

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 25 January 2012
Agenda Item:	12
Subject:	Progress Report
Author:	Fred Barker
Purpose:	To provide an update on various NuLeAF activities and developments

Introduction

This progress report covers the following items:

- the NuLeAF seminar on 9 March;
- the Government statement on plutonium management;
- the process for siting a geological disposal facility (GDF);
- environmental permitting; and
- the NuLeAF budget.

The report is for noting.

Strategic Objectives

The developments reported are relevant to the following strategic objectives:

Spatial Planning

- To encourage and assist the NDA, Site Licensee Companies and the supply chain to take full account of the role and needs of the local authority planning system in the implementation of LLW strategy.
- To encourage NDA to provide sufficient evidence base information and to engage in discussion about the potential for a more strategic approach to the siting of LLW management facilities.
- To encourage Waste Planning Authorities to develop policies in MWDFs on the management of LLW (and VLLW).

Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)

- to liaise effectively with any local authority that may wish to consider, or makes, an expression of interest in the GDF siting process and to provide assistance as appropriate
- to work with Government, the NDA, CoRWM, regulators and member authorities to help ensure that the approach based on voluntarism and partnership works robustly in practice
- to ensure member authorities are briefed and up-to-date on developments in the GDF siting process.

1 NuLeAF Seminar, 9 March

The seminar is taking place on 9 March in Local Government House, London. The SG's attention is drawn to the programme for the seminar, which includes presentations from senior managers from the NDA, LLWR Ltd, EDF and the Planning Inspectorate. Members are encouraged to register for the seminar.

2 Government Statement on Plutonium Management

A Government statement on plutonium management was published on 1 December and is available on the DECC website at [Charles Hendry Written Ministerial Statement on nuclear energy matters - Department of Energy and Climate Change](#).

The statement follows consultation last year which set out Government's preliminary view on the long-term management of the UK's plutonium. In particular, the consultation document proposed a preliminary policy view to pursue re-use of plutonium as mixed oxide fuel (MOX).

The Government statement says that having considered all responses received during the consultation period the UK Government has concluded that it has identified the right preliminary view. Accordingly, it confirms this as the preferred policy. It adds, however, that while it has sufficient information to set out a direction, it is not yet sufficient to make a specific decision to proceed with procuring a new MOX plant. Only when the Government is confident that its preferred option could be implemented safely and securely, that is affordable, deliverable, and offers value for money, will it be in a position to proceed with a new MOX plant. It adds that if it cannot establish a means of implementation that satisfies these conditions then the way forward may need to be revised.

The Government is now commencing the next phase of work, which will provide the information required to make such a decision. The next steps will see further information being gathered by the Government and NDA through detailed commercial discussions on the market for MOX fuel and the availability of reactors in which it can be burned. Other discussions will focus on detailing the costs and timescales for procuring services or facilities, including a suitable MOX plant, which can be delivered at minimum risk to Government.

Further workstreams will take forward the requirements for the Justification of the whole MOX path from fabrication, through use to disposal, which will be required before UK Government can commit to spending significant capital on procuring a new MOX fabrication plant.

In addition the Government has concluded that overseas owners of plutonium stored in the UK could, subject to commercial terms that are acceptable to UK Government, have their plutonium managed alongside UK plutonium, in line with a re-use policy. Where appropriate and subject to compliance with inter-governmental agreements and commercial arrangements that again, are acceptable to Government, the UK would be prepared to take ownership of overseas plutonium stored in the UK after which it would be managed alongside UK plutonium, again in line with a reuse policy.

While considering that converting the plutonium into MOX is the most credible and technologically mature option, the Government remains open to any alternative proposals for

plutonium management that offer better value to the taxpayer, and will seek to gather more data on all options.

The Government's response to consultation on plutonium management also gives some indications about the potential future use of MOX fuel, in particular:

- "Without a clear direction of travel, it would be difficult to hold meaningful commercial discussions with possible suppliers or new build operators. It will be through these discussions that we would gather further evidence that our chosen path can deliver ..." (para 3.42)
- Further work will include focusing on: "gaining further understanding of the market for MOX fuel and commercial arrangements"; and "establishing the planning, licensing and permissioning requirements." (para 5.3)
- "We anticipate that an initial data gathering process would take a year, which would be used to determine whether enough assurances can be provided that there is benefit to proceeding with the Justification process, which itself could easily take several years" (para 7.3)
- "Implementing a reuse option will be taken forward in a way that does not impact on the delivery of new nuclear power stations and therefore the time to first use of MOX fuel in new build can only be estimated" (and is estimated as from 2029 onwards) (para 7.8).

