

**Meeting:** Nuleaf Steering Group  
**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021  
**Item:** 7  
**Subject:** Updates on national developments in radioactive waste management  
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## Introduction:

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

- NDA update;
- Strategy 4;
- BEIS Update;
- Sellafield Update;
- Decommissioning of EDF Stations; and
- Welsh members group.

## Recommendations:

This paper is for noting.

### 1. NDA update

1.1 NDA has published its first ever **Sustainability Report**, covering 2020/21<sup>1</sup>. The report is for the whole NDA Group and sets out performance and examples of good practice across a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues.

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 study 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. The report is not yet publicly available.

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

NDA spoke at April's Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) on sustainability and the Net Zero Carbon Beacon project. Their presentations are available on the Nuleaf website<sup>2</sup>.

1.3 Nuleaf's Executive Director has participated in a number of meetings of the NDA's **Theme Overview Groups (TOGs)** over recent months.

The **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR) TOG** is currently developing its work plan, taking forward commitments set out in the new NDA Strategy. This will focus on four core themes of Decommissioning, End States, Interim States and Land Use. While many of the activities are technical, planned work in 2021/21 includes the development of:

- End State guidance along with updated end state assumptions for each site.
- A National Narrative on waste management and sustainable remediation.
- A revised Value Framework.
- Guidance on planning for on-site disposal (see below).
- Thinking on sustainability and social value factors and indicators.

1.4 The **Integrated Waste Management (IWM) TOG** on the 19<sup>th</sup> May involved a discussion on the IWM Strategy Work Plan and priorities for 2021/22. The aims are to:

- Adopt a risk-informed approach to sustainable waste management that supports developing government policies.
- Ensure that NDA and SLCs understand the value that IWM can deliver.
- Give proper consideration of the Waste Hierarchy and embrace the value of the circular economy.
- Ensure access to NDA Group capability as opposed to a site-by-site approach.

Stakeholder engagement is a central theme of the new Strategy and group members, including Phil Matthews of Nuleaf and Rob Ward of Copeland Borough Council, offered their perspective on the priorities for the next year. Corhyn Parr of NDA will address the June Steering Group on Integrated Waste Management.

Other points to note from recent TOG meetings 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 now complete and has been shared with Nuleaf's planning officers and other relevant organisations for final comment. A formal consultation is then planned for summer/autumn 2021. It is likely that the Guidance will be published at the end of the year, alongside the Government's response to the anticipated consultation on their Policy Review. (see 3.2)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/radioactive-waste-planning-group-meeting-30th-april-2021/>

- The NDA is undertaking work on its **Land Transport Strategy**. This is intended to help reduce the carbon footprint of transportation and support wider commitments on sustainability. Issues under consideration include the maintenance of rail paths to Magnox sites and the potential for reopening the line from Trawsfynydd to Blaenau Ffestiniog.
- The SDR TOG on 18<sup>th</sup> March included presentations and discussions on the **Winfrith Site End States** from Magnox and the Environment Agency (EA). Of particular interest was a presentation on the work of the EA in promoting wider sustainability and added value, beyond that required by regulation. As a follow up to this James Heavingham of the EA was invited to speak on this topic to the April Radioactive Waste Planning Group meeting.
- The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is currently developing its **Nuclear Liabilities Management Strategy (NLMS)**, with the final Strategy due for publication towards the end of 2021. They have spoken at a number of TOGs over recent months and intend to share sections of the new Strategy with the Groups for comment.

Nuleaf raised two issues in discussion: whether a formal public consultation was planned and whether it was intended to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Strategy. The MOD stated that it did not intend to undertake either. Nuleaf expressed disappointment at this, representing as it does a significant departure from the active engagement process undertaken as part of the Submarine Dismantling Project (SDP).

1.4 Phil Matthews was interviewed 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.

1.5 On the 1<sup>st</sup> 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. It has also been announced that **Wanda Goldwag** has been appointed as Chair of Nuclear Transport Solutions<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/wanda-goldwag-appointed-as-chair-of-nuclear-transport-solutions>

## 2. Strategy 4

2.1 The NDA's new **Strategy**<sup>2</sup> (Strategy 4) and its **Business Plan 2021-24**<sup>3</sup> 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* providing strategic oversight of progress. Nuleaf will be a member of this group, which will sit above the Theme Overview Groups (TOGs).

## 3. BEIS Update

3.1 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.

3.2 There is still no confirmation of when BEIS will launch the consultation on **Nuclear Decommissioning and Managing Radioactive Substances Policy**. The aim is to do so before the summer recess (22<sup>nd</sup> July) but it is understood that the need for further discussions with the Devolved Administrations may delay publication until later in the year.

This will be a single consultation document, but with two distinct parts. Part I will focus on consultation proposals: in particular it will set out the proposed changes to the management of solid radioactive waste including a policy framework for near surface disposal of ILW in England and Wales. Part II will be a draft of the policy framework as it would appear if the consultation proposals were implemented.

## 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. There are no immediate radiation dose consequences to people and the environment from the current leak. However, the EA has decided to set a series of improvement requirements to ensure that Sellafield Ltd. address their concerns.

4.2 A BBC investigation<sup>4</sup> 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. The final hearing is expected this month<sup>4</sup>.

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 been made in removing solid waste from Sellafield's **Pile Fuel Storage Pond**<sup>5</sup>. 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. Decommissioning of EDF Stations

5.1 EDF has announced that it expects to make a decision in the next few months on the future of its Dungeness B 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 in 2022. Hartlepool and Heysham 1 are scheduled to close in 2024.

5.2 Nuleaf's secretariat held their quarterly meeting with EDF and NDA on the 20<sup>th</sup> May. From the meeting it is understood that:

- An announcement on arrangements for the decommissioning of the EDF fleet may be made in the next month or so.
- NDA has been working with NDA and Magnox on establishing synergies between A and B stations and considering the different approaches to socio-economics that the two organisations have.

Once an announcement on EDF decommissioning is made it is planned to hold a briefing session at a Nuleaf Steering Group meeting with a more detailed stand-alone meeting held towards the end of 2021.

Finally, **Pip Hatt** has been appointed Head of Future Mission Communications at Magnox. It is hoped that she can join the next quarterly meeting.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/3d6d9982-92d4-434f-8bcb-907642de6542>

## **6. Welsh members group**

6.1 Nuleaf's Welsh member authorities met online on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, and agreed the format, membership and Terms of Reference for an annual meeting in Wales. Set up in recognition of the distinct policy context in Wales, it will enable discussion between local authorities and other important stakeholders include the Welsh Government, Magnox, Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh LGA. It is hoped that the first such meeting will be held this summer.