

ITEM 7: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT



Report to RWPG, 31st January 2024

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

- NDA Group update;
- UK Government update;
- Nuleaf news; and
- Regulatory update.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 Philip Matthews and Jonathan Cook attended an online **Critical Enablers (CE) Theme Overview Group (TOG)** meeting on the 11th January. The CE TOG is reviewing the enablers for NDA Strategy in turn. In this meeting key updates were:

Public and Stakeholder Engagement – work is underway to help deliver on the commitment in Strategy 4 to grow engagement with harder to reach groups and young people and to consider new means of engaging local and national stakeholders. Progress has been achieved in NGO engagement through the establishment of an NDA NGO Forum and a similar forum for engagement with NWS on the GDF process.

International Relations – Thomas Rookes has recently taken up the lead role at NDA on this topic, having previously worked at DESNZ. His view was that good progress has been made in recent years on all aspects of this agenda but that there are still many opportunities to further enhance work, particularly in the promotion of the UK supply chain and in ensuring a co-ordinated approach across NDA and with stakeholders. The growing work of Nuleaf with international partners was highlighted.

Strategy 5 process – There is a legal requirement on the Authority to prepare a 5-year strategy and to consult on it and the process of preparing the next iteration (Strategy 5) is underway. This will be published in March 2026 and a range of engagement with stakeholders is planned to help

develop the Strategy. Nuleaf will be part of the Strategy 5 Development Group which will meet regularly from April to September this year, with a public consultation launched in September 2024, running for 12 weeks.

1.2 The NDA has published guidance on **Determining the timing and pace of decommissioning**¹. This sets out the revised approach to prioritisation of sites and how an optimal approach will be decided on for each site. The overall preference is to decommission sites as quickly as possible. However, there is recognition that a number of constraints are likely to slow or defer decommissioning. The NDA has also published its **Mission Progress Report 2023**².

1.4 A consultation on a revised NDA **Social Impact and Communities Strategy** was launched on the 29th November and a link has been circulated to Nuleaf members³. The deadline for submissions is the 21st February 2024. Nuleaf will prepare a draft response and circulate it for comment.

1.5 The NDA is also undertaking a consultation on its **Business Plan 2024-27**⁴. Nuleaf will circulate a draft for comment and will submit the final version by the deadline of the 29th January 2024.

1.6 The Guardian newspaper ran a series of articles in December that were critical of **Sellafield** operations, and covered cyber security⁵, the workplace culture⁶ and the safety of the high hazard facilities⁷. The NDA has responded by challenging some of the allegations made and arguing that other issues were already in the public domain – their response was set out in a letter from CEO David Peattie to the Secretary of State⁸. Interim Sellafield boss Euan Hutton also appeared on the BBC to challenge some of the allegations⁹.

1.7 On the 16th January, Phil Matthews met with Andy Christmas, Group Head of Accommodation at NDA and Andrew Edwards from the NDA Property Team to discuss transport and estate management issues.

The NDA is looking to develop a more aligned approach to estate management and transport issues across all the operating companies with the use of shared working hubs. As an example, Herdus House, which was previously only used by NDA staff,

¹ [Determining the timing and pace of decommissioning - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/determining-the-timing-and-pace-of-decommissioning)

² [The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Mission Progress Report 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nda-social-impact-and-communities-strategy-consultation-nov-2023)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nda-social-impact-and-communities-strategy-consultation-nov-2023>

⁴ [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority: Draft Business Plan 2024 to 2027 for consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-draft-business-plan-2024-to-2027-for-consultation)

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/dec/04/sellafield-nuclear-site-hacked-groups-russia-china>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/dec/06/sellafield-toxic-culture-bullying-harassment-safety>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/dec/05/sellafield-nuclear-site-leak-could-pose-risk-to-public>

⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657c7c3a1c0c2a000d18ce75/CEO_23_-_0089_Letter_to_Secretary_of_State_from_David_Peattie_111223.pdf

⁹ [Sellafield nuclear site boss denies evidence of hacking | BBC News \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

is being opened up for use by those from Sellafield, Nuclear Waste Services and elsewhere in NDA Group.

Work is ongoing to address the NDA Group's net zero carbon targets, both in terms of building energy use and transport. On the latter, a charging strategy for Electric Vehicles (EVs) is in development.

Within West Cumbria, which has the biggest transport challenges, the NDA is seeking to develop a more co-ordinated approach to travel planning across all sites, including Sellafield, LLWR, Herdus House and Albion Court. It is hoped to have further engagement with Cumberland Council on this.

