

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT



Report to RWPG, 24th January 2023

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

- NDA Group update;
- UK Government update;
- Small Modular Reactors (SMRs);
- Fusion Power;
- Regulatory update; and
- International news.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 The NDA has published its **Draft Business Plan 2023-2026**¹ for consultation. Nuleaf has prepared a response and circulated it to members for comment (comments by 31st January please). The closing date for responses to the consultation is the 6th February.

1.2 The NDA has published the results of its annual **stakeholder survey**². A total of almost 900 people provided their views through phone interviews and an online questionnaire. Overall, the survey showed that perceptions of the NDA are improving, with 64% of respondents stating they would speak positively of the Authority and 89% believing the NDA acts in an open and transparent way.

1.3 An **Integrated Waste Management (IWM) TOG** meeting is being held on the 24th January at the same time as this Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG). The agenda for the meeting highlights a range of work that is underway of relevance to local planning authorities. This includes an NDA Strategic Review of non-radiological waste inventories and the development of a Strategic Position Paper on asbestos. Further information on these and other relevant workstreams will be shared with this group at future meetings.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-draft-business-plan-2023-to-2026-for-consultation>

² [Survey reflects increasingly positive stakeholder's view of NDA - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

1.4 Following the joint meeting between the RWPG and the **NIGLQ-Planning Group** on the 8th November, members provided a range of comments which have been fed back to NDA. These are noted in Appendix 1. Nuleaf is in discussion with NDA on how to continue to develop engagement between Local Planning Authorities and NIGLQ-P. More information will be provided soon.

1.5 Jonathan Cook of Copeland Borough Council attended a meeting of the **Integrated Waste Management Industry Forum** in Manchester on the 6th December and noted a range of updates and points of interest including the following:

- Nuclear Waste Services is currently preparing a corporate strategy and a road map for the organisation to 2030.
- The much-delayed BEIS Policy consultation on radioactive waste and decommissioning is expected to be launched early in 2023 though no date has been set. Among other things the consultation will seek comment on proposals for Near Surface Disposal and in situ disposal of low-level radioactive material.
- EDF is in the process of establishing a landfill disposal route for VLLW rubble from dismantling AGRs. They plan to test the strategy at two stations then roll out across the remaining sites.
- A decision has been taken that Hinkley Point C will adopt dry storage of spent fuel rather than wet storage.
- Hinkley Point C is exploring with Sizewell C and other nuclear developers the creation of a formal new build focused industry group to share information and best practice.
- A Magnox/EDF synergies group has been established that is examining opportunities to optimise use of existing facilities and reduce the need to build new stores.

1.6 Magnox has confirmed that it is considering burying very low-level waste below ground at the **Trawsfynydd** site³. The waste will be generated from the demolition of the sites cooling ponds and comprises rubble, scrap metal, foundations and soil.

Site director Angharad Raynor stated 'If we were able to transport the material to another site, within the UK, this would mean over 2,000 lorry loads of rubble going across our roads, in our communities.' Magnox plans to submit an application to the regulators in September 2023 and has committed to engagement with the local community. Any decision on this proposal isn't expected until 2025.

³ [Nuclear power: Radioactive waste to be buried at Gwynedd plant - BBC News](#)

2. UK Government update

2.1 Staff involved in nuclear decommissioning are among the groups of workers covered by new UK Government legislation that seeks to require minimum levels of service and to restrict the ability to strike⁴.

2.2 BEIS has published a range of Policy Statements to accompany the **Energy Security Bill** including one on **excluded disposal sites** for radioactive waste⁵. The Bill makes provision to allow disposal facilities for such wastes to exit the requirements for nuclear third-party liability. There are currently 6 sites for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste in the UK and only 4 of them, all in England, would be eligible to apply for the exclusion. BEIS anticipate that between 1 and 3 new sites may be constructed in the next decade.

The stated aim of the change is to cut costs for operators and ensure that the UK has enough suitable facilities into the future.

3. Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

3.1 Developers have submitted six new SMR designs for approval in the UK through the **Generic Design Assessment (GDA)** process⁶. The designs have been developed by the established firms GE-Hitachi and Holtec and by four new companies: X-Energy, Newcleo, UK Atomics and GMET. These companies join Rolls Royce which has already begun the formal GDA process for its SMR design.

3.2 **Rolls-Royce** has published a siting assessment of existing nuclear power plant sites that could potentially host SMRs and has identified 4 NDA owned sites as priorities⁷ with scope for up to 15GW of capacity. Two of the sites - Trawsfynydd and land neighbouring the Sellafield site - are within the control of the NDA. The two other sites - Wylfa and Oldbury - are on NDA land leased to Horizon Nuclear Power.

In the last two weeks a team from Rolls Royce has met with stakeholders and members of the community around the Oldbury and Berkeley sites⁸. Meanwhile, Solway Community Power Company (SCPC) has been established in Cumbria with

⁴ [Strikes bill: Unions criticise plans as unworkable - BBC News](#)

⁵ [Energy Security Bill: policy statements and draft regulations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶ [SMR developers submit 6 designs for UK approval \(imeche.org\)](#)

⁷ [Study identifies potential Rolls-Royce SMR sites : New Nuclear - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](#)

⁸ [More nuclear power could come to South Gloucestershire \(planetradio.co.uk\)](#)

the aim of securing land for Rolls Royce SMRs and encourage investors in any new nuclear station⁹. SCPC is headed by former Sellafield Chief Executive Paul Foster.

3.3 In addition to Rolls Royce, a second company has expressed an interest in developing a SMR at **Trawsfynydd**¹⁰. Balfour Beatty has signed a MoU with Holtec to develop plans for a pressurised light water reactor and has identified three potential locations – with Oldbury and Heysham being identified along with the Welsh site.

