

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 11 July 2013
Agenda Item:	6
Subject:	An update on the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) programme
Author:	Stewart Kemp
Purpose:	To update members on developments in the MRWS process and on-going work of NuLeAF officers

Introduction:

This paper covers:

- MRWS Review
- The Autumn MRWS Consultation Process
- Future MRWS Engagement
- CoRWM
- International Work

Recommendations:

1. That the Steering Group accept NDA sponsorship for NuLeAF attendance at the InSOTEC Seminar in Berlin between 12 and 13 November 2013.
2. That the Steering Group: a) accept NDA sponsorship for 4 NuLeAF representatives to attend the EURADWASTE '13 conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, between 14 and 16 October 2013; b) agree the Acting Chair and Co-Directors attend; and c) identify a fourth representative.

Contribution to 2012/13 Service Plan:

This report is in pursuance of the following tasks under the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) work-stream for 2012/13 in the NuLeAF Service Plan 2012-14:

- *Continue to advise and assist any local authority wishing to engage with MRWS through Stages 1 to 3 or in Stage 4. Seek engagement with any future Community Siting Partnership to represent national local government views. Alert members to and advise upon relevant consultations.*
- *Advise Government and NDA with local government engagement nationally in MRWS Stage 4 and to identify any further interest in MRWS. Continue to represent wider local government opinion to CoRWM and RIMM, particularly in the development of the permissioning process and implementation of key MRWS principles.*
- *Monitor and engage as appropriate with international programmes addressing key PSE issues, and identify resourcing opportunities.*

1. Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Review

Following the decision to end the current Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process in West Cumbria, because of the withdrawal of support by Cumbria County Council, Government is now reviewing the 2008 MRWS White Paper.

Initial NuLeAF views about the way forward for MRWS, based on the discussion at the 27 February 2013 NuLeAF Steering Group meeting, were submitted to DECC by letter dated 27 March 2013¹. This letter was followed up in a meeting between NuLeAF, DECC and the NDA on 16 May where it was clear that NuLeAF's concerns regarding uncertainties around the MRWS decision making process, community benefits, identification of potentially suitable geology, geological disposal facility generic design, inventory and other matters were broadly shared amongst other stakeholder groups.

By the time of the NuLeAF meeting with NDA and DECC a short 4 week consultation to 'Call for Evidence' on the MRWS siting process had already begun. It was explained in the meeting that feedback from the call for evidence would inform a more substantive 12 week consultation on MRWS policy starting in September/October 2013. NuLeAF responded to DECC by preparing a more detailed submission still largely based on its comments submitted on 27 March². These comments were finalised following discussion at the NuLeAF Radioactive Waste Planning Officers' Group meeting on 5 June.

DECC say they expect to publish a revised MRWS policy in late spring 2014.

In the meantime, DECC say they remain available to discuss with any interested local authority the scope for engagement with MRWS, and both Copeland and Allerdale Borough Councils have signalled to DECC their continuing interest in MRWS engagement. However, DECC says it has no plans to proactively seek any new volunteer communities until its revised MRWS policy is published.

The NDA 'Regulatory Interface Management Meeting' (RIMM), which provides coordination between different agencies on GDF regulatory work, received an update from DECC on the 'Call for Evidence' at their meeting on 13 June 2013. DECC reported about 200 consultation responses, which, on an initial brief survey, appeared to suggest that concerns regarding MRWS policy fell into 11 general areas. These were identified as:



Letter to Mark Higson
1 re MRWS process.pdf



MRWS Call for
2 Evidence June 2013 re

- Community Benefits
- Planning Process
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Pre Screening Geology
- Inventory
- Staged Decision Making Process
- Responsibility for Decision Making
- Gauging Support
- Advocacy/Communications
- Regulation and Licencing
- Plan B

The three councils in Cumbria each responded to the DECC 'Call for Evidence' as did the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC). In its response Copeland Borough Council argued that it is the tier of local government closest to the community and should be the decision making body. CALC argued that their members too, if affected by any future GDF development, should have decision making powers. In other areas there was significant agreement, particularly regarding the need for greater clarity in MRWS policy around, for example, the waste inventory and scale of GDF development. NuLeAF's own response addressed 9 of the 11 generic issues identified by DECC. The issues where NuLeAF has not expressed a view are around the timing of Strategic Environmental Assessment and 'Plan B' -the circumstances in which Government might consider an alternative approach to GDF implementation if the MRWS approach failed. Opportunities to comment on both matters should arise in the substantive Autumn consultation.

DECC suggested at the RIMM meeting that it would publish a summary of the responses to its call for evidence, but not the individual responses themselves. NuLeAF and Copeland, who were present during the discussion, urged DECC to reconsider this decision, pointing to the need to continue to uphold the very high standards of public and stakeholder engagement established by the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership which included openness and transparency. DECC undertook to reconsider its initial view.

