

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 24 July 2014
Agenda Item:	7
Subject:	Review of NuLeAF meetings and member support
Author:	Philip Matthews
Purpose:	To gain the view of the Steering Group and NuLeAF members as to whether there is scope to improve meeting format and member support

Introduction:

This paper is intended to inform a discussion on the format and location of Steering Group meetings. The aim is to determine whether changes could be made that would improve the usefulness of meetings and enable more people, particularly Elected Members, to attend. The views of members on the other services NuLeAF provides, such as the website and seminar, are also sought.

Recommendation:

The report is for noting. The comments of Steering Group members will be used to inform future meetings.

Contribution to 2013/15 Service Plan:

This paper contributes to the commitment in the Service Plan to consult NuLeAF members on their views on how NuLeAF meets their needs.

1. Introduction

NuLeAF has a growing membership, with 110 local authorities and 3 National Parks currently affiliated as corresponding or contributing members. Within this network, a smaller number of local authorities are actively involved in NuLeAF's work.

Attendance at Steering Group and Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) meetings is healthy, averaging around 22 for the former and 15 for the latter. There is therefore no immediate concern. However, it is important to engage with members on a regular basis to identify whether there are barriers that prevent some attending meetings; also if there are ways in which meetings could be made more useful or interesting.

On this basis it has been decided to consult members. This consultation has two elements:

- A series of brief phone interviews with those contributing members who are not regular attendees at Steering Group. This has covered both those authorities who do not send any representation, and those where an officer but not an Elected Member attends; or vice-versa.
- A discussion at this Steering Group with those who do attend regularly, to explore their views on aspects of current meetings and whether they could be improved.

A verbal report on the phone interviews will be provided at the meeting. Below is a series of questions and issues for discussion at Steering Group.

2. Current participation in Steering Group

As noted above, there is no immediate issue around participation in the Steering Group – attendance is good and three Elected Members contested the last Vice-Chair election.

However:

- Attendance of Elected Members could be improved. There have been occasions when low attendance has caused meetings to be in-quorate, meaning that votes cannot be taken. It also raises a potential issue with regard to filling any future vacancies for the Chair and Vice-Chair roles.
- A number of contributing members do not regularly attend. Contributing members account for around a quarter of NuLeAF's income and it is vital that members continue to feel their fee is good value.

It is also the case that some local authorities with nuclear licensed sites are only corresponding members. There may thus be scope for increasing the contributing membership through enhancement of 'the offer'.

3. The views of Steering Group members

The views of Steering Group members are sought on the following issues, through a facilitated discussion lasting around 30 minutes. Please consider your views on the following questions in advance of the meeting.

1. At present Steering Group meetings are held alternately in London and a location in the north of England, usually Manchester. This is felt to be the best solution given the disparate location of member authorities. However, are there other venues that may be appropriate? These will have to be locations that are accessible to significant numbers of NuLeAF members.

2. In 2013, an overnight visit was organised, combining a Steering Group meeting with a visit to Sellafield. Would the combination of some future Steering Group meeting and a site visit be welcome? The aim would be to visit nuclear sites with particular issues of wider interest. These may be in areas where Steering Group is not usually held, for example south-west England, north Wales or the East of England. The proposal is that one meeting every two years be combined with a site visit. It would probably be appropriate to arrange this for the July Steering Group meeting in order to take advantage of good weather.

3. NuLeAF is keen to encourage more Elected Members to participate. Are there ways in which more councillors can be encouraged to attend?

4. For both Elected Members and officers, does (a) the cost or (b) time commitment required to attend Steering Group meetings prove a barrier to more regular attendance?

5. The standard meeting format involves reports from officers on the various papers prepared, followed by discussion. A guest presentation is also included when possible. In terms of the materials and structure of the meeting:

- Could the papers be more useful? i.e. are they either lacking in the detailed information required or alternatively are they too complex and 'jargon heavy'?
- Is the length of meetings appropriate?
- Are there ways in which papers could be presented in clearer or more interesting ways?
- Are the guest presentations useful?
- Are there organisations/presenters which NuLeAF should invite over the coming year?

6. In terms of other communications and resource provided by NuLeAF, does your local authority (a) use the following resources and (b) find them useful:

- website
- briefing materials
- newsletter
- e-bulletin
- annual seminar

7. Do you have any other comments?