

Radioactive Waste Planning Group meeting, 7th May 2025
10.00 – 12.30, online.

Attendees

Heather Morrison	Cumberland Council
Eleanor Godesar	Dorset Council
Bethany Rance	East Suffolk Council
Andrew Firth	East Suffolk Council
Terry Burns	Essex County Council
Claire Bromley	Gloucestershire County Council
Amartya Deb	Gloucestershire County Council
Bryan Geake	Kent County Council
Richard Sharples	Lancashire County Council
Edward Wright	Lincolnshire County Council
Richard Outram	Manchester City Council/NFLA
Simon Milson	Maldon District Council
Annie Keen	Maldon District Council
Sion Roberts	Eryri/Snowdonia National Park Authority
Ross Walker	Suffolk County Council
Louise Martin	Somerset Council/Nuleaf
Tessa Bond	Somerset Council
John Burton	Somerset Council
Jon Severs	South Gloucestershire Council
Rachel Whaley	Westmorland & Furness Council
Chloe Atkinson	Nuleaf
Philip Matthews	Nuleaf

Speakers

Matthew Meldrum	NRS
Frank Wigley	NDA
Matt Verlander	Avison Young

1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 Philip Matthews opened the meeting and welcomed members and guest speakers.
- 1.2 He noted apologies from Marcus Hudson, Lancashire County Council.

2. Minutes held on the 29th of January 2025

- 2.1 It was requested that the Somerset update be amended to refer to Hinkley Point B, not Hinkley Point C.

ACTION:CA

3. Matters arising

3.1 PM informed members that the presentation on the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) programme by Malcolm Orford from NWS will not be uploaded to the website. The presenter has advised that it does not provide sufficient context for some of the points being made – this had been provided in the talk Malcolm gave to the RWPG but there was scope for misunderstanding if viewing the presentation in isolation.

4. Update from NRS- Matthew Meldrum

4.1 Matthew Meldrum (NRS) updated members on a number of matters.

Firstly, with regard to funding, the settlement for this year has now been finalised. Unfortunately, funding is limited and some projects will need to be slowed or deferred. This was expected and there have already been forward planning discussions on exactly what the impacts will be. There will be a need for engagement with local authorities and Nuleaf, as the lifetime of facilities is extended, particularly in areas such as consents which are time limited. The longer term financial situation will become clearer following the Spending Review in June.

NRS is also looking at decommissioning strategies and building their work with EDF as the time nears for the passing of the first AGR sites into the NDA estate. The scope for consolidation of stores will be a significant part of this.

In terms of major applications, they are working through the response to the pre-application consultation for the Ponds Complex demolition at Trawsfynydd. The environmental permit is still under consideration by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and so conversations are continuing with them. The next stage of the planning process will be held back until the dialogue with NRW has been completed. Other significant engagement is taking place at Dungeness and Chapelcross.

4.2 Comment: There has been dialogue between the local authority and NRS about a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) at Oldbury. The site is adjacent to land bought for new nuclear development by Great British Nuclear (GBN) and I wanted to note a concern that my authority has about the need for more integrated dialogue between GBN, NRS and the council regarding plans for the area.

Answer: I understand the Council's concerns about the need for joined up working and we have spoken with the authority around issues such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). We will continue to press for an approach that helps connect things better with GBN.

Comment: Thank you. I would also welcome a separate conversation with you regarding third party interest in land related to new nuclear development.

Answer: A meeting would be welcome.

Action: MM and JS to set up a meeting.

Question: Regarding NRW's request to delay planning applications at Trawsfynydd until permitting is resolved – can you say more about the reasons for this?

Answer: It's not entirely clear what the reasons are. Normally you would expect the two processes to work together, and so we are seeking clarification from NRW as to why they wish to delay progress with the planning side of things.

Question: Is the challenging government funding settlement due to general financial constraints or a lack of confidence in the decommissioning programme?

Answer: While I was not directly involved in the funding discussions I think the main issue is the lack of money for the Government in general rather than a loss of confidence in the programme.

