

# ITEM 7: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT



## Report to RWPG, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022

This report provides an update on recent developments in radioactive waste management. It covers:

- NDA Group update;
- UK Government update;
- Decommissioning of AGR stations;
- Welsh news
- Regulators Update; and
- International news.

### 1. NDA Group update

1.1 Nuleaf's Executive Director attended the **Integrated Waste Management (IWM) Theme Overview Group (TOG)** on the 13<sup>th</sup> January and the **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR) TOG** the following day.

The IWM TOG heard an update from BEIS on plans for a consultation on a new **Decommissioning and Radioactive Substances Policy**. Discussion between the UK and Devolved Governments have further delayed the finalisation of the policy, but it is now awaiting Ministerial sign off in Scotland and at UK level. It is expected that the consultation will be launched in March 2022, though upcoming elections at the local level, and in Wales and Northern Ireland, may lead to this being delayed until May.

The Scottish Government plans to consult on a new **Energy Strategy** in the coming year. While their current position is to oppose all new fission power developments, it is understood that the new Strategy will consider the issues around new nuclear development and in particular fusion power and Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). A Scottish site is on the shortlist for the STEP fusion development; and the Caithness community has expressed some interest in SMR development on the Dounreay site.

The **SDR TOG** involved discussion on plans to develop a **Code of Practice for the management of Nuclear Non-Radioactive Waste**. This will involve:

- A review of existing legislation
- An assessment of current stockpiling activities and anticipated future needs
- The development of case studies

- The preparation of guidance for NDA Group, regulators and stakeholders.

Nuleaf stressed the need for proper engagement of Local Planning Authorities in the development of this guidance and in particular that their perspectives should be sought in preparing case studies on the experience to date on Winfrith, Trawsfynydd, LLWR and Sellafield. Koulis Efkarpidis of NDA will give a short presentation to this RWPG meeting on the current work on non-radioactive wastes.

The TOG also heard an update on proposals for a **Town and Country Planning Working Group**. A range of discussions on this have been held, some involving Nuleaf. It is hoped to develop the group further in the coming months. The group will focus on four issues in particular: Strategic/masterplanning; Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs); Permitted Development Rights; and sustainability. Frank Wigley of NDA will be joining the RWPG to give members an update on this work.

Finally, it was announced that Juliet Long, formerly of the Environment Agency, has taken up a new role with NDA as their Chief Strategist on Site Decommissioning and Remediation.

1.2 Philip Matthews also participated in a **Critical Enablers (CE) TOG** meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> January. A verbal update on this will be provided at the meeting.

1.3 Nuleaf has drafted a response to the consultation on the **NDA Business Plan 2022-25** which has been circulated to members. The deadline for comments is the 26<sup>th</sup> January, the day after this RWPG meeting. The consultation itself closes on the 31<sup>st</sup> January<sup>1</sup>.

1.4 The NDA has announced that Adrienne Kelbie has been appointed as **Chair of Nuclear Waste Services**. Adrienne took up the role at the start of January and was formerly the Chief Executive of the ONR. Nuclear Waste Services CEO Corhyn Parr commented *'I am delighted to welcome Adrienne as our first chair of Nuclear Waste Services and look forward to working closely with her. Our role in managing the UK's nuclear waste innovatively and sustainably is one with many challenges and opportunities and Adrienne will be a huge asset to the organisation and the wider NDA group.'*

1.5 It has been announced that all foreign owned waste at Sellafield has been packaged and is ready for return. This material, consisting of spent nuclear fuel, was sent to Cumbria for reprocessing but remains the property of overseas customers who are legally obliged to take it back.

Work began in 2008 and so far, 1,840 containers have been prepared and cleaned. More than half has been sent back to customers in Japan, Switzerland, Germany,

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-draft-business-plan-2022-to-2025-for-consultation?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=69abf859-f9ac-4123-becf-817ac33730af&utm\\_content=immediately](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-draft-business-plan-2022-to-2025-for-consultation?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=69abf859-f9ac-4123-becf-817ac33730af&utm_content=immediately)

and the Netherlands. The remaining containers will be sent back to Japan, Germany and Italy over the next 6 years. Japan is the biggest customer, with half of all containers returning there.

