

**Minutes of the Steering Group meeting held online,
13th March 2024 10:00 – 12:00**

Present:

Cllr David Moore	Cumberland Council (Chair)
Cllr David Blackburn	Leeds City Council (NFLA Vice-Chair)
Cllr Mike Caswell	Somerset Council (Vice Chair)
Cllr Paul Thomas	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
Cllr. Chris Davies	South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Aled Morris Jones	Ynys Mon Council/SSG Chair of Chairs
Jonathan Cook	Cumberland Council
Eleanor Godesar	Dorset Council
Bethany Rance	East Suffolk Council
Terry Burns	Essex County Council
Richard Outram	Manchester City Council
Jonathan Holland	North Wales Councils
Terry Burns	Suffolk County Council
Ross Walker	Suffolk County Council
John Burton	Somerset Council
Louise Martin	Somerset Council
Jon Severs	South Gloucestershire Council
Ross Walker	Suffolk County Council
Rachel Whaley	Westmorland and Furness Council
Philip Matthews	Nuleaf
Chloe Atkinson	Nuleaf

Speakers and Guests

Sir Nigel Thrift	CoRWM
Samantha Harris	NDA
Fiona McCall	EDF
Paul Morton	EDF
Dale McQueen	NDA
Andy Munro	NRS
Kirsty Ramsden	NRS
Bill Hamilton	NRS

1.	Welcome and Apologies	ACTION
1.1	The chair welcomed members to the meeting.	
1.2	Apologies were received from: Cllr Richard Smith- Suffolk County Council, Linda Townsend - Gloucestershire County Council, Andy Gutherson - Lincolnshire County Council, Cllr Jonathan Brook - Westmorland and Furness and Darren Crossley - Cumberland Council.	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 14th December 2023.	
2.1	The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate representation and will be posted on the Nuleaf website.	CA
3.	Matters Arising	
3.1	<p>Phil reported he had tried to contact Great British Nuclear on a number of occasions but was still awaiting a response. He will try again but if he is unable to get a response from the Comms team he will write directly to the Chief Executive.</p> <p>Phil will also set up a meeting with the New Nuclear Local Authority Group (NNLAG) to propose a joint meeting with GBN.</p>	PM
3.2	<p>As requested by members, Phil spoke to Steve Smith and Doug Bamsey about the scope for them to attend a future Steering Group meeting. It was expected that at least one of them will be attending our Annual Gathering in June where they would run a session as part of planned consultancy work on NDA engagement that Nuleaf has commissioned.</p> <p>Phil also noted that, if the budget allows, Nuleaf was considering commissioning a separate piece of consultancy later in 24/25, looking at how one might define 'significant additional investment' within the GDF process.</p>	PM
4.	NDA Comms and engagement plans for 2024 from Dr Sam Harris , NDA	
4.1	<p>The Chair welcomed Sam Harris, Director of Shareholder and Stakeholder Relations at the NDA. She began by outlining recent developments within the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the departure of John McNamara and Simon Napper, Pip Hatt has joined from NRS to provide additional support. • David Wallace, Comms Director for Scotland, now has an expanded role that also covers Wales. • Charlotte Percival will be joining the NDA team next week. Some additional changes may also be forthcoming. <p>Sam elaborated on the responsibilities of her team, namely:</p>	

- To optimise the relationship with NDA shareholders in UK and Devolved Governments and to work with scrutiny bodies including the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and National Audit Office (NAO).
- To build relationships with influencers such as trade unions and the Nuclear Industry Association (NIA).
- To seek external stakeholder support for their mission. In this the aim is that transparency, accessibility and communication should underpin all work. The objective is to ensure stakeholders understand the organisation's challenges and how they can contribute to shaping its strategy. Efforts are made to reach a broad audience, including close collaboration with site communities
- Close work with regulators, which is crucial for maximizing stakeholder confidence and managing the NDA's reputation effectively.

She spoke on the upcoming election and noted that a general election and the potential for a new government can create uncertainty with scope for changes in the departmental structures of government.

