

Note of the AGR decommissioning meeting, 9th February, 2022, held online, 10.00 – 11.30

Present:

Cllr Matthew Riddle	South Gloucestershire Council (Chair)
Cllr Marion Fitzgerald	Allerdale Borough Council
Cllr Norman Dingemans	Arun District Council
Cllr Archie Dryburgh	Dumfries and Galloway Council
Cllr Norman Hampshire	East Lothian Council
Cllr David Godfrey	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
Cllr Jim McEleny	Inverclyde Council
Cllr Alex Gallagher	North Ayrshire Council
Cllr Chris Morgan	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Rob Ward	Copeland Borough Council
Coralie McGown	Dorset Council
Scott Kennedy	East Lothian Council
Grahame Stuteley	East Suffolk Council
Linda Marsh	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
Helen Smith	Hartlepool Borough Council
Richard Outram	Manchester City Council
Jo Manley	Sedgemoor District Council
Louise Martin	Somerset County Council
John Burton	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Cameron Clow	Suffolk County Council
Philip Matthews	Nuleaf
Catherine Draper	Nuleaf

BEIS

Andy Maggs
Camilla Whitehead

EDF

Mark England
Clare Hennessey
Fiona McCall

Magnox

Pip Hatt
Nigel Houlton
Emma Regan

NDA

Gillian Elliott
John McNamara
Simon Napper
Jamie Reed
Neil Smith
Duncan Thompson
David Wallace

Scottish Government

Daniel Couldridge
Diane Hamilton
Martin Macdonald

Observer

Brendan Sweeney

Apologies: Cllr David Southward - Cumbria County Council, Cllr Craig Rivett and Beth Rance – East Suffolk Council, Terry Burns – Essex County Council, Richard Sharples – Lancashire County Council, Charlotte Rushmere – Maldon District Council, Cllr Mike Caswell – Sedgemoor District Council.

1. Welcome and introduction: Cllr Matthew Riddle welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that we were joined by colleagues from Scottish local authorities representing the communities around the AGR sites in Scotland. He thanked BEIS, EDF, NDA and Magnox for their cooperation in setting up this meeting.

2. Andy Maggs, Head of AGR Decommissioning and NLF Policy, BEIS gave a short presentation on the UK government role. Key points for the presentation were:

- The revised arrangement sets out a legal contractual framework to deliver safe, value for money, decommissioning.
- The arrangement provides a framework for EDF and NDA to work together to defuel the AGR stations and then transfer the stations to NDA.
- It is important to defuel as quickly and safely as possible. Removing the fuel reduces the radioactivity level by 99%, safety and security requirements also diminish accordingly resulting in a reduction of running costs of the site.
- The cost of decommissioning will be met by the Nuclear Liabilities Fund (NLF) a government backed fund made up of contributions from the operator and UK government.

3. Duncan Thompson, Group Development Director, NDA, noted that all the speakers today already knew each other and were working together well. Key points from his presentation were:

- Although there are still three years to go before the first site is transferred to NDA, work has already begun on determining the socio-economic impacts.
- NDA will work with local communities and their elected representatives to establish their needs and desires, with a view of ensuring a positive legacy. In several of these communities, NDA already has a presence through the A stations.
- Governance arrangements set out the expectation that the organisations involved will work to find positions of agreement. BEIS's Permanent Secretary and the CEOs of NDA and EDF are all staying close to this project to ensure it works.
- The governance structure comprises four groups which draw from senior management from all parties

4. Mark England, Director of Transfer and Deconstruction at EDF, advised the meeting that he is responsible for preparations for deconstruction and is working with Nigel Houlton at Magnox and Duncan Thompson at NDA on the transfer of the stations. Key points from his presentation were:

- All sites, with the exception of Sizewell B which is a Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) will reach end of generation by 2028.
- At present there is one flask movement from a site per week, this will increase to 3 flask movements once defuelling takes place. The defuelling

process is the same as used for refuelling. Fuel will be stored in a pond for 90 days and then placed in a flask for shipment to Sellafield by rail.

