

SOCIO-ECONOMICS, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Policy Statement 5

September 2021

1. Introduction

Nuleaf welcomes the recent steps that the NDA has taken to improve its performance on socio-economics, sustainability and climate change. However, this should be seen as a start, but not the conclusion. A significant overhaul of approach is required. The NDA must deliver the greatest possible legacy for the communities that have hosted nuclear licensed sites on behalf of the country for generations.

Our **Briefing Paper 7**¹ provides more detail on the current legislative and policy context and the NDA's commitments. Nuleaf also has an agreed **Policy Statement** and **Briefing Paper on Community Benefits**².

2. Nuleaf's Position

We believe that, by working with local authorities, the NDA can maximise the added value its mission delivers. We want to see a coherent and joined up approach, in line with the actions we set out below.

The NDA's engagement should be tailored to the needs of individual communities, all of which have distinct economies within which the nuclear sector varies in terms of significance. Where the nuclear sector is being reduced or lost, the NDA should support diversification and the skills that will help local people to access new employment.

The sustainability and Net Zero Carbon agendas offer particular opportunities that should be built upon. Local authorities are already actively engaged in work on environmental enhancement and climate change, and there is great potential for active partnership with the NDA.

¹ <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/policy-communications/briefing-papers/>

² <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/policy-communications/policy-statements/>

Better reporting is also required, enabling an understanding of how the NDA is working to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive outcomes across all areas from investment to the support of local supply chains.

Breaking down this agenda into its component parts we would like to see the following:

a. Engagement with local authorities and LEPs

Earlier and more regular dialogue is required, leading to greater collaborative working and the development of shared priorities. This should include:

- Better communication and more regular meetings between NDA and host local authorities and LEPs, including:
 - Engagement with local authority planners on revisions to plans for interim and final end states.
 - Involvement by the NDA in the development of Local Industrial Strategies, Local Growth Strategies, Local Plans and other relevant socio-economic plans.
 - Greater involvement by NDA in supporting the resilience of local economies and economic diversification.
 - Better engagement on sustainability issues and action on Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change adaptation and energy infrastructure development.
- More collaborative working between the NDA and other nuclear site operators to develop a joined-up approach to activity where more than one site is in close proximity.

b. Employment

The NDA should adopt an approach to decommissioning that best maintains direct employment and maximises indirect employment across the estate. Critical areas for action are:

- Sellafield – work with local authorities and staff to build on the commitments in the Social Impact Strategy and Transformation Plan.
- Magnox – Ensure that decommissioning proposals protect and enhance, as far as possible, employment on sites over the longer term. The potential for interim uses that will bring appropriate alternative employment opportunities to the locality should be explored with the local authority from an early stage.
- Where it is not possible to protect nuclear employment, NDA/site operators should engage with local authorities to establish whether there is potential to release all or part of sites for other appropriate beneficial uses.

c. Investment in projects and infrastructure

More clarity on investment decisions is required, along with better alignment with the particular priorities of host areas as set out in their adopted strategies and plans. Greater impact could be delivered through enhanced co-operation with local and national organisations. NDA should:

- Increases its direct spend on socio-economics. Given the rural/peripheral location of many nuclear sites, consideration should be given to the use of different metrics that better measure the return on public investment.
- Develop a more collaborative approach, working with local authorities, LEPs and other government agencies to deliver new investment in critical infrastructure.
- Facilitate alternative employment uses e.g. by delivering a serviced site ready for development by others, either on an interim or long-term basis.

Master-planning processes with Local Planning Authorities are a very useful mechanism for taking the above work forward, as has already been demonstrated for the Winfrith site and many other major development areas across the UK. These should be at a strategic level and of a detail that is appropriate to the particular site under consideration. Plans will need to be flexible to accommodate future change and/or uncertainties.

d. Support for the supply chain

The NDA's procurement and investment processes should optimise opportunities for local businesses and enhance the social impact of the supply chain. Critical areas for action are:

- Using the Sellafield Social Impact Strategy and Transformation Plan, and changes in the governance arrangement for Magnox, to drive forward action that better supports local businesses and SMEs.
- Ensuring that local businesses and SMEs that are included in framework agreements and consortia actually receive a fair and appropriate amount of work when contracts are awarded.
- To take on board in full the requirements of Social Value legislation, as part of the promotion of Social Value across the NDA's work as a whole.

e. Education and Skills

Through the Nuclear Skills Strategy Group (NSSG) and other mechanisms, the industry must deliver on the commitment to significant investment in apprenticeships and skills at every level. The NDA should:

- Engage with local colleges and universities to better match the needs of the nuclear sector with the outputs of educational establishments.
- Work closely with local authorities to determine local skills needs, how the nuclear sector can contribute and how local government can assist through schools, colleges and LEPs. Given the aging workforce within the industry, the promotion of interest in STEM subjects among younger people is vital.

- Where the nuclear industry employment base is being lost, work with local authorities and LEPs to promote education and skills in other sectors that provide high quality job opportunities.

f. Community benefits and socio-economic funding

Current levels of community funds and benefits paid by the NDA vary, and the basis on which decisions are taken about which projects to support are not clearly understood. Over the last decade comparable industries, from new nuclear to fracking and renewables, have established community benefit protocols to reflect the service provided by communities on behalf of the nation. The NDA should therefore:

- Conduct a review of community benefits and socio-economic funding and commit to a framework that applies community benefits in a fair, even and transparent way. This should examine the examples of other industries in the UK, and international best practice in radioactive waste management. More information is provided in Nuleaf's **Policy and Briefing Paper on Community Benefits**.

g. Storage and disposal of radioactive waste

The socio-economic offer to communities and local authorities that enter and remain within the GDF siting process should be significant. Clarity on the scale of funding that will be provided to the host community is required. Decisions on how funds are spent must be driven by local authorities and local people.

Any proposals for a Near Surface Disposal (NSD) facility must be underpinned by a commitment to appropriate community investment. Finally, current timescales for the development of a GDF mean that communities will host radioactive waste stores for many decades. This service to the nation should be recognised through community funds.

h. Sustainability and Net Zero Carbon

The production of the NDA's first Sustainability Report is very welcome, as is the commitment to achieve Net Zero carbon across the estate. The NDA should now:

- Take forward and develop its thinking on sustainability through the Sustainability Beacon Project. Nuleaf and local authorities should be engaged in this work.
- Use the Carbon Trust report on the NDA's emissions as the basis for an ambitious programme of action to deliver Net Zero Carbon across all areas of NDA activity.
- Work with local authorities and communities to promote sustainable outcomes, including appropriate and beneficial interim and end uses of NDA sites. Action by the NDA should be integrated with local authority plans and objectives on Climate Change and Sustainable Development.

i. Governance, Indicators and Reporting

Local government and community understanding of the NDA's impact on their area can be limited. Steps must be taken to improve reporting, both in terms of the range of information available and its accessibility.

The NDA should:

- Develop its governance structures for taking forward and monitoring socio-economic and sustainability impacts and outcomes at a national and local level.
- Establish indicators to measure progress against all aspects of sustainability (economic, social and environmental). These should be SMART and be reported on regularly and in an accessible way.
- Benchmark performance with comparable industries in the UK and with nuclear decommissioning overseas.