

Note of the meeting of the Radioactive Waste Planning Group meeting, 24th January 2023, 10.00 – 12.30, online.

Present:

Rachel Whaley	Cumbria County Council
Eren Balkir	Dorset County Council
Bethany Rance	East Suffolk Council
Terry Burns	Essex County Council
Charlotte Rushmere	Essex County Council
Linda Townsend	Gloucestershire County Council
Doug Bamsey	Sedgemoor District Council
Louise Martin	Somerset County Council
John Burton	Somerset West & Taunton Council
Gillian Ellis-King	South Gloucestershire Council
Ross Walker	Suffolk County Council
Philip Matthews	Nuleaf
Catherine Draper	Nuleaf

Speakers

Rob Allott	Environment Agency
Cathy Scheib	Environment Agency

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 PM welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies were received from Eleanor Godesar -Dorset Council, Richard Outram – Manchester City Council and Heather Morrison - Copeland Borough Council.

2. Note of the meeting held on 8th November 2022

2.1 The meeting note was held to be a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 8th November 2022 and would be posted on the Nuleaf website.

Action: CD

3. Matters arising

3.1 All matters arising were completed and noted in the action list.

4. Presentation by Rob Allott and Cathy Scheib, Environment Agency

4.1 PM welcomed Rob Allott, Legacy and Waste Manager and Cathy Schieb, Nuclear Waste Assessor at the Environment Agency to the meeting.

4.2 Mr Allott gave a presentation on the Guidance for Requirements for Authorisation 2009 (GRA). Key points were:

- The environment agencies are updating the Guidance for Requirements for Authorisation originally published in 2009 and covering the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) and Near Surface Disposal (NSD) in two separate documents.
- The Guidance is now 10 years old and has become out of date in places. Significant applications are expected in the next decade and an updated version will give comfort to communities engaging in the GDF siting process.
- The revised Guidance will cover GDF and NSD in one document and will be more clearly aligned to international standards and government policy, whilst recognising the perspective of the devolved administrations and environment agencies.
- While radiological standards will remain unchanged, new requirements have been introduced and others modified.
- There will be public consultation on the final draft after the local elections in May 2023.
- BEIS will be consulting on revised UK radioactive waste policy in February/March. Areas the Environment Agency (EA) are considering responding on include the drive for sustainable development, reducing the generation of radioactive waste, recycling materials. EA are concerned that research and development has been omitted from the revised policy.

4.3 Ms Scheib gave a presentation on the Guidance on Requirement for Release from Radioactive Substances Regulation (GRR). Key points were:

- The GRR had been developed jointly by the environment agencies in 2018.

- There are two key deliverables in the GRR: Waste Management Plans (WMP) and Site-wide Environmental Safety Case (SWESC). About two-thirds of sites have produced these to date.
- GRR focuses on optimisation of waste management: site operators are expected to go through an options assessment for each waste stream.
- Criteria for on-site disposal is set out in GRR.
- Trawsfynydd and Winfrith are the 'lead and learn' sites. Applications are expected this year for the on-site disposal of two reactor basements at Winfrith and the disposal of the ponds complex at Trawsfynydd.

Slides are posted on Nuleaf's website. The meeting opened up to questions:

4.4 Q: *Do you have a sense of scale of NORM wastes?*

A: The figures we use are from the UK radioactive waste inventory. It is updated every three years, but there is uncertainty in the data. EA is considering commissioning a consultant to pull information together.

4.5 Q: *What, if any, is the direct role of local planning authorities in the production of Waste Management Plans (WMP) and Site Wide Environmental Safety Cases (SWESC)?*

A: The WMP and SWESC is generated by the operator and the expectation is that they will undertake stakeholder engagement in the development of those materials. Local government is specified as a stakeholder in the GRR.

