

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 18th June 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 reports.

Recommendation:

This paper is for noting.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 The first meeting of the **Strategy 5 Development Group (S5DG)** was held in Manchester on the 9th April and Doug Bamsey attended on behalf of Nuleaf. Nuleaf has since commented on the Terms of Reference for the Group and the Executive Director will participate in future meetings.

The process of developing the draft Strategy will run until January 2025. There will be a 12-week consultation on the draft, commencing on the 19th May next year. Nuleaf plans to run an engagement session for members to help inform our consultation response.

1.2 Phil Matthews and Jonathan Cook attended a **Critical Enablers (CE) TOG** meeting on the 22nd April.

At the meeting Jamie Reed, NDA Director of Social Value, gave a presentation on plans for developing the NDA's Socio-economic approach through Strategy 5. Jamie also mentioned that a refresh of the recently published Social Impact and

Communities Strategy will take place in 2026, taking on board any changes in approach driven by Strategy 5.

In response to questions from Nuleaf's Director, Jamie:

- Noted that the process of preparing the next round of studies on the impacts of Sellafield, Dounreay and Magnox would begin soon. In line with Nuleaf's request, these studies would be broadened to include social issues rather than be focussed solely on economic impacts.
- Agreed that there was scope for engaging Nuleaf/local authorities in developing a reporting framework covering socio-economics and sustainability measures. A further meeting on this topic between Phil, Jamie and Davide Stronati, NDA Director of Sustainability took place in May.
- Agreed it would be useful to discuss the NDA's aspiration to help support the capability and capacity of local authorities to work in partnership with NDA on socio-economic action.

Jacq Longrigg, NDA Head of Leadership, Skills and Talent provided an update on People and Skills. She highlighted:

- The launch of **Destination Nuclear**¹ as a new portal for careers in the nuclear sector. As part of the promotion of this, adverts have been placed in large stations in London and other major cities.
- The need to address workforce issues, with 38% of NDA staff being over the age of 50 and increased competition for staff from new nuclear and defence. In response the NDA has launched www.NDAgroup.careers as the first bespoke recruitment website for the organisation; along with a greater presence on social media.

Jacq stated that she would welcome an opportunity to speak to Nuleaf members on this work and that is in the process of being organised.

1.3 The NDA has launched its **Social Impact and Communities Strategy**² and **Business Plan 2024-27**³ following consultation with Nuleaf and other stakeholders. The NDA has provided Nuleaf with feedback on the issues we raised in our Business Plan response. This can be viewed in Appendix 1.

1.4 **Peter Hill CBE**⁴ has been appointed as the new Chair of the NDA. Peter is currently chair of Keller Group plc, the world's largest geotechnical projects engineer. He has previously been Chair and a non-executive director on the Boards of a number of organisations spanning the manufacturing, research, aerospace and defence industries amongst others.

¹ <https://www.destinationnuclear.com/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nda-social-impact-and-communities-strategy-april-2024>

³ [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority: Business Plan 2024 to 2027 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-business-plan-2024-to-2027)

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/peter-hill-cbe-appointed-as-new-chair-of-the-nda>

Mr Hill succeeds **Chris Train OBE** who has been acting as Interim Chair of NDA since last autumn and who has now been appointed as Chair of Sellafield Ltd. He will take up the role from the 1st July.

1.5 Mark Rouse has left his role as the Managing Director of **Dounreay** to take up an unspecified role elsewhere in NRS. It has been suggested that his departure is connected to the ongoing industrial action at the site⁵. More than 500 workers at the Dounreay site went on strike on the 15th and 29th May, with another day of action planned for the 19th June. This follows the rejection by Unite and the GMB of a revised offer from Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS). Another union, Prospect, was involved in the first strike day before accepting a revised deal⁶.

It has also been announced that the clean-up of the **Dounreay** site will now take decades longer to complete, with the end date moving from 2033 until the 2070s⁷.

According to Dounreay, the revised lifetime plan 'provides a credible and robust route map to reach the site's interim end state – the point at which all redundant facilities have been cleared and the resultant radioactive waste can be stored safely at the site. The new strategy prioritises the early completion of work to dismantle the fast reactors and empty two historic waste disposal and storage facilities. Work will continue in the Fuel Cycle Area with the aim of finding new and innovative approaches that will benefit decommissioning throughout the UK.'

1.6 The workforce at **Hunterston**⁸ will fall by around one third by 2026 as the site enters the next phase of decommissioning. The remaining 244 staff will then transfer from EDF to Nuclear Restoration Services following the completion of defueling at the B site. Overall, the workforce will have halved by that point compared to the 500 workers employed in 2020.

