

ITEM 7: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Report to RWPG, 19th October 2016

Introduction:

This paper provides a report on recent developments in NDA Strategy and operations. It covers:

- Changes in UK Government;
- Community benefits and fracking;
- Submarine Dismantling Project (SDP);
- Small Modular Reactors;
- Report from Theme Overview Groups (TOGs);
- Low Level Waste Update; and
- Magnox update.

1. Changes in the UK Government

As members will be aware, the election of Theresa May as Prime Minister was followed by a significant restructuring of Government departments and by a Ministerial reshuffle.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has been integrated into a new **Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)**. The Cabinet Minister in charge of the department is Greg Clarke while **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**, as Minister of State for Energy and Intellectual Property has responsibility for nuclear issues. She is supported by **Jesse Norman**, Minister for Industry and Energy who also has nuclear issues within his portfolio.

The civil service team supporting nuclear issues continues to be headed by **Lee McDonagh**, the Director of the Office for Nuclear Development. Bruce Cairns has been seconded from Government to RWM for six months, where he will work as a Policy Adviser on Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting. Jessica Ellis has taken up Bruce's post of Head of Geological Disposal while he is on secondment.

2. Community benefits and fracking

On the 7th August the Government proposed that householders in areas affected by fracking developments could receive direct payments as compensation. These could amount to up to £10,000 per household, with the finance coming from the **Shale Wealth Fund** which is intended to receive 10% of the tax proceeds from such development.

Previously the Shale Wealth Fund would have provided money for community level investment, potentially up to £10 million per affected community. The proposal to pay benefits direct to residents is a significant departure from current practice.

At present it is not clear whether this new approach might also be applied to other community benefits or compensation funding, such as that mooted for the GDF host community or already provided to Copeland residents in recognition of their hosting of the Low Level Waste Repository.

Some clarity on this may be provided by the consultation on the community aspects of the GDF siting process, and NuLeAF will raise this issue in our next meeting with BEIS and RWM, scheduled for immediately before the RWPG. Views on this issue would be welcome.

3. Submarine Dismantling Project (SDP)

The SDP, in its current and past forms, has run for 15 years. Its aim has been to identify a long term storage site for the Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) from the UK's 27 decommissioned nuclear powered submarines, prior to their final disposal in a Geological Disposal Facility. Following extensive consultation and deliberation, Capenhurst has been selected as the site of the ILW store, with Aldermaston as a contingency option in the unlikely case that Capenhurst does not prove suitable.

Given this decision, the final meeting of the Advisory Group was held in Bristol on the 10th August and attended by the Executive Director. Looking forward, the process of separating the Reactor Pressure Vessels (RPVs) from the submarines will begin shortly. The submarines are located at Rosyth and Devonport and, once the RPVs are separated, they will be transported to Capenhurst by road as the Vessels are too large for rail transportation. It is anticipated that approximately 1 RPV per year will be taken to Capenhurst. Low Level Waste (LLW) will also be generated and this is likely to be sent to the Low Level Waste Repository in Cumbria.

4. Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

NuLeAF is focussed on legacy wastes, and does not engage with any proposal for new nuclear development unless it has implications for decommissioning or for nuclear licenced sites.

Proposals for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) do have a potential impact on the management of NDA sites, as any such development is likely to take place on land previously used for nuclear generation, affecting land value and future use of sites. Their development will also impact on the UK nuclear waste inventory and thus plans for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). A Briefing paper on SMRs was prepared and discussed at the last Steering Group meeting and is available on the NuLeAF website.

5. Report from Theme Overview Groups (TOGs)

A meeting of the **Site Restoration Theme Overview Group (TOG)** was held in Penrith on the 13th September. The meeting included a general update along with reports on the NDA's current work on pipeline decommissioning, in optimising interim and end states and in using an assessment of asset conditions to prioritise decommissioning.