4.6 Q: *In the absence of lifetime plans for each site there is a vacuum of information. If changes to site end states are proposed in that waste will be left on site, will there be engagement with local authorities and local communities?*

A: It is the responsibility of the operator to undertake early engagement with local communities. Every disposal on site will require a permit and the environment agencies will undertake a standard consultation as part of the permitting process. We acknowledge that the lack of up-to-date lifetime plans is a problem and that there needs to be clear engagement on end states. We will continue to press for lifetime plans to be produced and would encourage you to do same.

4.7 Q: *Will the decommissioning strategy for the AGR fleet be for on-site disposal where appropriate?*

A: Current EDF lifetime plans and decommissioning strategy are for site clearance. However, EDF is beginning to look at whether this is the right thing to do and how end states can be reframed to be more sustainable. We are keen to ensure that more waste doesn't arise than necessary and will monitor EDF's proposals. New build stations are planning on not creating waste which will need onsite disposal. more practical. In other industries leaving concrete structure in ground is standard.

4.8 PM thanked Mr Allott and Ms Scheib for attending the meeting. It was agreed that further sessions would be arranged on as necessary basis.

5. Update on developments in radioactive waste management

5.1 PM took the meeting through the paper which had been circulated in advance and which gave updates on: the NDA, UK Government, Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), fusion, regulatory matters and international news.

5.2 PM advised the meeting that although the feedback received as part of the NDA Stakeholder Survey had been generally positive, there had been some criticism, notably that the NDA needs to do more to reach a wider audience, that it's communications need to address technical issues, that it needs to demonstrate how it delivers value for money, and that there is great emphasis on activities in West Cumbria and needs more thought on how it engages with its other sites.

5.3 The long-awaited consultation on the review of UK radioactive waste policy is expected shortly. The Welsh translation of the document is currently being prepared. This review will provide support for near-surface disposal of higher activity wastes and for on-site disposal of low-level wastes.

5.4 Clarification was provided that not all the land around the Oldbury site was leased to Horizon by NDA. A portion of it was in Horizon's ownership.

5.5 Concerns were raised about the lack of information regarding waste arisings and disposal routes from SMRs and AMRs, and engagement with communities at potential sites. It was proposed the Nuleaf should consider approaching vendors/operators regarding giving a presentation to Nuleaf.

Action: PM

6. Update on the GDF siting process

6.1 PM took the meeting through the paper which had been circulated prior to the meeting and gave updates on the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process; CoRWM, regulatory news and the international situation.

6.2 The move, by the Swedish government, away from supporting community engagement in the siting process for new nuclear was noted with concern.

7. Local site updates

Somerset West & Taunton: A bus carrying workers to the Hinkley Point C site had overturned causing a number of injuries. This highlighted how issues relating to new build were not only related to the site. Nuleaf had written to the new Somerset authority and had received a positive response regarding membership of Nuleaf. Hinkley Point C had been approached by the municipality of Borsele in the Netherlands. They were keen to visit as, following a moratorium on new nuclear for many years, it had been announced that they would host a new nuclear station. All the Somerset authorities would support their visit.

Somerset: Following EIADR consultation on Hinkley Point B and engagement by EDF on their decommissioning proposals, EDF are looking at stakeholder responses. A second round of consultation will take place over the summer. EDF's decommissioning strategy is for sites to go into Care and Maintenance. However, they will move to Magnox for decommissioning following defuelling. There is a lot of activity at the three sites and Somerset County Council (SCC) is trying to keep in touch internally and understand the implications across the sites. SCC has advised the operators that they need to coordinate their communications to avoid confusing the community.

Sedgemoor: Concerns had been raised regarding the transportation of spent fuel from Hinkley Point B. Vehicles transporting flasks to the railhead have to negotiate a narrow street. Vehicle movements have increased to around 3 per week.

Essex: BEIS had approached Essex CC regarding engagement with Maldon DC on new nuclear issues. ECC had advised that this was difficult to undertake until new national guidance on new nuclear had been published. Magnox are likely to approach other sites with ILW stores regarding storage of empty ILW containers. They had sought ECCs support in this approach.

