

The Government have set up the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM), to look at the options for managing the UK's radioactive waste and to recommend a long-term solution that will protect people and the environment.

Aims

The discussion guide has been developed to help groups of young people and adults from all over the UK talk about the issues and tell CoRWM their views and concerns.

The guide is designed to be used for self-managed discussions by anyone aged 16 and over, but students aged 14+ will be able to use it with a little more supervision and guidance from a teacher.

Contents of the guide

For the organiser/chairperson: Instructions on using the guide plus answers to some frequently asked questions about radioactive waste.

For all members of the group: 6 Information cards about radioactive waste and the options for dealing with it.

For the recorder or scribe: A reply form containing a series of questions to discuss and space to record the group's answers.

Results

The results can either be inputted online or posted to CoRWM. The results will be displayed on a special website <http://corwm.dialoguebydesign.net> so that participants will be able to see how their results compare to those of other groups across the UK.

Replies must reach CoRWM by 31st December 2005.

CoRWM will show how they have used the views of the public when they report to Government in July 2006.

Key ideas

- The nature of radioactive waste
- How radioactive waste is produced and why it is difficult to manage
- The things we need to consider when deciding how to deal with it
- The options for managing waste
- The ethical, social and moral dimensions of a science-based issue.

Skills developed

- Group discussion -considering multiple viewpoints
- Reading and obtaining information
- Considering short- and long-term impacts of a decision
- Considering local and national impacts of a decision.

Curriculum links

16+

- AS/A2 Physics (links to units on radioactivity, puts the uses and dangers of radioactivity into context)
- AS Public Understanding of Science (links to 'Sources and effects of radiation')
- AS/A2 General Studies (links to 'Scientific horizons')
- A2 Geography (links to decision-making and issues analysis)
- Scottish Highers, Physics (links to units on radioactivity).

14 -16

- England and Wales: the guide links to units 'Radioactivity' within Science and Physics GCSEs and 'Radioactive materials' in the 21st Century Science GCSE.
- Northern Ireland: links with Science, (Materials and Their Uses')
- Scotland: links with Standard grade, Science ('Energy and Environment').

The guide may also be of interest to teachers of Citizenship, Geography and PSE / PSHE.

Using the discussion guide in a lesson

See 'Information for Organisers' in the guide for more detail.

Reading the information, and then discussing and answering the questions will take at least an hour. If your lesson time is shorter, you may wish to copy the information cards so that students can read them prior to the lesson. Alternatively, you could split the task over two lessons, the first for reviewing the information and the second for holding the discussion and recording the results. It is not essential that students answer all of the questions. CoRWM would like to hear from as many young people as possible.

1. Split the class into groups

Get students into groups of between 4 and 12. Each group will need its own copy of the guide. You can order more copies of the guide by telephoning 0208 683 6602.

2. Assign roles

Each group needs a chairperson to lead the discussion (using the Step by Step guide) and a recorder to write down the results of the discussion (using the reply form).

3. Read the information

If they have not read the information cards before the lesson, allow students 10 minutes to read the information cards. They can either each read all of the cards independently or each student can summarise a card for the rest of the group.

4. Discuss the questions

The chairperson reads out the questions and makes sure that everyone who wants to say something has had a chance to do so. The group tries to come to a consensus, or record the range of views if this has not been possible. The teacher can emphasise that students are free to make their own responses to the questions; there are no right or wrong answers.

5. Record the answers

The recorder's job is to write down the group's answers on the reply form. Teachers may wish to complete Q9, and supply their own contact details for keeping updated on CoRWM's activities. *Please note: if your school completes more than one reply form, for example if you split your class into smaller groups, please give each group a unique name, e.g. "St Mary's School, Group 1", and enter this in Q9 of the form.* Either the teacher or the a student can later enter all the answers into an online version of the form at <http://corwm.dialoguebydesign.net> or send the reply form to CoRWM by post.

Useful Links

Some useful links are provided on the Questions and Answers sheet in the guide. Here are some additional links to educational resources on radioactive waste and related topics.

www.schoolscience.co.uk - dealing with waste debate

www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/nuclearwaste - website linked to exhibition "Nuclear waste: can you handle it?"

www.energyforesight.org - resources on radioactivity for KS4, including DVDs.

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/physics - revision pages provide some background information on radioactivity.

www.the-ba.net/resourcesforlearning - Having a discussion can count towards a BA Science Communicators award.