

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 12th March 2025
Item: 5
Subject: Updates on national developments in radioactive waste management
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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;
- Regulatory news;
- Nuleaf update;
- New nuclear and fusion reports; and
- EDF news.

Recommendation:

This report is for noting.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 The NDA Group continues to consider the implications of the 25/26 funding settlement it received in the 2024 Budget. The award is similar to that allocated in the current year, but rises in construction, labour and energy costs have been significant, and the provision made is seen as challenging. Further concerns have been expressed about the likely level of financial support over the lifetime of this Parliament.

Sellafield, responsible for the majority of NDA spending, stated in late February that the £2.8Billion allocated in next financial year '*would not be enough*' for planned operations and some planned works would have to be slowed down or paused¹. Dan Gow, senior organiser at GMB, said: '*GMB calls on Sellafield Ltd to be fully transparent about any cost-saving measures and to engage with us to ensure the workforce is protected.*' A Sellafield spokesman said the company was working with employees, trade unions and stakeholders to '*manage any impact*'.

¹ [Sellafield warns £2.8bn budget is 'not enough' for planned work - BBC News](#)

Beyond Sellafield there are concerns about the impact on the planned forward work programmes for **Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS)**, responsible for the Magnox sites and Dounreay; and for the GDF programme and the other operations of **Nuclear Waste Services (NWS)**. Nuleaf will host a discussion with NDA on Strategy 5 and forward work plans at the Annual Gathering (see below).

1.2 There is now expected to be a delay in the production of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) **Strategy 5**, the five year Strategy for the NDA Group, covering 2026-31. As noted, the budget settlement for the NDA has required revision of the forward workplan and the pausing or amendment of various workstreams and projects. It is now anticipated that a 12 week public consultation on the draft Strategy will begin in July 2025, with the final Strategy likely to be launched after the required deadline of April 2026.

Nuleaf continues to engage in the preparation of the Strategy through the **Strategy 5 Development Group (S5DG)**.

1.3 The Budget has also impacted on the timeframe for consultation on the **NDA Business Plan 2025-28**. It is now expected that the consultation will commence on the 10th March and run for only 6 weeks. Nuleaf will submit a response. It is expected that the Plan will be formally published in May next year, after the council elections.

1.4 Nuleaf Executive Director Philip Matthews participated in a number of NDA Group events being held as part of the Nuclear Industry Association's (NIA) **Nuclear Week in Parliament** in late January². The events marked the 20th anniversary of the founding of the NDA and included a reception addressed by NDA Group CEO David Peattie, Lord Hunt and David Mundell MP.

The NDA also sponsored a Skills and Apprenticeship Fair, hosted by Liz Saville Roberts MP, where 12 NDA group apprentices and graduates were able to meet their local MPs and representatives across the sector and discuss the development of the next generation of the nuclear decommissioning workforce.

1.5 The **Egni Economic Impact Project**, based on Anglesey, has reported on the delivery of a range of low carbon projects³. Egni was created in 2021 with a £360,000 grant from the NDA and now has a full-time staff team.

Jamie Reed, Director of Socio-Economics at the NDA, said *'The creation of Egni in M-SParc has brought about a step-change in activity in the low carbon sector in North Wales. The project has secured over £7m in inward investment into the area, and generated carbon savings through interventions such as increased solar panels, efficiency measures and EV chargers.'* Nuclear Restoration Services has now committed a further £389,000 in a second-phase funding package to the project.

² [NDA group celebrates progress and innovation in parliament - GOV.UK](#)

³ [NDA-funded project delivers low-carbon success across North Wales - GOV.UK](#)

1.6 ITV news has featured a report on the demolition of the turbine hall at **Sizewell A**⁴ while the BBC has published an article on the **Low Level Waste Repository**⁵.

2. UK and devolved Government reports

2.1 The NDA has welcomed the UK Government's announcement of its policy decision to **immobilise the UK's inventory of civil separated plutonium** (Pu)⁶. The UK holds 140 tonnes of civil Pu, the world's largest stockpile. Immobilisation puts the material beyond reach, reducing the long-term safety and security risks and ensuring it is suitable for final disposal in a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF).

