

News story: Chair for the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management standing down

Professor Laurence Williams FREng FIMEchE FNucI stood down as Chair of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) in November 2017. He has held the post since November 2012.

Professor Williams has had a long and distinguished career in the field of nuclear regulation, fulfilling the role of the government's Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations from 1998 to 2005, and is currently Chair of the Defence and Nuclear Safety Committee. He is Professor of Nuclear Safety at the University of Central Lancashire, and a senior research fellow at Imperial College London.

Professor Williams said:

The effective management of the UK's radioactive waste is essential not only to deal with past legacies but also for the successful exploitation of nuclear energy in the future. CoRWM has made, and will continue to make an important contribution to the management of radioactive waste.

The past 5 years have been both challenging and rewarding knowing that I have been able to contribute to this essential task. It has been both an honour and privilege to have chaired a committee of such distinguished and talented people.

I have every confidence that the current members of CoRWM will continue to provide invaluable advice to ensure that the new Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process will be a success.

Energy Minister Richard Harrington said:

On behalf of BEIS and the devolved administrations, I would like to thank Professor Williams for his outstanding commitment, dedication and professionalism serving as Chair of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) for the last 5 years.

CoRWM performs a vital function in providing scrutiny and advice on government radioactive waste management programmes. This has included constructive feedback and challenge in various fora such as the Geological Disposal Programme Board, as well as an invaluable level of independent assurance.

You have made an enormous contribution to the committee over the years and we particularly wish to thank you for your commitment to the timely and effective delivery of successive work programmes and CoRWM annual reports; your contribution to the implementation strategy for Scotland's policy on higher activity radioactive waste; and your assistance in the development of the Welsh government's radioactive waste policy.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has launched a recruitment campaign to find a new Chair for CoRWM, expected to complete by April 2018. Further details can be found on the [public appointments website](#).

CoRWM's Deputy Chair Professor Campbell Gemmell is standing in as interim Chair of the Committee until a new Chair is appointed.

Notes for editors

1. The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management provides independent scrutiny and advice to UK government and devolved administration ministers on long-term management of radioactive waste, including storage and disposal. The Committee's primary task is to provide independent scrutiny of the UK government's and Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's proposals, plans and programmes to deliver geological disposal, together with robust interim storage, as the long-term management option for higher activity waste. For more information see the [CoRWM website](#).
 2. The role of CoRWM Chair is remunerated at a rate of £450 per day; it is expected that the Chair will spend about 1.5 days per week on CoRWM business.
 3. The appointment is made by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Energy and Industry, on behalf of the Devolved Administrations as joint sponsors of CoRWM.
 4. Appointments to CoRWM are made in accordance with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the Nolan recommendations, appointees' political activity (if any declared) must be made public.
-

Notice: Notification of change to licence conditions for 10m and under

A new condition will be added to make it explicit that catches of any species can only be attributed to the vessel used to capture, and cannot be transferred to another vessel.

Master and owners of vessels will be required to take reasonable steps to ensure that sales notes submitted to the MMO correctly attributes species to the correct vessel .

The MMO is intending to amend the current 10m and under licence condition by 19 January 2018.

News story: More frequent cattle testing to boost fight against bovine TB

Bovine TB will be caught and stamped out more quickly in England's cattle herds under plans to strengthen testing in the highest-risk areas of the country.

Six monthly routine tests will be introduced for all herds in the High Risk Area – mainly the South West and parts of the Midlands – with annual tests preserved for herds that have gone five or more years without disease, and farms accredited under the [Cattle Herd Certification Standards \(CHeCS\) scheme](#), requiring tougher biosecurity measures to be observed.

[Grants](#) to vaccinate badgers in the Edge Area of the country – the 'buffer' between the High Risk and Low Risk Areas – are also available now for schemes to run next year.

These moves are part of the government's comprehensive 25-year plan to eradicate bovine TB in England and come as [recent peer-reviewed research](#) shows badger control in Gloucestershire (58%) and Somerset (21%) – where culling began in 2013 – has contributed to significant reductions in the disease in herds.

[Results](#) published today also confirm that all 19 licensed intensive badger control operations achieved the badger population reductions needed to realise disease control benefits.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

Our comprehensive strategy to eradicate bovine TB is delivering results. We are introducing more frequent testing of cattle to find and stamp out disease more quickly than ever before, to add to our tough restrictions on cattle movements to stop disease spreading. We are also addressing the disease in wildlife and it is encouraging to see early research shows badger control is having the expected results in driving down levels of TB.

Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens said:

This year's results show that badger control can be delivered successfully on a much wider scale, with all 11 new areas delivering effective operations. Expansion into further areas, alongside our robust cattle movement and testing regime, will allow us to achieve and maintain long term reductions in the level of TB across the South West and Midlands where the disease is widespread.

In the Edge Area of the country, testing frequency will become more risk-based from January 2018, with more herds undertaking six-monthly testing. This will help vets identify and address outbreaks more quickly, helping to stop the spread of disease to new areas.

The government is offering grants under the Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme, which recommences in 2018 and aims to create a buffer zone between the highest- and lowest-risk disease areas of England. The scheme is open for the first round of applications until 19 January and successful applicants will receive a government grant for at least 50% of their costs from a fund worth £700,000 over four years.

Dealing with Bovine TB in England costs taxpayers over £100 million a year, required the culling of more than 29,000 cattle in 2016 and causes devastation and distress for rural communities.

Other measures announced today as part of the government's 25-year strategy to eradicate bovine TB are:

- New compensation arrangements for pigs, sheep, goats, deer and camelids which have to be slaughtered because of bovine TB. The changes will come into force on 2 January 2018 and will bring statutory compensation in line with arrangements in Scotland and Wales.
- Reduced compensation for animals which are unclean when presented for slaughter.
- Delayed slaughter of pregnant cattle which test positive for bTB.

Farmers can also access practical guidance on the TB Hub website, which brings advice from farming experts, vets and government together in one place.

Background:

1. The [recent research paper](#) referred to is Brunton et al (2017) Assessing the effects of the first 2 years of industry-led badger culling in England on the incidence of bovine tuberculosis in cattle in 2013-2015. Ecology Evolution. 7 (18). 7213-7230.
2. The vaccination grants application page can be accessed [here](#).
3. The cull results can be accessed [here](#).
4. In September, the government awarded a contract to the Origin Group to deliver a new bTB advisory service. The easily accessible service offers clear, practical advice to help farmers in High Risk and Edge Areas to protect their herds from the disease and manage the impacts of a TB breakdown on their farm.

News story: Consultation on fees for marine licences

Defra has today [launched a consultation](#) on proposals seeking to revise the marine licensing application fees applied to England and the Wales and Northern Ireland Offshore marine areas. Changes are needed in order to maintain marine licence applicant fee rates in-line with the costs incurred by the Marine Management Organisation in determining a marine licence application.

This is being proposed to make sure the cost burden associated with administering licences for development lies with beneficiaries and not taxpayers.

Detailed information on the proposals is included in Defra's consultation document, but includes:

- availability of self-service licences
- a simplification of charges for a routine marine licence
- an increase in the hourly rate charged for routine and complex marine licences (from £94 to £122 per hour)

The proposals were previously discussed by the MMO's Chief Executive, John Tuckett, during a hearing of the [Environment Audit Committee in the House of Commons](#) in January 2017. They are also part of a wider [programme of improvements in marine licensing](#) to make sure that the process it is as efficient as possible and proportionately manages risks to the marine environment.

Businesses and industry representatives have been involved in this work and their views are being used to develop appropriate processes and services, such as a [self-service approach for some marine licences](#), which is mentioned in the consultation document.

The consultation runs until 2 February 2018. If any changes are agreed it is anticipated they will come into effect in March 2018. Further details will be provided in advance of any changes taking place.

Consultation outcome: Rationalising the main river network: de-maining proposals

Updated: Details of final outcome published for South Forty Foot catchment.

The Environment Agency proposes to transfer flood risk management activities on a number of stretches of watercourses to internal drainage boards (IDBs), lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) and district councils. This means that IDBs, LLFAs and district councils can take on more responsibility for their local flood risk where appropriate. The Environment Agency has been working with a number of IDBs, LLFAs and district councils to consider proposals to re-designate sections of watercourses in a number of locations. The watercourses will be re-designated from main river to ordinary watercourse – a change we refer to as de-maining.

The proposal is to re-designate sections of the watercourse in:

- Suffolk, East Anglia
- South Forty Foot Catchment, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire
- Stour Marshes, Kent and South London

All of these sections of watercourse have low levels of flood risk to people and property, and are not associated with major rivers or major population centres. The proposal is that this will strengthen local decision making. This helps IDBs, LLFAs and district councils to manage these stretches of watercourse and carry out works where they see fit for the benefit of local people.

This consultation explains all of the information in our proposals, including information about how the proposed sections of watercourses are currently managed and funded. The consultation also provides details on future management and funding if de-maining goes ahead.