2. UK and devolved Government reports

2.1 The new UK and Devolved Administration policy on **Managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning**⁹ was launched on the 16th May. The first major revision of policy in a quarter of a century, the paper aims to drive earlier and more cost-effective nuclear decommissioning and better management of radioactive substances. Nuleaf and our members have been actively involved in shaping the policy. We will now work with Government, the NDA Group and regulators as it is applied to nuclear sites.

⁵ [Allegations managing director of Scotland nuclear complex was 'shipped out' over long-running pay dispute \(scotsman.com\)](#)

⁶ [Dounreay: Members of two unions walk-out in pay dispute - BBC News](#)

⁷ <https://www.johnogroat-journal.co.uk/news/plan-to-extend-decommissioning-work-at-dounreay-until-the-20-345764/>

⁸ [Hunterston workforce set to be cut by nearly a third | Irvine Times](#)

⁹ [Managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

2.2 The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) is to award £196 million to **Urenco** to build a Uranium enrichment facility, with the UK being the first European nation to produce advanced nuclear fuel for power stations in the UK and elsewhere¹⁰. The Government believes this will free Europe from reliance on Russia and will create around 400 jobs at the Capenhurst site.

3. International news

3.1 Cllr David Moore, Doug Bamsey and Philip Matthews all participated in a **GMF Europe** meeting in **Bugey, France** on the 22nd to 24th May. The event was organised jointly with ARCICEN, the French equivalent of Nuleaf and both Cllr Moore and Doug Bamsey were invited to speak to the international group on their experiences on engagement of communities in nuclear issues. France has the largest nuclear sector in Europe and plans a new fleet of reactors.

4. Regulatory news

4.1. The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has notified Sellafield Ltd. that it will be prosecuted for alleged information technology security offences between 2019 and 2023, with the first hearing due in June¹¹. At the end of March, it was also announced that Sellafield's Chief Information Security Office **Richard Meal**¹² would be stepping down later this year. This follows reports in January that **Mark Neate**, the Environment, Safety and Security Director at the site, would be leaving his post in the coming months¹³.

4.2 The Environment Agency (EA) has written to the Low-Level Waste Repository (LLWR) in Cumbria with concerns about a delay in securing waste at the site. It comes after LLWR failed to make sufficient progress on operations to complete an engineered cap for some of the radioactive waste, meaning it breached the terms of its environmental permit¹⁴.

Nuclear Waste Services (NWS), which manages LLWR, said the delays did not have an impact on the surrounding area and that they had taken the time to ensure the right solutions were created for the safe disposal of nuclear waste.

4.3 The ONR has published its **Corporate Plan 24/25**¹⁵.

¹⁰ [UK first in Europe to invest in next generation of nuclear fuel - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-first-in-europe-to-invest-in-next-generation-of-nuclear-fuel)

¹¹ [ONR notifies Sellafield Ltd of intention to prosecute | Office for Nuclear Regulation](https://www.onr.gov.uk/news/2024/march/onr-notifies-sellafield-ltd-of-intention-to-prosecute)

¹² [Sellafield's head of information security to step down | Nuclear waste | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/energy-environment/2024/march/22/sellafield-head-of-information-security-to-step-down)

¹³ [Sellafield nuclear safety and security director to leave | Energy industry | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/energy-environment/2024/january/22/sellafield-nuclear-safety-and-security-director-to-leave)

¹⁴ [Nuclear waste storage facility told to take action after breach - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/energy-68111111)

¹⁵ [ONR Corporate Plan 2024/25 published | Office for Nuclear Regulation](https://www.onr.gov.uk/news/2024/june/onr-corporate-plan-2024-25-published)

5. Nuleaf update

5.1 Nuleaf has commissioned Steve Smith and Doug Bamsey to undertake research on the stakeholder landscape and ways in which future engagement could be improved. As a first step a workshop discussion with members will be held as part of this Steering Group meeting.

Running in parallel with the Nuleaf study, the NDA has commissioned a review of current arrangements for the Site Stakeholder Groups (SSGs). This year is the 20th Anniversary of the Energy Act (2004) that set out the framework for the NDA; and it is therefore felt timely to consider whether there is scope to enhance the approach to the engagement of local authorities and communities.

5.2 Nuleaf continues to work with the NDA and the **Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances (SCCORS)** to explore the potential to provide more support to SCCORS, the local government network on nuclear issues in Scotland. It is hoped that this will lead to the recruitment of a Co-ordinator for SCCORS later on this year.

