

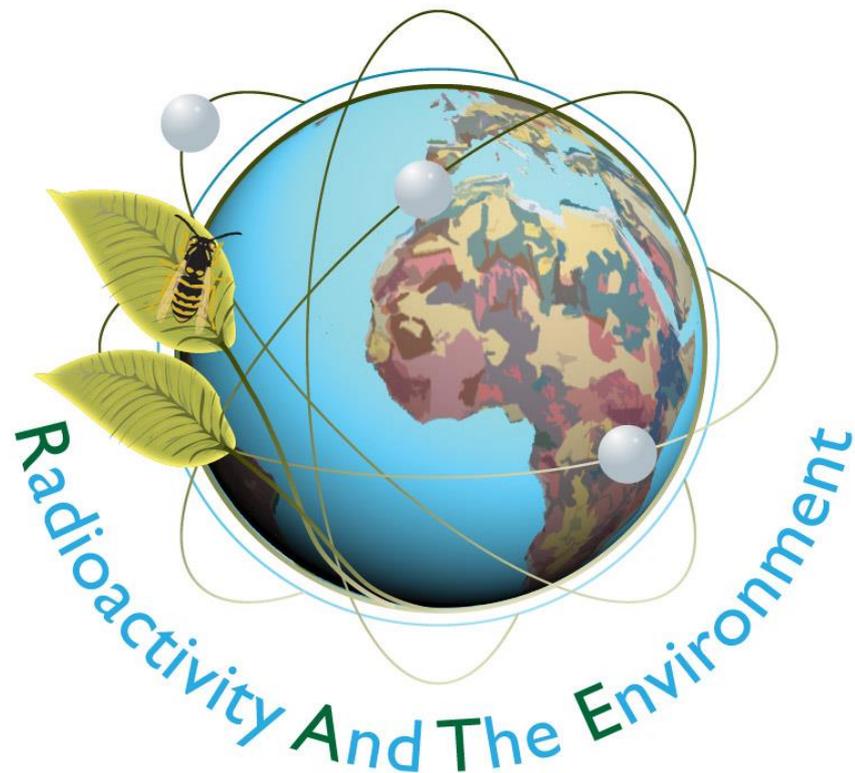


**British  
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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

# The NERC RATE annual meeting: Summary Report 2016

Minerals and Waste Programme

Open Report OR/16/049





BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

MINERALS and Waste PROGRAMME

OPEN REPORT OR/16/049

# The NERC RATE annual meeting: Summary Report 2016

The RATE Science Co-ordination Team

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## Foreword

This report, collated by the Radioactivity And The Environment (RATE) Science Co-ordination Team (SCT), is the published product RATE project, held in Glasgow February 2015.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the local organisers of the COGER (Co-Ordinating Group on Environmental Radioactivity) meeting who assisted with the organisation of the meeting and all RATE scientists and stakeholders who took part.

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## Summary

This report summarises the 2016 annual meeting of the NERC Radioactivity And The Environment research programme.

# 1 Introduction

The RATE (Radioactivity And The Environment) programme is a 5 year research programme funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) Ltd, the Environment Agency (EA) and augmented by support from the Science and Technologies Facilities Council (STFC) via its global challenge networks. The high level goal is to build UK capacity in radioactivity and the environment, so that a major contribution to the enhancement of environmental protection and a safeguarding of human health from releases of radioactivity from nuclear power plants, waste repositories and legacy-contaminated sites, as well as natural radiation, can be made.

The half day annual meeting of the research programme was held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 at the University of Glasgow and was attended by both RATE scientists and observers e.g. from SEPA (the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency).

The meeting was aimed at providing an update on progress within the individual projects (which was provided by the project leads), focussing on interaction across the programme as a whole and within individual consortia as the geographic and scientific spread of the programme is wide.

The meeting was designed to:

- Facilitate discussions related stakeholder needs, both short and longer term, and their expectations from the RATE Programme;
- Identify knowledge gaps in environmental radioactivity to provide a focus for future research to feed into the development of new multi-disciplinary strategic research programmes and projects;
- Provide a forum to hear from PhD students and PDRAs on where their research could develop post RATE providing an opportunity to identify research projects and create cohorts for developing consortium grants; and,
- Support the creation of group/network that will have a much greater longevity than the RATE programme itself.

The attendees noted that as the annual meeting was back to back with the COGER meeting that there were few participants from stakeholders and representation was dominated by one of the three projects.

## 2 Future Research discussion

The attendees were split into two cross project discussion groups to identify current knowledge gaps and, looking forward, the development of a new research roadmap.

The question of developing further research initiatives and funding resulting in the following soundbites:

- The NERC special topic project in the 1980's is an example of almost entirely wasted capacity building;
- Further research programmes need to **build upon current personnel and support career development**;
- Writing of a future research programme should be inclusive by having everyone involved in RATE contributing, especially early career researchers;
- A short synthesis of the progress in environmental radioactivity research that RATE has made will help develop a 'roadmap' for future research requirements and knowledge gaps;

- The interactions between consortia and outputs ‘that matter’ should be identified and highlighted; and,
- The development of a new programme should start immediately and be a collaborative approach between funders and end users (new and old);

The opportunity to look at the next strategic funding round was highlighted as an opportunity (the deadline of September 2016 was advised for a start date of March 2018).

### 3 Outcomes

The variation in attendance by the three RATE cohorts was highlighted as a barrier to having a perspective on the whole RATE programme. The attendance of one or two representatives from the other consortia representatives at the annual meetings of the three RATE projects was identified as a route to further understanding and linkages, as was larger attendance at RATE programme events.

Stakeholder representatives identified a need for identifying the RATE deliverables in order to engage better with outside organisations.

In addition to the more detailed information being produced by RATE there is a need to produce focussed, non-technical documents/information on the outcomes of RATE.

The need to deliver a programme finale event catering for researchers, stakeholders and non-specialist attendees was identified and that organisation of the event should start straight away.

The interaction across the programme at the annual meeting has started the process of developing a successor to RATE, identifying the need to engage with stakeholders as a priority.