

**Radioactive Waste Planning Group meeting, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024**  
**10.00 – 12.30, online.**

**Present:**

Heather Morrison	Cumberland Council
Eren Balkir	Dorset Council
Eleanor Godesar	Dorset Council
Felicity Hart	Dorset Council
Bethany Rance	East Suffolk Council
Naomi Goold	East Suffolk Council
Terry Burns	Essex County Council
Richard Greaves	Essex County Council
Wai Tse	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
Linda Townsend	Gloucestershire County Council
Angharad Crump	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Edward Wright	Lincolnshire County Council
Jon Zalot	North Wales Councils
Sion Roberts	Snowdonia National Park Authority
John Burton	Somerset Council
Louise Martin	Somerset Council
Rachel Whaley	Westmorland & Furness Council
Philip Matthews	Nuleaf
Chloe Atkinson	Nuleaf
Steve Smith	Nuleaf Consultant

**Speakers**

Matt Meldrum	NRS
Matt Verlander	Avison Young

## **1. Welcome and apologies.**

1.1 PM opened the meeting and welcomed members.

1.2 Apologies were received from Jonathan Cook - Cumberland Council; Matthew Winslow - Maldon Council; Richard Outram - Manchester City Council; and Kevin Broughton - Oxfordshire County Council.

## **2. Minutes held on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2024**

Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record and will be posted to Nuleaf's website.

**Action: CA**

## **3. Matters arising**

All matters arising were complete no further action required.

## **4. Presentation on Biodiversity Net Gain: Matt Meldrum, NRS**

Phil welcomed Matthew Meldrum from Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS). He noted that Matt used to be a local authority planner with West Berkshire Council and a member of this Group.

Matt introduced himself. He had served in local government for 17 years but had joined Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) to work on the GDF programme and around 12 months ago moved to NRS. He leads their land use planning team which supports land use matters across all NRS sites. He takes a strategic overview of all planning application and local plan submissions from across NRS and works closely with their planning consultants. In his remit he liaises with Frank Wigley and others at the NDA and also with Government on issues such as EIADR.

Matt then moved on to focus on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This is now mandatory for almost all planning applications and thus it is an important issue for NRS. They are still working to understand the legislation and requirements but have already been looking at the implications for sites such as Dungeness. An ongoing dialogue with local authorities is important and today was the first step of that conversation. Matt also noted that others in local authorities may have more expertise in biodiversity, but that RWPG members could be a conduit to that wider conversation.

The NRS/NDA starting point for all work is their legal obligation to decommission and the fact those sites are constrained in size and challenging in terms of the clean-up

mission. This means they will often be looking off-site for BNG activities. There are other challenges such as the need to submit a BNG plan even if there is no impact. This is untested new legislation and there will be a lot of learning.

More widely there are concerns that some developers are not acting in the spirit of the legislation, for example by reducing their biodiversity baseline or minimising existing habitats, to avoid taking action. NRS is keen to do things properly and is undertaking baseline work at its sites using independent consultants.

So overall NRS is looking to preserve what it has and act within sites where possible. Having done the baseline work they are now moving towards risk and opportunity masterplans, looking at actions they can take and possible constraints. Part of this next step is starting conversations with appropriate people in local government, and they are keen to take this dialogue to the next level.

Matt ended his presentation and invited questions.

Q: Are you having discussions with EDF about what the B stations might look like as part of this work? Are you looking at potential synergies between the two sites or are you being site specific?

*A: Yes, we are having conversations with EDF. In terms of discussion on synergies, I will have to take this question away with me and find more details.*

Q: What sort of timeframe are you looking at?

*A: Our timeframe is roughly the next 6-12 months, but I believe in some areas it will be slightly more accelerated. We do not have an unlimited resource so it will be done in a phased manner. Dungeness has been an early focus.*

Q: Where will Somerset be in the queue for this?

*A: I would say towards the middle of the queue at the moment.*

Q: What is your link between yourselves, Great British Nuclear (GBN) and NDA? Do you share information and if so how does this work? This is important for sites such as Oldbury.

*A: I am aware that there is high level discussion with GBN but in terms of more detail, this is a question which I will need to take away with me.*

Q: A high proportion of the site and land that you are looking at here is going to be polluted or contaminated in some way and therefore might not be suitable for BNG. I presume that offsite mitigation would be with third party landowners, and they might not want biodiversity net gain if they want to maximise their agricultural output. So could this be a difficult situation to meet?

*A: You are correct, off-site mitigation is where we are looking for most sites and the situation varies between locations. As an example, Harwell has a lot of open space and a landowner that is keen to engage. Elsewhere we do have biodiversity opportunities on site.*

Q: Decommissioning is nationally significant. Does this mean that the local authority might prioritise your needs for BNG ahead of others?

*A: I don't know for sure, but we are probably in the same queue as everybody else.*

Q: I recognise that there is encouragement to act locally but is there any scope to enhance biodiversity a considerable distance away? For example, could you locate a similar habitat to the shoreline at Dungeness that is 100 miles away and act on that?

*A: In theory action a long way away does count. However, there are challenges. At Chapelcross we have lots of space but that is in a completely different regulatory regime in Scotland which makes it difficult.*

Q: Winfrith is to be restored to a semi natural state at the end of the decommissioning, but it sounds like you can't count that towards your targets at other sites?

*A: Yes, we have worked to enhance biodiversity at Winfrith for years but we can't claim that retrospectively.*

Q: We had a recent presentation on the Winfrith master plan. I just wondered if you will be seeking to integrate BNG as you develop master planning across the estate?

*A: I work with colleagues at Winfrith closely. In terms of those future master plans, certainly I think biodiversity net gain would be something that would have to feed into that.*

Q: It is really interesting to hear that you've carried out baseline surveys at all 13 sites. What are the key messages from those?

