

ITEM 9: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT



Report to RWPG, 12th October 2020

This report provides an update on recent developments in radioactive waste management. It covers:

- NDA Update;
- NDA Strategy 4;
- BEIS Update;
- Sellafield update;
- Magnox Update;
- Consultation responses; and
- International Update.

1. NDA update

1.1 NuLeAF's Executive Director participated in a joint **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR)** and **Integrated Waste Management (IWM) Theme Overview Group (TOG)** meeting on the 30th September.

The agenda centred on a review by the Environment Agency of the decommissioning and waste management strategies for nuclear sites. This considered current plans in terms of developing national policy on waste management and in relation to wider objectives for communities and intergenerational equity. It was agreed that there was a need to reflect more on intergenerational issues at a future meeting.

The TOG also heard from the environment agencies on their work on the Groundwater Directive and Directive Wastes.

1.2 Former Cabinet Minister and MP Hazel Blears has been appointed as the NDA's **Social Value Specialist**. Ms Blears is Chair of the Social Investment Business and a Trustee of the Social Mobility Foundation, and as an MP was an author of the Social Mobility Act.

NuLeAF's Executive Director held a phone conference with Hazel earlier this year to discuss social issues and nuclear decommissioning and has written to her following her appointment. The letter extends an invitation to Ms Blears to speak to NuLeAF at a future meeting.

1.3 NuLeAF's Executive Director participated in a net zero carbon webinar on the 23rd and 24th September, hosted by NDA as part of their **Net Zero Beacon Project Group** work. The aim of the Group is to set meaningful targets for carbon emission reductions and develop a roadmap of opportunities for delivery. The work covers the whole of the NDA estate including nuclear sites and subsidiaries and is looking at

both direct and indirect emissions. NuLeAF is the only external organisation represented on the Group.

The webinar heard from presenters including Prof. Mike Berners-Lee of Lancaster University, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA). Prof. Berners-Lee set out starkly the carbon challenge facing society and also discussed his work on carbon reduction with a number of organisations including Cumbria County Council. The EA spoke about their E-mission project which aims to deliver net zero carbon across their estate by 2030; while the OGA outlined plans for the large scale integration of hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, offshore renewables and oil and gas production rigs in the North Sea.

1.4 As part of the review of the NDA's **Value Framework**, NuLeAF has provided a range of comments to NDA as to how the document could be enhanced in terms of its use and stakeholder understanding. Many of these comments are also included in draft response to the Strategy 4 consultation.

1.5 It has been confirmed that the NDA will hold a **stakeholder seminar** via Teams on Friday the 20th November. The focus will be on Integrated Waste Management (IWM). It is proposed that NuLeAF will chair one of the sessions on the day. Further details will be circulated to members when agreed.

1.6 The **Annual Report and Accounts** of the NDA for 2019-20 have been released¹, The report details the changes that have taken place in NDA group and the progress made in cleaning up the various NDA sites.

1.7 The NDA, in collaboration with the Nuclear Institute's Young Generation Network (YGN), has launched a year long partnership aimed at inspiring young people in the nuclear industry. The **Industrial Partnership** aligns behind the YGN's mission 'to encourage, develop and inspire young nuclear professionals and ensure that their voice is heard in shaping the future of the nuclear sector - and motivate young people to join and remain in the UK nuclear industry'.

1.8 A briefing for NuLeAF members on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), and their implications for NDA sites and legacy wastes, was held on the 9th October. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

2. NDA Strategy 4

2.1 A consultation on the draft **NDA Strategy** was launched on the 17th August² and will run for 12 weeks. The Strategy is the key guiding document for the Authority and is refreshed every 5 years. Also out for consultation is a strategic position paper on Near Surface Disposal (NSD) and the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) undertaken on the draft Strategy.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-annual-report-and-accounts-2019-to-2020>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-nda-draft-strategy-for-consultation>

NuLeAF's draft response has been circulated to members and an engagement meeting on the Strategy was held on the 23rd September. Member comments on the draft are invited by the 23rd October. James McKinney will attend the Steering Group meeting on 9th December to provide further information on proposals for near-surface disposal of radioactive waste.