Cwmni Egin, a development company established by the Welsh Government has stated that it is in discussions with a number of technology providers and is 'technology agnostic.'

4. Fusion Power

4.1 South Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission to General Fusion's **Fusion Demonstration Plant** at the Culham Campus. When construction is complete, General Fusion will lease the building from UKAEA. The facility is expected to be commissioned in 2026 and fully operational by early 2027.

The UKAEA's CEO Ian Chapman commented 'The UKAEA welcomes this milestone as it aligns with our strategy to create clusters that accelerate innovation in fusion and related technologies, and support public-private partnerships to thrive'. UKAEA is also developing STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production) at West Burton in Nottinghamshire. This is due to begin operating by 2040.

5. Regulatory update

5.1 Nuleaf's Executive Director met representatives of the Environment Agency on the 9th and 25th November to discuss their work on decommissioning and waste management. The Agency is keen to engage with Nuleaf around their developing site level work driven by the **Guidance on Requirements for Release from Radioactive Substance Regulation (GRR)** and has agreed to join the January Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) meeting to discuss this.

5.2 The Environment Agency has announced that it has varied the permit for the **Brockham landfill site** in Surrey to allow liquid waste from oil and gas operations

⁹ [Solway Community Power Company hopes to bring new reactors to Cumbria | News and Star](#)

¹⁰ [Second company reveals plans for a new nuclear power plant at Trawsfynydd \(nation.cymru\)](#)

to be brought to the site and injected into a former well¹¹. The liquid is expected to contain some NORM (Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material) and the storage of solid and liquid radioactive waste will be permitted on the site for up to three months.

Surrey County Council has informed the EA that the company that operates the site does not have planning permission to accept the import of water for reinjection.

5.3 Nuleaf responded to the ONR's recent consultation on its draft **Openness and Transparency Policy**. The response was via an online form and so can't be shared with members.

5.4 At the request of members, a meeting with ONR has been arranged for the 7th February to discuss **nuclear security issues**. The meeting is being held online between 13.00 and 14.00 and an invitation has been sent out.

6. International news

6.1 Nuleaf's Executive Director took part in an online meeting of the extended Steering Committee of GMF Europe on the 12th January.

At the meeting, Swedish delegates reported that their newly elected Government has decided to abolish the local safety committees (local fora for engagement) around some nuclear sites and is also considering cutting financial support for NGOs. This has left the municipalities there very surprised, especially since the Swedish Government has recently proposed amending legislation to enable a significant expansion of new nuclear power at both existing and new sites¹².

It was also announced that Halden municipality in Norway, which hosts a decommissioning research reactor, has joined GMF. The network is in dialogue with local authorities in Estonia and Poland about membership.

Finally, it has been confirmed that the annual IAEA meeting on at local engagement in nuclear will be held in the week of the 16th to 20th October and will focus on radioactive waste management. Nuleaf has participated in past meetings and plans to engage in this event.

¹¹ [Consent for importing radioactive waste for disposal at Brockham – DRILL OR DROP?](#)

¹² [Changes to Swedish law proposed to enable nuclear new build : Nuclear Policies - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](#)

Appendix 1: Feedback to NDA on joint RWPG/NIGLQ-P meeting, 9th November 2022.

1. The meeting was a good opportunity for planning practitioners to have dialogue with those directly involved with NDA policy and those who will be making applications as required. This level of interaction is long overdue and should be worthwhile for both parties.
2. The local plans should be the starting point i.e. it is a plan led process. At present it seems the perception of the NDA/Magnox is that land use planning will fit around their aspirations – not the other way round. By putting land use planning at the centre, NDA would have a better process and would be provided with a range of evidence about the local economy, environment and health and wellbeing of the communities it keeps saying are integral to its mission.
3. Members commented that it was disappointing that the planners were not invited to discuss some of the fundamental legal issues with NIGLQ-P. There was much in Part 1 of the meeting (before Nuleaf joined), that our members could have helped with and queried at the same time. In particular, there was discussion of master planning, Permitted Development Rights and EIADR. These are all crucial areas for local authority planning officers and our officers view is that if the NDA want to avoid pitfalls, delays and disagreements down the line, the dialogue should start now. Nuleaf/local authorities/NDA really should be aiming for closer ties and more positive collaboration.
4. A specific example was given by one of our officers regarding Permitted Development rights. They had spoken to Magnox on several occasions before but Magnox's response has been that Magnox had PD rights under the General Permitted Development Order. Our officer's view was that this wasn't the case and the legal analysis supported the Local Authority view.
5. Various comments were made on the regularity of engagement. It was felt that it was important that these meetings did not duplicate effort and time. Some felt that meeting around 4 times per year, as was suggested, seemed appropriate. Others commented that it could be difficult to cover such a large agenda and build relationships if the meetings were this infrequent. One suggestion made was that NIGLQ-P could prepare papers on relevant issues and circulate in advance. Nuleaf members would then have time to consider in advance leading to better discussion at meetings.
6. It was felt, from a Nuleaf point of view, that the hosting of a RWPG on the same day as NIGLQ made for a long meeting and resulted in some items being rushed. In future it might be better not to hold the meetings on the same day.
7. It was stressed that the NIGLQ-P should be focussed on the interface between planners and NDA that adds value. It should not be used by NDA Group as a means of bypassing engagement with the Nuleaf Radioactive Waste Planning Group.
8. It would be useful to have a list of the members of the NIGLQ -P and their contact details and for NUleaf to share our members details with NIGLQ-P. This could help dialogue outside formal meetings.

9. There seemed to be some thoughts about forming subgroups and sharing experience. Members were in general supportive of this.