

**Radioactive Waste Planning Group meeting, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025  
10.00 – 12.30, online.**

**Attendees**

|                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Heather Morrison | Cumberland Council             |
| Eleanor Godesar  | Dorset Council                 |
| Bethany Rance    | East Suffolk Council           |
| Terry Burns      | Essex County Council           |
| Claire Bromley   | Gloucestershire County Council |
| Amartya Deb      | Gloucestershire County Council |
| Edward Wright    | Lincolnshire County Council    |
| Richard Sharples | Lancashire County Council      |
| Richard Outram   | Manchester City Council        |
| Louise Martin    | Somerset Council               |
| Jon Severs       | South Gloucestershire Council  |
| Ross Walker      | Suffolk County Council         |
| Rachel Whaley    | Westmoreland and Furness       |
| Chloe Atkinson   | Nuleaf                         |
| Philip Matthews  | Nuleaf                         |

**Speakers/Guests**

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Matthew Meldrum | NRS |
| Simon Napper    | NWS |
| Malcolm Orford  | NWS |

## **1. Welcome and apologies**

1.1 The chair (Philip Matthews) opened the meeting and welcomed members and guest speakers.

1.2 Apologies were received from John Burton (Somerset Council)  
Marcus Hudson (Lancashire County Council) and Bryan Geake (Kent County Council)

## **2. Minutes held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2024**

2.1 Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record.

**ACTION:CA**

## **3. Matters arising**

3.1 Matters arising were discussed and confirmed as actioned. For items 3.1 and 3.2, members are encouraged to provide feedback to Matthew Meldrum if they wish to support.

## **4. Update from NRS**

4.1 The Chair welcomed Matt Meldrum of NRS and invited him to update members.

Matt noted a few key developments:

- The pre-application consultation for the Ponds Demolition Complex at Trawsfynydd has concluded, with responses under review before submitting the planning application later this year. Environmental permit applications for Trawsfynydd are under review by Natural Resource Wales (NRW) and the EIADR application will soon be lodged with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), potentially leading to further consultation.
- At Winfrith, planning applications and environmental permits submitted in December are undergoing validation.
- Other major projects include the Boilers project at Dungeness and a large remediation project at Chapelcross.

Funding challenges may impact project timelines across the decommissioning program. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) initiatives are progressing, with meetings at Dungeness and Oldbury to refine strategic approaches. A proactive approach to planning engagement is encouraged to integrate planning considerations early in projects.

**Question:** *Could you provide some insights into what challenges you have been facing regarding BNG?*

One challenge, at Dungeness, has been to determine if SSSI improvements can count toward Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

At Winfrith we have been considered whether the restoration project on heathland align with BNG requirements despite low metric scores, and how we can manage this.

A further challenge relates to the scope for freezing baselines across sites to define improvement areas for future developments.

**Question:** *We are aware of the financial constraints for NRS that are arising from the recent budget settlement. Can you say when it is likely there will be some clarity on the forward plans for individual sites?*

At present there is no clear timeline for further clarity on funding implications for the estate. However, initial insights are emerging for next year's projects.

Philip thanked Matthew for his update.

## **5. Update on GDF siting process**

5.1 The Chair welcomed Malcolm Orford of Nuclear Waste Services (NWS).

Malcolm began by noting that an announcement was expected imminently regarding the Areas of Focus for the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) in the three GDF Community Partnership areas. He could not say more about this at present.

He then provided an overview of Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) process and the forward timeline.

The GDF plans consist of an underground disposal area (200–1,000m below seabed), and surface site (~1 km<sup>2</sup>), linked by access tunnels. The final site will be selected based on a willing host community and suitable geology.

At present, three communities are engaged in Community Partnerships, with two expected to advance to site characterization.

Looking forward, the announcement of 'Areas of Focus' for the three communities will be made in the next three days – this will set out the areas of interest for both the headworks and the repository itself. Sites will continue to be evaluated in terms of safety, security, community impact, environment, engineering feasibility, transport and value for money.

It is anticipated that permissions for borehole investigations will be secured by late 2020s–early 2030s, with final site selection completed by late 2030s. GDF construction

is expected to begin in the early 2040s, with the first nuclear waste received on-site by 2050s.

Borehole permissions require a Development Consent Order (DCO) and an Environmental Permit. The consultation is determined by the local community and planning authority, based on affected electoral wards. There will be a requirement for clear plans to be set out and agreed regarding infrastructure, compensation, and mitigation before the development can proceed.

**Question:** *Regarding the Test of Public Support (ToPS), what does that look like, and when can that take place?*

The ToPS is not defined in policy and it is up to the Community Partnership (CP) and local authority to agree what form that will take. It will cover all people defined as being within the potential host community.

