

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 11th December 2024
Item: 6
Subject: Updates on national developments in radioactive waste management
Author: Philip Matthews



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;
- New nuclear and fusion reports; and
- Submarine Dismantling Programme (SDP).

Recommendation:

This report is for noting.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 Nuleaf continues to participate in the **Strategy 5 Development Group (S5DG)**, tasked by the NDA with developing a new 5-year Strategy, and in a range of related Theme Overview Group (TOG) meetings. The S5DG has now been presented with the draft text of most sections of the document. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) of the Strategy is also being undertaken. Nuleaf is feeding detailed comments back on all aspects of the process.

1.2 Sellafield Ltd. has appointed **Euan Hutton** as their permanent CEO, with Mr Hutton having undertaken the role on an interim basis since summer 2023¹.

Euan began his career on the Sellafield graduate programme. He has held positions at Sellafield and across the UK and international nuclear industry during his 33-year career. He commented *'It is an honour to continue to lead Sellafield Ltd as we enter what I believe will be the company's most exciting chapter yet.'*

¹ [Euan Hutton permanently appointed as Sellafield CEO - GOV.UK](#)

At Sellafield we must continue to make progress in tackling one of the biggest environmental remediation challenges in the UK. We must also continue to bring our skills to bear on supporting other national priorities – from security of energy supply through spent fuel management, or national security through world-class guardianship of special nuclear materials.'

Sellafield has also published its **Annual Review 2023/24**.² Among the achievements it highlights are:

- retrieving the first zeolite skip from the First Generation Magnox Storage Pond and transferring it to one of the newest waste stores, the Interim Storage Facility.
- transferring the first box of waste from the Pile Fuel Cladding Silo into storage via the Box Encapsulation Plant Product Store/ Direct Inlet Facility – marking the final stage of its commissioning with the introduction of nuclear materials.

Also released is Sellafield's latest **Review of Environmental Performance**³.

1.3 On the 23rd October, the National Audit Office (NAO) published its latest report on **Decommissioning Sellafield: managing risks from the nuclear legacy**⁴. 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.

At the end of November, the NAO also published a revised estimate of the UK decommissioning costs, with this rising to £128.8Bn⁵. The increase is largely the result of incorporating an estimate £23.5bn cost for the clean up of the Advanced Gas Cooled Reactors (AGR) and Sizewell B, operated by EDF Energy.

1.4 It is understood that continuing discussions with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) on the Spending Review has impacted on the timeframe for consultation on the **NDA Business Plan 2025-28**. It has been agreed with DESNZ that the consultation will be launched at the end of January and run for only 6 weeks. Because of Parliamentary Easter recess and pre-election period for council elections on the 1st May it is expected that the Plan will be formally published in early May next year, directly after the council elections.

² [Review of the Year 2023/24 - Our Sellafield - GOV.UK](#)

³ [Sellafield Ltd Annual Review of Environmental Performance 2023/24 - GOV.UK](#)

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

⁵ [Decommissioning old nuclear sites to cost £130bn in blow to Miliband](#)

1.5 The NDA has published its **Annual Report and Accounts 23/24**⁶ and its **Mission Progress Report**⁷.

1.6 It has been announced that **Corhyn Parr** will be stepping down as CEO of Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) in March 2025, with a recruitment process for her successor now underway⁸. In another change, **Dave Wilson** has been appointed as the managing director of Dounreay, joining from AtkinsRealis⁹.

2. UK and devolved Government reports

2.1 **Cwmni Eginno**, established by the Welsh Government to support the re-development of the Trawsfynydd site, has launched a Nuclear Prospectus for North Wales. It makes the case for bringing new nuclear development to North Wales and showcases what the region has to offer. Cwmni Eginno held a stakeholder event in collaboration with the **Wales Nuclear Forum** on the 28th of November to stimulate a wider conversation around the themes presented in the document. The Prospectus can be viewed here¹⁰.

2.2 Philip Matthews joined a meeting of the **Radioactive Substances Policy Group (RSPG)** on the 14th November. The RSPG involves the UK and Devolved Governments, the NDA Group, regulators and other stakeholders.

