the beginning in an open transparent way with appropriate opportunity for public and stakeholder, as well as expert involvement. We are not seeking to impose radioactive waste on any community.

Disposal facilities will only be built in a geologically suitable area, and we will consider how geological and scientific considerations will be meshed with other societal considerations. For a successful programme, all these criteria will need to be met.

I reiterate my commitment to developing strong partnerships with local communities over the selection of sites for disposal facilities. I want to invite any local authority or group of local authorities who wish to be involved in early discussions on how partnership arrangements could work in practice to contact the Minister of State for Climate Change and the Environment, Ian Pearson MP or my officials at:

Ian Pearson MP
Minister of State
Defra
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Head of Radioactive Substances Division
Defra
3/H24
123 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6DE
Email: radioactivewaste@defra.gsi.gov.uk

These discussions will help us develop a framework for the implementation process, for public consultation next year. All local authorities will, of course, be able to feed in to the consultation at this point. Further information is available on Defra's website at:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/radioactivity/waste/index.htm

Scottish and Welsh Ministers are writing in similar terms to their local government colleagues and I am copying this letter to Cllr Geoff Blackwell as chair of the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum.

DAVID MILIBAND