

## ITEM 8: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT



### Report to RWPG, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024

This report provides an update on recent developments in radioactive waste management. It covers:

- NDA Group update;
- Nuleaf news;
- Regulatory news;
- New nuclear and fusion updates; and
- Submarine Dismantling Programme (SDP).

#### 1. NDA Group update

1.1 Nuleaf's research into NDA stakeholder engagement continues to progress, and the consultants (Steve Smith and Doug Bamsey) will be hosting a discussion on their draft findings at this RWPG meeting. At time of writing Nuleaf has requested an update from the NDA on their review of the Site Stakeholder Groups (SSGs) and research on deliberative democracy. A verbal update will be provided to the meeting.

1.2 The **NDA Stakeholder Summit** took place in Manchester on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September. While Nuleaf attendance was down on previous years, a number of members did participate and, in addition to the formal programme, were able to meet with NDA CEO David Peattie. Philip Matthews participated in a panel discussion on building effective partnerships, and the event contained a number of workshop sessions on aspects of the NDA mission.

1.3 The NDA has announced that it is seeking a strategic partner to turn the **Chapelcross** site into a green energy hub; and has also unveiled a Masterplan for the 210Ha site<sup>1</sup>. The plans are supported by up to £15.3 million from the Scottish and UK Governments. NDA Chief Executive David Peattie commented '*Our ultimate aim is to free up our land for reuse, delivering benefit to local communities, the*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/masterplan-released-for-chapelcross-green-energy-hub>

*environment and the wider economy – the green energy hub will enable us to deliver this at Chapelcross.'*

1.4 Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) has received planning permission to demolish the turbine hall and annexe at the **Sizewell A** site<sup>2</sup>. Senior Project Manager Wendy Heath commented '*It will be a major skyline change for the community and clear an area the size of a professional football pitch for future use by March 2025.*'

1.5 In advance of the **2024 Budget**, Nuleaf wrote to the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, urging her to ensure that the NDA Group was provided with the resources to maintain progress with its mission. This request was also made by a range of other bodies, including the GMB Union<sup>3</sup>.

1.6 On the 23<sup>rd</sup> October, the National Audit Office (NAO) published its latest report on **Decommissioning Sellafield: managing risks from the nuclear legacy**<sup>4</sup>. The report recognises the exceptional challenges at Sellafield and that the mission will take until 2125 to complete. It notes that progress has been made since their last report (2018) in retrieving the most hazardous waste from aging facilities and that the site is more willing to confront and resolve difficult issues, drawing on expertise in the wider NDA Group.

However, the NAO believes that Sellafield has not made sufficient progress in reducing site risks, is not demonstrating value for money, and needs to address the deteriorating condition of key assets. This means that 'intolerable' risks are likely to persist for longer.

1.7 The NDA has published its **Annual Report and Accounts 23/24**<sup>5</sup>.

## **2. Nuleaf news**

2.1 A Nuleaf delegation participated in the **IAEA Technical Meeting on Stakeholder Engagement** in Vienna on the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October. The delegation was joined by a number of other UK participants representing the three GDF Community Partnerships and Nuclear Waste Services (NWS).

Over the course of the week delegates from around the world discussed local government and community engagement around waste management and in relation to proposals for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). The meeting also saw the further development of the **Global Partnership of Nuclear Communities**, with Argentina and the Republic of Korea committing to joining the network. A

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<sup>2</sup> [Sizewell A demolition project approved - Nuclear Engineering International \(neimagazine.com\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Reeves urged not to cut Sellafield funds amid concern at rise in 'near misses' | Energy industry | The Guardian](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Decommissioning Sellafield: managing risks from the nuclear legacy - NAO report](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority: Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

presentation on this event and other recent international meetings will be made at the December Steering Group.

2.2 Nuleaf members also attended the **GMF General Assembly** meeting in Salamanca on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> October. The General Assembly included presentations from member countries, a focussed discussion on the situation in Spain, and a visit to a nuclear fuel fabrication site.

2.3 A special meeting of the RWPG, focussed on **Permitted Development Rights**, took place on September 6<sup>th</sup>. Members discussed the issue with Avison Young (AY) and the NDA and expressed a general view that PDRs for nuclear, if properly defined, could be useful for both the industry and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs). The minutes of that meeting are included in the attached meeting papers.

2.4 The dates of the **2025 Nuleaf Annual Gathering** have been provisionally set for Tuesday the 10<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup> June. Please note these dates in your diary.

The Gathering, which will also mark Nuleaf's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, will involve a day of meetings and a dinner in London, followed by a site visit to Dungeness, which hosts two decommissioning nuclear power stations. It is hoped that NDA CEO David Peattie will be able to attend the London dinner.

### 3. Regulatory news

3.1. **Sellafield Ltd.** has issued an apology after pleading guilty to charges related to cybersecurity failings that were brought by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR). A fine of over £300,000 was imposed on the company – details of that and the failings are provided here<sup>6</sup>.