As for timing, this is again defined by the CP but it should occur after the information from borehole tests etc is available. Early indicative tests of local views are also possible.

**Question:** *How exactly is the potential host community defined? For example, it has been suggested that it might include the area that connects the site to the nearest railhead, but in a Lincolnshire context this is a very long way. Would, for example, electoral wards from the railhead to the site all be part of the host community?*

This is something we are discussing with DESNZ. The policy as it stands would include the wards along the route from a current railhead, which could be a fairly large area. It may be that further clarification on this is provided.

**Question:** *Current communities are progressing at different speeds within the siting process, and in Lincolnshire a form of ToPS has been proposed before 2027. Given where we are at, is there still scope for new communities to join the process?*

Yes, though the window is narrowing and it will depend increasingly on whether any new community has something significant to offer the process. Over all there are three approaches that could be used to determine the decision on which communities progress: Aligning all communities on the same timeline; Waiting for all communities to reach a similar stage before making decisions; Allowing flexibility with multiple decision points for communities at different stages.

**Question:** *The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) has suggested that the UK might require a rock laboratory (RL) to be established as part of the siting process. What is NWS' view on that?*

The Rock Laboratory is not my area of expertise but at any location there will essentially be a form of RL as a range of tests and assessments of the suitability of the site will have to take place.

Philip thanked Malcolm for his presentation.

## **6. Update on Developments in Radioactive Waste Management**

The Chair presented the paper, highlighting various items. The paper was for noting.

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

The Chair presented the paper, highlighting various items.

It was highlighted that Lincolnshire County Council had approved moving forward with a Hosting Agreement for the GDF programme. Legal teams have been drafted it over the past two months.

The first part of the hosting agreement will set out what the package of significant additional investment would look like. The second part will probably focus on how NWS as a developer might operate in the area.

It is important that the Hosting Agreement is ready and used to engage the local community before any ToPS.

## **8. Local site updates**

The Chair invited members to provide local site updates.

**Sizewell:** An important milestone has been reached with the demolition of the Turbine Hall Demolition. Planning Permission was granted last summer; demolition works are in full swing, and the explosive demolition completed in November was the largest use of explosives for conventional demolition on a nuclear site.

**Winfrith:** A number of technical reports have been prepared and reviewed as part of the pre-application process in Dorset. There have been delays with the upcoming planning application – this is now expected in summer 2025.

**Cumberland/Westmorland and Furness:** The Sellafield site is recovering from a significant power outage from Storm Erwin. Pending planning applications include for a new railhead, park and ride areas, and a draft travel plan. In general the announcement regarding Plutonium disposition has been positively received.

In terms of the GDF, there have been meetings with NWS to discuss two areas of focus in the Copeland region, indicating potential local challenges. Public Notification of this begins tomorrow with leaflet drops, local exhibitions, and webinars.

Council Restructuring is ongoing following local government reforms.

On the new Cumberland Local Plan, a consultation and a call for sites is planned for later this year.

**Oldbury:** We hope to published our revised Local Plan, including new nuclear policies, in the coming weeks.

There are continuing discussions with Great British Nuclear (GBN) about a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) so that the council can work with them as they embark on site characterisation. GBN is targeting a final investment decision in 2030, with operations potentially beginning in the mid-2030s.

**Hinkley:** There has been planning development at Hinkley A around the provision of a new welfare facility.

Somerset is progressing with the development of a new local plan, following local government reorganisation.

At the B site, work is progressing on schedule and the transition to NRS is expected in 2026.

A new decommissioning waste processing facility (DWPF) is required for low level waste at Hinkley Point B station – a joint NRS/EDF working group has been set up to oversee proposals.

**Bradwell:** There has been a request for a crane store, but this is likely to be Permitted Development. The outcome is awaited.

## **9. Any Other Business**

The following items of AOB were raised, related to local engagement.

It was commented that, while both NRS and local authorities consider long-term land use, discussions only occur retrospectively at SSG meetings. The SSG is not the appropriate forum for these discussions. It was agreed that Nuleaf should continue to promote direct dialogue between NRS and planning authorities to align land-use considerations and avoid conflicts with future policies.

It was also noted that not all RWPG attendees were aware of the Members Area on the Nuleaf website, where planning information could be shared. It was also the case that general usage of the Members Area has declined.

Members were invited to use the area. If any new members of the group would like to join, please contact Chloe.

### Action List

| 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2025 |  |    |   |
|-------------------------------|--|----|---|
| Item                          | Action                                     |    | Outcome   |
| 2.1                           | Upload previous minute to Nuleaf website   | CA | Done  |
| 5.3                           | Share Malcolm's presentation when received | CA | NWS declined to share the presentation as they felt that it would not be useful to have on the website without the context of the discussion. |