

ITEM 9: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT



Report to RWPG, 30th April 2021

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;
- Decommissioning of EDF Stations;
- International engagement;
- Welsh members group; and
- New Nuleaf website launched.

1. NDA update

1.1 NDA has published its **Sustainability Report** for 2020/21¹. The report covers the whole NDA Group and sets out performance and examples of good practice across a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues. This is the first such report prepared by NDA. Davide Stronati, NDA's Director of Sustainability, will present its findings and future plans for work in this area to the April RWPG meeting.

1.2 The NDA has also concluded its **Net Zero Carbon Beacon Project**. Working with the Carbon Trust, an assessment of greenhouse gas emissions for the NDA estate has been prepared, with this including both direct emissions and those deriving from the procurement of goods and services. The report found that Sellafield accounts for a large proportion of the NDA Carbon Footprint, and that goods and services are a significant component of overall emissions. While the report is not publicly available as yet, Alyson Morris of NDA will present an overview of this work to the RWPG.

1.3 Nuleaf's Executive Director participated in meetings of the NDA's **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR) Theme Overview Group (TOG)** on the 16th March, **Integrated Waste Management (IWM) TOG** on the 18th March and **Critical Enablers TOG** on the 26th March.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nda-sustainability-report-financial-year-april-2020-to-march-2021>

Key points to note include:

- Anna Clark has left NDA to take up a new position with the IAEA in Vienna. Recruitment of Anna's replacement is underway, but in the short term her role will be covered by Steve Hardy, NDA's Director of Environment, with support from Markku Koskelainan.
- A final draft of the Government's **Planning Guidance for on-site disposal** is being prepared. When ready this will be shared with relevant organisations including Nuleaf and any final comments taken on board. It is likely that the Guidance will be published later in the year, alongside the Government's response to the anticipated consultation on their Policy Review (see 3.1). Will Higgins, BEIS, will be providing a short update to the meeting on 30th April.
- The NDA is undertaking work on its **Land Transport Strategy**. This is intended to integrate action to reduce the carbon footprint of transportation and support wider commitments to sustainability. Issues under consideration include whether to maintain rail paths to Magnox sites and the potential for the reopening of the line from Trawsfynydd to Blaenau Ffestiniog.

The SDR TOG also included presentations and discussions on the Winfrith Site End State and the work of the Environment Agency in promoting sustainability on the site. The April RWPG will include presentations on this work.

1.4 Phil Matthews was interviewed on the 14th March as part of a consultation NDA is undertaking on the development of an appropriate 'brand strategy' for their new Integrated Waste Management (IWM) Division. The review is exploring stakeholder perceptions of LLWR and RWM and views on the challenges and benefits of creating a single organisation spanning all waste management across NDA.

1.5 On the 1st April 2021, Dounreay transitioned from Cavendish Dounreay Partnership to become an operating company within the overall NDA Group. This follows the merger of the NDA's transport companies into a single Nuclear Transport Solutions business and the announcement that LLWR will become an NDA subsidiary from July 2021.

2. NDA Strategy 4

2.1 The NDA's new **Strategy²** (Strategy 4) and its **Business Plan 2021-24³** were published in March. These set out the strategic direction and shorter-term objectives for nuclear decommissioning and waste management. NDA has also proposed that the Strategy 4 Development Group (S4DG) should continue as a *Delivery Group*

² [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Strategy effective from March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91412/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-strategy-effective-from-march-2021.pdf)

³ [NDA Business Plan 2021 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91412/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-business-plan-2021-to-2024.pdf)

providing strategic oversight of progress in taking the Strategy forward. Nuleaf will be a member of this new group, which will sit above the Theme Overview Groups (TOGs).

3. BEIS Update

3.1 Public consultation on the new **Nuclear Decommissioning and Radioactive Substances Policy** has been delayed until summer 2021. The Government's current timetable envisages a 12-week consultation on the Policy commencing in July 2021, leading to the publication of the agreed policy and framework in summer 2022.

3.2 Nuleaf's Executive Director met online with Craig Lester, Deputy Director Advanced Nuclear Innovation on the 15th February to receive an update on plans for SMRs and AMRs. A range of work is currently underway around the Siting Process for these technologies, the financial model for delivery and the Generic Design Assessment (GDA). BEIS is considering the respective roles of Government, developers and communities with the potential for communities to play a significant part in local siting. The Government is also planning to undertake a review of the **National Policy Statement for Energy (EN1)**, and then to revise other energy policy statements with that on **Nuclear Power Generation (EN6)** being the priority. A consultation is likely at some point towards the end of 2021. Mr Lester gave a short presentation on this and took questions at the Nuleaf Steering Group on 10th March 2021.