On pipelines, the NDA is considering how best to deal with legacy pipes which extend out-with NDA site boundaries. These are diverse in nature and in some cases the NDA believes there is a case for retrieval, while elsewhere the best option is disposal in-situ. Information on the pipelines has been gathered and a dialogue is underway with BEIS and the regulators along with stakeholders.

A meeting of the **Integrated Waste Management TOG** was held in Penrith on the 15th September. A significant part of the day was devoted to discussion on the developing **NDA Radioactive Waste Strategy** and on associated work on near surface disposal.

The overall vision of the new strategy will be to *'To manage radioactive waste and dispose of it where possible, or place it in safe, secure and suitable storage, ensuring the delivery of UK and devolved administrations' policies.*' This is underpinned by a number of principles, namely:

- Supporting key risk & hazard reduction initiatives by enabling a flexible approach to long-term waste management
- Taking into consideration the entire waste management lifecycle, including how waste management is needed to support other NDA strategic or wider UK initiatives such as large-scale decommissioning programmes
- Applying the waste hierarchy which should be used as a framework for waste management decision making
- Promoting timely characterisation and segregation of waste, which delivers effective waste management
- Providing leadership giving greater integration across the estate and supply chain, in particular by seeking opportunities to share treatment and interim storage assets, capabilities and learning
- Supporting and promoting the use of robust decision making processes to identify the most advantageous options for waste management
- Enabling the availability of sustainable, robust infrastructure for continued operations, hazard reduction and decommissioning.

The Radioactive Waste Strategy will provide an overview of key policies and strategies for the management of HAW and LLW across the component parts of the UK and identify potential policy issues, gaps and opportunities. It should ensure better information on the infrastructure requirements for radioactive waste management across the lifetime of the NDA's programmes, ensuring the availability of storage facilities, treatment and appropriate packaging.

Another area it will look at will be the scope for near surface storage. This is already the policy of the Scottish Government, but through the Strategy, NDA will consider the likely benefits and drawbacks of managing part of the wider UK HAW inventory near to surface. It will also look at different ways of classifying waste which may lead to some material currently being managed as ILW being managed as LLW, and vice versa.

There is a commitment to proper engagement in the development of the Strategy.

6. Low Level Waste (LLW) update

In July it was announced that the Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) had secured planning approval from Cumbria County Council for the extension of facilities on the site. This will enable the phased construction of two new vaults, and the extension of a third, for the disposal of LLW in specially grouted containers. It also allows for the construction of a final cap over existing and new vaults, and on seven clay lined trenches where waste was disposed of prior to 1988. Planning approval follows on from the acceptance by the Environment Agency of the revised site Environmental Safety Case (ESC). It is expected that work on the new vaults will begin in 2017.

A meeting of the **LLW National Waste Programme Delivery Overview Group (DOG)** was held in Manchester on the 20th September. NuLeAF's Executive Director presented his perspectives on the National Programme and on particular issues such as institutional controls and the delivery of the LLW Strategy. The important role of NuLeAF, and in particular the RWPG, in ensuring acceptable and effective management of LLW was recognised.

The meeting also heard reports from LLWR on the progress of the national programme, and updates from waste producers and the supply chain. The most recent report on progress is available here¹.

7. Magnox Update

At the last meetings of the RWPG and Steering Group, some NuLeAF members expressed concern at Magnox's lack of engagement around recent changes to the proposals for management of Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) and Fuel Element Debris (FED). Based on this, NuLeAF's Chair Cllr Brendan Sweeney wrote to Magnox's Managing Director Kenny Douglas. A response was received on the 22nd September (see below). The views of RWPG members on the response would be welcome.

In early August a court ruled that the NDA had failed to treat all bidders equally when awarding the contract for the clear up of the Magnox fleet to Cavendish Fluor Partnership (CFP). The challenge was launched by failed bidder Energy Solutions which may now be in line to receive compensation of up to £200 million. It is not yet clear whether NDA plans to appeal the decision.



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¹ http://llwrsite.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/NWP-Quarterly-Report-Q1-16_17-Final.pdf

