

STEERING GROUP MEETING, 14th DECEMBER 2023, 10.00- 15.00

Present:

Cllr David Moore	Cumberland Council (Chair)
Cllr David Blackburn	Leeds City Council (NFLA Vice-Chair)
Cllr Mike Caswell	Somerset Council (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Joseph Ghayouba	Cumberland Council
Cllr Paul Thomas	Folkestone and Hythe Council
Cllr Tracey Henry	Hull County Council
Cllr. Chris Davies	South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Richard Smith	Suffolk County Council
Beverly Alderton-Sambrook	Bassetlaw District Council
Jonathan Cook	Cumberland Council
Eleanor Godesar	Dorset Council
Emma Devereux	East Suffolk Council
Naomi Goold	East Suffolk Council
Bethany Rance	East Suffolk Council
Linda Marsh	Folkestone and Hythe Council
Linda Townsend	Gloucestershire County Council (am only)
Angharad Crump	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Mark Cassidy	Lancaster City Council
Tanya Vaughan	Lincolnshire County Council
Richard Outram	Manchester City Council
Jonathan Holland	North Wales Councils
John Burton	Somerset Council
Louise Martin	Somerset Council
Gillian Ellis-King	South Gloucestershire Council
Ross Walker	Suffolk County Council
Rachel Whaley	Westmorland and Furness Council
Philip Matthews	Nuleaf
Chloe Atkinson	Nuleaf

Speakers

Pip Hatt	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Kirsty Ramsden	Nuclear Restoration Service
Angela Vincent	Nuclear Restoration Service
Chris Keenan	Nuclear Waste Services

1	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES	ACTION
1.1	Apologies were received from Cllr. Daly (East Suffolk Council); Cllr. Riggott (Lancashire County Council); Terry Burns (Essex County Council); Charlotte Rushmere (Essex County Council).	
1.2	Cllr. Moore opened the meeting. He noted that we have an excellent attendance with 26 confirmed attendees and many Elected Members. This was the first Steering Group meeting for Emma Devereux of East Suffolk Council, Mark Cassidy of Lancaster City Council and Tanya Vaughan of Lincolnshire Council. He welcomed them.	
1.3	PM proposed recording the meeting, solely to assist Chloe with the minutes. Any recording will be deleted after the minutes have been transcribed. He asked if there were any objections. There not being any, it was agreed to record proceedings.	CA to record meeting.

2	Minutes held on the 7th of September 2023	ACTION
2.1	PM presented the minutes of the previous Steering Group Meeting. All the Actions for these minutes have been completed or are in hand and will be reported under Matters Arising. All members agreed the minutes are a true and accurate record.	CA to load minutes to Nuleaf website.

3	Matters Arising	ACTION
3.1	PM talked through the Matters Arising. All Nuleaf Actions were discussed have been completed or are in hand.	
3.2	PM confirmed that Sir Nigel Thrift, the Chair of CoRWM, would be speaking at the March 2024 Steering Group meeting.	Complete.
3.3	PM had twice extended an invitation to Great British Nuclear to speak to Nuleaf but had not received a response. He committed to trying again.	PM to contact GBN again to request a presentation. PM to invite NNLG members to any future event.
3.4	As requested, PM had approached NWS to ask whether there is an agreed voting age for the GDF Test of Public Support (ToPS). In response NWS had noted that there was no requirement for the ToPS to be via a referendum but, if it was, it was up to the Community Partnership to define the voting age as 16 or 18.	Complete.

4	Update on national developments in radioactive waste management	ACTION
4.1	Pip Hatt of NDA updated the Group on recent changes to the comms and engagement team. She noted that Sam Harris sent	

