

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT



Report to the RWPG, 16th July 2025

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

- NDA Group update;
- UK Government update;
- Nuleaf news;
- Regulatory update; and
- New nuclear and fusion updates.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 The consultation on the NDA's **Strategy 5** and the related **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIP)** was launched on the 7th July and will run to the 29th September. An online engagement event on the consultation will take place from 11.30am today (16th July) and is open to all members.

1.2 The Chancellor of the Exchequer presented her Spending Review to Parliament on June 11th. This set out the Government's spending plans for the next few years, including for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA).

Overall spending for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) will increase by 16% by 2028/29¹. Details of the settlement for the NDA Group are not yet available, but it is expected that greater clarity may emerge later in the summer or early in the autumn. Nuleaf will update members on this, and the implications for individual sites, when the picture becomes clearer.

1.3 A new report has concluded that Scotland's £25Billion decommissioning programme could deliver long term economic and social benefits at a local and national level over the next 90 years and beyond².

¹ [UK gov reallocates GB Energy funds, scraps Rapid Charging Fund - Current News](#)

² [New reports examine impact of nuclear decommissioning in Scotland - GOV.UK](#)

Stakeholders around Dounreay identified major challenges as being underinvestment in essential infrastructure, rural depopulation, and remoteness. At the same time, it was felt that the presence of the skilled workforce as well as the increased interest in the region's renewable energy resources meant that decommissioning could be a driver for building future skills and capacities for economic diversification and local resilience.

1.4 The NDA has announced a partnership that will see robots deployed for the first time to sort and segregate radioactive waste. An investment of up to £9.5million has been allocated for the 4 year project, which is a collaboration between Sellafield, NDA, Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) and Nuclear Waste Services (NWS). The project will initially be deployed at Oldbury and will be used to separate low-level waste from intermediate-level waste which has been retrieved from the vaults on site³.

1.5 Cumberland Council Leader **Cllr Mark Fryer** has stated that his authority is committed to working with the NDA to '*deliver maximum value and benefit*' from the Moorside site adjoining Sellafield. This follows an announcement from the Prime Minister that the 600 acre site is to be redeveloped as part of the Government's commitment to clear power.

Cllr Fryer added that a Small Modular Reactor (SMR) would be his preference and the move would '*unquestionably provide [Cumbria] with the most power capacity for the size of land being made available*'. However, Cumberland Council has said no concrete decision has been made on what the site, owned by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, will be used for. It could alternatively be utilised for solar and wind power generation. Discussions will continue⁴.

1.6 Sellafield Ltd is seeking planning permission from Cumberland Council to demolish the **Calder Hall turbine hall A building**, constructed between 1953 and 1956. Given the potential future redevelopment at the site, the proposal is to remove the building superstructure and retain the existing concrete foundations until a future development design is confirmed⁵.

³ [UK looks to robots to assist in waste management tasks - World Nuclear News](#)

⁴ [Govt tees up Cumbria site for nuclear future - Place North West](#)

⁵ [Sellafield nuclear plant bosses aim to demolish turbine hall | News and Star](#)

2. UK Government update

2.1 Nuleaf has submitted a response to the UK Government's working paper on **community benefits and shared ownership for local carbon energy infrastructure**⁶. The deadline for responses was today (16th July).

2.2 On the 22nd May, a series of new Energy **National Policy Statements (NPS)**⁷ were laid before the UK Parliament. These cover fossil fuels (EN-2), renewables (EN-3), gas supply and oil and gas pipelines (EN-4) and electricity networks (EN-5), sitting below an overarching energy NPS (EN-1).

2.3 The UK Government published its **Industrial Strategy**⁸ along with a range of sector plans, including the **Clean Energy Industries Sector Plan**⁹, on the 23rd June. The Industrial Strategy is a 10 year plan to increase investment and grow the industries of the future. It is supported by sector plans in areas seen as having significant potential for growth, including clean energy, where the Government has a mission to establish the UK as a Clean Energy Superpower.

The objective is that, by 2035 the UK will be a global leader in Clean Energy Industries, creating hundreds of thousands of high quality jobs across the country; and a world-leading exporter of low-carbon products, services and innovation. Nuclear, both fission and fusion, is identified as an important part of this objective with scope for the sector, including defence, to support the employment of up to 120,000 people next decade.

2.4 The appointment of a the new Minister of State in the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), to replace Baroness Curran, is still awaited. Baroness Curran, whose portfolio included nuclear matters, stepped down on health grounds on the 6th June.

3. Nuleaf news

3.1 A large number of Nuleaf members from across the country joined Nuleaf's **Annual Gathering and 20th anniversary celebrations**, held in Stratford, London on the 10th and 11th June. On the first day members heard from DESNZ, the NDA, EDF and GMF Europe as part of a seminar on the current and future nuclear landscape in the UK, the presentations being followed by a lively discussion. The meeting also involved an AGM and was followed by a dinner which was addressed

⁶ [Community benefits and shared ownership for low carbon energy infrastructure - GOV.UK](#)

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

⁸ [The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

⁹ [The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

by David Peattie, the CEO of the NDA and Gerben Dijkstra, President of GMF Europe.

The next morning members rose early to travel to Dungeness A power station where they heard presentations from Ian Cuthbert, the Site Director; and Cllr Paul Thomas, a Nuleaf member and Chair of the Romney Marsh Partnership.

Members have been sent a questionnaire to garner their views on the Gathering. Feedback on this, and a proposal of possible options for the 2026 Gathering, will be presented to the September Steering Group meeting.