- Transfer of the site license should be achieved about 9 months after fuel free verification by the regulators.
- EDF is working with NDA and Magnox on preparatory activities such as identifying waste routes and waste storage opportunities in order to make sure Magnox are ready to begin decommissioning as soon as the site is transferred.
- EDF is working with its staff and trade unions to support them through the changes. It is looking at what the employment landscape will look like post fuel free verification. EDF recognises that it is key to provide staff with a clear picture, and are going through their usual consultation processes.

5. Nigel Houlton, Future Missions Director at Magnox set out Magnox's perspective. The organisation had been through considerable change over the past few years with the transition from Parent Body Organisation (PBO) model to becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of NDA, and the development of decommissioning strategy from Care and Maintenance at all stations to one encompassing continuous reactor decommissioning. In future, Dounreay will join with Magnox under a single licensee board. Following the transfer of the AGR stations Magnox will have doubled in people, sites and funding. Key points from Nigel's presentation not covered elsewhere were:

- Under current arrangements Hunterston B will be the first to transfer to Magnox.
- Each site will transfer with a number of staff and a decommissioning plan.
- Of the 7 AGR stations, 3 are currently co-located with Magnox sites.
- Magnox are working with EDF to ensure alignment of AGR decommissioning plans with Magnox experience and understanding. They are building a positive working relationship with EDF and creating a seamless transfer programme and will seek to engage with stakeholders.
- Magnox has created a 'Future Missions' team, so those working on the existing decommissioning programme are not distracted.
- Magnox is actively seeking opportunities for realising greater value across the two organisations. An example of this would be the shared use of ILW stores at Hinkley Point and Hunterston which would save £100million.
- It will be 10 years before last site transfers over.

6. The meeting opened up to questions:

6.1 Q: Keeping skills and jobs in the area is very important to local authorities. Will your engagement include liaison with other job creators in the local area? Although defuelling will take up to four years it is important that you engage early to take advantage of opportunities in the near term.

A: EDF is happy to engage with the local authority on employment issues, and we are happy to look at opening up other pathways to employment for people outside the site. Both EDF and Magnox take the future wellbeing of their employees seriously.

6.2 Q: What training will staff receive to ensure they are suitably trained to deal with decommissioning activities?

A: EDF is working with NDA/Magnox to ensure staff are suitably skilled as the site moves through transition to transfer. We are working to ensure the two organisations are aligned, and Magnox has experience of moving from operation to decommissioning and will use that to support EDF.

6.3 Q: What are NDA's plans for stakeholder engagement where they do not currently have an Site Stakeholder Group (SSG)?

Regarding NDA stakeholder engagement, the same approach will be taken as with current Magnox sites and SSGs will be established. Again, EDF and NDA will work together to manage the shift from LCLC to SSG.

6.4 Q: What arrangements are being made in respect of TUPE for the transfer of staff.

A: Although it is still early days and transfer is some time away, discussions are already underway with unions.

6.5 Q: The earlier closure date for Torness came as a shock to the local community – it is a major employer in the area. Why was decommissioning brought forward and will there be the potential to install SMRs on the site?

A: Following routine maintenance inspections we concluded that the lifetime of the core may not be as long as expected. We need to operate the station safely so the decision was taken to move to decommissioning earlier than anticipated. With regard to the deployment of SMRs on the site, EDF is required to handover sufficient land to Magnox to facilitate decommissioning. NDA owns a large estate of land and that land is available for developers and NDA is working closely with central government on this issue.

Note: Current Scottish Government policy is against new nuclear development of current technologies.

6.6 Q: Could you clarify why defuelling will take longer at Dungeness B than other sites, and how long you expect it to take?

A: Dungeness B is technically very different from the other AGR stations. My belief is it will take 6 – 8 years, but I will get back to you with further information.