	her apologies for this meeting but would be joining the March 2024 Steering Group.	
4.2	<p>Pip addressed recent coverage of Sellafield operations in The Guardian newspaper. She noted that much of what was in the articles was either already in the public domain or was inaccurate or speculative.</p> <p>Sellafield had provided a robust and detailed response and had challenged a number of the claims made by the newspaper. They also offered the journalist concerned a visit to the site but were disappointed that she didn't take up this opportunity and had not given Sellafield's response enough weight in their coverage. They have issued rebuttals which has been placed on the .gov.uk website. The Chair of Sellafield, Tony Meggs has written to the editor of the paper to express his concerns.</p> <p>Since the articles, Theo Leggett of the BBC has visited Sellafield. NDA hoped that his report will provide a different perspective on the current situation. It should be aired in the coming few days.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Pip and invited questions.</p>	
4.3	<p><i>Question: To follow on from that, does that mean that the allegations about login details being viewed on Countryfile and other poor practice are true?</i></p> <p>I don't have a line-by-line rebuttal with me, but we wouldn't deny that there have been some failings and that there is clear room for improvement in some areas. What is important is to recognise that the most serious allegations are unsubstantiated. More detailed rebuttals are on the Sellafield website if members are interested in reading them.</p> <p>The Chair commented that many of those living around Sellafield had been disappointed by the Guardian coverage and are pleased to see the NDA rebut and challenge things which are not accurate.</p> <p><i>Question: Can you clarify if ONR have decided to do any inspection or investigation on cybersecurity on the back of the Guardian claims?</i></p> <p>We obviously have ongoing dialogue with the ONR about safety and security at all NDA sites but there has been no need for any enhanced scrutiny since the Guardian articles.</p>	
4.4	Pip then moved on to internal changes around Comms and Engagement in NDA. She noted that John McNamara had moved on secondment to Great British Nuclear (GBN) and that	

Simon Napper had returned to his former role at NWS. This had left the team at NDA rather depleted and so Pip has been seconded from NRS for one year. They are also looking to bolster the team through recruitment.

The Comms and Government Relations Teams have been merged, with Sam Harris now heading up a combined Shareholder and Stakeholder Relations Team. Within this new structure the relationships with Nuleaf and the SSGs remains of central importance.

Question: Does your move to NDA not leave the NRS team rather depleted and if so what is being done about that?

While Bill Hamilton is to some degree now working on his own on stakeholder engagement at a national level, there is the Comms team (Kirsty and Angela are speaking to Nuleaf this afternoon) and also a number of local and regionally based staff. There has been recruitment of leads for Scotland and Wales as well as the south-west. They are looking to cover the post of a regional lead for the south-east which isn't filled. The regional leads work to Angela rather than Bill.

Question: I think it's disappointing that stakeholder engagement and government relations have been merged, as there is a risk of dilution. Stakeholder engagement was seen as a key pillar of the NDA when formed and David Peattie has been very clear about its importance. This is an issue we will also raise with Sam Harris when she comes.

I think that part of the issue is that we have a number of new people in to support stakeholder engagement but perhaps they aren't known or visible to your members yet. We are also trying to get the right balance between in person and virtual events and some recent events have been well attended and got good feedback, particularly the recent online stakeholder summit. We are trying innovation such as the roadshows we held in 2023.

Comment: The stakeholder summit was excellent, and the recent Mission Progress Report was very useful. The roadshows were less relevant.

Question: As I understand it there will be an in-person Stakeholder Summit in Cumberland in 2024. From a Nuleaf perspective it would be a big step forward if we were involved in helping set the agenda for this. Can this be done?

The initial thinking is that there will be a face-to-face event in Cumbria, but it is early days in terms of planning. We do want stakeholders to help form the agenda so expect to hear more about that at a later date. We will come back to Nuleaf on that.