Comment: I also have concerns about the situation regarding permitting and planning that was highlighted at Trawsfynydd. I would welcome updates on this issue at future meetings, particularly whether this is solely an issue with NRW or is it also an issue impacting on the Environment Agency and English sites?

Answer: Thanks. Its an important issue and we keep this group updated at future meetings.

Question: Nuleaf now also hosts SCCORS (Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances). Does your remit extend to Scotland and would there be scope for you to engage with that group in future?

Answer: Yes, NRS manages the Chapelcross and Hunterston sites and also Dounreay, although that operates slightly separately from the others. Either myself or a Scotland based colleague would be happy to be involved in a future SCCORS meeting.

Question: How is social value considered and at what stage in processes is this done?

Answer: Social value is considered in planning and also in relation to procurement. Funds are also provided for community projects. I cannot add much more on the detail of this as it isn't something I directly engage with.

Frank Wigley of NDA added that Social Value is embedded within the Energy Act 2004 and the Social Value Act 2012 and it is one of the key factors, along with wider sustainable development, that we consider when developing work. These sustainability and social value drivers also help inform Masterplans and other ways in which NDA Group engages with local authorities.

Philip thanked Matthew for his presentation.

5. Update on PDRs/nuclear decommissioning PPG – Frank Wigley, NDA and Matt Verlander, Avison Young.

5.1 PM welcomed Frank Wigley of NDA and Matt Verlander of Avison Young who would be providing an update on Permitted Development Rights (PDR) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Frank began by thanking the RWPG and Nuleaf for their engagement on PDRs over the last 18 months – it had been very useful and NDA has been able to take on board almost all the feedback given in terms of shaping their approach.

They have now taken these conversations into Government and have been drafting a technical document for discussion with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). They have also presented a business case that sets out the potential savings for NDA Group and local planning authorities. A paper was also presented to DESNZ.

There is general support from Government for change and DESNZ and MHCLG will be meeting shortly to discuss this further. If things go well this will then go to Ministers and, assuming they are content, NDA will get permission to proceed, after which they will come back to the RWPG. NDA understands that with a fair wind the timeframe for all of this is around 14 months.

There is scope for further engagement between NDA and Nuleaf to sensitivity test and help develop guidance. NDA intend to start looking at planning applications from Sellafield and NRS sites and consider how PDRs would work for individual applications; and also what wouldn't work and what the sticking points are. NDA will also be having

conversations with the Devolved Administrations as to how this would apply in Scotland and Wales.

Matt then spoke about current work on Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). There are 41 categories of PPG covering everything from climate change to hazardous minerals. Matt presented some thinking on this at an earlier RWPG meeting and the task now is to try and pull that together. NDA/AY would welcome a further discussion about what would be useful in PPG from a local authority perspective. They are also seeking local authority volunteers to help create sector-specific Planning Practice Guidance. The aim is to develop this between now and March 2026.

Phil thanked Frank and Matt for their update. He then invited questions.

5.2 Question: Does the planned 14-month timeline for permitted development rights and the proposed PPG apply UK-wide or just to England? Also, when you refer to the 'sector' does that refer solely to decommissioning or include waste management and new nuclear?

Answer: The current planning reform, including the 14-month timeline, applies only to England and follows a 'lead and learn' approach. Scotland is watching developments, while engagement with Wales remains limited. The initial focus is solely on nuclear decommissioning, with potential scope and geographical expansion possible if justified.

Question: Could the scope of the proposed (PPG) be broadened to address sites where nuclear decommissioning and new nuclear build are co-located? There are potential benefits of guidance that considers the interplay between legacy and future nuclear developments on the same site.

Answer: Thank you – this is a valuable insight. This hasn't been previously considered but such contributions are exactly what these discussions are for.

Other RWPG members added their support to the view that a PPG should cover engagement around sites where decommissioning and new build are being taken forward in close proximity.

