

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 8th December 2021
Item: 9
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 Group update;
- UK Government update;
- Decommissioning of AGR Stations;
- Fusion Siting Process;
- Welsh news;
- ONR update;
- International news; and
- Nuleaf updates.

Recommendations:

1. That the Nuleaf Briefing papers on **Proposals for the Decommissioning of the AGR Stations** and the **Energy White Paper 2020 and New Nuclear: Decommissioning and Waste Implications** are approved, incorporating any final amendments agreed at this meeting.
2. That members discuss the opportunities for Nuleaf to commission research on an issue of interest, and agree a proposed area of work to be commissioned in 2021/22.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 Jamie Reed has been appointed as the NDA's first **Director of Social Impact**, tasked with taking forward the organisation's social impact programme across all its sites. It has also been confirmed that NDA will run a **Beacon project on Social Value** in 2022/23.

A former Labour MP, Jamie was Sellafield's Director of Corporate Affairs prior to taking up his new role. Nuleaf's Executive Director will meet Jamie tomorrow (9th December) and he has been invited to present to the March meeting of the Steering Group.

1.2 Other changes to NDA staff have been announced. Dr. Samantha Harris has been appointed as the NDA's **Head of Government Relations**. Samantha has a background in the public sector and was previously an Executive Director in UKGI (UK Government Investments), working on the shareholder team of NDA.

There have also been appointments and departures in the NDA stakeholder team:

- Jonathan Jenkin has taken up a 2-year secondment to work on nuclear policy for BEIS. He has been replaced by Simon Napper, who worked closely with Nuleaf in his previous role at RWM.
- Kelly Anderson is leaving the NDA to take on a new full-time role with RWM, working with West Cumbrian stakeholders.

1.3 The NDA's latest **Mission Progress Report**¹ was released on the 4th November. The report structure and some of the outcome measures have been amended to reflect the revised NDA Strategy (Strategy 4). So far, 4 of the 47 Strategic Outcomes have been achieved. In terms of sites, 9% of land has been delicensed or relicensed and the same percentage has been demonstrated as suitable for reuse. Overall, 950Ha of designated land on nuclear licensed sites remains and required clean up.

Looking forward, the report will be extended to include the AGR stations at an appropriate time.

1.4 The NDA has published its revised **Value Framework**². This is intended to set out decision making criteria against which different options can be assessed. Nuleaf has been involved in the review of the Framework and the new version places a stronger emphasis on sustainability than before. Nuleaf has also been pressing NDA to enhance training for staff on how to use the Framework effectively, and to report on its use and the impact it has on final outcomes.

1.5 An NDA **Group Inclusion Strategy 2021-25** has been released³. This makes a commitment that 30% of board and senior leadership staff will be women by 2025 and sets out a range of other objectives aimed at creating a more diverse workforce and promoting more flexible working.

¹ [The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Mission Progress Report 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014441/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-mission-progress-report-2021.pdf)

² [NDA value framework: how we make decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014441/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-value-framework-2021.pdf)

³ [The NDA group inclusion strategy 2021 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014441/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-group-inclusion-strategy-2021-to-2025.pdf)

1.6 Following its transition from a PBO into an NDA subsidiary earlier in 2021, it has been announced that **Dounreay** will be integrated into Magnox. Assuming regulatory approval is forthcoming the change is expected to take around 18 months. Magnox will also oversee the decommissioning of the AGR sites and this represents a further expansion in operations. It is understood that the organisation will be rebranded to reflect these changes.

1.7 The NDA held a **stakeholder event** on Friday the 26th November, with a number of Nuleaf members joining. Nuleaf's Chair, Cllr Matthew Riddle, took part in a panel discussion on the issues around local engagement and proposals for AGR decommissioning, while Nuleaf's Vice Chair Cllr David Moore was involved in a separate discussion on the establishment of a NDA Waste Division.

It is planned to return to a two-day, in person, stakeholder summit in 2022, with the intention being to hold this in Edinburgh in September next year.

1.8 Nuleaf's Director attended a **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR) TOG** meeting held on the 5th October. This included presentation and discussion on:

- The Sellafield Site End State Strategy Review. It is felt to be an appropriate time to revisit the Sellafield end state, applying learning from recent work at Sellafield and from other 'lead and learn' sites. A need has also been identified to address the practical difficulties associated with the zonal concept of the current end state assumption.
- A discussion on what constitutes sustainable remediation. The presentation highlighted the work of Sustainable Remediation Forum UK (SuRF-UK) which has developed tools that can help assessment of sustainability.

