

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 6 th June 2018
Agenda Item:	6
Subject:	Update on national developments in radioactive waste management
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Purpose:	This paper provides an update on recent developments in radioactive waste management and NDA operations

Introduction:

This paper updates members on recent developments in radioactive waste management and NDA operations. It covers:

- NDA meeting reports;
- NDA Stakeholder Summit;
- Report from GMF meeting in Belgium, 10th and 11th April
- NDA, SLC and BEIS round-up;
- Brexit update; and
- Meeting with SCCORS.

Recommendation:

This report is for noting.

1. NDA meeting reports

The Executive Director attended two meetings of the **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR) Theme Overview Group (TOG)** on the 27th March and 8th May.

The 27th March meeting included discussion of issues around **in-situ disposal (ISD)** and the need for the NDA, Government and regulators to develop a 'national narrative' to help underpin engagement with stakeholders. The narrative is intended to aid discussion and understanding of ISD and the way in which any proposal to leave material in situ on NDA sites would be discussed with communities and local authorities.

The TOG agreed that the narrative might include both a technical explanation of how decisions were taken and a more accessible document to assist local government in communication with their communities. It was felt that the narrative or narratives should:

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- Place in-situ disposal in the context of wider decommissioning work and proposals for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF), near surface disposal, accelerated decommissioning of Magnox sites and integrated waste management
- Link to the current BEIS discussion paper on the regulation of nuclear sites in the final stages of decommissioning and clean up (see below)
- Be clear that ISD is not the easy option: all remediation and waste management options will require a proportionate environmental safety case
- Illustrate how any decisions about ISD would be made in line with the NDA's Values Framework and Best Available Techniques (BAT)

Discussion is ongoing within BEIS and NDA as to who should lead on developing the narrative. There is a clear recognition that local government, through NuLeAF, should be involved in the process.

The TOG also heard other presentations including one on progress with **defining the end state of Sellafield** and the challenges presented by the uncertainties around the decommissioning of certain facilities on the site. There is a recognition at Sellafield that the situation has changed since the 2006 End States consultation and resulting Plan which envisaged the dismantling of all facilities and the export of wastes to disposal locations. Current thinking is that it would be more appropriate to leave some contaminated ground and foundations in-situ. It is therefore felt timely to engage stakeholders on options and the means of optimising the end state.

The **8th May SDR TOG** included discussion on the development of guidance for local authorities on planning applications for in-situ disposal on NDA sites. It was agreed that a small working group involving NDA, BEIS and NuLeAF should be established to take this work forward, and that this group should also involve expert input from local authority planning officers. It is hoped to hold the first meeting of this group in mid-June.

The meeting also heard a presentation from BEIS on the current consultation on the **regulation of nuclear sites in the final stages of decommissioning and clean-up**¹ which was launched on May the 8th and runs until July the 3rd. BEIS delivered a presentation on the consultations to the Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) meeting on May the 9th. NuLeAF is drafting a response to the consultation which will be circulated to members for comment on the 15th June.

The Director also participated in an **Integrated Waste Management (IWM) TOG** held in Penrith on the 10th May.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-regulation-of-nuclear-sites-in-the-final-stages-of-decommissioning-and-clean-up>

The morning session focussed on the **NDA's Skills Strategy** and work on **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Through the Nuclear Skills Strategy Group (NSSG), the NDA, Government and others developed a long-term skills strategy for the nuclear sector² which was published in 2016. Following the publication of the UK Government's **Industrial Strategy** and in anticipation of the **Nuclear Sector Deal**, due for publication shortly, the NDA is looking again at this area. Priorities for the NDA are:

- Apprenticeships
- Bridging the skills gap
- Developing subject matter experts
- Enhancing technical and professional skills
- Transferability and mobility of labour
- STEM engagement

NuLeAF's Director has set up a phone meeting with the NDA's Head of Skills and Talent and will explore the potential for a future Steering Group discussion on skills and STEM.

The TOG also heard presentations from:

LLWR – which reported that, in the year to March 2018, a record 95% of LLW had been diverted from the LLWR along other disposal or recovery routes. The result was that in the last financial year the lowest level of material was disposed of at the LLWR site since its opening in 1959.

RWM who reported on the consultations on the GDF siting process and on their ongoing work in exploring the scope for near surface disposal of some Higher Activity Waste (HAW). RWM plans to publish an options paper on near surface disposal in 2018/19 which will include detailed design and costing concepts.

2. NDA Stakeholder Summit

The NDA's Stakeholder Summit 2018 will be held at the Berkeley Green Campus of South Gloucestershire & Stroud College on 10th and 11th July 2018.

The registration website is now active³. Invitations have been sent to NuLeAF members who have NDA sites within their area and there has been a high level of interest in attending the event.

² <http://www.cogentskills.com/nssg/strategy>

³ <https://ndastakeholdersummit.co.uk/>

NuLeAF has issued an invitation to NDA Chief Executive David Peattie and RWM Chief Executive Bruce McKirdy to speak to NuLeAF members at a special meeting on the first morning of the Summit, before formal business begins.