5	Update on national developments in radioactive waste management	ACTION
5.1	<p>PM introduced the update to members on recent developments in radioactive waste management and highlighted a few items.</p> <p>He noted the mention at a recent Critical Enablers TOG meeting of the report of the National Nuclear Skills Task Force. He hadn't seen this report but would try and obtain a copy and circulate to members.</p>	PM/CA to check if the report has been published.
5.2	<p>The TOG also held an interesting discussion on the scope for sites to employ a lighter touch approach to security as they progress to the later stages of decommissioning, perhaps relying on autonomous systems. This could see some changes in how sites are monitored and protected. The work is at a pilot stage at present and Nuleaf would monitor how this work progresses.</p> <p>Comment: There is a need to ensure effective local engagement and relations with the host community around any such move. Members agreed while also noting that this approach is already adopted to some degree – for example the security level at the LLWR was lowered after the Plutonium Contaminated Material was removed.</p>	
5.3	<p>PM reported on a recent meeting on asbestos which JC had also attended. The NDA hold possibly the largest inventory of asbestos in the UK but the exact scale of this won't be known until decommissioning progresses.</p> <p>The NDA is looking at a range of options for management and disposal, and this is an issue Nuleaf will engage with more as the work progresses. PM suggested that this would be an appropriate item for discussion at the RWPG.</p>	PM/CA to add presentation on asbestos to RWPG event planner.
5.4	<p>Finally, PM noted that the Social Impact and Communities Strategy was now out for consultation and that Nuleaf would prepare a draft response for comment by members.</p> <p>Members felt that the Nuleaf response should stress the need for action on social issues as well as on economics.</p>	
5.5	<p>Under Item 2 PM noted that the final draft of the new Policy on Decommissioning and Radioactive Substances has been circulated to members of the Radioactive Substances Policy Group. PM was pleased that some of the issues Nuleaf had raised in the consultation, such as the need for a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) for a Near Surface Disposal facility had been addressed. He has had a follow up meeting with DESNZ to discuss community benefits.</p>	

	<p>The final Policy is expected to be published early in 2024 alongside a document setting out the Government’s response to the issues raised in consultation.</p> <p>PM also highlighted the launch of two new nuclear consultations on Alternative Routes to Market and a new nuclear NPS. Nuleaf was considering responding to the NPS consultation.</p> <p>The reference in the paper to the GBN purchase of Oldbury was commented on and it was stressed this had not been confirmed as yet. Also, it was commented that GBN appears to be focussed on the EN-6 sites at present.</p> <p><i>Question: When will the final new nuclear NPS emerge?</i></p> <p>PM responded that he understood it would be published by March 2026 at the latest.</p> <p><i>Question: The paper notes that GBN is currently considering 6 SMR technologies but plans to reduce this to two that will be put forward for development. How will this process work?</i></p> <p>PM responded that understood all would be assessed against a range of criteria. It was commented that having too many possible technologies available was not a good thing and so the focus on one or two made more economic sense.</p> <p>Comment: This discussion heightens the need to arrange a session with GBN. It was noted that all speaking slots at the March Steering Group were taken up but there was scope to include in the June meeting or to hold a stand-alone meeting.</p>	<p>PM/CA to look again at options for GBN engagement.</p>
5.6	<p>PM attended an event on nuclear at the Scottish Parliament recently, which NDA had invited him to. There was a significant NDA presence and speeches from Andrew Bowie MP (the relevant UK Minister) and Tom Greatrex of the Nuclear Industry Association. It was well attended by MSPs.</p> <p><i>Question: Were many local authorities in attendance?</i></p> <p>PM commented that he wasn’t aware of any local authority involvement.</p>	
5.7	<p>PM then moved on to international matters and reported that he had attended an IAEA Technical Meeting in October that had a sole focus in local authority engagement in radioactive waste management. The meeting had proved very productive and involved those from across the planet. He noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That he was involved in the development of a Global Partnership Agreement on municipal involvement in nuclear, working with GMF Europe and North American colleagues amongst others. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That he was part of a small delegation who were granted a meeting with IAEA Director General Mariano Grossi. The DG had been very positive about the importance of local government and community engagement. • That he was re-elected Vice President of GMF at their General Assembly which was held in the same week. <p>The Chair commented that he was delighted that Phil had been re-appointed to GMF Europe and with the wider growth of Nuleaf’s engagement at the international level.</p> <p>PM noted that he hoped to be able to fund some Nuleaf members to participate in international meetings during 2024.</p>	
5.8	<p>Phil had attended the ONR Industry Forum in London on the 11th October. What was notable was that the priority issues for discussion were conventional health and safety and cybersecurity, rather than nuclear safety itself. There had been two fatalities on nuclear sites in the last year related to construction activities, and this was clearly of great concern to all.</p>	
5.9	<p>PM then reported on an ONR workshop on Proportionate Regulatory Control (PRC) held in Liverpool in October. Steve Smith had attended on behalf of Nuleaf, following an agreement that had been reached with Steve and Doug Bamsey to provide support to Nuleaf as and when required.</p> <p>It was requested that, if Steve or Doug attended meetings on Nuleaf’s behalf, they be invited to join the following Steering Group or RWPG meeting to help with the report back.</p>	PM to discuss with Steve and Doug.
5.10	<p>Finally, PM reported on the defueling of the first AGR reactor at Hunterston, a significant milestone for EDF. The fuel would be transported to Sellafield and, following the defueling of the second reactor the site would pass to NDA/NRS in 2025.</p> <p>Comment: Hinkley Point B has a three-year timeframe for defueling. It is welcome to see Hunterston being defueled on time and on budget.</p> <p>Comment: There are significant challenges for Sellafield in storing AGR fuel. There is a lack of confidence in the NDA’s Spent Fuel Strategy given that a GDF is a long way off and there is no reprocessing capacity.</p> <p>Comment: there is a challenge for NDA is updating its engagement arrangements and socio-economic funding to reflect the expanded estate brought about by the AGR decommissioning.</p>	

