Addressing the Issue

This is Radioactive Waste Management Limited’s response to an issue raised on our Geological Disposal Implementation Plan showing how the issue has been addressed. Our issues register can be accessed via http://www.nda.gov.uk/geological-disposal/issues/.

ISSUE I.D.: 713-08

ISSUE: Further research may not provide desired outcomes

HOW THE ISSUE HAS BEEN ADDRESSED:

The desired outcome of research is an improved understanding of a scientific or technical issue where the need to fill a knowledge gap is a key consideration in prioritising work under our research programme. If commissioned research fails to improve understanding then we will continue to address the prevailing level of uncertainty in our engineering design and safety assessment work or follow another appropriate course of action. We are strongly committed to the requirement for sound science laid down in the Environment Agency’s regulatory guidance [1] and will therefore ensure that the scientific method (e.g., hypothesis testing) is followed in our research programme.

The R&D funded by RWM is directed towards demonstrating a sufficient understanding of the relevant scientific processes to be able to produce a safety case that will meet regulatory requirements. Our Technical Programme [2] was updated in 2013.

In order to build confidence in our scientific evidence base, we have a continued commitment to openness and transparency, including independent peer review and publication of our work in the open literature and the NDA document library. This ensures scrutiny of our work.

In September 2014 we published our Science and Technology (S&T) Plan [3], which is due to be updated in 2015. The objective for the S&T plan is for it to be used as a reference document, setting out the research being undertaken / proposed at RWM. The document comprises a brief factual report outlining the aims and objectives for the document, the detailed product breakdown structure of the RWM research programme and task sheets providing specific details on each research project. It is designed to encourage visibility of the RWM research programme, enabling evidence providers to dovetail to research needs more efficiently. This document will receive regular updates to demonstrate the development of knowledge as projects are completed, and plan for future research as needs are identified. We also distributed 250 hard copies to stakeholders and requested feedback which will be used to inform future updates of the plan.

We recognise that it is important stakeholders have access to and can influence our R&D strategy and programme, that our programme is based on sound science, that our programme is subject to appropriate scrutiny, and that it is co-ordinated with other relevant R&D programmes. In order to assess the impact of R&D, to realise the greatest benefit, and identify any future R&D needs, we employ a Disposal System Change Management Procedure. This Change Control process is designed to capture the outputs of completed R&D tasks in the relevant documents, ensuring an increase to the knowledge base. The wider dissemination of knowledge across RWM that this supports enables the identification of future R&D requirements which may result from a change in position.

Supporting Documents