NuLeAF continues as a member of the Radioactive Waste Management Directive's (RWMD) advisory group on the SEA for the MRWS process.

2. The Autumn MRWS Consultation Process

At the 16 May meeting NuLeAF offered to help facilitate a seminar for local government to be briefed on the DECC consultation document expected in the Autumn. This offer was subject to NDA meeting all event costs including event management. At the time of writing NuLeAF officers are preparing a proposal. A verbal update will be provided to the Steering Group meeting.

NuLeAF in its response to the Call for Evidence urged DECC to consider a range of engagement methods and not rely solely on written responses to a consultation document.

3. Future MRWS Engagement

At the 16 May meeting NuLeAF also indicated it could do more work to increase awareness within local government of any revised MRWS policy if it had more capacity to do so. The meeting agreed that NuLeAF should prepare a business case for additional resources and this is in hand. Again, a verbal update can be provided to the Steering Group meeting.

4. Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM)

In March NuLeAF staff met with the new CoRWM to generally introduce NuLeAF's work and make a presentation about our views on the way forward for MRWS. The presentation, which was well received, was based on the main points of our letter to DECC.

In June CoRWM endorsed and restated its original recommendation to Government that: *Within the present state of knowledge, CoRWM considers geological disposal to be the best available approach to the long-term management of all the material categorised as waste in CoRWM's inventory when compared with the risks associated with other methods of management. The aim should be to progress to disposal as soon as practicable, consistent with developing and maintaining public and stakeholder confidence.*

CoRWM further clarified that: *...its original recommendations (Doc. 700, chapter 14) were an integrated set of recommendations, covering three interdependent strands. It recommended geological disposal as the end point for the long term management of radioactive wastes (strand 1), preceded by robust storage in the interim period, with provision of contingency against delay or failure in reaching the end point included in this (strand 2). The third strand focused on implementation, including the need for a staged process, flexibility in decision making (including developments in alternative management options being actively pursued through monitoring of and/or participation in national or international R&D programmes) and partnership with communities willing to participate in the siting process.*

5. International Work

NDA sponsored NuLeAF participation in a MoDeRn (Monitoring in Geological Disposal of Radioactive Waste) workshop at the European Commission in Luxembourg between 19 and 21 March 2013. The meeting was an

opportunity to learn about technical developments in capabilities for monitoring and assessing GDF performance during construction, operation, closure and post closure periods. New non intrusive technologies hold out the prospect of gathering reassurance monitoring data without compromising repository integrity, and improved data sharing holds out the prospect of new opportunities for stakeholder engagement. NuLeAF participated fully in these discussions. More detailed notes of the meeting are available via the NuLeAF Secretariat.

Again, with NDA sponsorship NuLeAF participated in the EURATOM funded InSOTEC programme in Paris between 9 and 10 April 2013. InSOTEC brings together representatives from 12 EU States and representatives from Canada and the USA to gain a better understanding of remaining 'socio- technical challenges' to geological disposal. Key issues include: 'reversibility and retrievability' of wastes once emplaced in a GDF; different approaches in different states to GDF siting; how can safety be demonstrated?; and the role of research and underground research laboratories. Again, more detailed notes of the meeting are available via the NuLeAF Secretariat.

At the InSOTEC meeting NuLeAF was able to present on the current position with MRWS in England and Wales. As a result of InSOTEC engagement NuLeAF is advising InSOTEC researchers from the University of East Anglia with their continuing research and reporting on the GDF siting process here.

In November NuLeAF has the opportunity through NDA sponsorship to attend a further InSOTEC seminar in Berlin between 12 and 13 November where research results from the different InSOTEC work packages will be reported. The Steering Group is asked to support NuLeAF's attendance at this meeting.

As reported to the February 2013 NuLeAF Steering Group meeting, the European Commission is arranging EURADWASTE '13 (the 8th European Commission Conference on the Management of Radioactive Waste) around the theme *Community Policy and Research on Disposal*, Vilnius, Lithuania, 14-16 October 2013, to coincide with the Lithuanian European Presidency (see: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/euratom-fission/docs/finalleaflet-euradwaste2013-web.pdf>).

The objective of Euradwaste' 13 will be to present an overview of all recent EC activities in the field of radioactive waste management with the focus on geological disposal as the main challenge, including research and development, policy, strategic, legislative and socio-political aspects.

The conference will report on the requirements of the new EC Waste Directive which should be transposed into member states' legislation by August 2013, and result in the establishment, or implementation, of respective national GDF programmes by August 2015. NDA has offered to sponsor 4 NuLeAF places at this conference and it is suggested three places be reserved for NuLeAF's

Acting Chair and the Executive Co-Directors. The Steering Group is asked to identify a fourth NuLeAF representative to attend the conference.

These different international meetings contribute learning from overseas radioactive waste management and GDF siting programmes and informs NuLeAF's contribution to UK radioactive waste management policy development. In the Autumn this work will specifically contribute to our input into the review of MRWS policy in England and Wales.