

**Meeting:** Nuleaf Steering Group  
**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
**Item:** 4  
**Subject:** Discussion on relationship with NNLAG  
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## Introduction:

This report provides an update to members on recent discussions that have been held with NNLAG, the NDA and NFLA on the remit of Nuleaf, our relationship with NNLAG and our ability to engage across the whole nuclear fuel cycle.

**Recommendation:** No recommendation is made at this stage. The paper is intended to inform a Steering Group discussion.

Members are invited to offer their views on the three possible options under consideration – No Change; Shared Secretariat or Single Body (see Section 3 of the paper) and advise the Secretariat on any next steps.

## 1. Context

In 2021, and at the request of members, Nuleaf explored the possibility of closer working with the **New Nuclear Local Authority Group (NNLAG)**, another Special Interest Group (SIG) of the LGA.

Following dialogue with members of Nuleaf and others, it was agreed at the September 2021 Steering Group to continue to work closely with NNLAG on areas of common interest while remaining constitutionally distinct bodies.

That meeting reaffirmed that Nuleaf should continue to engage in new nuclear issues in line with our constitution (See Annex 1), which states '*Nuleaf's remit encompasses all aspects of the management of the UK's nuclear legacy. This includes the implications for legacy management of any developments that are likely to impact on that management.*' A Concordat, signed in 2012, sets out the relationship between Nuleaf and NNLAG and supports joint working where appropriate.

In recent months NNLAG members (many of whom are also active in Nuleaf) have approached the Executive Director and asked that we look again at the question of whether there would be benefits, to Nuleaf and NNLAG, of a change in the relationship

between the two bodies. This new dialogue has been driven by a number of factors, namely that:

- The UK Government's plans for a large new nuclear sector have become better defined with a commitment to establish Great British Nuclear (GBN) and to develop a pipeline of new nuclear projects.
- These new nuclear projects are likely to be Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), while fusion and AMR projects may also emerge. Their development presents a different range of challenges for local authorities than the large nuclear stations that have been the focus of NNLAG to date.
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Cwmni Egino, a company tasked with supporting the development of SMRs at Trawsfynydd. The MoU signals a change in the NDA's relationship to new nuclear development. It is likely to be replicated at other sites.
- Active engagement between new nuclear developers and Nuleaf member local authorities is growing. NNLAG is limited by its lack of a full-time secretariat and is thus not able to fully support local authority interests related to new nuclear development.

This paper updates members on recent discussions have been held with NNLAG, the NDA and Nuclear Free Local Authorities. The main points of an earlier dialogue with the Local Government Association (LGA) are also noted where appropriate.

## **2. Update on recent discussions**

An online meeting was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> January, involving Nuleaf's Chair and secretariat, along with a number of officers involved in NNLAG. All the officers involved are either personally active in Nuleaf or are from local authorities that are contributing members. A presentation by Nuleaf's Executive Director was followed by a discussion. Key points noted were:

- The role of NNLAG was not to promote new nuclear power, but rather to ensure that projects were well managed and therefore deliver the best outcomes for local authorities and communities.
- The presence of two local authority networks dealing with nuclear issues was unique to England and Wales. Representative bodies for local authorities in Europe (e.g. AMAC<sup>1</sup> in Spain, KSO<sup>2</sup> in Sweden or ARCICEN<sup>3</sup> in France) and elsewhere (e.g. ECA<sup>4</sup> in the United States and CANHC<sup>5</sup> in Canada) all cover the complete nuclear cycle. Networks in other countries were able to incorporate pro, anti and neutral views on nuclear power.
- NDA is actively looking at the potential re-use of sites for a variety of purposes including, in some cases, new nuclear. As an example, the West

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amac.es/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.karnkraftskommunerna.se/english/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://arcicen.fr/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.energyca.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.canhc.ca/>

Cumbria SSG, which is funded by NDA, had expanded its remit to look at SMRs.

- Fewer elected members engage with NNLAG than in the past. It was felt the mix of elected members and officers in Nuleaf was a positive and such a mix would be helpful in discussions on new nuclear.
- Suffolk County Council is taking over the Chair of NNLAG in April and will be looking at whether the group needs to refocus on skills and jobs. It will also consider who should be attending meetings and whether to broaden the scope to include officers in non-planning roles.
- An integrated network might allow new sources of funding to be accessed that could enhance the secretariat and therefore the support provided. However, care would need to be taken not to jeopardise the current funding that Nuleaf receives from NDA. This has increased in recent years and is based on scrutiny of the NDA's decommissioning and waste management mission.
- If joint working was considered, then it was important to avoid either organisation being diminished. Challenges in terms of staffing and resources would have to be addressed.

