

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 13th March 2024
Item: 5
Subject: Updates on national developments in radioactive waste management
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Introduction:

This paper updates members on recent developments in radioactive waste management and NDA operations. It covers:

- NDA Group update;
- UK and Devolved Government reports;
- International news;
- Regulatory news;
- Nuleaf update; and
- New nuclear and fusion updates.

Recommendation:

That members note the ongoing discussions between Nuleaf, NDA and SCCORS on the line management by Nuleaf of a SCCORS staff member (5.4) and offer their views.

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 all 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 noted.

1.2. Phil and Jonathan also attended a joint **Integrated Waste Management (IWM) and Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR) TOG** in Penrith on the 27th February. Significant items for discussion were:

- **Decommissioning and Radioactive Substances Policy** – This has been signed off within Government and is due to be published around the middle of March.
- **The Energy Act** gained Royal Assent in October, a key requirement to enable the implementation of the Proportionate Regulatory Control (PRC) regime. The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) will now be consulting on their guidance on PRC in the coming months. They plan to publish this on the 3rd June to coincide with the commencement regulations which brings the relevant sections of the Energy Act into force.
- The NDA is looking to bolster their Group spatial planning capability in recognition of the need to better interface with land use and waste planning.
- Following the completion of the **Stores Strategic Review**, the NDS is planning to undertake work to look at opportunities to consolidate storage facilities across the estate.
- There is a legal requirement on the Authority to prepare a 5-year strategy and the process of preparing the next iteration (**Strategy 5**) is underway. This will be published by March 2026 and a range of engagement with stakeholders is planned. A public consultation on a draft will be launched in September 2024, running for 12 weeks.
- The NDA is close to finalising **How can we manage waste more sustainably**, a brochure intended to help communication with communities on the issues around site remediation and the scope for disposal of waste on site. The document, formerly known as the National Narrative, should be published later this year.

1.3 With the launch of the process to prepare Strategy 5, the NDA has invited Nuleaf to be part of the **Strategy 5 Development Group** which will meet regularly from April to September this year. The first meeting of the Group will be on the 9th of April. As Phil Matthews is on leave, Doug Bamsey will attend on behalf of Nuleaf.

1.4 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, 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 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 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.

1.5 Nuleaf has submitted responses to consultations on a revised NDA **Social Impact and Communities Strategy** and **Business Plan 2024-27**¹.

1.6 An episode of the BBC's Business Daily, focussed on the decommissioning of the Hinkley Point A and B sites, has been released. It can be listened to here².

2. UK and devolved Government reports

2.1 The UK Government launched two consultations on new nuclear on the 11th January, aimed at supporting the **Civil Nuclear Roadmap**³. These are:

- A consultation on the **approach to siting new nuclear power stations beyond 2025**⁴. This closed on the 10th March and Nuleaf submitted a response after consulting with members. Nuleaf highlighted concerns about waste management and stressed the need for community benefits to apply to any new nuclear development. It also raised member concerns about how the approach outlined in EN-7 may impact on those sites already appraised and designated under EN-6.
- A consultation on **alternative routes to market for advanced nuclear projects** which is running until the 12th April.⁵ This aims to explore 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.

¹ <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/policy-communications/consultation-responses-2/>

² [Business Daily - How to shut down a nuclear power station - BBC Sounds](https://www.bbc.com/news/business-61844444)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-nuclear-roadmap-to-2050>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/alternative-routes-to-market-for-new-nuclear-projects>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/alternative-routes-to-market-for-new-nuclear-projects>

The UK Parliament held a debate on the **Civil Nuclear Roadmap** on the 22nd February⁶.

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 Russia⁷.

2.3 The **Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee** of the Welsh Senedd has published a report on the future of nuclear development in Wales⁸. It calls on the UK Government to decide soon on the future of the Wylfa and Trawsfynydd sites, and backs new nuclear development at both. It also urges the Welsh Government to be ready to ensure that the maximum benefits to the Welsh economy are delivered.

Paul Davies MS, Chair of the Committee, commented *'Both the Wylfa and Trawsfynydd have the potential to rejuvenate the north Wales economy if they are chosen for nuclear investment, but we also need the Welsh Government to step up to make sure that this potential investment is successful. They need to start their work now, making sure that the workforce is skilled, specialised and ready so that the new opportunities can benefit local people. The Welsh Government must also engage with local authorities and communities to ensure that housing stock isn't overwhelmed.'*

Separately, it has been announced that Great British Nuclear is in talks with Hitachi Ltd to buy back the Wylfa site following the ending of the Japanese company's plans for developing a new reactor there⁹.

2.4 The Scottish Parliament has established a **Cross-Party Group on the Civil Nuclear Industry**, due to meet for the first time on the 27th March. The aim is to act as a forum for Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), stakeholders and interested parties to engage on the opportunities and challenges facing nuclear decommissioning sites, the workforce and supply chain in Scotland and to better inform the development of policy. The NDA has been active in helping establish this group. As there are currently no plans for new nuclear developments in Scotland, the Group will be solely focussed on decommissioning.

