

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 15 October 2009
Agenda Item:	5
Subject:	Higher Activity Wastes: Discussions about Optimisation
Author:	Fred Barker
Purpose:	To report on discussion about ways of optimising the management of Higher Activity Wastes (HAW)

Introduction

This report outlines:

- The NDA's preliminary response to discussion at its National Stakeholder Group about ways of optimising the management of HAW
- NDA plans for development of a HAW topic strategy
- Next steps for considering the issues.

Recommendation

That the Steering Group consider a report at its next meeting on NDA thinking about 'credible options' for optimising the management of HAW.

Contribution to Achieving Strategic Objectives

The activities described in this report relate to the following NuLeAF objective:

- To encourage 'regional' approaches to nuclear legacy management where such approaches are supported by the affected local authorities in the light of the overall balance of benefits and disadvantages.

1 Discussion at the NDA National Stakeholder Group (NSG)

The SG meeting in July received a report on discussion at the NSG that took place on 17-18 June. The discussion about waste management strategy focused on:

- The interim storage of higher activity wastes
- The optimisation of the treatment of higher activity wastes

The discussion on interim storage focused on the following questions:

1. Should NDA consider all storage infrastructure across the NDA estate as an integrated NDA asset, which would operate a flexible approach to the movement of wastes between sites?
2. Under what circumstances could this approach be extended to other waste producers in the UK eg British Energy and MoD?
3. What are the benefits and disadvantages to more flexible waste storage and transfer arrangements?
4. How could the NDA begin to address any barriers?

Discussion on the optimisation of treatment of higher activity wastes focused on the possibility of multi-site treatment centres, and on issues associated with the thermal treatment of wastes.

The discussion raised some familiar themes, covering the pros and cons of regional approaches, including attitudes to 'waste imports' from other areas, the application of the proximity principle and the case for community funds for 'regional centres'. The issue of whether waste management facilities should be concentrated at sites with a nuclear future, allowing other sites to be cleaned up and de-licensed, was also discussed.

A record of the discussion is available at [NSG Meeting Report](#). This states that the NDA will use the outputs of discussion to inform development of its HAW topic strategy (see next section). The report lists the key messages that the NDA took from discussion.

On interim storage these include:

- Recognition that joined up/shared waste storage infrastructure is sensible
- A key concern is transport of wastes between sites
- Consideration should be given to substitution/trade-offs
- Community benefit is an issue
- Removal of waste so some sites can be cleared
- Existing planning policies and consents might block sharing of stores
- Opportunities for sharing storage with non-NDA waste producers should be examined
- Innovation in waste packaging should be pursued to enable a different storage scenario

On waste treatment optimisation these include:

- Tie in with 'new build' waste management
- Take the treatment capability to the waste not vice versa
- Treat the waste close to the disposal site
- Planning blight needs to be considered

- Be clearer about definitions of thermal treatment
- Take a lifecycle view
- Develop specific proposals for thermal treatment
- Take a holistic view of environmental impacts

2 Development of the HAW Topic Strategy

The Executive Director attended a meeting of the NDA's National Waste Management Steering Group on 15 September. This included a discussion on the development of the HAW topic strategy.

Key points were:

- The NDA is in the process of identifying 'credible options' for inclusion in the HAW topic strategy
- These could include, for example, near surface disposal for Reactor Decommissioning Wastes (short-lived ILW), decay storage of some short-lived ILW, two stage containerisation for high hazard wastes and thermal treatment of some ILW
- The NDA hopes to have agreed 'credible options' by April 2010. This will be followed by a process of detailed option assessment.

The NDA lead on the HAW topic strategy - Graham Jonsson - has agreed to make a presentation to NuLeAF's Strategy Review Group. This will take place on 15 December in Manchester. This will provide opportunity to discuss NDA thinking on 'credible options', the issues they raise, and next steps. The meeting is open to representatives from any member authority.

The outcome of the SRG discussion will be reported to the SG meeting on 27 January.