5.3 We are able to provide funding to a number of our members to attend international events later this year. The two events in question are:

- **GMF General Assembly** meeting in Salamanca on the 8th and 9th October.
- **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** Technical meeting on local engagement in nuclear, being held in Vienna on the 16th to 20th October.

Please note these dates if you are interested in attending and more information will be sent out nearer the time.

6. New nuclear and fusion reports

6.1 Four sites across Teesside, Cumbria, the West Midlands and South Yorkshire have been shortlisted for a factory to build SMRs for deployment across the UK, Europe and the Middle East. The development, by Holtec Britain, could lead to an investment of £1.3Bn. The investment is dependent on Holtec being selected by Great British Nuclear (GBN) as one of its two preferred designs. However, a decision on which firms will be selected to roll out Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in the UK has now been delayed until after the General Election.

6.3 On the 22nd May it was announced that **Wylfa** has been selected as the preferred site for a large-scale nuclear power plant, following the purchase of the land by GBN¹⁶.

¹⁶ [Nuclear power: Wylfa on Anglesey chosen as site for new plant - BBC News](#)

Earlier in May, GBN announced that **Trawsfynydd** would not be considered as a site for the initial roll-out of SMRs. The stated reasons for this were the size of the site and the volume of cooling water required, given GBNs desire that the initial sites would contain 4 or 5 SMRs. There is still scope for Trawsfynydd to be considered in the next phase of roll out, where smaller sites with one or two reactors could be included¹⁷.

¹⁷ [Why UK Government nuclear quango has ruled out Trawsfynydd from initial mini-nuke rollout - North Wales Live \(dailypost.co.uk\)](https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/uk-government-nuclear-quango-has-ruled-out-trawsfynydd-from-initial-mini-nuke-rollout-north-wales-live)

Appendix 1: NDA response to issues raised by Nuleaf in Business Plan 2024-27 consultation

- *Consultation period over Christmas and New Year provided challenges.*

We recognise that the timing of our annual Business Plan consultation may cause difficulties for some stakeholders wanting to respond, we are, however, constrained to the current planned period due to the timing of seeking consultation responses and following the required approvals process. We will continue to review and improve the consultation process within the current constraints.

- *Civil Nuclear Roadmap to 2050 commits NDA to periodically publishing a prospectus stating which of its land holdings will become available for reuse including prioritising, where feasible, new nuclear projects – ensure BP is align to this roadmap.*
- *Improve clarification and explanation of NDA role in new nuclear including production of prospectus – address roadmap’s stated priority that NDA land should where feasible go first to new nuclear projects (different to current wording on page 14)*

The Civil Nuclear Roadmap was published part way through our consultation. As a result, we are still assessing what this means for NDA and any requirements. We do agree, however, the importance of alignment to the roadmap and this approach is highlighted by a reference made to wider government priorities in CEO foreword.

- *Interconnections between different NDA companies and aspects of the NDA mission (GDF communities, GBN, public spending pressures) should be set out as clearly as possible.*

Agreed, and we will strive to ensure these connections are set out in such a way.

- *Welcome change in model but work to do in delivering effective integration within OpCos and between NDA and rest of the group – expect to see specific actions listed.*

We accept there is more to do in highlighting the actions we are taking to deliver effective integration as part of the new model. We will consider how to reflect this appropriately in plans moving forward.

- *Should break down the 17,000 staff in the group to include the number of staff at each OpCo on the site pages.*

We will give this suggestion full consideration for the next planning cycle.

- *NDA commitment to workforce, communities and environment. Request for engagement to work together to define set of public facing targets and outcomes that enable transparent reporting of progress.*
- **We would be happy to take this forward with more detailed discussions and engagement with the relevant leads for workforce, communities and environment.**
- *Heritage strategy – unclear if this includes physical form of power stations and associated landscapes. Suggest NDA should consider they are custodians not only of landmark structures but robust landscape infrastructure (orchards, meadows and public paths, estuary at Oldbury)*

We agree that landscape infrastructure should be a key consideration in our approach to heritage, and it is captured as one of the key drivers as outlined in the Strategy document (page 10. Social Value and Drivers. Point 3 and 4).

Having said that, we recognise this doesn’t come across as clearly as it could do and so will seek opportunities to make this more explicit.

In addition to the built environment heritage assets, NDA Group are also custodians of a number of landscape environments of significance in terms of heritage and environmental contribution. These include Cestyll Garden - a registered historic garden on Anglesey, a number of listed structures such as Seascale Hall Farm and Pelham House in West Cumbria, as well as other sites of environmental interest such as the Silt Lagoons at Oldbury.