3. International news

3.1 GMF Europe has confirmed that its planned meetings in 2024 will be:

- A joint meeting with ARCICEN (French equivalent of Nuleaf) near the Bugey nuclear station in France on the 22nd to 24th May; and

⁶ [Debate: Civil Nuclear Road Map - 22nd Feb 2024 \(parliament.parliament.co.uk\)](https://parliament.parliament.uk/debate/2024-02-22/civil-nuclear-roadmap)

⁷ [US, Canada, France, Japan, and UK announce plans to mobilise \\$4.2bn for reliable global nuclear energy supply chain - NS Energy \(nsenergybusiness.com\)](https://www.nsenergybusiness.com/news/us-canada-france-japan-and-uk-announce-plans-to-mobilise-4-2bn-for-reliable-global-nuclear-energy-supply-chain/)

⁸ [Decision on Wylfa and Trawsfynydd 'urgently needed' \(senedd.wales\)](https://www.senedd.wales/decision-on-wylfa-and-trawsfynydd-urgently-needed/)

⁹ [UK in talks with Hitachi over Welsh nuclear plant site \(energyvoice.com\)](https://www.energyvoice.com/uk-in-talks-with-hitachi-over-welsh-nuclear-plant-site/)

- A meeting of the GMF General Assembly in Salamanca in Spain, the site of a nuclear fuel assembly plant, on the 8th and 9th October.

Depending on the financial settlement for next year, Nuleaf hopes to support one or more of our members to attend the Salamanca meeting. Further details will be released nearer the time.

4. Regulatory news

4.1. The ONR has announced¹⁰ that the **Imperial College Reactors Centre** in Ascot has become the first reactor site in the UK to be fully decommissioned under modern regulatory controls. The small 100kW research reactor began operations in 1965. It closed in 2012 and defueling was completed two years later with fuel elements transported to Sellafield. Imperial College applied to the ONR in 2015 to begin the decommissioning project.

4.2 The ONR held a consultation on the environmental statement submitted by EDF energy as part of their decommissioning plans for the **Hunterston B** power station in Ayrshire¹¹. The statement has been prepared under the **Environmental Impact Assessment for Decommissioning Regulations (EIADR)**.

4.3 Dame Judith Hackett has been named as the new interim Chair of the ONR¹².

5. Nuleaf update

5.1 The date of Nuleaf's **Annual Gathering 2024** has been set for 18th and 19th June, to be held in Llandudno. As in previous years, Nuleaf will provide accommodation on the 17th (if required) and 18th June and will cover transport and food costs for two Members and/or Officers from each Contributing member local authority.

On the 18th an extended Steering Group meeting will be held with guest speakers involved in socio-economic projects related to nuclear sites in North Wales. On the 19th there will be a site visit to Trawsfynydd nuclear decommissioning site before members are transported back to Llandudno to travel home. Nuleaf is working with the NDA, NRS and others to finalise the agenda and this will be shared when available.

Those who are interested in attending, but who have not yet indicated so, should contact Chloe Atkinson.

¹⁰ [UK research reactor fully decommissioned : Waste & Recycling - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/UK_research_reactor_fully_decommissioned_Waste_Recycling)

¹¹ [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-on-the-edf-energy-nuclear-generation-ltd-eiadr-application-for-consent-for-the-hunterston-b-power-station)

¹² [Dame Judith Hackett named new ONR interim Chair - Office for Nuclear Regulation - News](https://www.onr.org.uk/news/dame-judith-hackett-named-new-onr-interim-chair)

5.2 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.

5.3 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 to members at this Steering Group meeting.

5.4 Over recent months Nuleaf's Executive Director and Chair have been in dialogue with the NDA and the **Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances (SCCORS)**, our sister organisation north of the border.

There has been a recognition that SCCORS activities have been limited by the lack of a secretariat, and the NDA has offered to provide funding for a part time officer if a suitable arrangement can be put in place. It has also been recognised that, with the NDA being one of only a few remaining Britain wide organisations, there is scope for local authorities across Britain to collaborate in certain areas of NDA engagement. The Site Stakeholder Groups (SSGs), all of which have a local focus, co-ordinate work across Britain through their Chairs Forum.

It has been agreed that a SCCORS Co-ordinator is appointed to work 3 days a week in support of the Scottish network with all funding and costs being met by the NDA. The officer's line management would be by Nuleaf's Executive Director, with their work programme developed by SCCORS in consultation with Nuleaf.

This arrangement will not impact on Nuleaf's operations or focus on England and Wales but it does open up the possibility of Britain wide engagement opportunities when they are of benefit to both organisations. This has already been demonstrated, with the successful Nuleaf AGR decommissioning workshop held in 2022, which was joined by a significant number of Scottish colleagues.

There will be no financial cost to Nuleaf in supporting this arrangement, and it is not anticipated it will cause any other challenges for our network.

Member views are invited.

6. New nuclear and fusion updates

6.1 The decommissioning of the **Joint European Torus (JET)** facility at Culham in Oxfordshire has begun following the ending of experiments at the fusion reactor in

December¹³. It is expected that it will take 12 years to repurpose the reactor. The facility was commissioned in the 1970s and anticipated to operate for a decade, but its life has been repeatedly extended.

6.2 It was announced on the 9th of February that an agreement has been reached to build a privately financed nuclear power station on Teesside¹⁴. Community Nuclear Power (CNP) proposes to install 4 Small Modular Reactors in North Tees, producing up to a Gigawatt (GW) of energy. The reactors will be built by US company Westinghouse and are expected to come on stream in the early 2030s.

6.3 The official go ahead for the **Sizewell C** nuclear power plant was given on the 15th January with the triggering of the Development Consent Order (DCO)¹⁵. The development is estimated to cost around £20Bn and the granting of the DCO means that a phased package of £250million community benefits will begin. Almost 8,000 workers will be required during the construction phase with a commitment that at least a third will come from the local area.

The final financial package for the development is still to be agreed, and a range of opposition groups are continuing to campaign against the development.

¹³ [Nuclear fusion reactor decommissioning begins after 40 years - BBC News](#)

¹⁴ [Teesside private SMR nuclear power station to be built - BBC News](#)

¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-67973566>