Action: EDF undertook to provide further information to the next meeting of the Dungeness SSG on 18th May 2022.

6.7 Q: Decommissioning at Dungeness A station site is proceeding well. Is there any reason why the site couldn't be put forward for redevelopment or will it have to wait for the B station to be defueled?

A: There is no reason that, depending on ownership of the land, a decommissioned site, or areas of land no longer required within that site, cannot be put up for redevelopment.

Comment: land around EDF sites could be made available for renewable projects as well as new nuclear.

6.8 Q: What work is being done to ensure skills and experience aren't lost, specifically regarding the closure of Hinkley Point B and the start-up of Hinkley Point C?

A: EDF is engaging with staff on this topic. Hinkley Point C is due to start generation in 2026 which will coincide with the completion of defuelling of Hinkley Point B. C site is already seeking to attract staff from the B site and we are carefully managing the shift through our HR team.

6.9 Q: Can you explain how the new approach to decommissioned being trialled at Trawsfynydd will impact on the decommissioning of the AGR stations?

A: Our strategy for decommissioning Magnox stations has been to clear sites but leave the reactor and put it into storage for many decades (Care and Maintenance). We achieved this at Bradwell in November 2018. Learning from that experience has led us to question whether it is the best approach, so now we are looking at each site on specific basis. We will trial this new approach at Trawsfynydd. It will be the first place we take a Magnox reactor apart, and we are developing the programme for this work. We will use the learning from carrying out reactor decommissioning at Trawsfynydd to refine our approach at other sites.

6.10 Q: Can you explain how Sizewell B fits into this?

A: The revised arrangements agreed last year relate to the AGR stations not Sizewell B as this is a PWR station. Its current closure date is 2035, though EDF aspire to keep it operating until the 2050s. Because of that difference in timing, and the difference in technologies, it wasn't included in this agreement. Sizewell B doesn't have the same defuelling requirements as the AGR stations and can be decommissioned more promptly.

6.11 Q: If all ILW is being moved to Sellafield, will community benefits be awarded to the community for hosting this waste on behalf of the nation?

A: There are already a number of agreements in place between NDA and the district and county councils. These will pass to the new local authority following the changes in May 2023.

6.12 Q: What are the plans for disposal of the graphite from reactor cores?

A: At present EDF's decommissioning strategy is for Care and Maintenance so the graphite would be stored in the reactor core for a period of quiescence. Magnox's approach for their stations has moved to one which includes rolling decommissioning with individual plans being drawn up for each site. Regardless of that, graphite will not be removed from any reactor some quite some time so will initially stay on site. Ultimately it will go the GDF for disposal. There is still work to do on developing the programme for this workstream.

6.13 Q: Where AGR stations are co-located with Magnox stations to what extent are you looking to coordinate use of facilities across both sites, for example with the storage of spent fuel.

A: We are looking at where it will be possible to share facilities, subject to any necessary regulatory approvals. It will save money and is a more sustainable approach.

7. Phil Matthews, Nuleaf's Executive Director, thanked the presenters and local authority representatives for attending. He noted that the issue of engagement with local authorities had been raised in the Public Accounts Committee hearing on 7th February following an evidence submission by Nuleaf, and he was pleased to note that David Peattie, CEO of NDA Group, had confirmed the importance of engaging with local government. He noted that the topics discussed and issues raised today chimed with the seven key issues around the decommissioning of the AGR stations identified by Nuleaf in the Briefing Paper¹ produced in 2020.

8. Cllr Riddle thanked everyone for attending. He noted that participants were keen to work with BEIS, EDF, NDA and Magnox as the strategy and decommissioning programme developed. He thanked them for attending the meeting.

9. Mr Thompson noted that NDA had three Beacon Projects starting in the new financial year: sustainability, social value and skills. He felt these were areas where NDA and Nuleaf could work together.

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