Those in the meeting also offered their views on the options under consideration:

1. **No change** - Nuleaf and NNLAG continue to be separate bodies supported by separate secretariats but working together as appropriate.
2. **Shared Secretariat** - Nuleaf and NNLAG remain as separate bodies but both networks are supported by the current Nuleaf secretariat.
3. **Single body** - a merger of the two organisations takes place, creating a single local authority network engaged across the development and generation of nuclear power, its decommissioning and the management of waste arisings.

Overall, it was felt that there were potential benefits to developing a means of working across the nuclear cycle in an integrated way. These included better engagement with the UK and Welsh Government; scope for new funding (though that was not guaranteed); encouraging more local authorities to get involved; and avoiding duplication of meetings or effort.

Some felt that a move towards a shared secretariat was desirable in the first instance; while others believed a full merger would ensure the most benefits. It was recognised that dialogue was required with a range of groups to reassure them; that the views of Nuleaf's main funder, NDA, were important; and that any new forum should be open to, and would benefit from, all points of view.

Following the NNLAG meeting, Nuleaf's Executive Director also spoke with the NDA and NFLA.

- The **NDA** indicated that it values its relationship with Nuleaf and believes that the network has established itself in recent years as a critically important stakeholder for the Authority. The NDA finds the focus on legacy issues helpful and is supportive of Nuleaf being a 'broad church' that offers a range

of perspectives on the NDA mission in decommissioning and remediating its sites. It was recognised that the policy landscape is changing. However, it was noted that the NDA's role isn't to fund scrutiny of new build: the decision-making responsibilities and commitment to local authorities on that currently rests elsewhere and the Authority simply holds land on behalf of the government. It was suggested that discussions about new build will need to take place with GBN when it is established. At the meeting, NDA made a commitment to feedback the discussion to senior management; and also to seek the views of the UK Government on any possible change. It was proposed to hold a further meeting with Nuleaf once this had been done.

- Discussions were also held with the Vice-Chair and Secretary of the **NFLA**. The NFLA view is that Nuleaf was established with Manchester as a founder member on the basis that it would be an organisation through which elected member representatives, both pro- and anti- nuclear, could work on those nuclear legacy issues in which they had a mutual interest. The NFLA believes that their members will not wish to engage in a merged body as this could become increasingly focused on facilitating new nuclear projects, something the NFLA is opposed to.

### **3. Next Steps**

The paper is intended to inform a Steering Group discussion. Members are invited to share their views on whether any next steps are required, and if so, what those should be.

To assist discussion, a detailed analysis of the potential benefits and drawbacks of the three options under consideration is set out in Appendix 2.

## Annex 1: Nuleaf's constitutional position

Nuleaf's **Constitution**<sup>6</sup> enables the organisation to engage in new nuclear issues. Paragraph 3, as amended in September 2021, states: *'Nuleaf's remit encompasses all aspects of the management of the UK's nuclear legacy. This includes the implications for legacy nuclear sites and waste management of any developments that are likely to impact on that management, including proposals for new energy generation, transmission and storage infrastructure.'*

Nuleaf has adopted three 'strategic objectives' on the legacy management implications of potential new build. These are to:

- *seek to ensure that proposals for radioactive waste management and decommissioning of new nuclear power stations are appropriate and do not prejudice effective management of the nuclear legacy;*
- *to promote debate and thinking about the ways in which new build could be developed to the benefit of nuclear legacy management and in accordance with the Polluter Pays Principle, including how a more coordinated 'across site' approach could be taken in locations that have or are proposed to have multiple licensed nuclear sites; and*
- *liaise effectively with NNLAG and with local authorities addressing the radioactive waste management implications of new build and provide assistance as appropriate.*

The organisation also has an agreed **Protocol** with NNLAG, signed off in 2012. This states that: *'Nuleaf and NNLAG will seek to ensure that adequate communication and liaison takes place on issues of mutual interest. The mechanisms are likely to include:*

- *the mutual exchange of Nuleaf Steering Group and NNLAG meeting papers.*
- *the mutual exchange of working and task group papers.*
- *representation at each other's meetings - contact between secretariats as appropriate.'*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/about/constitution/>