*A: I will take this question away with me and get back with more information.*

Q: Thinking about the local site-specific level, I wanted to ask what involvement NRS has had in discussions on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)?

*A: It was our sustainability team that started this piece of work. In terms of the LNRS I think they have been involved in some of the early conversations that we've had, but I am not entirely sure on that.*

Q: Could there potentially be a link between biodiversity action and action that helps wider adaptation in terms of say coastal protection? And if so how would one plan to ensure that the biodiversity is sustainable in a changing climate over many decades?

*A: We do look at the long term most definitely given the long-term nature of decommissioning. So, thinking about climate change is something that's always on our agenda. I wouldn't want to give a commitment that we're specifically thinking about it in terms of BNG but it's certainly on the radar.*

**Action: MM to respond on a number of points at next RWPG.**

## **5. Update on NDA Planning: Frank Wigley, NDA and Matt Verlander, Avison Young**

Technical issues meant that guests were unable to deliver their presentation. It was agreed to postpone this item to a future meeting.

**Action: PM/CA**

## **6. Update on developments in radioactive waste management**

Phil introduced the paper and highlighted a number of items. No issues were raised regarding items on the paper.

## **7. Update on the GDF siting process**

Phil introduced the paper which he noted was short due to the lack of recent developments. No issues were raised regarding items on the paper.

## **8. Local Site Updates**

Phil invited members to provide any updates on their sites.

**East Suffolk Council** - The planning application for the demolition of the turbine hall at Sizewell A is out to consultation. The earthworks will be starting soon at Sizewell C.

**Kent County Council** - The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2016 is undergoing its formal 5-year review with a new time horizon to 2039. The pertinent policy for this group is CSW 17 which covers nuclear waste treatment and storage at Dungeness. This has been further refined to bring this in line with government policy and the changes that are ongoing at the site.

**Lincolnshire County Council** – Not a planning update as such, but the GDF Community Partnership are leading a number of work streams at the moment. A community visioning phase has begun and over the next few months the plan is to engage with communities and businesses to understand what a vision for the area would look like and how this may influence plans for additional infrastructure.

**Dorset Council** – They are expecting a planning application for the Winfrith Site around October/November time. It is not clear that target will be met but NRS are due to send a series of reports which set out the background for their environment statement. A Winfrith statement of agreed matters has been prepared and the council is working with the Environment Agency and NRS to take all this forward.

**Cumberland Council** – There are a number of updates to note:

- Sellafield are launching a new travel plan - one is required every three years. This covers the site itself and immediate surroundings.
- We have a long standing, bespoke and unique Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with Sellafield covering a lot of projects and underpinned by significant resources. There has been an issue with the PPA since local government reform, but they are working to resolve this.
- A new design guide for Sellafield is being developed with the aim of making the whole site less conspicuous.
- In terms of BNG we have had some minor applications to beat the deadline and the LPA is querying a few.
- Discussions have started regarding a new rail head just off site of Sellafield that would serve Sellafield and Moorside and any nuclear new build.
- The Council has just had the main modifications on our emerging new Copeland local plan. Those closed on the 24th of March and there were some objections from Sellafield on boundary grounds and justification definition grounds. Despite that things are progressing positively.
- Cumberland are also looking at a restructure which includes merging of the head of planning and the assistant director.

**Somerset Council** – It has been quiet regarding HPB but there is a consultation underway on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) this is required under the decommissioning regulations. This is due to be formally submitted by the end of summer. The plans are to keep the reactor building in situ, but all other buildings on site shall be removed to ground level. The plan is to start the decommissioning processes in 2026. This could take approximately 12 years before they enter a long period of quiescence. They have mentioned they would like to put the aluminium cladding on the outside of the building which is a concern.

In terms of local plan updates, Somerset is reviewing the waste core strategy. The purpose is to identify whether the plan needs to be updated and if so if it is full or partial. This will be progressing over the next few months.

**South Gloucestershire Council** – The main news is the purchase by Great British Nuclear of the Oldbury site. There is a meeting coming up with GBN about local community engagement. This will discuss a master planning exercise for Stroud and Gloucestershire and also to look at decommissioning issues, programmes, and time scales.

**Suffolk County Council** - The application for Sizewell A to receive low level nuclear waste has been approved and is in process.

**Snowdonia National Park Authority** – The SNPA is developing a planning framework for Trawsfynydd, working with Avison Young and NRS, but this has been delayed. It this should now be ready towards the end of this year.

**Essex County Council** – First, in response to concerns about aluminium cladding at Hinkley, Bradwell already has similar cladding. Terry is happy to discuss this further with Somerset Council.

Bradwell has got ILW coming in from Dungeness and Sizewell, with 136 packages from Dungeness and 11 due from Sizewell over the next two periods. They are also expecting 4 more packages to come in from Dungeness.

## **9. Date of next meeting**

This was confirmed as being Thursday 18th July, 10.30am -12.00pm (online).

## **10. Any other Business**

Members were asked if it was appropriate for NRS to be present at future meetings. It was agreed that members are happy for NRS to have a regular slot but that it would not be appropriate for them to attend the meeting as a whole due to the need to discuss planning matters that may be of relevance.

## Action List

<b>30<sup>th</sup> April 2024</b>			
Item	Action		Outcome
2.1	Chloe to upload Minutes		Done
4.1	Chloe to upload presentation		Done
4.1	MM to respond on a number of points at next RWPG.		MM due to attend July meeting
5.	Nuleaf to liaise with NDA/AY to rearrange session		Tbc
10.	PM to inform Matt Meldrum of decision		Done