	PM noted that EDF and NRS had been invited to the next Steering Group meeting to update members on the AGR mission. These would all be useful issues to raise with them.	
--	--	--

6	Update on Geological Disposal Facility siting process	ACTION
6.1	Phil presented the paper on recent development related to the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process.	
6.2	<p>Phil highlighted the decision by NDA to withdraw from Allerdale, precipitating the ending of the Community Partnership (CP) and leaving three communities in the process. The reason given was the lack of suitable geology.</p> <p>While it was always envisaged that NWS would withdraw from some communities over time, their stated aim has been to leave a positive legacy in all communities.</p> <p>Comment: The view locally is that this was not well handled. It is leading the other CPs in Cumberland to enter discussions on NWS about how any withdrawal process would be managed.</p> <p>Comment: A major challenge for NWS is to clarify what they mean by 'significant additional investment' and how they define 'comparable international projects' that they wish to match. A look at international examples such as South Korea could be a useful study to commission from consultants.</p>	PM to consider scope for consultancy work on comparable infrastructure projects and the benefits they provide.
6.3	The Chair commented that Chris Keenan of NWS would be presenting to members later in this meeting and it would be good to save questions for him.	

7	Review of Annual Gathering 2023 and proposal for 2024	ACTION
7.1	<p>PM presented the paper which offered some reflections on the 2023 Annual Gathering in Working and proposed a plan for the 2024 Gathering.</p> <p>It was great to see so many people we had up to 40 members attending at least part of part of that event which is the most we have had at a single event.</p>	
7.2	<p>Member feedback was positive with it being commented that there was a real value to meeting face to face and having time to engage and network. The general view was that the Gathering was well organised and the site visits were interesting.</p> <p>There were a few recommendations on how the event could be improved for next year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was suggested that a profile of the host community would be a useful part of any future meeting and that it 	

	<p>would be useful to set up a Whatsapp Group to help deal with any travel delays people experienced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was disappointment that only 12 people were able to attend the LLWR visit though it was accepted this was out of the control of Nuleaf. 	
7.3	<p>For 2024 it was proposed to move the Gathering back to June and to hold it in North Wales. Trawsfynydd is one of the NDA's 'Lead and Learn' sites and there is interesting work ongoing on issues such as in site disposal and engagement with Cwmni Eginio about next planned use.</p> <p>The area is a priority one for NDA Socio-economic funding and there are some useful local projects that involve co-funding between NDA/NRS and others.</p> <p>It is likely that the event will be based in Llandudno as it is on the main rail line and thus accessible from many places across England and Wales.</p> <p>More details would be provided early in 2024.</p>	

8	Date of next meeting	ACTION
8.1	It was agreed to hold the next Steering Group on the 13 th March, online.	

9	Any other Business	ACTION
9.1	The Chair noted that this may be the last Nuleaf meeting for Gillian Ellis King who is due to retire in March. Gillian has been involved in Nuleaf for many years and contributed a great deal to the Steering Group and RWPG. On behalf of Nuleaf he thanked her for her contribution and wished her well for the future.	

