

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 29 October 2008
Agenda Item:	7
Subject:	Radioactive Waste Management and the Future of Nuclear Power
Author:	Fred Barker
Purpose:	To report on (a) the proposed process for Strategic Siting Assessment and (b) the Government's response to the consultation on waste and decommissioning funding provisions guidance

Introduction

NuLeAF's remit encompasses all aspects of the management of the UK's nuclear legacy. This includes the implications for legacy management of any developments that are likely to impact on that management (including the management of radioactive wastes from new nuclear build).

In that context, this report considers:

- the way radioactive waste management is addressed in the current consultation on the proposed process for Strategic Siting Assessment for new nuclear power stations; and
- the Government's response to the consultation on 'Funded Decommissioning Programme Guidance' for new nuclear power stations.

Recommendation

That the Steering Group respond to consultation on the process for Strategic Siting Assessment by proposing ways that the criteria for assessing sites should refer more fully to radioactive waste management, as set out in this report.

Radioactive Waste Management and the Proposed Process for Strategic Siting Assessment

The Government is currently undertaking a consultation on a proposed process for Strategic Siting Assessment and Siting Criteria for new nuclear power stations ([SSA Proposals](#)). The consultation closes on 11 November.

During the course of 2009, the Government will:

- publish the final SSA criteria
- invite third parties to nominate sites
- assess sites against the criteria
- consult on a draft National Policy Statement (NPS) (including a draft list of sites)

The purpose of the current consultation is to seek views on: the process for inviting and accepting nominations for sites; the process for assessing nominated sites; and criteria for assessing sites.

The SSA proposals make the following statement on radioactive waste management:

“it is the Government’s policy that before development consents for new nuclear power stations are granted it will need to be satisfied that effective arrangements exist or will exist to manage and dispose of the waste the stations will produce. The government currently expects the Nuclear NPS to take the relevant aspects of new build radioactive waste management into account at the strategic level and provide further details in the Environmental Report.” (p 24)

The proposed criteria for assessing sites make limited reference to radioactive waste management. These criteria are of two basic types:

- ‘SSA criteria’ for the Government’s strategic assessment of the suitability of sites for new build; and
- ‘local criteria’ which would be flagged for consideration by the Infrastructure Planning Commission at the site-specific planning application stage.

The proposals state that the local criteria are not intended to be an exhaustive list (p15).

There are two ways in which it might be expected that the proposed criteria would refer more fully to radioactive waste management:

- 1 Under SSA criteria related to operational requirements, the criteria include “size of site to accommodate construction, operation and decommissioning”. The proposals explain that Government “expects operators ... to make provision to store all the spent fuel and intermediate level waste produced through operation and from decommissioning on the site of the station until it can be sent for disposal in a geological disposal facility. Operators will be expected to factor the need for storage of waste and spent fuel into the area nominated.” (p70) The proposals are silent, however, on the Government’s expectations for the management of LLW arising at a site. In order to reduce reliance on the LLW Repository near Drigg (and any

successor facility), the current emphasis in LLW management is on application of the waste hierarchy, with a focus on finding more localised approaches including, potentially, on site disposal of LLW. As such, it is recommended that the criterion of “size of site” should make reference to a Government expectation that that an operator will factor the possibility for on site disposal of LLW into the area nominated. The actual suitability of the site for LLW disposal would be determined at a subsequent stage.

- 2 Under local criteria it is recommended that a criterion of ‘radioactive waste management’ be included and that Government state its expectation that nominators of sites would give a high level description of the practicality of developing appropriate waste management arrangements at any site that they nominate. A detailed consideration of the practicality of such arrangements would be undertaken at the site-specific planning application stage.

As proposed in the AGM report on ‘strategic objectives’, when Government consults on the NPS next year, it will probably also be appropriate for NuLeAF to highlight the need for openness and transparency about the interactions between new build and nuclear legacy management, and to stress that proposals for radioactive waste management from new build should not prejudice effective management of the nuclear legacy.

Government Response to Consultation on Funded Decommissioning Programme Guidance for New Nuclear Power Stations

The Energy Bill will require any operator of a new nuclear power station to have a Funded Decommissioning Programme (FDP), approved by the Secretary of State. On 22 February the Government published for consultation two sets of draft guidance on what a FDP should contain ([Consultation of FDP Guidance](#)). Following discussion at the April SG, NuLeAF comments were submitted on the draft guidance ([NuLeAF Consultation Comments](#)).

The Government has now published a response to consultation comments ([Government Response](#)). Next steps include:

- Government intends to hold further discussions with stakeholders in late 08 on cost models and methodologies for establishing unit prices for disposal of ILW and spent fuel (via web-based discussion papers).
- This will be followed by a formal consultation on cost models and methodologies in the first half of 2009.
- Finalised guidance on the FDP will be published in the third quarter of 2009.

On points of content, the Government response notes that:

- On fund structure, a range of responses are noted, including support for shared funds between an operator’s stations, to help minimise the risk of unfunded liabilities falling on the taxpayer. The Government does not express a preference for a specific fund structure, but notes that it will be for the operator to set out and justify proposals and that these must be transparent (para 3.5).
- On cost modelling, Government says that it will be open and transparent and subject the BERR cost model to external peer review before finalisation (para 4.6).

- On the costs of disposal, Government says it recognises that there are uncertainties and that it plans to deal with these by including a significant risk premium in the fixed unit price (para 4.8).
- On the advisory role of the Nuclear Liabilities Financing Assurance Board (NLFAB), Government says that its advice will be an important input to the Government's decisions on whether to approve or amend an operator's proposals (paras 4.21 and 4.22).