3.2 The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have announced that **Holtec International's** Small Modular Reactor (SMR) design<sup>7</sup> has successfully completed Phase 1 of the Generic Design Assessment (GDA). The process allows the regulators to begin assessing the safety, security, safeguards and environmental aspects of new reactor designs before site-specific proposals are brought forward. The **Rolls Royce SMR** design completed Phase 2 of the GDA process in July and has now moved to the third and final phase of the assessment<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.onr.org.uk/news/all-news/2024/10/sellafield-ltd-fined-332-500-for-cyber-security-shortfalls/>

<sup>7</sup> [Holtec International's Small Modular Reactor completes first step of design assessment | Office for Nuclear Regulation \(onr.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Rolls-Royce SMR progresses to final step of UK assessment : Regulation & Safety - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](#)

3.3 The ONR has published its **Annual Report and Accounts 23/24**<sup>9</sup> and also its **Chief Nuclear Inspector's Annual Report**<sup>10</sup>. The latter concludes that overall performance of the nuclear industry remains satisfactory, while highlighting some issues of concern.

3.4 On the 13<sup>th</sup> September the ONR granted consent for the decommissioning of **Hunterston B** under the Nuclear Reactors (Environmental Impact Assessment for Decommissioning) Regulations, 1999 (EIADR)<sup>11</sup>. The statement included a detailed environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the proposed decommissioning project at the North Ayrshire site, along with mitigation measures designed to prevent or reduce any significant adverse environmental impacts. Defueling of the two reactors is expected to be completed next year, after which the site will pass to Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) for decommissioning.

3.5 A consultation on EDF's **EIADR application for consent for Hinkley Point B** has been temporarily paused as the ONR awaits further details for the company on their Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report. The consultation was due to close on the 9<sup>th</sup> December but will now be relaunched for a further 90 days at an unspecified time<sup>12</sup>.

#### 4. New nuclear and fusion updates

4.1 The new Labour Government has announced up to £5.5bn of support for **Sizewell C**<sup>13</sup>, with the aim of *'providing certainty and ensuring the project has access to the necessary financial support to remain on track.'* The announcement came as the new Government reaffirmed its commitment to the project.

4.2 **South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGSC)** has sold its 40-acre science park site at the former Berkeley nuclear power station for £6.5 million<sup>14</sup>.

The land has been purchased by Chiltern Vital Group (CVB) who are interested in the development of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and the creation of a low carbon energy 'super-cluster'. An announcement from Government on a technology provider to develop new nuclear at Oldbury is expected soon. The land is already host to a University Technical College run by SGSC – this is not being sold as part of the agreement and will continue operating as before.

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<sup>9</sup> [Office for Nuclear Regulation Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Chief Nuclear Inspector's Annual Report on Great Britain's Nuclear Industry 2023/24](#)

<sup>11</sup> [ONR grants consent to decommission Hunterston B | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Consultation on EDF Energy's EIADR application for consent for Hinkley Point B power station | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Government unlocks up to £5.5bn for nuclear power subsidy scheme - BBC News](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Former Berkeley power station site sold for £6.5m - BBC News](#)

4.3 Ynys Mon MP **Llinos Medi** has called on the UK Government to provide clear commitments and timelines on the future of the Wylfa site and wider energy strategy. This follows reports that Secretary of State Ed Miliband has asked his department to review all nuclear plans. It is suggested that Wylfa may host four Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) rather than a large Gigawatt facility<sup>15</sup>.

4.4 EDF Energy has announced that it is looking at new locations to create a saltmarsh following local objections<sup>16</sup>. Andrew Cockcroft, head of stakeholder relations at **Hinkley Point C** said *'We have listened carefully to concerns and suggestions made during our consultation and are now exploring changes to our proposals....The development of saltmarsh habitat will boost this further - helping support fish populations and minimise the small environmental impact of operating the new power station.'*

EDF said that Hinkley Point C was obliged to make environmental improvements like saltmarsh to compensate for the impact the power station will have on fish numbers when operational.

4.5 US Company **Last Energy** has announced plans to develop four micro modular reactors at Bridgend in South Wales<sup>17</sup>. The 20MW reactors would be constructed on the site of the former coal-fired Llynfi Power Station which closed in 1977.

The plant would serve local industrial customers, and if given the go ahead, the first reactor could be operational by 2027. The company claims that this will translate into a £30 million investment in the local area and support at least 100 local full-time jobs.

## 5. Submarine Dismantling Programme (SDP)

5.1 Lord Coaker, a Minister of State in the MOD (Ministry of Defence) has agreed that the process of submarine dismantling needs to be speeded up, stating that the Government is exploring *'every way in which we can do that.'*

Nuleaf was involved in the stakeholder engagement around the SDP, which is seeking to dismantle 27 former nuclear-powered submarines, currently sitting at Rosyth and Devonport. The Minister stated that the first of these submarines, Swiftsure, will be fully dismantled as a demonstration by the end of 2026. However, some of the ships have been sitting in dry dock since the 1980s and the overall programme is behind schedule and will take many decades to complete<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> [Claims Wylfa mega-nuclear site 'under-review' with potential switch to mini-nuke plants - North Wales Live](#)

<sup>16</sup> [EDF Energy investigating new sites for Somerset saltmarsh plan - The Business Magazine](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Four micro nuclear plants planned for Wales](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Britain 'must speed up' disposal of old nuclear submarines](#)