Additionally, the appointment of a new Chair of the NDA Group is imminent, and this will be crucial for setting the organisation's direction.

Reputation management is another key focus, especially given ongoing scrutiny, including the public bodies review led by the Cabinet Office. This review aims to achieve significant savings, particularly in administrative costs. While the first phase has concluded, there are follow-up questions, the work is currently in the second phase, with plans for a third phase in the early part of the summer.

A NAO value for money study is also underway, primarily centred on Sellafield and its progress in reducing hazard and risk. This study is a continuation of a previous report conducted in 2018. Depending on developments related to the general election, we anticipate potential scrutiny from the Public Accounts Committee.

Conducting a stakeholder survey is vital for gathering feedback from our stakeholders. This survey is conducted every two years, and it is scheduled for this year.

Sam also noted changes intended to build further meaningful engagement with stakeholders. NDA has:

- Worked to establish a Cross-Party Group on nuclear at the Scottish Parliament which is due to launch this month. This initiative will provide an opportunity for Members of the Scottish Parliament to gain a deeper understanding of NDA work.
- Commissioned a review of the Site Stakeholder Groups (SSGs) to assess their effectiveness and their contributions to the stakeholder voice from communities over the past two decades, as well as to identify any challenges.

In terms of events, Nuclear Week in Parliament is significant. Typically held in September, this year it has been postponed to January due to general election planning.

Finally, a face-to-face stakeholder summit is scheduled for September, and planning is already in progress. NDA is also aiming to conduct a webinar with the Young Generation Network (YGN) in early summer.

Sam Harris concluded her presentation and invited questions from the audience.

Q: Can you say more about the Cabinet Office review of public bodies. What is the aim?

4.2

A: The review is intended to look at the public body landscape and assess whether bodies are still necessary and if their functions are being carried out effectively. It considers efficiency and delivery methods and will identify opportunities for potential savings.

Q: How is the NDA going to structure the stakeholder survey this year?

A: We are at early stages of planning, but I am very open so happy to take suggestions to help us improve. Any thoughts on questions or types of things we should be asking within the survey would be welcome.

Q: There have been concerns raised about the significant turnover of staff within NDA and on departures e.g. from NDA in Cumbria to BAE at Barrow. What is NDA doing to maintain an effective workforce?

A: NDA recently completed a graduate event to encourage new staff into the industry and have been involved in launching a wider scheme to boost nuclear skills. There is a major challenge

	<p>for the whole sector in getting enough skilled workers in the coming years.</p> <p>Sam explained to members if anyone would like to contact her with any questions or queries outside of the meeting, she is more than happy for them to do so.</p>	
5.	Update on national developments in radioactive waste management	
5.1	<p>Phil took the meeting through the paper which had been circulated before the meeting. Among other things he noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Decommissioning and Radioactive Substance Policy has cleared Government processes, and it is anticipated that it will be released in mid-March. Nuleaf will send a link round when it emerges. • The NDA has been conducting a strategic review of stores, considering the decommissioning of the AGR fleet and its implications for waste storage locations across the country. Nuleaf plans to run an engagement session on this work at an appropriate time. • The national narrative, designed to help explain changes to waste management to communities, will be published later this year. • Strategy 5, the NDA's overarching five-year strategy, is in the early stages of preparation. A consultation is likely to take place in May 2025. Nuleaf is represented in the Strategy 5 development group as a key stakeholder. <p><i>Q: Has the national narrative been distributed to officers as unofficial guidance?</i></p> <p>A: No, it won't be before it is launched.</p> <p><i>Q: Will the national narrative be a stand-alone document, or will there be a campaign or program associated with it?</i></p> <p>A: Phil stated that he is not aware of the plans for launching the national narrative or how it will be engaged with. He will raise this with NDA.</p>	PM
5.2	<p>Phil also updated members on discussions he had been having with the NDA and SCCORS (Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances) (Item 5.4). There is a recognition that SCCORS required a Co-ordinator to support its engagement, with NDA offering funding for this appointment. The proposal is that this new staff member could be line managed by Nuleaf's Director.</p>	

