

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 12 October 2006
Agenda Item:	6
Subject:	NDA Programme Developments
Author:	Fred Barker
Purpose:	To report on developments

Introduction

This report outlines developments in key areas of NDA activity, including discussion at NuLeAF regional seminars. The report covers

- Draft socio-economic policy
- Review of site 'End States'
- Interim storage of ILW
- LLW management

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1 A report outlining the main themes and concerns in local authority responses to the site end states review be tabled at the next meeting of the Steering Group.
- 2 NDA plans for engagement on its review of options for interim storage of ILW be considered at the next meeting.
- 3 NuLeAF initiatives on LLW management be reviewed once the Magnox workshop reports, and the Government policy statement, are available

Draft Socio-Economic Policy

This was published on 5 October with a request for comments by 19 January. The draft policy sets out how the NDA intends to work with partners to help mitigate the impacts of decommissioning programmes. It seeks to provide the framework within which organisations near NDA sites will be able to bid for funds for projects that will bring long lasting benefits to communities.

A NuLeAF response will be submitted by 19 January, taking into account individual member authority views, and those expressed at the regional seminars. The latter are summarised as follows in the seminar report:

Although participants welcomed the NDA's approach, some pointed out that it is very challenging to meet aspirations to move away from the dependency culture that exists around some sites. They pointed to problems arising from a lack of entrepreneurship, outward migration and the need for major investment in infrastructure. Difficulties arise in identifying projects that are appropriate to very remote areas. Concerns were also expressed about the limited scale of support that might be available and the approach of relying on cost savings in decommissioning and clean-up to generate funds for socio-economic initiatives.

Some participants highlighted that projects must be coordinated with other initiatives (for example through local Partnerships), support sustainable development, and bring added value. They favoured initiatives that were 'owned' by local communities, and generated good quality jobs. Suggestions included developing local business skills so local firms could compete for contracts. Local authorities might also be encouraged to undertake feasibility studies into 'transformational' projects.

Other participants suggested that in addition to 'transformational' projects that meshed with local and regional development strategies, there should be scope for supporting community-based initiatives generated at local level. It was pointed out that some local authorities are split into community areas, each with its own action plan and budget for local decisions, and that in some areas these might provide a framework for community-based initiatives.

Participants also highlighted the need for the NDA to make sure people know of the opportunity to apply for support, and to publicise examples of good projects. It was suggested that information should be published on the web and be circulated via contractors, SSGs, local strategic partnerships and local authorities.

Site End States

As discussed at previous meetings of the Steering Group, the NDA is reviewing site End States with stakeholders. The review aims to identify the physical condition that a nuclear site should be left in when the NDA has finished its business. The End State (or states) will influence the end uses that are possible on a site. The review involves consultation around each NDA site, coordinated by the Site Stakeholder Groups.

The site end states review was discussed at the regional seminars. A summary of the discussion is as follows:

There is a mixed picture of local authority involvement in the End States review. Some participants pointed to the advantages of direct local authority involvement. For example, Lancashire County Council is closely involved with the review of the Springfields end-state. A County Councillor chairs the SSG Sub-Group, key players are being engaged (eg the Fylde Strategic Partnership), and the County Council is providing specialist analysis of consultation outputs.

Other participants were concerned that in some areas local authorities, particularly at County level, were not being directly engaged in the review by local SSGs. It was suggested that SSGs should be provided with guidance or a 'protocol' about which organisations to consult.

It was stressed that the local planning authority should be a major player in the process, as it is likely to have a key role in decision-making about the future use of a site. Local authority planners should be involved upfront in the process, not at the end.

Some participants expressed concern about the process that will be used to reconcile local community views with national considerations. In some cases, community aspirations may be constrained by cost considerations. It was thought important that the 'reconciliation process' should be open and transparent. Some participants suggested that the process should address 'sustainability' issues.

Some participants recognised that mixed end states might be appropriate, with different parts of a site being used for different purposes and cleaned-up to different standards. For example, one part of a site might be used to manage contaminated land from across the site. Given service connections (gas, water, sewage, road, rail etc), it might be appropriate for some sites or parts of a site to be used for industry or other initiatives aimed at economic regeneration.

Participants suggested that local authorities with NDA sites should be provided with information about the consultation processes and outputs from other sites. It was important that there is a clear audit trail of engagement and decision making on the issue.

Some participants pointed out that whatever the preferred end use and state, there would be a need to validate that required standards of clean-up had been met.

Some participants queried what opportunity there would be for review of preferred end uses/states some years from now. It was suggested that local views could change in the decades before an end state was achieved.

In the light of concerns being raised at the seminars, the following comments were included in NuLeAF's response to the NDA's draft Annual Plan:

Whilst welcoming the current consultation on site end uses, we are concerned that in some areas there has been little or no attempt to involve some of those local authorities that have NDA sites within their areas. A risk therefore arises that for some sites the NDA will develop recommendations to Government on end states that are not informed by the views of all relevant local authorities.

We would suggest that the process for developing these recommendations be reviewed so that opportunity is provided for the input of views by all levels of local authority in areas containing NDA sites.

It is understood that the NDA is reviewing the process for developing its recommendations to Government on site end states. As a result, it is likely that some form of stakeholder panel will be set up to participate in the 'reconciliation process' about how the outputs of local consultation can be reconciled with national developments (June – September 07). It is likely that NuLeAF will be invited to participate in this panel.

Finally, the secretariat has contacted local authorities containing NDA sites to ask for copies of their responses to the site end use/state consultation. These responses will enable NuLeAF to identify common themes and concerns, which will form the basis for NuLeAF input into discussions with the NDA. A report outlining these themes and concerns will be tabled at the next meeting of the Steering Group.

Interim Storage of ILW

The NDA is developing plans for engaging stakeholders in its review of options for rationalising the interim storage of intermediate level wastes (ILW). This review could impact on the location of the site or sites for storing operational ILW from Berkeley, Bradwell, Culham, Dungeness, Harwell, Oldbury, Sizewell, Winfrith and Wylfa, which amounts to about 5% of the NDA's ILW inventory. It is likely that four basic options will be assessed:

- Building stores at each or most of the listed sites
- Building an enhanced store at one of the existing sites in the south
- Building enhanced stores at two of the existing sites (one in the SW and one in the SE/East)
- Taking a centralised approach (eg storage of the wastes at Sellafield)

The NDA review was discussed at the regional seminars. The main points made were:

Some participants expressed surprise that the NDA was looking to rationalise ILW storage at a smaller number of sites. Some pointed out that planning permissions for existing ILW stores (for example at Hinkley Point) were for local wastes, and that agreement would not necessarily be forthcoming for use of such facilities for wastes from other sites. Others thought that the use of an existing store for ILW from another site "worthy of discussion", although the possibility had not yet been discussed in the SSGs or by the planning authorities.

Participants pointed out that it was important for potentially affected local authorities to be involved as early as possible in these option assessments. Some participants pointed to the need to see a cost-benefit analysis of the different storage options.

Some participants asked whether a regional store at an existing site would attract the sort of Community Packages being discussed for geological disposal. In principle, community benefits could be made available as a result of savings derived from consolidating storage at a smaller number of sites.

For some participants, transport of ILW was seen as an important issue, raising public concerns about safety (although there was a good transport safety record). Some pointed to the need for 'transport links' to be included as a criterion in options assessment.

It is understood that the NDA is currently reviewing its approach to the assessment of ILW storage options in the light of developments in the Government's Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) process.

The Executive Director has encouraged the NDA to clarify its plans for engagement at the earliest opportunity.

Low Level Waste Management

The first ever competition for a nuclear management contract under the auspices of the NDA is underway. This covers the operation of the LLW repository (LLWR) near Drigg and the longer-term development and implementation of a strategic plan for LLW arising from the NDA's 20 sites.

The schedule for the competition is as follows:

Mar 07	LLWR bid down selection
Oct 07	Contract award
Mar 08	Contract live

The NDA expects to consult on a strategy for the management of LLW from all its sites in the Spring of 2008.

Members will also recall that Magnox Electric is undertaking a project to determine the most appropriate means of managing and disposing of decommissioning LLW, focusing on the LLW at the lower activity end of the range.

The options being considered for the lower activity LLW are:

- disposal on existing Magnox sites
- near-surface disposal at a site-specific facility near to site
- near-surface disposal in a national or regional facility appropriate for LLW
- near-surface disposal in a national facility designed to accept wastes suitable for the repository near Drigg

Site-specific workshops have taken place at Bradwell, Dungeness, Hinkley Point and Sizewell, with stakeholders from Site Stakeholder Groups and representatives of Local Planning Authorities. In the main, option assessments are pointing towards some form of disposal on existing Magnox sites as the preferred option from a technical perspective. Magnox Electric has said that they will provide NuLeAF with copies of the workshop reports when available.

Feedback from the regional seminars on LLW management was as follows:

Some participants welcomed these developments and felt that the EA policy of favouring the use of the repository near Drigg in Cumbria for LLW from outside the area should be challenged, particularly in the light of severe capacity constraints. They felt there was a need for a higher profile discussion about the future of LLW management across the UK, and that the NDA should learn from the CoRWM process in terms of involving stakeholders in such discussions.

Others asked what the timetable was for discussions about the management of decommissioning LLW from other NDA sites.

In some areas, concern was expressed about the potential impact of coastal erosion and sea level rises, and whether this might undermine the safety case for on-site disposal.

Some officers that had been involved in the option assessment workshops stressed that Magnox Electric should not assume that councillors would take the same view as their officers on the findings.

Some participants highlighted the capacity constraints on the use of controlled burial to landfill for Very LLW and the need to look for alternatives. Other participants highlighted that 'community acceptance' of landfill and incineration for conventional wastes could be jeopardised by attempts to use these routes for VLLW disposal.

Finally, members should note that the announcement of the Government's conclusions to the LLW policy review is expected shortly. The policy is expected to provide a high level framework, with emphasis on waste minimisation and a case-by-case consideration of all practical options for its management.

It is proposed that NuLeAF initiatives on LLW management be reviewed once the Magnox workshop reports, and the Government policy statement, are available.

Overview of Key Dates

Jan 07	Close of consultation on socio-economic policy
Mar 07	First issue of Annual Waste and Nuclear Material report
June-Sept 07	Reconciliation process – site end states
Aug-Nov 07	Consultation on NDA Annual Plan 08/09
Oct 07	Award of Low Level Waste Repository Contract (LLWR)
Mar 08	LLW strategic review and consultation
Aug-Nov 08	Consultation on NDA Strategy and Annual Plan