1.9 A significant milestone has been reached with the decommissioning of the diffuser on top of the **Windscale Pile Chimney**. Working high above the ground, a total of 226 blocks have been removed the chimney stack, with each one weighing between two and nine tonnes⁴. Sellafield has also published its latest list of **reports of incidents** on the site⁵.

1.10 Nuleaf's Director met with Danny Fox of NDA on the 19th November for an update on progress with the NDA's work on Spent Fuels and Nuclear Materials. Danny noted that Covid has slowed work but that progress has still been achieved in all areas. Key points to note were:

- The Magnox reprocessing plant had to close during initial Covid outbreak in March 2020 and restarting the plant, which is over 57 years old, and maintaining throughput has proved challenging. Magnox reprocessing has

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-59263069>

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sellafield-ltd-incident-reports-and-notice?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=ef6974c4-cef6-42fc-b46f-81ce4fcac7ff&utm_content=immediately

operated intermittently because of this and is expected to complete reprocessing and transition in 2022 to a washout phase (to remove process solids) before formally entering POCO. There are a few hundred tonnes of fuel left to reprocess and it is likely that some fuel will be left un-reprocessed; how much will depend primarily on plant performance over the next several months. This will mark the end of all reprocessing in the UK after 70 years.

- Some heavily degraded fuel from the Magnox ponds isn't suitable for reprocessing and most of this fuel is expected to be transferred from wet storage to dry storage over the next decade.
- A plant for repackaging plutonium cans is under development at Sellafield and is expected to be completed and commissioned towards the back end of this decade. Government and NDA are continuing work on options to put UK civil plutonium beyond reach with options for both reuse and immobilisation being explored.
- Around 70% of the material from the Dounreay Fast Reactor has now been transferred to Sellafield. Any DFR material remaining at the end of reprocessing will be transferred to Sellafield and placed into dry storage. The PFR fuel from Dounreay will be moved to Sellafield over the next decade. Some of this fuel is suitable for storage alongside the AGR fuel within the THORP facility but some will be transferred into dry storage.
- The NDA owns a Uranium inventory arising from enrichment and reprocessing activities with material also held on behalf of others such as EDF and the MOD. Most of the NDA's Uranium is suitable for storage for a number of decades. However the 'Hex' material at Capenhurst is chemically reactive and is being transferred to new cylinders and converted into a more stable Uranium Oxide for long-term storage.

2. UK Government update

2.1 The UK Government's long-awaited **Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener** was published on 19th October⁶. Released ahead of the COP Summit in Glasgow, the Strategy sets out the pathway to 2050 along with policies and proposals for each sector.

It includes a commitment to fully decarbonise the electricity system by 2035, and new nuclear is seen as playing a significant role in this. A £120million **Future Nuclear Enabling Fund** has been launched to help fund SMRs, with Wylfa identified as a prime site for such development.

Little is said in the Strategy on new large nuclear plants, although on the 26th October the Government announced a funding model, **Regulated Asset Base**

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

(RAB) that may enable the proposed Sizewell C station, and potentially others, to progress⁷. Sizewell C still requires planning approval and faces local opposition.

3. Decommissioning of AGR Stations

3.1 It has been agreed to host a meeting on AGR decommissioning for Nuleaf members on the 9th February 2022 and an invitation has been sent out. The NDA and EDF have confirmed their attendance and an invitation has also been extended to BEIS.

4. Fusion siting process

4.1 On the 14th October the Government published a shortlist of 5 sites that are being considered as the host of the STEP fusion plant⁸, narrowed down from the 15 candidate sites announced some months ago. The five are:

- Ardeer (North Ayrshire)
- Goole (East Riding of Yorkshire)
- Moorside (Cumbria)
- Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Nottinghamshire)
- Severn Edge (South Gloucestershire & Gloucestershire)

Paul Methven, STEP Programme Director at UKAEA commented *'Through the next phase of assessment, we look forward to working with the shortlisted sites and local communities to gain a more in-depth understanding of the socio-economic, commercial and technical conditions associated with each site before we make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State in 2022'*.