3. BEIS Update

3.1 NuLeAF's Executive Director attended a meeting of the **Radioactive Substances Policy Group (RSPG)** held on the 6th October. A draft of BEIS' **Nuclear Decommissioning and Radioactive Substances White Paper** was reviewed and NuLeAF fed in a number of comments. A public consultation on the new Policy is expected to begin towards the end of 2020 or in early 2021, and NuLeAF will hold an engagement event with BEIS at an appropriate time.

4. Sellafield Update

4.1 NuLeAF has continued to engage in a small group tasked with scoping out a '**strategic futures**' approach to the decommissioning of Sellafield. The group also involves the Environment Agency, Sellafield, NDA, ONR and BEIS.

One area of focus is the Lifetime Plan for the site. Two activities, the transfer of material to a GDF and the processing of plutonium following a policy decision on the way forward, are critical to future management. The group has also looked at the challenges of engaging stakeholders and the public over such long time periods, the physical constraints for waste management and the local geology and hydrology. Looking forward visions and future scenarios will be expanded upon and case studies developed to aid understanding of options. Once the proposals are fully scoped out it is intended to engage directly with the Cumbrian local authorities.

5. Magnox Update

5.1 It was announced on the 30th July that Trawsfynydd has been selected as the lead site for **Magnox reactor decommissioning**, based on an assessment of all sites against criteria including the potential for future uses and the physical state of the infrastructure. It follows a decision by the NDA to review the former blanket strategy of deferred decommissioning for Magnox sites which would have seen all sites placed in Care and Maintenance for 60 years before final site clearance.

The new approach at Trawsfynydd will see the reactors fully decommissioned without a period of deferral. In turn, the experience learned there, along with that gained at the other lead site at Bradwell, will be used to guide the approach to decommissioning elsewhere.

The NDA has committed to develop site-specific decommissioning strategies for all Magnox sites over the next 12 to 18 months. NuLeAF aims to clarify the exact

approach that will be taken to the development of these new site strategies and ensure appropriate engagement of local authorities in their preparation.

5.2 Magnox published their interim **Socio-economic Plan 2016-21**³ on the 27th August. The aim is to support the NDA's objective of '*the creation of dynamic, sustainable local economies for communities living near our sites*' and there is a commitment to focus support on initiatives that will maximise impact through linking to local authority strategies, BEIS policies and the NDA's property strategy. While there is no formal consultation on this interim plan, NuLeAF will be writing to Magnox to comment. There is a commitment to a full consultation in 2021 leading to a new 5-year plan.

NuLeAF's December Steering Group meeting will host an extended session with Magnox that will include discussion of socio-economics.

5.3 On the 11th of September the National Audit Office (NAO) published a progress report on **Terminating the Magnox Contract**⁴. The report concludes that the Cavendish Fluor Partnership (CFP) was able to complete £2.72Bn of decommissioning work before the end of the contract in August 2019.

Despite that, the report does identify a further £20million in costs incurred by NDA through the need to avoid further litigation, this being on top of the £122 million cost identified previously by the NAO for the mis-management of the tender process. It also finds that there is still uncertainty in the total cost of the Magnox decommissioning programme (£6.9Bn to £8.7Bn) and that it is critical that NDA uses its new delivery model to enhance its understanding of costs and the most efficient way to deliver decommissioning.

6. Consultation Responses

6.1 NuLeAF has drafted responses to two current planning consultations being undertaken by the UK Government:

- Changes to the current planning system⁵ – which set out proposals intended to improve the effectiveness of planning
- Consultation on the Waste Management Plan for England⁶

While both are concerned with wider land use and waste planning, they do have some implications for radioactive waste management. NuLeAF has drafted responses to both and there will be an opportunity to comment on these during the RWPG meeting.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/magnox-socio-economic-plan-2016-21-interim>

⁴ <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/terminating-the-magnox-contract/?slide=1>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

⁶ <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/waste-management-plan-for-england/>

7. International update

7.1 GMF Europe held an online meeting on October 6th. The keynote address was made by Jean-Phillipe Guisset, the European Commission's Head of Decommissioning. This was followed by presentations from all GMF members, including the UK, on the current situation in their country as regards nuclear issues.

7.2 NuLeAF's Vice Chair Cllr David Moore participated in a Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) workshop on the decommissioning of nuclear facilities in the UK, held online on the 16th September. The meeting was organised by NEA's Forum for Stakeholder Confidence (FSC) to gain a better understanding of the current situation in the UK. Other speakers were drawn from the NDA, regulators, the Site Stakeholder Groups (SSGs) and Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA).