

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 15th September 2021
Item: 8
Subject: Format of meetings in the future, and the recording of presentations
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Recommendation:

1. That the Steering Group directs the secretariat to follow one of the options outlined in Section 2, and also considers (a) whether an annual event should be held and (b) whether the RWPG should be given the option of face-to-face meetings, with this being determined by RWPG members.
2. That the decision to begin holding in-person meetings again will be made by the secretariat in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chairs, taking into account the Covid-19 situation.
3. That the Steering Group agrees that presentations given to online meetings should be recorded via Microsoft Teams when possible and made available to members. Recording will only take place with the written agreement of the presenter. Recording will only be of the presentation and not the Q&A.

1. Background:

1.1 At the Steering Group meeting held on 2nd June 2021, members considered a paper setting out the advantages and disadvantages of holding meetings in person and online.

1.2 The meeting agreed that there was an appetite for returning to some level of in-person meetings but, given the uncertainty on when restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic would be lifted, it was too early to make a decision on what that format would be and when it should be implemented.

1.3 The meeting was presented with three options for future meeting formats:

1. A return to the old format of 4 Steering Group meetings held in person, two in London and two in Manchester, per annum. In addition, 3 or 4 meetings of the Radioactive Waste Planning Group would be held in person, in London. Any additional topic meetings would be held online.
2. All meetings held online including additional meetings on single topic subjects.

3. Two Steering Group meetings per annum held in person, one in Manchester and one in London. A further two Steering Group meetings a year, along with all Radioactive Waste Planning Group and other ad-hoc topic-based meetings would be held online.

It was also suggested that an additional annual meeting, potentially involving a dinner and site visit, could be organised.

1.4 The first two options, a return to all meetings being face-to-face or alternatively all meetings moving online, were rejected. It was agreed that a blend of in-person and online meetings was required but the frequency was not agreed. The secretariat were asked to prepare a further paper and revisit the format and time for implementation at the meeting of the Steering Group on 15th September.

1.5 Subsequent to the June meeting, a member asked whether it would be possible to record presentations for the benefit of those unable to attend. Whilst PowerPoint slides are routinely posted on Nuleaf's website, these lack the accompanying explanations and information, and the questions raised and answered.

2. Meeting format options for consideration

2.1 Following the elimination of returning to the old format of all meetings in person, or continuing to hold all meetings online, two main options from the original proposals remain for consideration:

Option 1. Two Steering Group meetings per annum held in person, one in Manchester and one in London. A further two Steering Group meetings a year, along with all Radioactive Waste Planning Group and other ad-hoc topic-based meetings would be held online. A limited number (no more than four) of places would be available to attend the face-to-face meetings online on a first come first served basis. The limit is applied to ensure the best meeting experience for all those attending whether in person or virtually.¹

Option 2. One Steering Group meeting will be held in-person per annum, and this will be combined with a networking opportunity and possibly a site visit.

2.2 In addition to the above the option of an annual event in the margins of the NDA Stakeholder Summit, or in conjunction with a Steering Group meeting, with a site stakeholder visit if appropriate, could also be included with Option 1 above.

2.3 The Steering Group may consider it appropriate to give the Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) the freedom to hold one or more of its meetings in person

¹ Anecdotal evidence is that virtual participants at 'blended' meetings find the experience less than satisfactory as they can be overlooked by the Chair when wishing to make comments and can feel left out of the discussion. Hopefully a limit on numbers would overcome or reduce these issues.

per annum. This issue could then be discussed at the next RWPG meeting in November.

2.4 The option (s) selected would be subject to review after 1 year.

3. The return to in-person meetings

3.1 The changing situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic makes it difficult to set a firm date to recommence in-person meetings. Although, at the time of writing this paper, all legal restrictions have been lifted, there are still concerns amongst some regarding gatherings in enclosed areas and related to travel on public transport. In addition, local authorities may adopt different approaches to how Councillors and officers should engage in meetings, at least in the short term.

3.2 At the time of writing, council meetings have returned to in-person as required by law. However, many other meetings have remained online. Council staff are slowly returning to work but with reduced office occupancy (e.g. Suffolk County Council offices are moving to 40-50% occupancy) to permit social distancing.

3.3 Because of the difficulty in prediction the Covid situation, it is recommended that the Steering Group authorises the secretariat to take the decision to move to in-person meetings in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chairs. Before taking the decision the secretariat will poll regular attendees to see if they are prepared to travel and attend.

4. Recording meetings

4.1 Microsoft Teams has the facility to record meetings. It has been suggested that presentations could be recorded for the benefit of those unable to attend the meeting. These could then be posted on Nuleaf's website or on a specially created YouTube channel.

4.2 The Secretariat has confirmed that this would not contravene any Suffolk County Council policies.

4.3 The Secretariat approached NDA, Magnox and RWM as the three most frequent givers of presentations for their views. All are content for recording to take place, with the proviso that if any sensitive information is being discussed the recording will be paused or not take place.

4.4. There is also the option of recording the Q&A that follows. This is more problematic, and it may be the case that individual local authorities have policies on this matter. It is therefore suggested that this option is not followed at the present time. All Q&A is already included in the minutes of the meeting.