East Suffolk: The council received and determined an EIA screening request for the demolition of the turbine hall at Sizewell A. Taking a precautionary approach the council screened the development as EIA – on the information provided the council could not rule out potential adverse impacts relating to designated sites, noise and vibration, and cumulative impact with other planned/known development (Sizewell B and C, and other energy projects).

Dorset: A draft restoration management plan is expected shortly. This will give further information about decommissioning proposals. There had been some stakeholder engagement to support the development of the plan, but this had been poorly attended. A decision had yet to be made on which sections of the discharge pipeline which runs from Winfrith to the coast would be left in situ. Magnox needs to understand the water table in the area. Permission has been sought to drill boreholes in a SSSI area on a firing range. The council had considered internally

whether this was covered under permitted development rights. It was noted that Magnox generically assumed permission was covered under permitted development rights, but this should be scrutinised rigorously.

JB advised he had dealt with an application previously and would forward to EB. The topic may be suitable for consideration at a future meeting.

South Gloucestershire: Discussions are on-going regarding a large former lagoon which NDA has undertaken to restore for bird habitat. Demolition of a substation and other large building has taken place. Proposals for this year include the demolition of the turbine hall. Suffolk County Council had shared their screening opinion for the demolition of the turbine hall at Sizewell A. Some way of sharing these documents amongst members would be beneficial. Rolls Royce had visited Oldbury and Berkeley sites. There is interest from the host parish for Berkeley and their SSG on learning more about proposals for SMR deployment.

Gloucestershire: A preapplication enquiry had been received regarding the erection of a temporary building to facilitate the dismantling of two reactor safe stores and ancillary buildings. The council had provided fairly positive comments on the proposals. A screening opinion will be provided separately, and GCC had advised Magnox to approach Natural England and the Environment Agency. Gloucestershire CC's Waste Core Strategy is being reviewed. Avison Young have made contact to see if there is scope for interim use for waste purposes.

Cumbria: There was no site update. In regard to the Local Government Review in Cumbria, the Cumbria County Council minerals and waste team were transferring to Westmorland and Furness Council. They would be providing services to Cumberland Council in the short term, but in time each would recruit its own planning staff. Consideration was being given to a new Local Plan. Practically a joint plan would be preferred, but this is unlikely to be acceptable politically.

All other sites had no updates to report.

8. Date of next meeting

8.1 The next meeting will be held online on 10.00 – 12.30, 20th April 2023

9. Any other business

9.1 The meeting was asked if it wished to hold an annual meeting on Emergency Planning. It was agreed that it was preferred that meetings were held as and when the need arose and addressed a specific topic.

9.2 The meeting was asked whether it would find a discussion on EIADR useful. It was noted that planning reforms are likely to address EIADR, but it was felt that there was value in holding a session, and that a wider discussion, without external parties, may be beneficial.

Action: PM/CD

9.3 A financial surplus has been projected for this year which would mean that Nuleaf could again commission a piece of research. It was suggested that research could be carried out into the varying experiences of local authorities regarding the development management applications they receive. Other suggestions would be welcome.

9.4 PM asked if the meeting felt there were any points in the National Planning Policy Framework document (currently out for consultation) which Nuleaf should address. It was agreed that the emphasis in the new NPPF was on housing and that there was no need for Nuleaf to respond.

The meeting closed at 12.26

Action List

24 th January 2023			
Item	Action	By	Outcome
2.1	Post note of the 8 th November 2022 on Nuleaf website subject to amendments.	CD	Done
5.5	Set up meeting re waste arisings and community engagement around SMRs and AMRs	PM	DESNZ and ONR approached. It is hoped this will be held as part of June Steering Group
9.2	Arrange meeting to discuss EIADR and other issues	PM/CD	DESNZ speaking at this meeting on EIADR and EIA. Further session to be arranged if required.