4.2 The UK Government has launched a consultation on the regulatory framework for fusion⁹. It proposes that future fusion plants are classified as 'non-nuclear' in a regulatory sense, with regulation by the **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** and the relevant **Environment Agency** in different parts of the UK. This is currently the case with fusion research and development activity in England.

The consultation also suggests that it is likely that the STEP fusion plan will be designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. The current consultation proposes that a Fusion NPS will be prepared, setting out the development consent framework. Nuleaf has drafted a response and circulated it for comment.

⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-59051025>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/five-sites-shortlisted-for-uk-fusion-energy-plant>

⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1022286/towards-fusion-energy-uk-government-proposals-regulatory-framework-fusion-energy.pdf

5. Welsh news

5.1 The Welsh Government has announced the creation of a new development company, **Cwmni Egin**¹⁰, to bring forward new projects for the Trawsfynydd site as it moves to next planned use.

Central to plans are the deployment of small nuclear reactors (SMRs) to generate electricity and also a medical radioisotope research reactor to support cancer treatment. Mike Tynan has been appointed interim Chief Executive while Dr John Idris Jones, Chair of the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone, will act as Chair to the new body. Local anti-nuclear groups, PAWB and CANDU, have criticised the decision and argue that Trawsfynydd should instead be redeveloped as a hub for renewable technologies¹¹.

5.2 An agreement has been signed between **Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, North Wales Regional Skills Partnership** and **Magnox Ltd** that will facilitate the development of a skilled regional workforce to continue nuclear decommissioning and contribute to future developments¹². The partners will undertake an assessment of skills for future nuclear decommissioning in the North Wales region and aims to ensure that the specialist training required is provided in the area. This will enable local businesses and workers to access the opportunities available.

5.3 Nuleaf held its first ever meeting for Welsh members on the 24th September. The event was well attended by both Nuleaf member authorities and partner organisations. It heard from speakers including David Peattie and Gwen Parry-Jones, CEO's of NDA and Magnox respectively, along with representatives of the Welsh and UK Government and Coleg Menai. Feedback from both members and speakers has been positive and it is planned to hold a similar event annually from now on.

6. ONR Update

6.1 ONR's Chief Nuclear Inspector, Mark Foy, has published his **annual review of industry performance**¹³. The report notes good practice including the development by Sellafield Ltd of a facility to practice the retrieval of radioactive waste from a legacy silo, and improvements by Magnox Ltd in its approach to conventional health and safety risk. At the same time the ONR identifies a need for further scrutiny of conventional health and safety given the considerable construction and decommissioning work that is underway.

¹⁰ [Written Statement: Cwmni Egin, Trawsfynydd \(26 August 2021\) | GOV.WALES](#)

¹¹ [Anti-nuclear campaigners slam plans to install new nuclear reactors in Wales \(nation.cymru\)](#)

¹² <https://www.insidermedia.com/news/wales/agreement-to-help-build-a-world-class-nuclear-decommissioning-workforce>

¹³ [Chief Nuclear Inspector publishes annual review of industry performance - Office for Nuclear Regulation newsOffice for Nuclear Regulation news \(onr.org.uk\)](#)

The ONR notes that it will maintain a focus on the industry's management of ageing facilities. To support this, they are carrying out a themed inspection examining a cross section of nuclear sites to identify challenges, good practice and inform future regulatory priorities. Findings are due to be published in spring 2022.

6.2 The ONR has also published updated guidance on how it licenses nuclear installations¹⁴ and its quarterly statement of civil nuclear incidents¹⁵.

7. International news

7.1 The **GMF General Assembly** took place online on the 14th October with Nuleaf's Vice Chair, Cllr. David Moore, along with Nuleaf officers, in attendance.

The meeting heard from Spanish and Swedish delegates about challenges to local engagement in their countries. In Spain, central government has removed the former powers that local authorities had over the licensing of nuclear waste facilities; while in Sweden a decision has been taken to separate the extension of the current waste storage facility (CLAB) from that on the GDF. Again this was done against the wishes of municipalities and it was agreed that GMF should work to support local authorities in both countries to make their voice heard on these issues.

The Assembly decided to establish to establish a **Working Group on decommissioning and proposals for socio-economic development after plant closure**, and to hold meetings in 2022 in Krsko (Slovenia) and Borsele (Netherlands). Nuleaf will participate in the new Working Group and hopes to be able to fund some of our members to attend the meetings planned for next year.