The meeting was chaired by Tonima Saha, who is acting Deputy Director, a role previously held by Umran Nazir. She provided a briefing on the new Ministerial team and on the new UK Government's work in nuclear and energy generation. It was noted that:

- The Budget/Spending Review settlement for DESNZ was viewed as being a good one, recognising the importance of the delivery of a decarbonised grid by 2030. That said, significant challenges lay ahead. Funding for the NDA had not yet been defined.
- A formal consultation on the National Policy Statement on new nuclear (EN-7) was expected before the end of 2025, drawing on the siting consultation undertaken this year.

Updates were received on a range of topics including the Register of Radioactive Sources and Generators, which is being updated, and on the Management of liquid wastes and other discharges of radioactive material.

2.3 The UK Parliament's **Energy Security and Net Zero Committee** held an evidence session on the 20th November in which the Chairs of **Great British Nuclear** and **Great British Energy** were questioned about their remit and how they can work in the most effective way. In evidence it emerged that only 30 of

⁶ [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority: Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

⁷ [The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Mission Progress Report 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

⁸ [NWS CEO Corhyn Parr to step down in March 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

⁹ [New managing director appointed at Dounreay - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁰ [cwmni-egino-north-wales-nuclear-prospectus.pdf](#)

GBN's 140 staff were on permanent contracts, amid rumours that GBN may be subsumed within Great British Energy. The transcript is available here¹¹.

2.4 On the 11th November it was announced that **Great British Nuclear** has begun detailed negotiations with the 4 shortlisted bidders for the UK Small Modular Reactor (SMR) programme¹². The four companies involved are GE Hitachi, Holtec, Rolls Royce SMR and Westinghouse. GBN's Chair, Simon Bowen said *'This is a significant moment for the SMR programme. Our technical experts have assessed each design in detail and are very confident these SMRs could play a key role in the UK's future energy mix. The negotiation phase will enable us to select the absolute best technologies on the best terms for the UK.'*

3. International news

3.1 The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has launched a Centre of Excellence for Safeguards and Non-Proliferation at the Capenhurst site in Cheshire. The site will enable the development and testing of nuclear verification technologies and also train practitioners. It is a collaboration between the IAEA, Urenco (owned by the governments of the UK, Germany and the Netherlands) and the US Government¹³.

4. Regulatory news

4.1. The ONR has published its **Annual Report and Accounts 23/24**¹⁴ and also its **Chief Nuclear Inspector's Annual Report**¹⁵. The latter concludes that overall performance of the nuclear industry remains satisfactory, while highlighting some issues of concern.

4.2 On the 13th September the ONR granted consent for the decommissioning of **Hunterston B** under the Nuclear Reactors (Environmental Impact Assessment for Decommissioning) Regulations, 1999 (EIADR)¹⁶. 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.

4.3 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

¹¹ [20 November 2024 - Work of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero - Oral evidence - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

¹² [Negotiations begin for UK's small modular reactor programme - GOV.UK](#)

¹³ [IAEA Centre of Excellence launched at Capenhurst : Regulation & Safety - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](#)

¹⁴ [Office for Nuclear Regulation Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#)

¹⁵ [Chief Nuclear Inspector's Annual Report on Great Britain's Nuclear Industry 2023/24](#)

¹⁶ [ONR grants consent to decommission Hunterston B | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

their Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report. The consultation was due to close on the 9th December but will now be relaunched for a further 90 days at an unspecified time¹⁷.

4.4 EDF and Trillium Flow Services Ltd have been fined a total of £633,333 after a scaffolder lost some of his toes in an accident at the former **Dungeness B** power station in Kent. Colin Dell, 62, was hit by a two-tonne counterweight which had not been properly secured. The prosecution was carried out by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)¹⁸.

4.5 The ONR is expected to announce, before the end of 2024, that it has approved proposals to extend the operation of AGR reactors at Heysham, Hartlepool and Torness until the end of this decade¹⁹. The operator, EDF Energy, had requested this due to delays in the development of new low carbon power sources, putting the UK Government's target to decarbonise the grid by 2030 at risk.

5. Nuleaf update

5.1 The emerging findings of Nuleaf's research into NDA stakeholder engagement will be presented for discussion at this Steering Group meeting, following consideration at the November Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) and by Elected Members at a special meeting.

In parallel the NDA is nearing completion of its review of Site Stakeholder Groups – a presentation on this is also anticipated at this Steering Group. Finally, a research report on the use of deliberative democracy by the NDA is also due to be published soon.