	Members voiced their support for this proposal, and Phil said he would report back to future meetings on this.	
6.	Update on the Geological disposal facility siting process	
6.1	<p>Phil presented paper 6 and highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An official GDF Working Group was briefly established in South Holderness, but NWS had decided to withdraw after a short period due to the strong level of local resistance and the withdrawal of support from the local authority, East Riding of Yorkshire. • There was a general view that no new communities were likely to enter the siting process in the coming months due to the upcoming election. It was also clear that the window for any new communities to enter was getting smaller. • The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) has recently published a report on AMRs and SMRs. The report emphasises a lot of the concerns around waste management that had been raised at the recent Nuleaf seminar on AMRs. 	
7.	Date of next meeting	
7.1	The next Steering Group meeting will take place on the 18 th June as part of the Annual Gathering.	
8.	Any other business	
8.1	Phil asked members about how best to alert them about upcoming meetings. It was agreed to trial the sending of a diary invitation and also an email alert, followed by the papers and a Teams link prior to the meeting.	
8.2	<p>The Annual Gathering was discussed. Phil explained that, as in previous years, funding is available for up to two Members or officers from Contributing Authorities to attend. This will cover accommodation, food and travel. Accommodation will be available on the 17th June for those members wishing to travel up the day before.</p> <p>Regarding the program, on the 18th June there will be an extended steering group meeting, including a facilitated discussion on NDA engagement and a panel discussion on socio-economics. On the morning of the 19th, there will be a site visit to Trawsfynydd, before members are returned to the train station to head home.</p>	
9.	Update on the work of the committee on Radioactive Waste Management - Sir Nigel Thrift, Chair of CoRWM	
9.1	Nigel introduced himself to the group and explained that he would be focussing on recent work on small modular reactors (SMRs) and advanced modular reactors (AMRs) along with geological disposal.	

CoRWM was established in 2003 as an advisory committee to the UK government, with representation from the three devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

CoRWM offers independent advice, covering scientific, technical, planning, legislative, and regulatory issues relevant to radioactive waste management. The Committee also intervenes in government policy by commenting on any policies related to radioactive waste or nuclear energy, ensuring that the government recognises the importance of managing nuclear waste.

During his presentation, Nigel highlighted the following points:

- Engagement with the Welsh and Scottish governments has been ongoing, but there has been no involvement with Northern Ireland due to the absence of a government and nuclear policy for about two and a half years.
- CoRWM comprises six subgroups, including one focused on working with communities and communication, mainly concerning siting policy. Another subgroup is dedicated to geological disposal facility safety case and geology, with a focus on geology, planning, and regulation.
- The Committee has provided advice to the UK government on various topics, including fusion waste and the potential disposal of spent fuel and nuclear materials in the GDF. This advice considers whether certain materials should be classified as waste and the implications for GDF design.
- The Committee is providing advice to the Scottish Government on Near Surface Disposal (NSD) and also looking at NSD across the UK.

CoRWM has recently published a report on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs) which highlights a range of recommendations on:

- The necessity of clear guidance from the government to promoters, regulators, and Great British Nuclear on addressing costs, safety, environmental issues, and radioactive waste management at an early stage.
- The need for reactor vendors to consider waste and to undertake early engagement with Nuclear Waste Services (NWS).
- The need to ensure adequate funds are set aside for decommissioning and waste management.

