

**Meeting:** Nuleaf Steering Group  
**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
**Item:** 4  
**Subject:** Updates on national developments in radioactive waste management  
**Author:** Phil Matthews



## 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;
- International news;
- Nuleaf updates; and
- Lisa Chandler.

## Recommendation:

This paper is for noting

### 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 after the May elections.

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 local communities have expressed some interest in SMR development on the Dounreay and Torness sites.

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.

Large volumes of non-radioactive waste will be generated from decommissioning and some of this will be hazardous, including significant quantities of asbestos.

Following the TOG, Koulis Efkarpidis of NDA spoke to Nuleaf members at the Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> January. It was stated that the peak generation of non-radioactive wastes from decommissioning is expected in the next decade. There is a recognition that the NDA will have to engage with Waste Planning Authorities at a local level to ensure that this is addressed in Waste and Mineral Plans. The slides from the presentation can be found on Nuleaf's website<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.2 Nuleaf continues to engage with the NDA in their development of a **Town and Country Planning Working Group (TCPWG)**.

Frank Wigley discussed the plans with the RWPG on the 25<sup>th</sup> January, this following on from a meeting of the Working Group at the end of last year which Philip Matthews attended. Nuleaf has highlighted a number of areas where engagement with local planning authorities was required and it has now been agreed that the Working Group will focus on these issues, namely:

- Permitted development rights
- Planning Performance Agreements
- Sustainability – definitions and measures
- Masterplanning / planning frameworks

Nuleaf's Executive Director will attend the next meeting of the TCPWG on the 10<sup>th</sup> March. The NDA has also agreed that local authority planning officers should join the group as it moves forward.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/radioactive-waste-planning-group-meeting-24th-october-2019/>

1.3 Nuleaf submitted a response to the consultation on the **NDA Draft Business Plan 2022-25**. This can be found here<sup>2</sup>.

1.4 The NDA's Waste Division, **Nuclear Waste Services** was launched on the 31<sup>st</sup> January. This brings together the Low-Level Waste Repository Limited, Radioactive Waste Management Limited and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) group's Integrated Waste Management Programme. Adrienne Kelbie has been appointed as Chair to work alongside Chief Executive Officer Corhyn Parr.

The Nuclear Waste Services portfolio includes:

- Major Capital Programmes - Developing a permanent disposal capability for higher-activity UK radioactive wastes in a GDF.
- Waste Operations – Ensuring the continued safe, compliant, and effective management of the Low-Level Waste Repository Site.
- Waste Services - Managing contracts and relationships across the waste cycle.
- Integrated Waste Management Programme – Developing new opportunities and capabilities that help ensure that waste is managed in a more integrated way, from waste generation to disposal.

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, 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>3</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.

1.7 It has been 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.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/policy-communications/consultation-responses-2/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-upgrades-transform-scrabster-harbour>

## 2. UK Government update

2.1 The UK Government and devolved administrations have jointly published a **Radioactive Substances Provisional Common Framework**<sup>4</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 our members. The Guidance has been circulated to Nuleaf planning officers but will not be formally published until after the completion of the upcoming BEIS policy consultation.

2.3 BEIS has notified Nuleaf of a proposal to allow qualifying disposal facilities for low or very low-level radioactive waste of nuclear origin to exit the requirement for nuclear third-party liability if they meet criteria set out by the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency. Once a site exits the nuclear third-party liability regime, it will still be covered by ordinary liability law. There are 4 existing sites that might be eligible to apply:

- Augean sites at Kings Cliffe in Northants and Port Clarence in Teesside
- Suez at Clifton Marsh in Lancashire
- FCC at Lillyhall in Cumbria

The proposed changes will require new legislation and the UK Government has committed to consult on any new regulations. Members will be notified of the consultation when launched and Nuleaf will submit a response.

## 3. Decommissioning of AGR Stations

3.1 Nuleaf held a member meeting on the **Decommissioning of the AGR Stations** on the 9<sup>th</sup> February. This was very well attended by local authorities from across England and Scotland, demonstrating significant interest in the issue. Following presentations by BEIS, EDF and NDA and Magnox a range of questions

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<sup>4</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)

were raised, with a focus on socio-economic issues and the need for integrated working between A and B sites (and with new nuclear where that is occurring). A note of the meeting has been drafted and the presentations are available on Nuleaf's website<sup>5</sup>.

3.2 The **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** held an evidence session on the 7<sup>th</sup> February as part of their current enquiry into the Future of the AGRs. Nuleaf responded to the call for evidence and our submission was referenced by the Committee in their questioning of the panel. The evidence session can be viewed here<sup>6</sup>.

3.3 Hunterston B nuclear power station ceased generation permanently in January 2022 after 46 years of operation, 21 years longer than originally envisaged<sup>7</sup>. The station on 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. Once verified fuel free by the regulators, the site will 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. International news

4.1 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 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.

4.2 A spike in radiation levels around the **Chernobyl nuclear plant** has been recorded, following its seizure by Russian troops<sup>9</sup>. Levels rose at one point to 20 times normal, caused by contaminated soil being disturbed by military vehicles. The

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/meetings-events/other-meetings/>

<sup>6</sup> [Future of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors - Committees - UK Parliament](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/committees-public-accounts-committee-2020-2024/future-of-the-advanced-gas-cooled-reactors/)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-59894688>

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

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-60528828>

higher levels were near to the reactor itself and are the equivalent of 5 times what a person receives on a transatlantic flight.

Prof Claire Corkhill, a member of CoRWM and an academic at Sheffield University, stated that the rise was '*quite localised*'. She commented '*The increased movement of people and vehicles in and around the Chernobyl zone will have kicked up radioactive dust that's on the ground, Provided there's no further movement, it should decrease again over the next couple of days.*'

The **Nuclear Free Local Authorities** have published a briefing, setting out their views on the potential impact of the conflict in Ukraine on nuclear power plants and the scope for nuclear escalation<sup>10</sup>.

## 5. Nuleaf updates

5.1 Following an approach from Copeland Borough Council, Nuleaf circulated information on a member of the Nuclear Graduates scheme who was seeking a six-month secondment in a local authority or environmental regulator. Members showed a significant level of interest in this, and a number of offers were made to the graduate.

Becoming a full sponsor for the Nuclear Graduates scheme would appear to be prohibitively expensive for local authorities, but Nuleaf is exploring if there are other ways to become engaged. Members views and comments on this are welcome.

## 6. Lisa Chandler

6.1 Nuleaf received the very sad news than Lisa Chandler of East Suffolk Council passed away suddenly following a fall at home. Lisa had been an active member of Nuleaf over many years. She was greatly liked and respected by all and valued for her dedication and contribution to our discussions.

Her colleagues at East Suffolk Council have been inundated with messages for her husband Darren and two children, Toby and Paige, including those from Nuleaf members.

Lisa's funeral was held in Ipswich Crematorium on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March. Nuleaf made a donation to the MS Society as requested by her family. An obituary of Lisa was published in the Lowestoft Journal<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A341-NB227-The-potential-impact-of-the-conflict-in-Ukraine-24.2.22.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lowestoftjournal.co.uk/news/obituaries/lisa-was-involved-in-sizewell-c-project-8669942>