Working with the NDA, NuLeAF has also invited members of the pan-European Group of Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF) to attend, and it is expected that delegates from a range of other countries will participate.

GMF members are very interested in the UK's approach to decommissioning and plans for a GDF. At the Summit it is hoped to organise a number of presentations from GMF members on issues of interest from their countries, including from Osthhammer on their experience of the Swedish geological disposal siting process. This will be open to NuLeAF members.

3. Report from GMF meeting in Belgium, 10th and 11th April

NuLeAF's Chair and Executive Director attended a meeting of the Group of Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF) in Belgium in April.

On the first day NuLeAF was invited to be part of a small delegation that met with the Jerzy Busek, Chair of the **European Parliament Industry, Research and Energy Committee (ITRE)**. The discussion focussed on how local municipalities can better engage in European level discussions on nuclear decommissioning. Mr Busek suggested a number of actions which are being taken forward by GMF. The delegation also met with Johannes Luchner, **Directorate of Civil Protection** to discuss emergency preparedness for nuclear incidents.

Following the Brussels meeting the delegation linked up with the wider GMF membership and travelled to Dessel in the north of Belgium. Following a civic reception, the group spent an interesting day visiting a range of facilities around the town.

This included a trip 225 metres underground to see the HADES test laboratory, which since the early 1980s has been studying the long-term disposal of HAW in deep clay deposits. Since its inception the size of the facility has expanded and a range of work undertaken on issues such as the impact of heat generating wastes on clays.

The HADES project is part of a larger research and development programme entitled **EURIDICE (European Underground Research Infrastructure**

for Disposal of nuclear Waste in a Clay Environment)⁴ which is supported by the European Commission and involves researchers and consultancies in a number of countries.

The GMF delegation also heard interesting presentations on the nuclear industry in Belgium, where at present there are 8 reactors on two sites. The Belgian political situation, with a Federal Government and three governments representing Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia, has made long term decision making complex. Policy on whether Belgium should continue with nuclear energy had changed a number of times, but the current plan is that all reactors should close by 2025. In terms of waste management there is general support for geological disposal but no agreement on a process to find a repository site. While Dessel is the focus of current research, the local municipality is clear that the repository itself will not be located in the area.

4. NDA, SLC and BEIS round-up

The NDA has published its **Business Plan 2018-21**⁵ along with its **Socio-economic spend report 2016-17**⁶. The socio-economic spend report provides information on the £20.2 million the NDA Group contributed to over 200 projects including Campus Whitehaven in Cumbria and in support of economic opportunities around Romney Marshes in Kent.

The May meeting of the Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) hosted the **annual meeting with LLWR** and the wider industry to discuss Low Level Waste Management (LLW). The Group heard presentations from LLWR, Sellafield, NDA and Magnox and this was followed by an interesting discussion. A note of the meeting will be included in the RWPG minutes when published, and presentations are currently available on the NuLeAF website⁷.

BEIS has launched a consultation on **Environmental impact assessment: Nuclear Decommissioning regulations**⁸ which will run until the 20th June. NuLeAF will review the document and submit a response if required.

5. Brexit Update

The first phase of EU withdrawal negotiations around Euratom is now complete and there is a preliminary agreement on the draft legal text for the

⁴ <http://www.euridice.be/en>

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-business-plan-2018-to-2021?utm_source=e96aed15-c6ca-4b72-9237-5a6d645124cf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/socio-economic-spend-report-2016-to-2017>

⁷ <http://www.nuleaf.org.uk/document-library/rwpg-notes/radioactive-waste-planning-group-meeting-notes-and-papers-2018>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/environmental-impact-assessment-nuclear-decommissioning-regulations>

withdrawal agreement and extension of the current rules until December 2020 through an implementation/transition period.

However, the future relationship with EU and Euratom remains uncertain. The Government is seeking to mitigate the most acute risks through a policy response addressing the major issues of nuclear safeguards and nuclear co-operation agreements with key partners (i.e. US, Japan, Canada and Australia).

According to the current implementation plan the new safeguards regime and necessary nuclear co-operation agreements will be in place by April 2019. That said, the EU's Energy and Environment Sub-Committee wrote to the Minister for Business and Industry, Richard Harrington MP, on the 18th May asking for his response to media reports that the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) is falling behind in its efforts to prepare for Brexit.

The Government's plans also suffered a setback on the 21st March after the House of Lords voted through an amendment that insists the UK should not be able to withdraw from the European nuclear agreement until alternative international arrangements for nuclear cooperation have been agreed. This has the potential to delay any exit from Euratom.

6. Meeting with SCCORS

NuLeAF's Director met with the new joint Chairs of SCCORS (Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances) in Edinburgh on the 26th April. SCCORS is the equivalent to NuLeAF for Scottish local authorities, although its focus is to some degree different due to the policy regime and nuclear context north of the border. The meeting was positive and SCCORS Chairs have expressed an interest in attending a NuLeAF Steering Group meeting in the future.