1.6 The latest stage in the redevelopment of **Scrabster Harbour** opened on December 10<sup>th</sup> 2021. The ongoing improvement work is intended to increase harbour capacity and will allow Scrabster to attract cruise ships and access new opportunities including in offshore energy<sup>2</sup>.

The NDA contributed £5million out of a total project budget of £18.9million. It represents one of the largest single contributions to socio-economics made by the Authority.

## 2. UK Government Update

2.1 The UK Government and devolved administrations have jointly published a **Radioactive Substances Provisional Common Framework**<sup>3</sup>.

The framework provides governance mechanisms to ensure that the UK government and devolved governments can work together to maintain or improve on current standards for radiological protection, to develop common policy and manage potential divergence in a way that respects the devolution settlements.

It is underpinned by a Concordat setting out principles for collaborative working between the 4 governments.

2.2 BEIS has completed its **Guidance for on-site disposal of suitable 'low level' and 'very low level' radioactive waste on nuclear and decommissioned sites**. This has been prepared in discussion with Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Devolved Administration and has had significant input from Nuleaf members. The Guidance has been circulated to our members but will not be formally published until after the completing of the upcoming BEIS policy consultation. As noted in 1.1 this is now likely in spring 2022.

## 3. Decommissioning of AGR Stations

3.1 Hunterston B nuclear power station shut down permanently in January 2022 after 46 years of operation, 21 years more than originally envisaged<sup>4</sup>. The station of the Ayrshire coast is operated by EDF energy who will now begin a 3-year process of defueling the reactors, with the spent fuel sent to Sellafield for storage. Following

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-upgrades-transform-scrabster-harbour>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/radioactive-substances-common-framework?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=92a8973d-6f7d-4b15-82b8-0df852c6c690&utm\\_content=immediately](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/radioactive-substances-common-framework?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=92a8973d-6f7d-4b15-82b8-0df852c6c690&utm_content=immediately)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-59894688>

agreement last year, the site will then be handed over to the NDA for decommissioning.

Hunterston's workforce of 480 will be reduced by 25% during defueling but EDF has stated that this will be achieved through retirement or redeployment with no redundancies.

EDF has also announced that Heysham 2 and Torness AGR stations will close in 2028, two years earlier than previously expected.

#### **4. Welsh News**

4.1 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 developments<sup>5</sup>. 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. Regulators Update**

5.1 The Environment Agency has published **technical guidance on non-nuclear radioactive substances regulation**<sup>6</sup> along with separate guidance on the **permitting process for non-nuclear wastes**<sup>7</sup>. This guidance is intended for the operators of sites that generate such materials including hospitals, universities and industry.

5.2 Nuleaf held its quarterly meeting with ONR in December 2021. The meeting discussed a range of issues including ONR's submission to the recent consultation on the regulation of fusion energy and their engagement in some local discussions around the GDF siting process. Interest was expressed in Nuleaf's plans to hold an annual event on Emergency Planning.

#### **6. International news**

6.1 The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** has published a guide to stakeholder engagement at all stages of the nuclear life cycle<sup>8</sup>. The paper identifies five key principles for effective engagement: building trust; demonstrating

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.insidermedia.com/news/wales/agreement-to-help-build-a-world-class-nuclear-decommissioning-workforce>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/non-nuclear-radioactive-substances-regulation-technical-guidance?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=aa01aad0-f206-4477-9a26-4c9f07b3004b&utm\\_content=immediately](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/non-nuclear-radioactive-substances-regulation-technical-guidance?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=aa01aad0-f206-4477-9a26-4c9f07b3004b&utm_content=immediately)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/non-nuclear-rsr-environmental-permits>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/IAEA-releases-guide-to-stakeholder-engagement>

accountability; exhibiting openness and transparency; practising early and frequent consultation; and communicating the benefits and risks of the nuclear technology.

It covers the development of stakeholder engagement strategies and plans, including practical information such as stakeholder mapping; the roles and responsibilities of key nuclear organisations; and the engagement approaches for the different life cycle stages, each of which requires its own strategic approach.