

Minutes

NIRAB eighth meeting

7th October 2015, 12:00-15:00

The Royal Academy of Engineering, London

Attendees:

MEMBERS

Dame Sue Ion	Chair	John Lillington	AMEC Foster Wheeler
Tim Abram	University of Manchester	Andrew Sherry	NNL
Steve Cowley	CCFE	Neil Thomson	EDF Energy
Paul Harding	Urenco	Mike Tynan	NAMRC
Malcolm Joyce	Lancaster University	Peter Wylie	Sellafield Ltd
Bob McKenzie (on behalf of Mick Gornall)	Springfields Ltd	John Molyneux (on behalf of Paul Stein)	Rolls-Royce

OBSERVERS

Derek Allen	Innovate UK	Robin Grimes	FCO
Neil Bateman	EPSRC	David Senior	ONR
Melanie Brownridge	NDA		

OFFICIALS

Rob Arnold	DECC	Bryan Payne	BIS
Si Dilks	DECC	Anna Stephenson	DECC
Craig Lucas	DECC	Rupert Wilmouth	GO-Science

SECRETARIAT

Gordon Bryan	NIRO	Andrew Howarth	NIRO
Andrew Brown	NIRO	Simon White	NIRO

Apologies:

MEMBERS

Andrew Carlick	DBD Ltd	Paul Stein	Rolls-Royce
Bill Lee	Imperial College	Neil Hyatt	Sheffield University
Richard Clegg	Lloyd's Register	Laurence Williams	CORWM
Mick Gornall	Springfields Ltd		

OBSERVERS

John Loughhead	DECC	Sir Mark Walport	GO-Science
Tim Dafforn	BIS		

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

The members and observers were welcomed to the eighth meeting of NIRAB. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Agenda Item 2 – Actions from previous NIRAB meetings

Action 6.1 Update the reactors and fuel roadmap to take on board NIRAB member comments – Roadmaps are still being updated following NIRAB comments. Update to be given under agenda item nine. [Action open].

Action 7.1 DECC to identify any outputs from the SMR TEA that flag up the need for any research on public acceptance – The TEA is due to be completed at the end of March 2016 at which point DECC will discuss the outputs with NIRAB. [Action open].

Action 7.2 BIS to discuss how to take forward the need to maintain a secure supply of medical isotopes with the Department of Health – BIS officials have briefed their new CSA Tim Dafforn on the issue. He is awaiting a meeting with the Department of Health's CSA. [Action complete].

Action 7.3 Neil Bateman to identify any STFC funded research relevant to TC99m production using accelerators – Neil has made enquiries with colleagues at STFC who have confirmed that is not funding any projects which relate to Tc99m production. The Chair reiterated her view that this is an issue that Government needs to address, however it is not an issue that falls within NIRAB's remit. The meeting of the CSAs will hopefully provide this assurance. [Action complete].

Action 7.10 Melanie Brownridge to ensure that all relevant information on Fukushima made available to INS is made available to the relevant UK parties – Melanie will work with International Nuclear Services to ensure that information is passed on. [Action complete].

Agenda Item 3 – Government's 2015 Spending Review

Officials thanked NIRO for the excellent work done over the summer providing supporting information to the Spending Review. Work has been undertaken to evaluate a range of scenarios applying the prioritisation principles agreed at the last meeting to NIRAB's baseline recommendations. The Board endorsed the priorities identified through the application of this process.

DECC officials have worked closely with Innovate UK to prepare co-ordinated Spending Review submissions. DECC officials took into account advice from NIRAB and NIRO in preparing its energy innovation budget proposal which is currently under review by Treasury. DECC advised that the scale of funding will not be confirmed until the Spending Review in November.

It was noted that the NIRAB recommendations were formulated to fill gaps in existing research and innovation funding which includes funding routed through NDA, RCUK and Innovate UK. Consequently the Board supported continuation of funding in these areas and asked that members be informed of any change to these budgets, which would have a knock on effect to the Board's recommendations.

The board stressed the need to identify appropriate arrangements for the governance and management of any future R&D programme following the Spending Review, emphasising the need to maintain a coordinated and integrated approach. Officials agreed that this is an important issue and advised that a robust discussion is taking place within Government on how implementation should be managed. It was noted that some examples of good practice in programme management can be found in industry. The Chair offered the Board's support in developing a solution and urged that

implementation mechanism should incorporate sufficient flexibility to manage a highly linked programme and respond to international opportunities as they arise.

Agenda Item 4 – International Engagement

A discussion took place on the importance of a co-ordinated international engagement strategy which takes into account all the complex factors which arise from selecting and working with international partners. DECC officials requested that NIRAB focus on the technical opportunities for collaboration.

Action 8.1: NIRO to gather and consolidate the views of members on technical collaboration opportunities.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer recently announced that the UK and China would work together to co-fund a £50 million cutting-edge nuclear research centre to be headquartered in the UK. Andrew Sherry provided a brief on the proposed centre which will be a virtual centre which will be co-ordinated by NNL and the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC). The Chair noted that a number of UK SMEs currently realise significant value from the archive of UK intellectual property. She advised bounding the scope of the centre in order to avoid prejudicing these activities and to allow space for other international collaborations.

The board asked NNL to take into account its priorities when developing the Joint Research and Innovation Centre (JRIC) and offered its assistance to advise on the scope.

Action 8.2: Andrew Sherry to seek the views of members on the priorities for the JRIC, with the support of NIRO.

Agenda Item 5 – Sir Henry Royce Institute Update

An update was given on the planned Sir Henry Royce Institute which will be based in Manchester with spokes at a number of research bodies around the country. There are a number of funded initiatives currently being developed which are welcomed by the board and it stressed the need for Government departments to co-ordinate activities to ensure value for money. The board stressed the need to ensure effective co-ordination between public funding bodies and urged that priorities identified by NIRAB should be reflected in public funding decisions.

Action 8.3: Research Councils and Innovate UK to ensure Sir Henry Royce Institute includes NIRAB priorities when developing its scope.

Agenda Item 6 – National Nuclear Users Facility Update

The NNUF gave a summary of the progress they have made over the past three years and the plans for the future. NNUF facilities are attracting new scientists to work in the field and are helping provide a pipeline of skills. Whilst funding was announced in the Autumn Statement last year to expand the NNUF, this is still subject to business case approval. DECC officials highlighted the fact that recent grants made by the Department to develop research facilities have all included a requirement for open access to those facilities. The MIDAS laboratory at Sheffield was commended for the transparency of its web site which provides real time information on the status of equipment as well as providing a portal to register to use the equipment.

Agenda Item 7 – ETI SMR study briefing

The ETI have undertaken three projects looking at SMRs in 2014-2015. A brief was given on the work undertaken including its findings, conclusions and recommendations. A [summary report](#) is available on

the ETI web site. This along with the output from the Techno-Economic Assessment commissioned by DECC and other gathered information will form part of DECC's process of developing policy options in the new year. The Chair noted that in order to achieve the cost reductions predicted by learning from doing it will be necessary to pick a single design as such cost reductions will not come from building small numbers of several different designs.

Agenda Item 8 – Progress against Nuclear Industrial Strategy

The intention to establish NIRAB was set out in the Nuclear Industrial Strategy (NIS), published in March 2013. The Nuclear Industry Council (NIC) is the organisation primarily responsible for tracking progress against the strategy. NIRAB are in a position to assist the NIC in tracking progress against the research and innovation R&D milestones. The Chair asked NIRO to co-ordinate a small review of the research and innovation aspects of the NIS.

Action 8.4: NIRO to gather and consolidate the views of members on the progress that has been made against NIS milestones and objectives.

Agenda Item 9 – NIRAB R&D Roadmap update

An initial draft of the Roadmap was circulated and discussed at the March NIRAB meeting. It has subsequently been restructured to take on board comments and to reflect the 5 main themes of proposed research programme. Following review by the Sub-Group Chair the Roadmap will be circulated to members prior to publication on the web site.

Agenda Item 10 – 2015 NIRAB Annual Report

A brief synopsis for the 2015 annual report was distributed to members and observers before the meeting. NIRAB members endorsed the proposed structure and content and provided some detailed comments on the style and tone of the report. NIRO are to create a draft version to be circulated in December to enable a significant discussion of the draft to take place at the January meeting.

Action 8.5: Members to read the draft NIRAB Annual Report and come to the January meeting prepared for a detailed discussion of the report.

Agenda Item 11 – NIRAB Chair/NIRO additional notable activities

A list of notable NIRAB Chair and NIRO stakeholder meetings was distributed to the board.

Agenda Item 12 – Summary of actions and next steps

A summary of the actions from the meeting was recorded and an update will be made at the next meeting.

Agenda Item 13 – AOB

The NDA has published a draft strategy document. Members were urged to comment on the draft.. Research and development is a part of this strategy and the NDA highlighted the role that its current investments in R&D play in securing a pipeline of skilled researchers.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 12th January 2016.