4. Regulatory update

4.1. The **Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)** and the **Environment Agencies covering England, Wales and Scotland** have launched a consultation on their joint Guidance on Higher Activity Waste Management¹⁰. The Guidance was last updated a decade ago, and radioactive waste management has evolved significantly over that time.

The aim of the consultation is to gather feedback from interested parties on the scope, clarity and technical content of the guidance, to help inform a review. The consultation closes on the 22nd August, and Nuleaf will be responding.

4.2 The **ONR** has served an improvement notice on **Direct Rail Services (DRS)** after it emerged that a subcontractor was not registered to work with radioactive material¹¹. DRS is part of Nuclear Transport Solutions (NTS), a pillar of the NDA.

Russell Bowden, an ONR Transport Competent Authority inspector, said inquiries revealed 'wider shortcomings' in DRS's management system and 'failings' with supply chain management and incident management and reporting. There were no impacts on public safety or the environment, but ONR have said they would continue to work with the company during the improvement notice to ensure progress was made.

4.3 **Nucleo** has said that its 200MWe advanced lead cooled reactor has been accepted for the UK's Generic Design Assessment (GDA) process¹². Overseen by the ONR and the Environment Agency, the GDA assesses the environmental and safety aspects of new nuclear designs and is part of the pre-licensing process.

4.4 **Mike Finnerty** took up the post of Chief Executive and Chief Nuclear Inspector at ONR on the 1st July. He joins from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), where he has been Special Assistant to the IAEA Director General, offering

¹⁰ [Review of Higher Activity Waste Management Guidance | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

¹¹ [Cumbria rail freight firm told to improve after nuclear failures - BBC News](#)

¹² [UK Accepts Newcleo's Lead-Cooled Reactor Technology For Generic Design Assessment](#)

technical and strategic advice on nuclear safety, security, and safeguards. Prior to his time with the IAEA he worked at ONR for 21 years in other roles¹³.

4.5 The **Environment Agency** has opened a consultation on plans for the disposal of radioactive waste at the **Port Clarence landfill site** in Stockton-on-Tees, operated by Auegan¹⁴. Plans were first submitted in 2019 and the company argue that risk assessments demonstrate that they pose no risk to the community or environment. Objections to the plan have been raised by the local MP and Mayor, Lord Ben Houchen. Lord Houchen commented *'We absolutely want new nuclear power and we are working hard to deliver this - but I will not allow Teesside to be seen as a dumping ground for the country's waste. I will continue to stand firmly against any plan, and I urge everyone to make their voices heard loud and clear in this consultation.'*

5. New nuclear and fusion updates

5.1 Great British Nuclear (GBN) has been renamed **Great British Energy – Nuclear (GBE-N)**. In the Spending Review a total of £8.3Bn was allocated to Great British Energy (GBE) and GBE-Nuclear, in line with previous commitments. However, £2.5Bn of this amount is earmarked for new SMR development, meaning that funding for GBE's non-nuclear activities has actually been cut¹⁵. The Treasury stated that the *'two allied publicly owned companies with a shared mission'* would spend the £8.3 billion on *'homegrown clean power'* while remaining separate entities.

5.2 **Great British Energy - Nuclear (GBE-N)** announced on the 10th June that Rolls-Royce has been selected as its sole partner for Small Modular Reactor (SMR) development¹⁶, despite having previously identified a risk in only taking one technology forward.

GBE-N has already identified potential development sites at Wylfa and Oldbury-on-Severn but it is not clear yet when a final selection of the first site for development will be made. Westinghouse is also understood to be seeking to develop a Gigawatt (GW) nuclear station at Wylfa¹⁷.

¹³ [New Chief Executive/Chief Nuclear Inspector arrives at ONR | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

¹⁴ [Port Clarence nuclear waste plan ongoing - BBC News](#)

¹⁵ [UK gov reallocates GB Energy funds, scraps Rapid Charging Fund - Current News](#)

¹⁶ [Government drops plans for backup SMR developer despite risks | New Civil Engineer](#)

¹⁷ [US nuclear giant plans to build major power plant in Wales](#)

5.3 A £14.2Billion investment in **Sizewell C** was also announced on the 10th June, creating 10,000 jobs in construction including 1,500 apprenticeships, with the plant expected to take around a decade to complete¹⁸.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, said *'Today we are once again investing in Britain's renewal, with the biggest nuclear building programme in a generation. This landmark decision is our Plan for Change in action. We are creating thousands of jobs, kickstarting economic growth and putting more money in people's pockets.'*

5.4 **Holtec**¹⁹ has announced the selection of a site near Doncaster for a planned new UK factory to manufacture Small Modular Reactors for the UK, Europe and the Middle East. The £1.5 billion investment will create 3,600 construction jobs and 3,000 long term jobs along with more in the supply chain. Holtec lost out to Rolls Royce in the competition to partner GBE-N.

5.5 The UK and Japan have signed a memorandum of co-operation²⁰ to support partnership work on fusion power, with an aim to support *'further collaboration in key fusion areas including research and development, regulation and skills and workforce'*.

Separately there has been a memorandum of understanding signed between the UK's Fusion Cluster and the Japan Fusion Energy Council *'to foster industrial collaboration, knowledge exchange, and workforce development'*; and **Kyoto Fusioneering** has relocated its UK headquarters to UK Atomic Energy Authority's Culham Campus near Oxford.

¹⁸ [Thousands of jobs to be created as government announces multi-billion-pound investment to build Sizewell C - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁹ [Thousands of jobs to be created as Doncaster chosen for £1.5 billion nuclear reactor factory](#)

²⁰ [UK and Japan deepen fusion energy cooperation - World Nuclear News](#)