

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 15th September 2022
Item: 7
Subject: Local authority representation at Steering Group meetings
Author: Philip Matthews



Introduction

Local Government in England is undergoing significant change, with the creation of fewer, unitary local authorities. A reduction in the number of local authorities could impact on Nuleaf in terms of meeting participation. This paper offers a proposal as to how Nuleaf might address this situation.

Recommendations:

1. That more than one Elected Member from each member local authority be able to receive information and participate in the Steering Group and other Nuleaf meetings.
2. Member authorities should nominate an official appointed representative - only he/she will be able to vote at meetings or stand for office. Other Elected Members from member authorities and council officers will also be welcome to attend meetings.
3. That Article 10 of the Nuleaf Constitution be amended to clarify this. It is proposed that the new Article 10 should read: *'Member authorities will nominate an official appointed representative. Only the official elected representative will be able to vote at meetings or stand for office. Other Elected Members and officers from member authorities will also be able to receive communications and to attend meetings. Those wishing to do so should notify the Nuleaf Secretariat.'*

1. Local authority representation at Steering Group

Recent years have seen major changes in local Government in England, with a reduction in the number of local authorities through the creation of unitary structures in many areas. This process is continuing.

In terms of active Nuleaf members, new unitary councils have been formed in Dorset and Northamptonshire, with unitary authorities in Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness and Somerset due in 2023.

This trend presents challenges for Nuleaf. Issues for our network include:

- The UK's nuclear decommissioning and waste management infrastructure will be covered by fewer councils, meaning that Nuleaf may have fewer contributing member authorities. For example, the new Somerset Council will take the place

of three contributing member authorities – Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council.

- New local authorities will often be larger in area. This could mean that the centre of power and decision making may be more removed from nuclear communities.
- Some local authorities will host a considerable number of nuclear facilities. As an example, the new Cumberland authority will host Sellafield, the LLWR and three of the four GDF Community Partnerships. These facilities may cover a number of electoral wards and it will be the responsibility of more than one Elected Member to represent the views of those impacted by these facilities.
- Some of Nuleaf's most long standing Elected Members are unlikely to be selected as the Nuleaf representative of their new authorities. Thus, the organisation will lose a lot of experience and insight.

It has been standard practice for each Nuleaf member authority to nominate only one councillor to attend our meetings. However, the Constitution does not stipulate that only a single Elected Member may attend meetings (see Appendix 1). Some local authorities have, on occasion, sent more than one Elected Member to Steering Group.

It is therefore proposed that the Nuleaf Steering Group formally recognises that member local authorities are able to send more than one Elected Member to meetings. Member councils should nominate their official Elected representative. Other Elected Members may attend meetings should they wish to do so.

It should be noted that:

- Regardless of the number of Elected Members attending Steering Group, each contributing member authority will only have one vote. That vote will be cast by the official nominee of each contributing local authority
- As is the case at present, more than one officer from each member authority will be able to attend Steering Group and other meetings (though this may not be possible at in-person meetings).

Appendix 1: Nuleaf Constitution

With regard to meeting attendance, our Constitution states the following:

Article 8. Contributing and corresponding member authorities are entitled to attend (a) Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and (b) quarterly Steering Group (SG) meetings. Only contributing member authorities are entitled to vote at AGMs and SG meetings.

Article 10. Member authorities will nominate councillor and officer contacts for receipt of information and invitations to meetings.