10	Presentation and discussion on rebranding and updates on strategic and site plans.	ACTION
10.1	<p>The Chair introduced Kirsty Ramsden, Head of Internal Communications and Angela Vincent, Head of Operational Communications at Nuclear Restoration Services.</p> <p>Angela apologised for the fact that Bill Hamilton could not attend but committed to taking away any questions they were not able to answer.</p>	
10.2	The presentation covered the rebranding and wider organisational development. The aim was to 'future proof' the organisation as the Magnox brand did not reflect the expanded mission that would incorporate Dounreay and the AGR reactors. NRS had become the last of the 4 'pillars' of one NDA. The new	

	<p>approach would be set out in a 10-year Strategy to be published early in the new year.</p>	
10.3	<p>She then noted some innovative recent or upcoming work. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The completion at Harwell of the shipment of the 8.5km off site discharge pipeline, with 99% of waste recycled. • The retrieval of the final drum from the Treated Radwaste Store at Winfrith. • The transfer of 7 concrete boxes to the interim storage facility at Berkeley. • The installation of solar panels at Oldbury. • Progress in asbestos removal at Hinkley Point A, with 5000m² removed. 8 tonnes of Fuel Element Debris has also been removed. • Reduction in height of both reactor buildings at Trawsfynydd by around one third. • Work to ensure the weather integrity of the Wylfa reactors. 	
10.4	<p>The Chair opened the meeting to questions:</p> <p><i>Question: We are told quite a lot about what will happen in the next 3 years and over the very long-term but it would be good to have more detail about the whole timeline, particularly to help plan for new nuclear or other future uses. We have waited a long time for Lifetime Plans (LTPs). Can you say more about future plans and strategies for each site.</i></p> <p>That work is still underway and we can't say too much about LTPs. We will take that point back with us.</p> <p><i>Question: You mentioned solar at Oldbury. Our members are very interested in interim uses such as renewables. Could you say more about the scale of solar at Oldbury?</i></p> <p>This is a pilot in many ways, but we are keen to do more on renewables and other things such as biodiversity.</p> <p>Comment: As someone who works for South Gloucestershire Council, I was not aware of the solar development. Solar is positive but it would be good to have had some communication.</p> <p><i>Question: You mentioned asbestos which the NDA has a huge amount of and you spoke of removing large amounts of asbestos from one site. This is positive but of course the waste has to go somewhere and there are suggestions it might go to landfill or a near surface site or a GDF. Could you say what the plans are to engage local authorities on asbestos?</i></p>	

	<p>Im afraid I don't but I can take that away with me.</p> <p><i>Question: On solar, has NRS got any plans to export solar energy it has generated?</i></p> <p>I'm afraid I can't comment on that but again we will take that away and get back to you on that.</p> <p><i>Question: I was interested in the big conversation. Could you say more about that and how it will be used to inform engagement with stakeholders?</i></p> <p>We know that Bill Hamilton has been engaging with the SSGs and I'm sure Bill can report on that to this group.</p> <p><i>Question: What barriers are there to the integration of Vulcan and MoD operations with the NDA? It would be helpful to get an update on the MoD side of things.</i></p> <p>Thank you. We can certainly say more about that at a future meeting.</p> <p>Comment: Nuleaf was very involved in the Submarine Dismantling Programme (SDP) and a few of us were able to visit the submarine site at Rosyth. It is something we are very interested in.</p> <p><i>Question: In your strapline you talk about saving billions and shortening the process by decades. As you don't have a detailed plan how can you say that?</i></p> <p>The 10-year Strategy is setting out the aspirations at a high level and we will put more detail on that in future.</p> <p><i>Question: What are you doing on the characterisation of Plutonium Contaminated Material (PCM). There is a lot of it at Sellafield.</i></p> <p>There is characterisation work across the whole estate and we are making progress in some areas.</p>	
--	--	--

11	Update on progress with the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting process	ACTION
11.1	<p>The Chair welcomed Chris Keenan, Head of Property and Land, Nuclear Waste Service (NWS).</p> <p>Chris explained his role within NWS which covered both property but which also involves engaging with communities that enter the GDF process. The aim of his presentation was to</p>	

set out the current context and then look at some of the specific activities that are underway.

The current Working with Communities policy has been active for 5 years now which is longer than the whole of the previous process (MRWS). We have seen four communities progress further than any community last time, with three still actively engaged. It's also important to note the significant role of local authorities within the process and the learning that NWS has from them and other stakeholders.