## Annex 2: Analysis of different options

	<b>No Change</b>	<b>Shared Secretariat</b>	<b>Single body</b>
<b>Constitution</b>	As now.	<p>Both organisations retain their own constitution. However, amendment will be required to recognise the shared secretariat.</p> <p>A shared secretariat is unlikely to cause any issues with the LGA.</p>	<p>A new constitution would have to be developed.</p> <p>The LGA has indicated that if members of both bodies wish to create a merged Special Interest Group (SIG) they are unlikely to block this. However, Nuleaf member authorities would have the right to lodge a formal objection which would have to be considered by LGA Board.</p>
<b>Remit and influence</b>	As now.	<p>Both organisations continue to have clearly defined and separate remits, though with some potential for added collaborative working or events.</p>	<p>A new local authority nuclear network would be created, covering the whole nuclear life cycle. This would bring England and Wales into line with most other nations in Europe and North America.</p> <p>An integrated body may have greater influence, for example with Government. There could be beneficial synergies e.g. it may facilitate additional work on the community aspects of new nuclear, drawing on the experience that Nuleaf has.</p> <p>However, without additional resources and an expanded secretariat, it may result in the organisation becoming over-stretched and spread too thinly to focus effectively on priority issues.</p>
<b>Staffing</b>	<p>No change to workload. Staff would continue as at present. There would be a reasonable level of security about the provision of current funding for the secretariat. There would be less scope to generate funds from new sources to expand the secretariat.</p> <p>Ahead of the formal launch of GBN, it is unclear how much additional work around SMRs and other new nuclear is</p>	<p>Creates more work for the Nuleaf Secretariat, which already has a demanding workload. Some members and staff may question why they are being asked to take on additional work for no obvious benefit.</p> <p>There may be scope over time to draw on new funding sources to expand the secretariat. However, this is not by any means guaranteed.</p>	<p>By creating a single organisation, this might increase the likelihood of securing new funds that may enable an expansion of the staff team. Would create a single body able to work in a joined-up way across all aspects of nuclear which may offer a better service to members.</p>

	likely. However, given the anticipated expansion of work on new nuclear around NDA sites there could be an enhanced risk of duplication between Nuleaf and NNLAG.		
<b>Funding</b>	<p>Nuleaf has been successful in increasing its funding from the NDA while maintaining local authority contributions. Some may therefore question the desirability of change.</p> <p>The NDA sees benefits to the current remit of Nuleaf with its focus on the NDA's mission including the future incorporation of the AGR transition, the integrated waste strategy and search for a willing community for the GDF.</p> <p>The creation of unitary authorities and pressures on council finances may reduce the number of contributing members of Nuleaf; while councils may find it more difficult to justify separate fees for two bodies working in the nuclear space.</p>	<p>It is unclear if this model would generate any additional finance to support an enhanced joint secretariat. Current funding for NNLAG is far less than for Nuleaf, and there is no guarantee that NNLAG funding would be maintained and flow to Nuleaf.</p> <p>Even if it was, it would not make a significant difference to Nuleaf. For this option to proceed, it will be important that NNLAG demonstrates it can provide sufficient funding to support the extra work that will be required of the Nuleaf secretariat.</p> <p>This model appears unlikely to jeopardise NDA funding for Nuleaf though that is not guaranteed.</p>	<p>A single local authority body on nuclear may be able to maintain existing funding and seek new funds from bodies such as EDF or Great British Nuclear. The UK Government may look favourably on a more integrated body given their interest in all aspects of nuclear generation and decommissioning.</p> <p>At the same time, there is a greater risk than the other options that a body that deals with new nuclear may impact negatively on existing NDA support without any certainty that new funding will be forthcoming. As noted above, the NDA has highlighted these concerns in the discussions to date.</p>
<b>Membership</b>	<p>No change. It would be hoped core members of Nuleaf, including NFLA authorities, would remain engaged.</p> <p>However, some member authorities may feel a unitary body or shared secretariat would offer better value for money and less duplication.</p>	<p>This may present scope for joint hosting of events and the elimination of duplication, something of value to members.</p> <p>NFLA councils may not wish to continue though the fact that Nuleaf and NNLAG would remain separate bodies might lessen this risk.</p>	<p>A forum covering the whole fuel cycle could reflect different points of view and be an effective focus for debate and discussion. This is the case in other countries. However, the NFLA has made clear that it is opposed to such a move and to a change in Nuleaf's current remit.</p> <p>The NDA has stressed that it is keen for the NFLA to remain within Nuleaf, and funds Nuleaf based on its focus on decommissioning and waste management.</p>