Finally, Nuleaf's Executive Director was re-elected as Vice-President of GMF Europe for another two years.

7.2 Nuleaf's Executive Director joined other members of the GMF extended Steering Committee for a meeting in Barcelona on the 24th and 25th November. The meeting discussed a range of issues including how to increase influence in European institutions and also how to take forward collaborative work on geological repositories, decommissioning and emergency planning.

7.3 Nuleaf's Director held meetings in November with Tom McKeating, Head of International Relations at NDA and Alex Nicholson, Head of Multilateral Engagement at BEIS. He was able to explain the range of international networks that Nuleaf is involved with and discuss the plans BEIS and NDA have for better co-ordination of international work around nuclear decommissioning and waste management.

¹⁴ <https://news.onr.org.uk/2021/11/revised-licensing-nuclear-installations-guidance/>

¹⁵ <https://www.onr.org.uk/quarterly-stat/2021-3.htm>

8. Nuleaf updates

8.1 Nuleaf has drafted two new Briefing Papers which have been shared with members, one on **Proposals for the Decommissioning of the AGR Stations** and another on the **Energy White Paper 2020 and New Nuclear: Decommissioning and Waste Implications**. When agreed the latter will replace Briefing Paper 1 on Nuclear New Build and Briefing Paper 10 on New Nuclear, both of which are now significantly out of date.

These were circulated to members for comment and updated versions are presented to this meeting. Members are asked to approve these papers.

8.2 Following agreement of Nuleaf's first **Sustainability Policy**, a proposed set of indicators and targets have been developed (Annex 1).

8.3 Due to cost saving's resulting from the movement of meetings online during Covid, Nuleaf has some funding available to commission research that could support Nuleaf's advocacy and engagement work.

Members were contacted by email and invited to suggest issues they felt would benefit from investigation, and various proposals have been received, some of which are similar in nature:

- To look at the issues around planning for the reuse of structures and installations on nuclear sites after delicensing.
- To consider the credible uses of land around a Nuclear Licensed Site at an interim and final stage, and how to engage the local community in discussion on possible uses.
- In relation to site specific lifetime plans, to evaluate the community & council engagement to date, the recommendations on scope (in terms of environmental, socio economic / regeneration impacts) and how and when communities should be engaged as the process moves forward.
- To consider how best Nuleaf could engage local authorities around AGR plants and to evaluate how we can involve Senior Managers and Councillors in member authorities where this representation is not present at the moment.

Other options might be to investigate the socio-economic benefits provided in other countries to communities hosting nuclear sites; or undertake a similar exercise examining community engagement internationally. The former could be useful in helping engagement in the upcoming consultation on Decommissioning and Radioactive Waste Policy, which will set the framework for socio-economics over the coming decade and more.

Members are invited to discuss this issue and make a recommendation.

Annex 1: Nuleaf Sustainability Policy - Targets, indicators and reporting

With a home-based staff and the majority of our meetings online, Nuleaf's overall environmental impact is small. However it is right that we demonstrate good practice in everything we do. We will do this through reporting annually on the following targets and indicators. We will review our performance every year to determine if further improvements can be made.

Staff travel

- 95% of journeys in the UK to be by public transport, cycling and walking.
- All flights, in the UK or internationally, to be only permitted in cases where no reasonable alternative exists. To demonstrate this, we will record and report on all flights made.

Nuleaf meetings

- 80% of Nuleaf meetings (Steering Group, RWPG, other events) to be held online.

Office resources and materials

- All office paper to be FSC standard or equivalent.

Waste and recycling

- All paper and office materials to be recycled.
- All office furniture and equipment purchased by Nuleaf, including computers and electronic goods, to be passed on for reuse or recycled.

Procurement

- All tenders to have a sustainability and social value statement. Evaluation of tenders to include a scoring for the quality of these.

Other actions

- Undertake an annual review to ensure that our policies continue to demonstrate good practice and are aligned with any changes in guidance or legislation.
- Discussion of this policy and targets to be part of staff induction. This induction will include consideration of the potential to reduce the environmental impact of home working, for example through the installation of insulation and low energy lighting in the home work space.
- Venues for Nuleaf meetings to be selected based on accessibility via public transport.