NDA has stated that this decision will lead to significant investment in West Cumbria, with thousand of jobs during construction and hundreds of jobs during operation. The NDA will develop a suitable immobilisation solution, before seeking approval for a major programme on plutonium disposition. The written ministerial statement can be viewed here⁷.

The Chair of Nuleaf and of the West Cumbria Site Stakeholder Group (WCSSG) Cllr. David Moore commented *'This is probably not the news a lot of us in West Cumbria hoped for but was inevitable as none of the new reactors are looking to MOX as a fuel. WCSSG will need to look at the implications, there will be lots of job opportunities as new plant will need to be built and run here at Sellafield, but we need to understand how it is going to be funded as it must not impact on the high hazard clean-up of the site, that is so important to our local community.'*

2.2 The UK Government has launched a consultation on a draft new **National Policy Statement for Nuclear Energy Generation (EN7)**⁸. EN-7 will allow developers more freedom in choosing locations for new nuclear projects, a move away from the pre-identified locations set out in EN-6⁹; and also supports the development of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs) along with conventional Gigawatt stations.

It follows on from an earlier consultation that sought general views on siting criteria. Nuleaf submitted a response to that consultation and will respond to the current one. The deadline for is **midday on the 3rd April**.

Speaking on the day the consultation was launched, (6th February) the Prime Minister stated that he wanted the UK to return to being 'one of the world leaders on nuclear' and would 'take on the blockers' as in other areas of planning¹⁰.

⁴ [Inside the demolition of Sizewell A nuclear power plant - Latest From ITV News](#)

⁵ [Plan for Cumbria's former WW2 site now storing nuclear waste - BBC News](#)

⁶ [NDA group welcomes Government decision on plutonium disposition - GOV.UK](#)

⁷ [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

⁸ [Draft National Policy Statement for nuclear energy generation \(EN-7\) - GOV.UK](#)

⁹ [UK Nuclear Power Planning Reforms: Impact on Data Centres](#)

¹⁰ ['Build baby build', says Keir Starmer as he sets out nuclear plan - BBC News](#)

2.3 On the 28th February, **Great British Nuclear (GBN)** announced that it has entered the final stage of the selection process for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and plans to make a final decision in spring 2025¹¹. Four remaining vendors (GE Hitachi, Holtec, Rolls-Royce and Westinghouse)¹² have been issued with an invitation to submit final tenders, with GBN having already identified potential development sites at Wylfa and Oldbury-on-Severn.

GBN has also announced a number of key appointments to its staff¹³.

2.4 The UK Government is to establish a new **AI Energy Council** to look at the opportunities for '*renewable and innovative energy solutions, including small modular reactors*' to support the significant energy demand required by artificial intelligence (AI). The Government has committed to establishing 'AI Growth Zones', the first of these being at Culham in Oxfordshire, home of the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA)¹⁴.

2.5 The Ministry of Defence has awarded **Rolls-Royce** a £9 Billion contract to make nuclear reactors for the submarine fleet. The decision will secure 4,000 jobs and lead to the creation of 1,000 more¹⁵.

3. Regulatory news

3.1. The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has announced the appointment of Mike Finnerty as its new Chief Executive and Chief Nuclear Inspector. He joins ONR from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) where he served as Special Assistant to the IAEA Director General, providing technical and strategic advice and guidance on nuclear safety, security and safeguards¹⁶.

Prior to this, Mike spent 21 years at ONR, beginning as a specialist criticality inspector and, from 2013, served as Deputy Chief Nuclear Inspector and Director. It has also been announced that Dr. Nicola Crauford has been appointed as ONR Chair.

3.2 The ONR has determined that Sellafield Ltd no longer requires enhanced oversight for its physical security measures and that it can return to a routine attention level. Sellafield currently remains in significantly enhanced attention for cyber security and work is ongoing to achieve the required improvements in this area.

