



KIMO RESOLUTION 3/01

Presented by KIMO UK

DOUNREAY NUCLEAR ESTABLISHMENT

While the decision of the UK Government to end reprocessing at the Dounreay Nuclear Establishment is welcomed by KIMO, the complex and hazardous decommissioning tasks at the site present unique problems and raise considerable concerns for potential threats to the marine environment.

It is estimated that over 20 new plants and facilities will be required to decommission the legacy of over 40 years of nuclear activity. Some of these plants will be highly complex and many of the processes used in decommissioning will be hazardous and will involve marine and aerial radioactive waste discharges. Several of the decommissioning tasks present special, unique problems and dangers.

For example the 780 cu. m. intermediate-level waste silo at Dounreay is unlined there are not complete records of the waste dumped in the silo. But perhaps the biggest challenge is the emptying of the waste shaft - a 65 metre deep unlined shaft into which all kinds of contaminated wastes was dumped between 1959 and 1977 when an explosion in the shaft forced its closure. There are no complete records of what was dumped in the shaft.

In addition, the continued discovery of radioactive contamination on the foreshore at Dounreay; at the nearby beach at Sandside and on the seabed off the Caithness coast - which has resulted in a fishing ban over a 2 kilometre area - is still a cause of great concern to KIMO, especially as the source, or sources, and pathways into the environment remain unknown over a decade after the pollution first appeared.

The problem of radioactive waste storage is not restricted to Dounreay. All nuclear facilities produce waste and its storage and eventual disposal is an issue still unresolved in the UK. Communities in Scotland, and in particular the Highlands and Islands, accept the responsibility of dealing with the wastes already at Dounreay. However there are concerns that the existence of extensive waste storage facilities at Dounreay, to deal with the decommissioning wastes, may encourage a UK government to consider using Dounreay to store wastes from other sites in Scotland or further afield.

KIMO

Recognising the complex problems and issues involved in the decommissioning of Dounreay; the continued concerns of radioactive

particles being found in the sea off the Caithness coast; and the concerns that nuclear waste from other sites may be taken to Dounreay:

(1) urges the UK Government to publish full details of all the new plants and facilities expected to be required at Dounreay and to commission and publish independent assessments of the environmental and waste implications;

(2) calls on the UK Government to consult on these plans not only within the UK but to provide full details to its partners in the OSPAR Convention and to allow Contracting Parties to participate in any public consultations on the new plants and facilities;

(3) calls for greater resources to be allocated to finding existing radioactive particles already on the seabed off Dounreay and dealing with them safely and to finding the source of this contamination and preventing further releases into the environment;

(4) only supports the safe storage at Dounreay of nuclear wastes either already present or produced in the course of decommissioning the site.

Urges Northern Sea States

(1) to raise their concerns on these issues with the UK Government

KIMO members:

(1) agree to submit this resolution to all national governments, the European Commission and other relevant agencies.

*This Resolution was agreed unanimously by Delegates at the 11th KIMO International Annual General Meeting in Göteborg, Sweden on October 14th 2001 and became KIMO policy upon that date.