2 August 2006
2006/025

UKAEA SHORT-LISTS FOUR BEACH MONITORING SYSTEMS AFTER WORLDWIDE SEARCH

A worldwide search for technology capable of improving UKAEA's detection of radioactive particles on beaches near Dounreay has resulted in four companies being short-listed for the award of a contract to undertake the work.

Four different systems, including an enhanced version of the system currently in use, were selected by a panel of experts after a series of trials to test their performance against the current system.

The companies will now be invited to tender for the contract to monitor local beaches when it comes up for renewal next year.

Dr Joe Toole, UKAEA's particles monitoring programme manager, said: "When we last awarded the contract in 2002, the system we selected was the best that was made available to us during the competitive tendering process. But a number of stakeholders expressed the view that other technology could be developed that would improve our detection abilities.

"I am very pleased that we have been able to work with these stakeholders to identify and test other systems. We are now in a position to take forward four different systems with a view to choosing the one that can best meet the current and future regulatory requirements of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency."

UKAEA established its Beaches Monitoring Steering Group, composed of radiometrics experts, in 2003 to undertake the research programme.

In 2004, 13 companies from around the world expressed an interest in offering their systems in response to a notice placed in the Official Journal of the European Union. Seven were selected for testing, and six companies proceeded to the trials stage.

A simulated beach was constructed at the UKAEA site at Harwell in Oxfordshire, with radioactive sources buried in the sand. The sources varied in activity and included both caesium-137 and cobalt-60 sources. Approximately 5000 test runs over the beach were made using the six different systems and the results compared against the performance of the existing system.

The expert members of the working group have now short-listed four systems that will proceed to the tender stage for a three-year contract.

Ends