3.3 It has been announced that Adrian Simper of NDA has been seconded to BEIS to act as their Chief Nuclear Adviser. Clive Nixon will take over Adrian's role at the NDA in the interim.

4. Sellafield Update

4.1 The **Environment Agency (EA)** has issued a variation of the Radioactive Substances Activities (RSA) permit for the Sellafield site.

The variation came into effect on 1 April 2021 and relates to the **Magnox Swarf Storage Silo (MSSS)**, a facility on the Sellafield site constructed between 1960 and 1983 primarily for the storage of Magnox fuel cladding waste underwater, known as silo liquor. The MSSS leaked below ground in the late 1960s to early 1980s through cracks in the concrete superstructure, and Sellafield Ltd has recently detected further leakage from the MSSS. While there are no immediate radiation dose consequences to people and the environment from the current leak the EA has

decided to set a series of improvement requirements to ensure that Sellafield Ltd. address their concerns.

4.2 A BBC investigation⁴ has claimed that staff at Sellafield suffer a 'toxic mix of bullying and harassment'. In parallel, Alison McDermott, a consultant who worked on the site's equality strategy, is involved in an industrial tribunal, alleging that she was dismissed for whistleblowing.

In response a Sellafield spokesperson said: 'There is no place for bullying and harassment at Sellafield. We do not tolerate it and where we find it, we take action.' The spokesperson said the company was working to improve its processes so employees can have confidence that when issues are raised, they are dealt with.

4.3 In more positive news it has been announced that significant progress has now been made in removing solid waste from Sellafield's **Pile Fuel Storage Pond**⁵. The Pond was constructed in the 1940's to help produce plutonium for the UK's nuclear deterrent. It is now envisaged that the pond should be clear of almost all radioactive materials by 2024 and fully drained of water by 2029, enabling the facility to be decommissioned and demolished.

5. Magnox Update

5.1 The final report on the independent inquiry into the failing of the Magnox contract process was published on the 4th March 2021⁶.

Led by Steve Holliday, the report notes that 'In many respects, Magnox was a well-run procurement and appeared to have the critical components for successful delivery.' However, it identifies a range of significant failings in terms of the NDA's procurement strategy, the design of the tender, the evaluation of bids, the management of the legal challenge and overall governance.

The report recommends a variety of actions intended to enhance NDA's organisational capacity and improve its work culture, along with governance and oversight both internally and of NDA by BEIS. It acknowledges that changes in the NDA's business model and the recruitment of new personnel have already gone some way to address these issues.

⁴ [Sellafield nuclear site a 'toxic mix of bullying and harassment' - BBC News](#)

⁵ [It's been a massive effort in challenging times - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/magnox-inquiry-final-report>

6. Decommissioning of EDF Stations

6.1 Nuleaf's Chair and officers met with EDF on the 17th February. The meeting, which also involved NDA, proved useful in understanding EDF's current and future plans, and in discussing the important role that local authorities will play. It was agreed that EDF and Nuleaf would continue to meet quarterly.

6.2 EDF has announced that it expects to have the technical information required to make a decision in the next few months on the future of its Dungeness B nuclear power plant in Kent. The plant last generated electricity in September 2018 and is currently forecast to return to service in August this year, but it has 'a number of unique, significant and ongoing technical challenges that continue to make the future both difficult and uncertain'.

The current scheduled decommissioning date is 2028, but EDF is considering 'a range of scenarios', including moving directly into the de-fuelling phase later this year. This follows on from announcements of the early closure of the Hinkley Point B and Hunterston B plants.

7. International engagement

7.1 GMF Europe held an online seminar on the **socio-economic impacts of the closure and decommissioning of nuclear power plants** on the 26th February, joined by over 150 delegates from 25 countries. Phil Matthews of Nuleaf, and Neil Smith of the NDA, gave perspectives on the situation in the UK, and the meeting also heard speakers from Belgium, Spain, France and Bulgaria. All presentations are available to view on the GMF Europe website.⁷

8. Welsh members group

8.1 A meeting of Nuleaf's Welsh member authorities was held on the 29th of March, where the format, membership and Terms of Reference for an annual meeting in Wales was agreed. It is hoped that the first annual meeting of the group will be held in summer 2021.

⁷ www.gmfurope.org

9. New Nuleaf website launched

9.1 Nuleaf's new website is now live. It incorporates greater use of graphics and includes a range of new information pages and resources. Along with better links to social media a new blog has been created. The completion of the website marks the culmination of an overhaul of all of Nuleaf's communication materials, including the creation of a new logo, a redesigned newsletter and e-bulletin, new letterhead paper and a new PowerPoint presentation.