

# Harwell Site Stakeholder Group

## Environment Agency report

4 December 2015

**This report covers the Environment Agency's (EA) regulation of the Harwell Nuclear Licensed Site and related issues.**

### Radioactive substances regulation

#### Permitting

There have been no changes to the RSRL environmental permit since 1 April 2015 when we transferred all Environment Agency permits and consents for the Harwell site to Magnox Limited.

We are currently assessing an application to surrender part of the permit which covers land at the Sutton Courtenay discharge point where the offsite discharge pipeline has been removed.

#### Regulation

We regulate radioactive waste disposals to the environment. We do this through environmental permits that contain limits and conditions aimed at minimising wastes and protecting the environment. We also check compliance with the permit by making regular inspections at Harwell. For all inspections we issue Radioactive Substances Compliance Assessment Forms (RASCARs). These forms summarise the inspection we carried out and clearly describe any permit breaches. Copies of RASCARs are available on Environment Agency public registers on application.

Since the last Harwell SSG meeting we have:

- Conducted an inspection of radioactive waste management arrangements at the Liquid Effluent Treatment Plant. We identified no breaches of the environmental permit.
- Attended the Annual Review of Safety and Environment. We welcomed the environment report presented by Magnox.
- Attended the annual Environmental Regulators' Review meeting with colleagues from the Groundwater and Contaminated Land team.

### Incidents and enforcement

The Environment Agency monitors breaches of permit conditions using the Compliance Classification Scheme (CCS). This ranks breaches on a 1-4 scale, with category 1 being the most serious.

We have raised no non-compliances at the Harwell site since the last SSG meeting.

### Discharge reports

The operator at Harwell is required to report liquid and gaseous discharges to the environment on a regular basis. We examine these reports and produce a RASCAR for them. Copies of the discharge reports and the RASCARs are available on the Environment Agency public register. A digest of information is available via the Environment Agency website 'What's in your backyard?' facility<sup>1</sup>.

Liquid and gaseous discharges from Harwell are at levels well within permitted limits.

### Environmental impact

The site permit requires the operator to monitor and assess the impact of discharges on the environment. This monitoring demonstrates that the impact of the site on the environment is low.

The Environment Agencies and Food Standards Agency also carry out independent environmental monitoring around nuclear sites. The results of this work are published annually and the latest report "Radioactivity in Food and the Environment 2014" (RIFE 2014) is published on the Food Standards Agency website<sup>2</sup>.

The RIFE report presents a yearly assessment of radiological dose to individuals in the local population who are most exposed to radiation from each nuclear licensed site. In 2014, the total dose to this 'representative person' as a result of discharges from the Harwell campus was 0.016

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/check-local-environmental-data>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/radiologicalresearch/radiosurv/rife>

millisieverts (mSv). This is less than 1% of the average annual amount of radiation we all receive from natural sources (2.7 mSv/year).

## Environment Agency environmental monitoring programme

We have reviewed our independent environmental monitoring programmes at all nuclear sites that we regulate to ensure our programmes are consistent with our guidance. The programme for Harwell has remained unchanged for a number of years and did not fully reflect the progress in decommissioning at the site. The majority of the programme changes have been made to reflect the change in the site's liquid discharge from being via a pipeline to the River Thames to going via the Didcot sewage treatment works. This has meant a change in some of our sampling and monitoring locations to take account of the new discharge point to the environment and to focus effort on reassurance monitoring at the sewage treatment works where any effects would be most noticeable.

## Emergency preparedness

We attended the Harwell Emergency Planning Consultative Committee chaired by Oxfordshire County Council.

Every three years the Harwell site is required to test its ability to respond to an off-site emergency invoking the local authority multi agency response plan by holding an emergency exercise. This was last done in December 2013 and the planning cycle is now beginning in preparation for the 2016 exercise.

## Further information

Further information on our role in regulating the use of radioactive substances and related activities on nuclear licensed sites can be found on the Environment Agency website<sup>3</sup>.

The Environment Agency's lead Nuclear Regulator for the Harwell site and its tenants is Rebecca Cleverley. Rebecca is part of the national Nuclear Regulation Group (South) (NRG(S)) which is based at the Environment Agency's Wallingford office in Oxfordshire.

NRG(S) undertakes environmental regulation of radioactive substances on nuclear licensed sites in southern England. They work closely with the local Environment Agency teams in those areas as well as external bodies such as the Office for Nuclear Regulation.

Members of the local Environment Agency team cover the site for general (non-radioactive substances) environment protection matters such as regulation of groundwater, contaminated land, waste management and water abstraction.

**Address:** Environment Agency  
Red Kite House  
Howbery Park  
Wallingford  
Oxfordshire  
OX10 8BD

**Email:**  
[rebecca.cleverley@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.cleverley@environment-agency.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 01491 828629

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nuclear-regulation-in-the-environment-agency>