3.3 The UK Government announced on February 6th that it is setting up an **independent taskforce on nuclear regulation**¹⁷. A spokesman for ONR

¹¹ [GBN at final stage of Small Modular Reactor selection process - GOV.UK](#)

¹² [Great British Nuclear SMR competition advances to final stage | New Civil Engineer](#)

¹³ [Great British Nuclear Announces Key Leaders to Power Next Phase - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁴ [UK government considering role for SMRs in AI expansion - World Nuclear News](#)

¹⁵ [Rolls-Royce seals record £9bn MoD contract to build nuclear sub reactors | This is Money](#)

¹⁶ [ONR announces new Chief Executive and Chief Nuclear Inspector | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

¹⁷ [ONR welcomes new government independent taskforce on nuclear regulation | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

commented 'We look forward to the insights that will be offered on how we can.....maximise the benefits in terms of reduced costs for industry and faster approvals. Nuclear safety and the protection of workers and the public will always be our priority, but we are committed to regulating in a way that supports cost-effective, efficient nuclear deployment, the adoption of innovation and technological advancements.'

4. Nuleaf update

4.1 On the 27th February Nuleaf hosted a well-attended meeting at which the final conclusions of independent research on NDA engagement were presented to members. A minute of the meeting is being prepared, and it is hoped that the final report will be published in late spring.

In parallel the NDA is nearing completion of its review of Site Stakeholder Groups and a research report on the use of deliberative democracy. A presentation on both these work strands will be made at this Steering Group.

4.2 Louise Martin joined the Nuleaf team as **Co-ordinator of SCCORS (Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances)** on the 17th February. Louise joins on a 12 month secondment from Somerset Council, and will be working 3 days a week. Her key task is to re-establish and develop SCCORS, the representative body on nuclear matters north of the border, but she will also be providing policy support for Nuleaf.

4.3 We are delighted to announce that Lord Hunt, Minister of State at the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) will be joining our **Annual Gathering 2025**, which will take place in London on the **10th and 11th June**. Lord Hunt will give an overview of the Government's current and future plans for the nuclear sector as part of a seminar on the afternoon of the 10th June. We will also be joined by Clive Nixon, NDA Chief Nuclear Strategist.

In the evening a members dinner will be addressed by David Peattie, CEO of the NDA and Gerben Dijksterhuis, President of GMF Europe, the European network of nuclear municipalities. The following morning we travel to Dungeness where there will be a visit to Dungeness B and a meeting with the Romney Marsh Partnership. Following lunch members will make their way home.

The venue will be the Stratford Hotel, located next to Stratford International railway station. The level of interest from Nuleaf members has been high and only a few places are still available. If you would like to join the event please contact Chloe Atkinson.

5. New nuclear and fusion reports

5.1 Equilibrion consultancy has been appointed by Midlands Net Zero Hub and Midlands Nuclear to explore the potential for new nuclear production in the region. The **Midlands Nuclear Siting Project**, set to report in Spring/Summer 2025, will assess the region's nuclear energy opportunities, which include electricity production, hydrogen, sustainable fuel and direct heat¹⁸.

5.2 **Viaro Energy** and US company Terrestrial Energy are in discussions around the feasibility of a new Integrated Molten Salt Reactor (IMSR) at various sites in the UK including the former Bacton Gas Terminal in Norfolk. These small modular reactors produce thermal energy at high temperature for direct industrial use and to generate electricity, including powering data centres for artificial intelligence (AI)¹⁹.

6. EDF news

6.1 EDF has published an independent report that claims the UK's current fleet of nuclear reactors has contributed £123 Billion to UK economic growth since the first station opened in 1976, while supporting 31,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs. The report was prepared by Economic Insight and can be viewed here²⁰.

6.2 The BBC has published an article on work to defuel the **Dungeness B** reactor²¹.

¹⁸ [Consultancy to explore nuclear energy potential in the Midlands | TheBusinessDesk.com](#)

¹⁹ [Plans for Nuclear power plant in Norfolk handed boost | Eastern Daily Press](#)

²⁰ [Positive economic impact of nuclear power stations](#)

²¹ [Dungeness: 'Long journey ahead' for nuclear plant clean-up - BBC News](#)