

ITEM 6: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Report to RWPG, 24th January 2017

Introduction:

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

- Further Ministerial change at BEIS;
- Report from Theme Overview Groups (TOGs);
- New NDA Chair appointed; and
- Proportionate Regulatory Controls (PRC) and Guidance on Requirements for Release of Nuclear Sites from Radioactive Substances Regulation (GRR) Update.

1. Further Ministerial Change at BEIS

Despite only being in position for a number of months, **Baroness Neville-Rolfe** has left her post as Minister of State for Energy and Intellectual Property (with responsibility for nuclear issues) and moved to the treasury. NuLeAF understands that **Jesse Norman**, already a BEIS Minister, will take on her previous portfolio, although this has not yet been announced officially. It is not clear if this latest change may have an impact on the timetable for work on the GDF siting process.

2. Report from Theme Overview Groups (TOGs)

A meeting of the **Site Restoration Theme Overview Group (TOG)** was held in Penrith on the 13th December.

Key items discussed were:

- Plans to develop a '**Strategic BAT**' (Best Available Technique) to identify the optimum solution for subsurface structures and off-shore pipelines. Research for NDA has explored the complex range of international and national conventions and legislation governing the management of such structures, and concluded there is no legal reason why pipelines cannot either be left in situ or removed, based on what is identified as the best approach (BAT). The Strategic BAT will set out a framework to be used to underpin decisions taken on different sites across the NDA estate.
- A discussion on **administrative controls**, with a presentation from Shelly Mobbs on her research for NDA on **Administrative Controls for**

Protecting People and the Environment from Residual

Contamination on a Decommissioning Site. This followed on from the presentation and discussion between the RWPG and Shelly, held in October 2016, where RWPG members highlighted a number of limitations to the use of the planning system as a tool to manage sites. Discussion at the TOG meeting centred on the limitations of the planning systems and the challenges posed by the separation of radioactive waste planning and guidance from the mainstream land use and waste planning system.

A meeting of the **Integrated Waste Management TOG** was held in Penrith on the 15th December. NuLeAF's Director was unable to attend the meeting but the key agenda items were based around reports from LLWR and RWM.

- The **LLWR** report updated the Group on the latest waste figures, with 88% diversion from the LLWR site through compaction, recovery and alternative treatments. LLWR also highlighted a number of research projects they are supporting, including on short-lived ILW and on waste at the boundary between LLW and ILW. These studies will help inform the developing **Radioactive Waste Strategy** which will explore the management of such wastes and potential alternatives to current waste management routes.
- **RWM** provided a general update on planned work on geology and on the consultations on the community and land use planning aspects of the GDF siting process, along with a range of technical work on packaging.

3. New NDA Chair appointed

On the 22nd December it was announced that Tom Smith has been appointed as Chair of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)¹. He will assume this role on the 1st March 2017, taking over from Stephen Henwood, with his appointment running until 2020. Following a career in the diplomatic service, Mr Smith work for a number of years in the rail industry, including as Chairman of the Association of Rail Operating Companies. He has served as a Non-Executive Director of the NDA from 2013. Following his appointment, NDA is recruiting a new Chief Executive to follow on from John Clarke, who is retiring.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tom-smith-appointed-chairman-of-the-nuclear-decommissioning-authority>

4. Proportionate Regulatory Controls (PRC) and Guidance on Requirements for Release of Nuclear Sites from Radioactive Substances Regulation (GRR) Update

Over the past year NuLeAF has been involved in an on-going dialogue with the Government, Environment Agencies and the NDA on the options for the regulation of nuclear sites in the final stages of decommissioning and clean up.

As part of developing work in this area, the UK Government launched a discussion paper on 3rd November, inviting the views of stakeholders on proposed policy development and any legislative changes.

A total of 22 organisations and individuals, including NuLeAF, responded. An analysis of these comments, and a response from the environment agencies, has now been published on the SEPA website². Having analysed the submissions, the environment agencies have not identified the need for any substantive changes to their approach, although they do recognise that many of the comments have proved useful in improving the clarity of the final document.

Looking forward, the consultation document will be trialled in its current form at a number of nuclear sites until mid-2017. The feedback from this, along with the consultation responses, will be applied in the drafting of finalised guidance, expected in mid-2017.

NuLeAF's Executive Director also attended a workshop on the Guidance for Requirements for Release of Nuclear Sites from Radioactive Substances Regulation (GRR), hosted by Magnox and held at Trawsfynydd on the 29th November. A site visit to Trawsfynydd was also provided on the following day.

Trawsfynydd is one of three NDA 'Lead and Learn' sites which are exploring the scope for early decommissioning and the use of new approaches to waste management. The site visit and workshop discussed the significant depth of some structures at Trawsfynydd and the challenge in removing them. Following agreement at the December 2016 Steering Group, NuLeAF will organise a site visit to Trawsfynydd during 2017, to enable members to discuss further the 'Lead and Learn' programme and the potential options for the management of residual contamination on this and other Magnox sites.

² <https://consultation.sepa.org.uk/operations-portfolio/grr/>