5.2 A Co-ordinator for **SCCORS (Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances)** has been appointed. This role will sit within Nuleaf and the officer will also provide support for Nuleaf's policy work. A verbal update will be provided at the Steering Group meeting.

5.3 A Nuleaf delegation participated in the **IAEA Technical Meeting on Stakeholder Engagement** in Vienna on the 16th to 20th 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

¹⁷ [Consultation on EDF Energy's EIA/DR application for consent for Hinkley Point B power station | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

¹⁸ [Dungeness B: Firms fined £63k over nuclear power station injury - BBC News](#)

¹⁹ [Energy giant set to extend lifespan of nuclear power plants](#)

development of the **Global Partnership of Nuclear Communities**, with Argentina and the Republic of Korea committing to joining the network.

Nuleaf members also attended the **GMF General Assembly** meeting in Salamanca on the 8th and 9th 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. A presentation on these events and the GMF visit to Oskarshamn will be made at this Steering Group.

5.4 The **2025 Nuleaf Annual Gathering** will take place on **Tuesday the 10th and Wednesday the 11th June**. Please note these dates in your diary.

The Gathering, which will also mark Nuleaf's 20th 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. NDA CEO David Peattie will address members at the dinner.

6. New nuclear and fusion reports

6.1 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 to better explain its 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 facility²⁰.

6.2 **East Coast College** in Suffolk, working with Sizewell C, has launched **Nucleus**²¹, a new employability hub. This provides employment search assistance and application and interview support to those looking to secure employment in the region. Located at the College's Lowestoft Campus, Nucleus will bring together services, training, and employability expertise to reach an untapped local workforce.

Also announced is a new agreement between Sizewell C and Lowestoft MP, Jess Asato, which will see the town benefit from at least 500 jobs during the construction of the nuclear power plant on the Suffolk coast²². This follows a similar commitment made to Ipswich through an agreement with local MP Jack Abbott. Sizewell C has previously pledged that at least a third of the 7,900 peak construction workforce – around 2,600 jobs – will come from East Anglia.

It has also been announced that **East Suffolk Council** will offer grants of up to £7,000 to local householders offering accommodation to workers at the site. A **Renovation Grant** will provide up to £7,000 per bed space to cover structural works, electrical wiring, heating installation, windows and doors, plumbing, installing kitchen and bathroom facilities and additional parking. Separately, a **Minor Works**

²⁰ [Claims Wylfa mega-nuclear site 'under-review' with potential switch to mini-nuke plants - North Wales Live](#)

²¹ [East Coast College and Sizewell C launch employability hub in Lowestoft - Sizewell C](#)

²² [Sizewell C and Lowestoft MP sign jobs pledge for town - Sizewell C](#)

Grant will offer financial support of up to £3,000 per bed space for people wishing to repurpose an unused bedroom for use by Sizewell C workers²³.

6.3 EDF Energy has announced that it is looking at new locations to create a saltmarsh following local objections²⁴. 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 stated 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.

6.4 US Company **Last Energy** has announced plans to develop four micro modular reactors at Bridgend in South Wales²⁵. 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, it was claimed that the first reactor could be operational by 2027. The company has stated that this will translate into a £30 million investment in the local area and support at least 100 local full-time jobs.

6.5 The **New Nuclear Local Authority Group (NNLAG)** has published research on the impact of the construction of Hinkley Point C, to help local authorities understand how a nuclear power station can affect their area. The report, undertaken by Oxford Brookes University, is intended to help local authorities better plan for and implement such projects in a way that maximises benefits and minimises negative impacts, to the advantage of all involved²⁶.

7. Submarine Dismantling Programme (SDP)

7.1 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,

²³ [East Suffolk Council offering grants to convert homes | East Anglian Daily Times](#)

²⁴ [EDF Energy investigating new sites for Somerset saltmarsh plan - The Business Magazine](#)

²⁵ [Four micro nuclear plants planned for Wales](#)

²⁶ [New Nuclear Local Authorities Group \(NNLAG\) - Suffolk County Council](#)

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 complete²⁷.

It has also been announced that **Rolls Royce Submarines** is opening an office in Glasgow to support its work in delivering new nuclear reactors for UK submarines and the AUKUS defence pact with the USA and Australia. Around 120 jobs will be created²⁸.

²⁷ [Britain 'must speed up' disposal of old nuclear submarines](#)

²⁸ [New Aukus nuclear submarine office opening in Glasgow | The National](#)