The Chair thanked Nigel and invited questions:

9.2	<p><i>Q: Presumably, any community holding a Test of Public Support will need to understand the inventory for disposal. How will that be possible given all the uncertainties about the wastes destined for a GDF, especially that from AMRs?</i></p> <p>A: Regarding Advanced Modular Reactor (AMR) waste, it's challenging due to the complexity of the waste and the time and resources required for thorough assessment.</p> <p><i>Q: Given the expanding inventory and the scale of the new nuclear programme, many people feel that a second GDF may be required. Does CoRWM have a view on this?</i></p> <p>A: The policy does not exclude a second GDF. However, the costs of that and complexity of the siting process would make that difficult to deliver.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Thrift for his presentation.</p>
10	<p>Update on AGR Decommissioning with Dale Mcqueen, Andrew Munro, Paul Morton and Bill Hamilton.</p>
10.1	<p>Mr Morton began the session by outlining EDF's role and the progress that the company has made with Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor (AGR) defueling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first Hunterston was defueled on schedule in September 2023 with the company on track in terms of the timetable for defueling the second reactor on that site. • At Hinkley Point B the first reactor is now 70% defueled and active defueling has also started at Dungeness. • At Heysham 1 flask corridor upgrades have been completed to aid defueling once the site is offline. The same is planned at Hartlepool and Dungeness. • Expenditure on defueling is below forecasts and good progress is being made overall. <p>Mr Munro updated the group on NRS work on the AGRs, noting the recent creation of the body by the merging of Dounreay and Magnox:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the rebranding the new organisation has developed a 10-year strategy aimed at transforming the business and promoting innovation. • In 10 years' time, NRS will have over 20 sites in the UK, while 50% of the business will be in Scotland. • The lead and learn strategy across our fleet is vitally important. NRS will learn from the process at Trawsfynydd,

Winfrith and Dounreay and use that to guide future decommissioning.

In terms of the AGR fleet:

- Nine months after fuel-free verification marks the point at which the AGR site will transfer to NRS. This period includes key steps such as implementing the post-defueling safety case.
- NRS has structured plans for Hunterston, the first site to transfer in 2026, followed by Hinkley in the same year, and Dungeness around 2029. For Hunterston and Hinkley, we have agreed on blueprints in collaboration with EDF and the NDA to outline the site's configuration at the point of transfer.
- Recent achievements include finalizing the land boundary agreement for Hunterston B and ongoing efforts to secure funding from the Nuclear Liabilities Fund to support decommissioning activities.
- Each site has a specific decommissioning plan informed by lessons learned from Magnox and other decommissioning experiences. We are committed to optimizing these plans to ensure efficient and safe decommissioning.
- They are looking to maximise synergies, especially between A and B stations, in areas such as waste stores.

10.2

The Chair thanked presenters and opened up to questions:

Q: Are you engaged with local communities now around the AGR sites?

A: There are ongoing public consultations and engagement at Hunterston and Hinkley. A new consultation at Hinkley is about to be launched.

Q: How confident are you in the radioactive and non-radioactive inventory at the AGR sites. Is it much better understood than at the Magnox sites and how much is still to be discovered as you go through decommissioning?

A: There is better understanding than for earlier sites and the sites have been better designed for decommissioning. However, there are still uncertainties.

	<p><i>Q: In your presentation, you talked about having a workforce of 7,000 people. Is that set to grow, and what recruitment challenges do you think you will face.</i></p> <p>A: The 7,000 figure includes contractors. There will be a growth in the coming decade. Recruitment is challenging as we will be competing against new nuclear and defence, as well as other sectors such as renewables. Building a better skills base is essential.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the presenters and closed the meeting.</p>
--	---

ACTION LIST

13th March 2024			
Item	Action	By	Outcome
2.1	Upload previous minutes onto Nuleaf's website.	CA	Done
3.1	Approach GBN again to set up a meeting to discuss their planned engagement with local authorities. Contact NNLAG to discuss a joint event.	PM	<p>After further efforts contact has now been made with GBN who have said they are interested in a joint Nuleaf/NNLAG event post-election.</p> <p>PM also held a meeting with Michael Mol and Phil Watson of NNLAG on the 30th May where it was agreed to work together to set up an event with GBN.</p>
5.1	Alert members to the Decommissioning and Radioactive Substances Policy when published.	PM	Link included in June Steering Group Papers. Also circulated to members by email and included in May newsletter.