Protecting and preserving the landscape infrastructure is a key consideration to NDA Group in terms of heritage, environment, and wildlife stewardship across the estate.

NDA group work closely with our environmental teams across the estate to maintain these land and heritage assets, and where appropriate enhance them. Examples include an ongoing tree planting initiative across our estate, plus the sympathetic renovations of the historic Seascale Hall, and the preservation work currently underway at Pelham House walled garden.

- *Only 1 years of funding - expect Gov to be able to provide at least a 3 year funding horizon.*

A Spending Review to secure funding for 2025/26 onwards is expected this year but still to be confirmed – work is ongoing to prepare for this. As with all publicly funded bodies, we are only able to secure funding via this process and are subject to the timetables set out by HMG.

- *Slight decline in income from commercial activities (24/25) – would welcome an explanation of the reasons for this large fall in income by INS transport.*

Elements of the NTS / INS transport contract income vary significantly from one year to the next, dependent on the timings of significant shipments of HLW, ILW, MOX fuel etc.

The fall highlighted between 2023/24 and 2024/25 does not represent a decline in business but reflects the difference between a financial year with significant shipments in and then a year without.

The level of income seen in 2023/24 is expected to be seen again in a future year when subsequent shipments occur and will result in a jump back up in income level.

The intent of including expenditure figures is to outline planned allocations of available funding.

The NDA operates a portfolio funding approach across the group and retains flexibility in final allocations through the year. This allows us to focus on our highest hazards and high risk areas, while maximising value for money. This means that it is not always appropriate to provide a more detailed split of the expenditure.

- *Fall in "other central spend" – if this includes soc-ec and sustainability it runs against the NDA's stated ambition.*

"Other central spend" does not include soc-ec and sustainability.

- *1% of NDAs budget spent on Soc-Ec, in other countries this is greater (Bulgaria 2%)*

Based on the report produced by Assystem on behalf of Nuleaf, the 2% in Bulgaria equates to just 150,000 EUR/Year.

Sweden has a 200,000 EUR per year fund, but there is no indication of how much this is relative to the overall decommissioning budget.

In Spain, funding is allocated by formula written in law, which provided a total of 3,245,072 EUR in 2021 – again this not a % based on size of overall budget.

NDA Group invests £15m per year in community benefits via the Socio-Economic programme, which is significantly more than any of the examples given in the Nuleaf report.

- *Engagement requested on some of NDAs CE activities (natural capital baseline assessment, Gov Energy Security Plan and new build decommissioning plans, group wide accommodation strategy)*

Happy to take this forward with further discussions/engagement.

- *Pleased to see progress at Sellafield including retrievals from all legacy facilities and POCO at Magnox Repro. However recent research shown GVA of Sellafield has halved in recent years, though overall GVA increased, want to see action to reverse this. Quote research undertaken by Assystem <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/steering-group-meeting-15th-december-2022/>*

The source data used (Appraisal of Support for Nuclear Communities – Assystem) is not accurate – data has been incorrectly transposed from our Economic Impact Study report.

In addition, the datasets used do not compare like with like. As a result, that there has not been a notable drop in local GVA from Sellafield.

- *Good to see current best estimates at NRS. Will SSS replace previous LTPs for sites.*

Site Specific Strategies will not replace Lifetime Plans. The Site-Specific Strategies will inform either a continuation of decommissioning or the site being placed into a safe period of deferment, this is still to be confirmed. Either way, the Lifetime Plans will be updated to reflect the decision.

- *Support development of strategic masterplans for each site. Will highlight areas for infrastructure or land that may be freed up for other uses. Effective approach must be developed around each site including infrastructure that will be available for reuse in other developments. BP should set out this requirement, underpinned by appropriate engagement.*
- *Need to demonstrate integrated working where A&B sites are being decommissioned in same location.*
- *Site profiles should consider infrastructure that no longer needs/could be shared or potential for redevelopment/reuse. Identify the area required for decommissioning purposes.*

Reuse of land - this strategy has commenced with progress seen on the Harwell campus where successful land release is progressing. NRS are also progressing this as per a key activity to "Designate or Reuse" land and also working closely with GBN and other enterprises regarding options for reuse of land - where it known to be surplus to requirement to meet the NDA's decommissioning mission.

This will also link with work NDA is planning as regards establishing Planning Policy Guidance.

Regarding integrated working where there are A&B sites, through NRS, an engagement process will commence at HNA with the next round of site end state work.