2. UK Government update

2.1 The UK Government has published three key documents intended to support plans to increase nuclear capacity up to four times by 2050. These are:

- The **Civil Nuclear Roadmap** which reconfirms the government's ambition to deploy up to 24 gigawatts nuclear power by 2050¹⁰. It provides high-level timelines and key decision points for a wide range of nuclear technologies over the next decades, including Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs) and GW-scale projects. It covers areas such as siting, regulation, financing, and the supply chain. It also addresses legacy through policies on decommissioning and waste management.
- A consultation on **siting for future nuclear power stations**¹¹. This marks a first step in the process for developing a new nuclear National Policy Statement (NPS) and will run for eight weeks. The consultation will be used to inform the drafting of the NPS document, which will then be subject to further consultation. The NPS will provide a planning policy framework for SMRs and AMRs as well as traditional GW-scale power stations. It will no longer specify potentially suitable locations for nuclear development. However, Government has stated that it is likely that the existing designated nuclear sites will retain many of the inherent positive attributes that make them potentially suitable for consideration for future development.
- A consultation on **alternative routes to market for advanced nuclear projects**.¹² This aims to explore how government can go further and what steps can be taken to enable different routes to market for new Advanced Nuclear Technologies (ANTs), as well as exploring the uses and services they can provide the economy.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-nuclear-roadmap-to-2050>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/approach-to-siting-new-nuclear-power-stations-beyond-2025>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/alternative-routes-to-market-for-new-nuclear-projects>

Nuleaf is likely to respond to the siting consultation. Views of the RWPG on this, and the key points that Nuleaf should raise in our response, are welcome.

2.2 The UK has signed an agreement with the USA, Canada, Japan and France to establish a reliable uranium enrichment and conversion capacity that is intended to end reliance on Russia¹³.

3. Nuleaf news

3.1 The date of Nuleaf's **Annual Gathering 2024** has been provisionally set for 18th and 19th June, to be held in North Wales. Discussions are ongoing with NRS and the NDA, but it is hoped that the meeting will include a site visit to Trawsfynydd, one of the lead and learn sites, and presentations on the socio-economic support the NDA has provided in the area. It is also planned to hold a meeting for Nuleaf's Welsh members during that week.

3.2 Nuleaf's Executive Director was invited to present to the **Cumberland Nuclear Issues Board (NIB)** on the 8th January. The NIB has been established by the new authority to provide guidance and direction on nuclear issues and is Chaired by Council Leader Cllr. Mark Fryer.

3.3 Nuleaf's Chair and Executive Director met Paul Vallance, Director of Communications and Stakeholder Relations, and Dr. Samantha Harris, Director of Shareholder and Stakeholder Relations at the NDA, in Cumbria on the 10th January.

The meeting offered an opportunity to provide an update on how Nuleaf has developed over recent years and discuss issues including funding and reform of local engagement processes. Dr. Harris will be speaking at the next Steering Group meeting on the 13th March.

4. Regulatory update

4.1. The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has commenced a Generic Design Assessment (GRA) for the **Holtec SMR-300** reactor design. The ONR will work with the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales in developing the Assessment and will look at opportunities to draw on work already undertaken internationally¹⁴.

4.2 The ONR has also launched a consultation on the environmental statement submitted by EDF energy as part of their decommissioning plans for the

¹³ [US, Canada, France, Japan, and UK announce plans to mobilise \\$4.2bn for reliable global nuclear energy supply chain - NS Energy \(nsenergybusiness.com\)](#)

¹⁴ [ONR begins new SMR reactor assessment - Office for Nuclear Regulation - News](#)

Hunterston B power station in Ayrshire¹⁵. The deadline for comments is the 28th March.

The statement has been prepared under the **Environmental Impact Assessment for Decommissioning Regulations (EIADR)**. This RWPG meeting will hear a presentation from DESNZ on potential reform of EIADR.

4.3 Dame Judith Hackett has been named as the new interim Chair of the ONR¹⁶.

¹⁵ [Consultation on the EDF Energy Nuclear Generation Ltd EIADR application for consent for the Hunterston B power station \(onr.org.uk\)](https://www.onr.org.uk/consultation/consultation-on-the-edf-energy-nuclear-generation-ltd-eiadr-application-for-consent-for-the-hunterston-b-power-station)

¹⁶ [Dame Judith Hackitt named new ONR interim Chair - Office for Nuclear Regulation - News](https://www.onr.org.uk/news/dame-judith-hackitt-named-new-onr-interim-chair)