

Annual Report

APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024





Our central strength as Nuleaf is our ability to link the local to the national. By coming together, we are able to speak with one voice to the nuclear industry and government.

Equally important is our ability to share experiences at a local and site level. Through this we can appreciate the similar concerns that all nuclear communities face. We can also understand how the elements of the UK's nuclear decommissioning and waste management infrastructure connect.

As a Cumberland Councillor, and a farmer whose land borders Sellafield, the nuclear sector is on my doorstep. I was therefore delighted to welcome Nuleaf members from across the country to our Annual Gathering in Workington. Members were able to visit Sellafield and understand the huge complexity and great challenges of cleaning up the site. They also toured the Low-Level Waste Repository (LLWR).

Both these facilities have local importance *and* national significance. Waste and Spent Fuel from all Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) sites is stored and managed through these facilities. In this way, Cumberland impacts on all nuclear communities and all nuclear communities impact on Cumberland. Nuleaf enables us to understand this complex web.

The same is true of our growing international engagement. This year saw Nuleaf become a founding member of a Global Partnership of Nuclear Communities, supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Initially involving European and North American municipalities, this network is already growing, with interest from Asia and South America.

From the local to the national and now global, our strength is in the sharing of experiences. Nuleaf continues to deliver this for all our members.

Cllr. David Moore, Chair of Nuleaf

Better outcomes for nuclear communities

Nuleaf's central objective is to deliver the best economic, social and environmental outcomes for nuclear host communities. The development by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) of a new **Social Value and Communities Strategy** was therefore a priority area for engagement in 2023/24.

Throughout the year we provided a forum for a dialogue between the NDA and our members and prepared a detailed response to the consultation on a draft Strategy.

While we welcome the strengthening of the NDA Group's commitment to Social Value and Sustainability, we continue to press for further action. Priority areas include:

- The need for a Community Benefits framework for the NDA estate. This would allow a fair and consistent distribution of benefits, recognising the major changes to decommissioning and waste management that will be taken forward through new policy.
- The establishment of a public facing and accessible set of performance measures for the NDA Group, covering economic, social and environmental issues.
- An enhancement of the level of socio-economic funding and further progress in ensuring a high level of procurement spend in the areas around NDA sites.
- The effective integration of the Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor (AGR) sites into the estate, and the creation of a consistent approach to engagement across all sites within the expanded NDA Group.

We will continue to work with the NDA to build on the progress made in recent years.

Members gather in Cumberland

Nuleaf members came together in September 2023 for our **Annual Gathering**, held in a sunny and warm Workington, Cumberland. The event proved very popular, with around 40 members from across England and Wales participating.

Meeting over two days, members joined site visits to Sellafield (see cover photo) and the Low-Level Waste Repository (LLWR) and were able to discuss the decommissioning and waste management challenges at these two sites.

During an extended Steering Group meeting, we debated the NDA's plans for Social Value and support for communities with Jamie Reed, their Director of Social Value.

With most Nuleaf meetings now held online, in-person networking is an increasingly valuable part of the Gathering. Outside the formal meeting, members were able to get together over dinner and hear from Cllr Mark Fryer, Leader of Cumberland Council; and Martin Walkingshaw, Chief Operating Officer of Nuclear Waste Services (NWS).

Local Planning Authorities are regulators of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. They have a critical role in waste management and the move towards the next planned use of sites. During the year our **Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG)** continued to develop its engagement with the NDA and the operating companies. Their focus was work with the NDA and regulators on engagement mechanisms such as Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) and Masterplans, these delivering better outcomes for all parties.

The search for a repository continues

The search for a suitable site for a **Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)** continued with a number of significant developments, including the decision of Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) to withdraw from Allerdale, and the brief establishment of a Working Group in South Holderness.

Three Community Partnerships remain in the process, located in Lincolnshire and Cumberland. Local government involvement is critical to the success of the process, and throughout the year Nuleaf was active, convening regular meetings for Councils engaged in the process; speaking with the Community Partnerships; and advising NWS and the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM).

New nuclear technologies

The UK's plans for up to 24 Gigawatts (GW) of new nuclear power includes a commitment to the development of **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** and **Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs)**. While the former utilise existing technology on a smaller scale, the latter includes an array of novel approaches that could be employed in a variety of ways.

All new nuclear technologies are likely to impact on current host communities and will have decommissioning and legacy waste implications. To understand this better, we held a well-attended seminar on AMRs. Members heard from the UK Government and a range of experts including the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation. The diversity of AMR technologies, and the uncertainty about their implications for waste management emerged as key learning points. We will continue to monitor SMR and AMR plans as they develop.



Nuleaf's Executive Director addressing the IAEA in Vienna, October 2023.

Towards a global partnership of nuclear communities

Nuleaf plays a prominent role in the **Group of Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF) Europe**, working with a growing network of local governments across the continent.

In 2023/24 our international networking took a further step forward, with the foundation of a **Global Partnership of Nuclear Communities**, initially involving Europe, Canada and the USA. This was officially launched in March 2024, building on the signing of an agreement at the Technical Meeting on local engagement in radioactive waste management, hosted by the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** at their headquarters in Vienna.

Our Executive Director also continued to play an active role in the European Commission's **EURAD** research programme, exploring the implications for civil society of nuclear waste management and geological disposal.