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Our Reference - 476302



Nirex response to the RSE Energy Inquiry – Stakeholder Consultation Questions

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your Inquiry, Nirex is happy for its response to be made publicly available. Our mission is, 'in support of Government policy, develop and advise on safe, environmentally sound and publicly acceptable options for the long-term management of radioactive materials in the UK'. Thus we have focused our attention on the questions that are most related to our work in the area of radioactive waste management and therefore are only providing responses to questions 11, 12 and 13.

11. *What are the environmental concerns that need to be taken into account, in terms of the impact on ecological and other natural resources, as well as waste management and impacts on the landscape.*

The discharge of carbon-dioxide and climate change have been highlighted in national and international discussions as important environmental issues that need to be taken into account when thinking about energy supply from fossil fuels.

When considering the production of energy from nuclear power, an important issue is the waste that is produced as part of the production process. The UK already has a legacy of radioactive waste for which no long-term management route has been agreed. The Government is undertaking a national consultation on 'Managing Radioactive Waste Safely' to evaluate potential long-term waste management options and how they should be implemented. A decision on which option(s) the UK will take forward is not expected until 2007. The process is focusing on the wastes that currently exist or will arise when the current nuclear plants are decommissioned at the end of their working life.

When considering any replacement or new nuclear build it will be essential to consider what wastes will be produced and how they will be managed from the start of the decision-making process. Design and construction material decisions will impact on what wastes are produced and how they will have to be managed.

To judge the acceptability of new or replacement nuclear build it is necessary to undertake assessments of their implications for long-term waste management. Any future waste streams arising from a 'new-build' programme would not automatically be dealt with in a single facility. Our existing rigorous process for deciding whether materials can be safely included is the Nirex Letter of Compliance process. This would need to be followed to ensure we are able to deal with the waste produced, before deciding on a particular reactor design.

12. Can the objectives of environmental improvement and economic growth both be met without a major increase in energy costs?

The cost of energy from all sources must take into account the total cost of its production, the impact it has on the environment and the costs of managing the wastes that are produced as a result. Costs of electricity production will depend on the supply and the demand. It is expected that demand will continue to rise and the supply side will depend on world market forces and the security of these supplies.

It should also be pointed out that building in environmental improvements could lead to reduced demand and hence reduced energy costs for example by improving energy efficiency.

What steps should be taken to enable an informed debate on the issue?

Engaging young people in the debate will be important as they can often influence their parents' choices and can be informed to enable them to make better decisions in the future.

An important issue that needs to be debated is how energy demand can be managed. The link between energy demand and its consequences are often unclear to members of the public. It would be helpful to point out the consequences of energy consumption and how it impacts on the environment. It could also be helpful to outline to people how changes in their use of energy could help to decrease demand and benefit the environment and society as a whole.

Mechanisms could be used to engage existing groups in the debate, for example, church groups, campaign groups, the women's institute. A discussion pack could be sent to them to enable them to submit their views to the debate.

Workshops could be arranged for stakeholders and specialists to encourage them to bring their different expertise and views into the discussion. Discussion groups with members of the public could also be organised to enable considered views to be obtained, these could be complemented by questionnaires and surveys.

Providing information on electricity or gas bills is one way to disseminate information to people.

13. What are the social values and consequences of energy generation and distribution on employment opportunities, health, and energy affordability?

In terms of radioactive waste management, it is important to recognise that the waste already exists and needs to be dealt with irrespective of what decisions are taken on replacement or new nuclear build. The wastes produced from energy production will also have to be dealt with in facilities around the UK and the distribution of these negative impacts must also be taken into account.

Nirex believes that the following principles are important:

- energy efficiency and management of energy demand;
- waste minimisation and provision for long-term waste management;
- intra and intergenerational equity to ensure that the distribution of benefits and costs across communities and generations is taken into account.

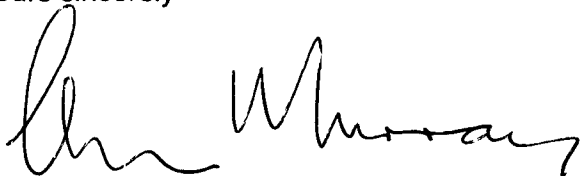
In addition, there is the Aarhus Convention that requires stakeholders to be involved in the decision making process. Involving these groups 'upfront' allows their values and opinions to

be collected and incorporated into the decisions taken. This is more cost effective than having to deal with the civic unrest that could be generated if stakeholders are not involved in the decision making process.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you in more detail. If you require clarification about any of the points raised, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

We would be grateful if you could send us a copy of the outcome of the consultation and add us to any list of interested consultees that you hold.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Murray', written in a cursive style.

Chris Murray
Managing Director

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