Although there is no firm commitment to use MOX fuel in new nuclear power stations, the direction of travel is clear.

In response to a specific comment from NuLeAF, the Government also states that: "UK Government accepts that the option for plutonium management must be capable of inspiring public confidence, particularly in the light of the experience of the existing Sellafield MOX plant." (para 3.36).

3 Process for Siting a GDF

West Cumbria MRWS Partnership

The West Cumbria MRWS Partnership has launched a formal public consultation to consider whether West Cumbria should take part in the search for a site for a repository for the UK's higher activity radioactive waste, without any commitment to have it. Details on the consultation can be found on the Partnership website at [Consultation - West Cumbria MRWS Partnership](#).

The consultation runs until 23rd March 2012 and asks for views on the Partnership's initial opinions about the key issues relating to a potential repository for higher activity radioactive waste in West Cumbria. The Partnership will use responses to consider whether it should change its initial opinions and, if so, how. This will shape the advice the Partnership gives to Allerdale BC, Copeland BC and Cumbria CC, to help inform their decision about whether to take part in the search for a site for a repository or not.

In addition to a consultation document, the Partnership has produced an accompanying DVD and an eight-page overview document summarising some of the issues in the full consultation document. It is planned to show the DVD in the afternoon session of the SG meeting.

An opinion survey will also be conducted at the end of the Partnership's consultation period to test public opinion in a statistically representative way. The results will be considered alongside the results of this consultation.

As NuLeAF is a member of the Partnership it is not intended to respond to the consultation.

Geological Disposal Implementation Board (GDIB)

The GDIB met on 6 December and was attended by the ED. The meeting received a 'geological disposal situation report', and discussed (a) options for acceleration/optimisation of the GDF programme and (b) the NDA's approach to 'issues management'. The minutes of the meeting are published on the DECC website at [GDIB meeting](#).

On acceleration/optimisation, NDA's Radioactive Waste Management Directorate (RWMD) presented its work to date in responding to the Minister's challenge to bring forward disposal dates. Potential options had been grouped under three possible scenarios, which ranged from finding efficiencies in the current programme to more radical options such as deep borehole disposal.

RWMD's preferred course of action is to carry out further technical underpinning work and stakeholder engagement on scenario one (see paper now published on the NDA website at [Review of timescales](#)) to further test the potential for achieving accelerated dates within the programme. In its view scenarios two and three introduced greater levels of uncertainty, adding significant risks to the programme. There could also be greater practical potential for acceleration once a specific area is identified for exploration. If and when a community takes a decision to participate in the later stages of the MRWS programme, RWMD would work with them to explore the practical programme timescales in detail.

The NDA Board had endorsed the options and RWMD's proposal to concentrate efforts at this stage on scenario one and CoRWM confirmed it had been involved in scrutinising RWMD's work from inception and was satisfied that the process had been robust and comprehensive.

The Minister thanked NDA for its work so far and looked forward to receiving the final report. He indicated that once received, the Government would commission formal advice from CoRWM. It would also look to have RWMD's work peer reviewed outside Government.

On issues management, RWMD presented an update on its issues management process. RWMD had published in August a report – *RWMD approach to issues management NDA/RWMD/81* – providing a definition of the issues management process and an issues register, which listed all issues and compiled similar issues into 78 groups. An 'issue' was defined as any challenge or concern raised which could affect the implementation of a geological disposal system, covering scientific, technical, environmental, economic, social and ethical questions. RWMD planned to report periodically on all issues or groups of issues and would maintain the issues register on its website from the end of this financial year.

RWMD has been in discussion with the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership and CoRWM about ways of improving its initial proposals for issues management.