One issue we are looking at is local engagement process and how they can be truly representative of the host communities. You often get an early spike in interest in engaging but this can tail off. It's also challenging to get harder to reach groups involved.

We have also recently seen, NWS has withdrawn from the process in Allerdale. That was challenging and we accept we didn't get everything right. We want to leave a good legacy in all communities. In Allerdale and elsewhere the Community Investment Funding (CIF) of £1million per year is a significant part of what we offer an area.

On the ground a lot of site characterisation work and surveys are ongoing that help us build a picture of an area above and below ground. This gives us the baseline for EIA work. The results of the seismic work are also due to be published soon.

Another interesting area is out international work. We have had some really useful meetings in countries such as Canada and France, understanding the process there.

At the same time there are distinct differences, as well as similarities, between our communities in Cumberland and Lincolnshire and we are working to support them in ways that work.

The Chair thanked Chris for his update and invited questions.

Question: The next significant step in the process is the drilling of boreholes, where you actually have to go through the planning process and all that entails. The communities aren't therefore going to get a yes or no to proceeding for a long time. From a Copeland perspective this is seen as having an impact on other things that we would like to go ahead such as Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). How is NWS dealing with this issue?

I would disagree that there is necessarily a conflict. I was involved in work around the Moorside nuclear project and I

think the biggest challenges for that were technical and related to the framework set by EN-6. The GDF process has no designation on land and so I don't feel we are precluding other development.

Question: I was at a CoRWM meeting last week and have two questions arising from that. I understand there is some difference of opinion between yourselves and CoRWM about the need for an Underground Rock Laboratory (URL). Could you say more about that? Also, they discussed the impact of a large new nuclear programme incorporating Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs). There was a suggestion that a GDF to take all that waste could have an underground footprint of 50km² which suggests we might need a second GDF. Again, your thoughts on that would be welcome.

On the URL issue and the GDF footprint I am not the best person to comment on that so will take that away and get back to you. The footprint figure you quote isn't one I recognise though.

Question: I would first like to thank you for emphasising it is the local authority that can withdraw from the process, not the community. I don't think that NWS has also been clear about that. My question relates to borehole drilling, and I understand that NWS' plans to commence this in 2026. Is that correct? If so, does it not put a lot of pressure on areas that are not yet in the process? Can you also comment on recent press reports that Milton Keynes might enter the process?

There is still scope for new communities to enter. I understand this causes some concern in communities already in the process who feel that they may have to wait for others to catch up. But the reality is that we can have a split decision where a community could go forward to the next stage while keeping the door open for others to do so at a later date. Communities may of course fall out the siting process at different stages too.

Question: Given all you have said, what year do you anticipate the go ahead being given. Also, who gives the go ahead – is it NWS or is it up to Government.

The aim at present is for the go ahead to be in the 2040s. The recommendation will come from NWS but the Government will need to be comfortable with it.

Question: The policy says that the significant additional investment that will be provided will be comparable to that offered for comparable large infrastructure projects internationally. It's a challenge to know what that means. I see

	<p><i>scope for Nuleaf to do some work on that and do you think NWS could support or fund such work?</i></p> <p>I will raise that and see if that is something we could support.</p> <p><i>Question: will there be a cut-off point after which no new community could join the process?</i></p> <p>We don't have a fixed date as such but it is inevitable it will come to a point where, assuming we don't have some major technical challenges in the communities involved, the process would focus in on those communities alone.</p> <p>The Chair brought the meeting to a close and thanks Chris and the other speakers for a useful set of presentations.</p>	
--	---	--

ACTION LIST

Item	Action	By	Outcome
3.3	PM to contact GBN again to request a presentation. PM to invite NNLAG members to any future event.		Ongoing.
5.2	The nuclear national Skills Task Force report Chloe and Phil to circulate once received.		Report not out. Will be circulated when available.
5.3	PM/CA to add presentation on asbestos to RWPG event planner.		Done.
5.9	PM to discuss with Steve and Doug whether they could participate in a future meeting if required.		Discussed. May be scope for their engagement in future meetings.
6.2	PM to consider scope for consultancy work on comparable infrastructure projects and the benefits they provide.		Added to workplan.