Philip ended the session by encouraging further engagement. Nuleaf is happy to coordinate a call for volunteers when appropriate.

6. Update on developments in radioactive waste management

6.1 PM noted a few items of interest in the paper.

The NDA will consult on its draft Strategy 5 from July to September, with Nuleaf planning to hold an engagement event and to submit a response to the consultation.

The NDA's review of Site Stakeholder Groups is nearly complete. It is expected to recommend improvements to governance, community outreach especially to underrepresented groups, and accountability to both communities and the NDA.

Nuleaf's consultant's report is nearing completion and will draw on international best practice to offer recommendations as to how to enhance nuclear engagement with local government.

7. Update on the GDF siting process

7.1 PM noted that the main item of interest was the decision of East Lindsey Council to formally withdraw from the GDF process, with Lincolnshire County Council also indicating their intent to withdraw. The local elections have led to a majority Reform administration who stood on an anti-GDF platform.

Edward Wright noted that any withdrawal was likely to take several months due to the need for scrutiny processes to run their course. A decision was therefore unlikely before the autumn.

If the process ends in Lincolnshire, only two Cumberland communities will remain involved, with the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) highlighting challenges in developing a GDF far offshore in that area.

8. Local Site Updates

Sizewell - Demolition at Sizewell A continues but there is nothing significant to report there or at Sizewell B. Sizewell C remains on schedule, having marked the first anniversary of the commencement of associated developments in early 2025.

Oldbury and Berkeley - No significant updates to report though there has been a retrospective planning application for a structure that has already been built.

Dungeness - Further demolition works are expected at Dungeness, with details pending. Kent's updated Waste and Minerals Local Plan is now fully adopted, so there is now a strategic plan that includes nuclear. The newly reformed Kent County Council's stance on nuclear remains uncertain.

Lincolnshire - The focus remains on the GDF, though the process is currently uncertain. A major political shift has occurred with a new Reform-controlled County Council and Mayor, replacing the previous Conservative leadership.

Winfrith - Technical reports for Winfrith are under review as the planning application is prepared. Permitting applications have been submitted to the Environment Agency, with consultations imminent. However, due to site complexities and funding issues, the planning submission has been delayed to late summer or beyond, and timelines are being closely watched.

Hinkley- New nuclear development in Somerset is slower than anticipated, but EDF remains engaged. The Council now has regular 6 monthly catch ups with EDF on the B station and these are proving useful. Somerset Council, as a relatively new authority, is starting the process of preparing a local plan for the whole county, which will cover the A, B and C sites at Hinkley. On the B station they are close to the end of the consultation period for the EIADR.

Bradwell – The site is receiving 3 containers of waste every quarter from Dungeness and we are still awaiting for material to come from Sizewell.

Cumberland/Westmorland and Furness– As part of the Local Plan development, the Councils plans a call for sites by June, potentially including new nuclear proposals. Most current Sellafield applications are minor, but funding uncertainties are causing wider project delays.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the RWPG will be held on the **16th July at 10am**. This is likely to be a short meeting as there tends to be less to report over the summer months. It will be followed later that morning by an engagement event on the NDA Strategy V consultation.

10. Any other business

CA noted that she is finalising travel arrangements and hotel bookings for the upcoming Annual Gathering and asked anyone who has not yet fed back their preferences to do so in the coming week. PM noted that the agenda, site visits, and attendee numbers for the Gathering are now finalised, and general details will be circulated soon.

John Burton noted that he would soon be retiring from local government, marking the end of over 7 years of involvement with Nuleaf. He had very much enjoyed his time with Nuleaf and thanked colleagues. Somerset Council intends to appoint a replacement, though the details of this have not yet been confirmed.

Philip warmly thanked John for his valuable contributions and camaraderie over the years. On behalf of the Group he wished John well in retirement.

Action List

7 th May 2025			
Item	Action		Outcome
2.1	Upload previous minute to Nuleaf website	CA	Done
4.2	MM and JS to set up a meeting.	MM/JS	