Geological Disposal Steering Group

DECC have also started publishing the minutes of the Government's Geological Disposal Steering Group (see [gds-g-meeting](#)). It is notable that the note of the meeting on 17 November says that the business case for GDF-related community benefits is on track for submission to Treasury by the end of the year.

Presentation to the Steering Group

Bruce Cairns from DECC is making a presentation to the afternoon session of the SG meeting on the GDF programme, including DECC's plans to promote the opportunity for expressions of interest from other parts of England and Wales.

4 Environmental Permitting

The secretariat has written to the EA to ask whether it would be possible to arrange a session where a small number of officers from the RWPG could have a further briefing on the application of the environmental permitting regime to transfers of radioactive waste.

EA has been advised that we would particularly like to understand how the regime is being, and will be, applied to consigning sites, for example, to the Harwell site for LLW consignments to King's Cliffe and, potentially, for ILW transfers to Sellafield from Harwell.

The presentation that EA gave to the July meeting of the NuLeAF Steering Group provided a good starting point for such a briefing, but there is a need to understand in more detail how the regime is and will be applied in practice. For example, in its presentation EA said that:

- *disposal must represent BAT and relevant Government policy e.g. proximity principle.* There is a need to understand – by reference to specific consignor examples - how EA's assessments take account of relevant policy requirements.
- *the EPR does not require specific routes to be permitted.* There is a need to understand – again by reference to specific examples – whether permissions for consignors to transfer/dispose of wastes are or will be specifying named recipient sites, or more generally holders of appropriate permits.

The discussion is taking place by telephone conference on 27 January.

5 NuLeAF Budget

The SG will recall that budgetary projections for 2011-12 and 2012-13 were presented to the AGM in October. These included projected deficits of just over £20,500 and £35,800 respectively, which can be met from reserves. Current projections are similar.

To address this, the ED has had preliminary discussions with (a) DECC regarding the possibility of funding relating to specific GDF related project work, and (b) the NDA regarding the possibility of funding in relation to NuLeAF's work on non-GDF related work. It is hoped to provide a verbal update to the meeting.

Radioactive Waste Management and Spatial Planning

Invitation to NuLeAF Seminar

9 March 2012 - Local Government House, Smith Square, London



Why should you attend?

The seminar provides a major opportunity to hear how new strategies for managing radioactive wastes are being developed and implemented. For existing nuclear sites, these strategies can impact locally in various ways, from consolidating higher activity wastes at a smaller number of sites, to identifying new disposal routes for Low Level Radioactive Wastes (LLW). And then there is the question of how the radioactive wastes and spent fuel from new nuclear power stations will be managed. All these aspects can raise challenging issues for spatial planning and development control.

What is the purpose of the seminar?

The purpose is to:

- promote understanding and discussion of current developments in radioactive waste management;
- identify the implications for spatial planning and development control; and to
- identify the issues for NuLeAF to take up on behalf of its member authorities

Who should attend?

- leading local authority members and officers for planning
- representatives from the regulators, operators and the supply chain

Costs

NuLeAF contributing members – 2 free places, additional delegates £50 each

NuLeAF corresponding members - £50 per person

Other organisations - £100 per person

Registration

To register for this event email: catherine.draper@nuleaf.org.uk or call 01473 264833.

Programme

- 10.30 Registration and coffee
- 11.00 Introduction
- 11.05 An overview of integrated waste management at NDA sites (*James McKinney, Head of Integrated Waste Management, NDA*)
- 11.35 Strategy development: Intermediate Level Waste - consolidation of treatment and storage (*as above*)
- 12.05 Strategy delivery: the Low Level Waste programme - capacity gap analysis and future disposal options (*Dave Rossiter, Head of National Programme Implementation, LLWR Ltd*)
- 12.35 Panel discussion
- 1.00 Lunch
- 1.30 The management of radioactive wastes and spent fuel from new nuclear power stations (*Tony Free, Head of Waste and Decommissioning, EdF Energy*)
- 2.15 Radioactive waste management and spatial planning: the perspective of the Planning Inspectorate (*Rynd Smith, Director of Policy, Quality and Development Plans, The Planning Inspectorate*)
- 3.00 Issues for NuLeAF to address (*Fred, Barker, Executive Director, NuLeAF*)
- 3.30 Finish