

**Meeting:** Nuleaf Steering Group  
**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025  
**Item:** 4  
**Subject:** Nuleaf: Discussion on future engagement  
**Author:** Philip Matthews



## Overview:

This paper reflects on the changing landscape for nuclear in the UK and invites members to comment on proposals as to how Nuleaf's remit and support to members might evolve.

These proposals are based on an analysis of how the organisation could be enhanced, drawing on the recommendations made in independent consultancy research commissioned by Nuleaf and due for publication in the coming weeks.

## Recommendations:

That Nuleaf:

- Develops its engagement in new nuclear issues in a limited way, while continuing dialogue with NNLAG, the NDA and others on how best to support local authority engagement in what is a dynamic environment for nuclear issues.
- Establishes a dialogue with our members, the NDA and other stakeholders on how best to reform local engagement processes.
- Continues to reach out to local authorities to encourage them to become involved in our work, and in particular seeks engagement with new unitary councils and new political administrations in areas that host nuclear facilities.
- Develops our voice in the media and seeks to work with national politicians on issues of interest to our members.

Members are also invited to offer their views on our current meeting format and how this and any other aspect of our work could be improved.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Nuleaf was founded in 2005, when the landscape for the nuclear industry and local government was very different. As we celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, it is

timely to reflect on the changing context within which we operate; and whether there is scope to further develop our support for member local authorities.

1.2 The key contextual changes are:

- The NDA operating model has evolved into a single, public body (One NDA) with a corporate centre and 4 operating companies (Sellafield, Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS), Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) and Nuclear Transport Solutions (NTS)). The NDA has taken on responsibility for the decommissioning of the AGR stations and Vulcan, and may adopt further missions.
- There is an active new nuclear sector with construction of large new stations at Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C; ambitions for a significant Small Modular Reactor (SMR) fleet; and scope for new types of reactors to be developed in non-nuclear communities.
- A rapid and sustained change in local government in England, with ongoing moves to create Unitary Authorities across the country; and the growth of Combined Authorities and local government models based on Mayors.
- Change in the local political landscape, with a greater range of political parties involved in forming political administrations.
- The NDA Group, and local authorities, are facing significant financial challenges. This requires Nuleaf to continue to enhance its offer and its value to members and funders; and look for potential new sources of funding.

1.3 Independent research on nuclear engagement, commissioned by Nuleaf and conducted by Steve Smith and Doug Bamsey, has considered these changes and how Nuleaf might further enhance its 'offer'. It will be published in the coming weeks and used to inform a dialogue between Nuleaf, the NDA Group and others.

1.4 Drawing on the report's (hereafter referred to as the 'Consultancy Research') conclusions, the views of members are sought on a few areas of possible change/development in engagement.

## **2. Proposed areas for development of Nuleaf work**

### **Engagement on new nuclear issues**

2.1 Over recent years, Nuleaf members have considered the changes to the Nuclear landscape and how the organisation might respond. There have been proposals around the development of a closer relationship with the New Nuclear Local Authority Group (NNLAG), in particular whether there is scope for a shared secretariat. There is a good degree of overlap between membership of the two bodies.

2.2 When Nuleaf has hosted meetings on new nuclear issues they have proved very popular with both our members and those of NNLAG.

2.3 Nuleaf's consultancy research has identified scope for Nuleaf to host the NNLAG Secretariat (if NNLAG and Nuleaf members were in agreement) but only if additional resources were forthcoming – such resources have not yet been identified. To date there has not been support from NNLAG and Nuleaf members for such a relationship to develop.

2.4 There would also appear to be a need for a forum that fully supported local Elected Members in engaging in new nuclear, NNLAG having a primary focus on the planning aspects of new nuclear.

2.5 Since February, Nuleaf has hosted the secretariat to SCCORS (Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances). This arrangement has proved not just beneficial to SCCORS but enhanced Nuleaf's resources and the opportunities for joint work between the networks.

2.6 Given this context, it is proposed that Nuleaf develops its engagement around new nuclear issues, based on dialogue with our members, NNLAG and the NDA Group. We would retain our primary focus on decommissioning and waste management, but would:

- Enhance our reporting on new nuclear developments and our responses to relevant consultations and media discussion of these issues. We would also prepare briefings and case studies on new nuclear matters as resources allow.
- Continue to host dedicated meetings on new nuclear matters at appropriate intervals, and seek dialogue with our members on additional support we could provide. One example might be the convening of a forum for local politicians to discuss the implications of new nuclear for local authorities. Such work would always aim to complement that of NNLAG and not seek to duplicate existing activities.

2.7 Change could enable Nuleaf to reach out to other local authorities to become members; and help secure additional funding from other sources. Nuleaf would remain a neutral forum that involved members with a broad range of views on nuclear power; and would retain a primary focus on decommissioning and waste management. Our aim would be solely on making sure the voice of local government was fully heard across the nuclear fuel cycle.

### **Enhanced support for local engagement**

2.8. Our Consultancy research, informed by dialogue with our members and other stakeholders, has suggested that Nuleaf begin a dialogue with the NDA Group and others such as Site Stakeholder Groups (SSGs) around how best to support local level engagement and connect the NDA Group with individual local authorities. It is also suggested that local authorities can assist the NDA through drawing on their own experience of local engagement and in reaching seldom heard groups. It is

therefore proposed that Nuleaf enters into a dialogue with the NDA and other stakeholders, using the Nuleaf Steering Group as a forum for discussion of how local engagement can be enhanced.

2.9 In response to local government reform and changes in local political leadership, Nuleaf has sought to engage with new councils and new administrations. This work will continue. Member views on further or alternative steps that Nuleaf can take to encourage new member and officer engagement are invited.

### **Greater media engagement and outreach to national politicians**

2.10 Nuleaf has not been active in the media to any great degree, beyond the regular use of our social media channels to share news. This is in part due to resource limitations.

2.11 The appointment of a SCCORS Co-ordinator has increased Nuleaf's capacity to a limited degree, with the Co-ordinator also working 1 day per week in support of Nuleaf.

2.12 Given this, it is felt that Nuleaf has the scope to become more active in engaging with national/devolved politicians and with the media on issues of interest, for example the socio-economic offer to nuclear communities or the means of engagement. All such activity would be in support of our agreed views, would be signed off by the Nuleaf Chair and would be reported to Steering Group.

### **3. Nuleaf meetings and engagement events**

3.1 Since the Covid pandemic there have been changes in how Nuleaf members meet and engage in our work.

3.2 Our Steering Group and Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) have moved online, and we hold additional ad-hoc online meetings on issues of interest, along with an in-person Annual Gathering over two days in different parts of the country. These changes have proved popular – member feedback has shown that they appreciate the reduced need for travel but value the face to face dialogue provided at the Annual Gathering.

3.3 At the same time, the basic format of meetings has remained the same for many years. The Secretariat drafts and then presents papers for comment by the membership, and this is followed by presentations. Steering Group meetings last for 5 hours with a 1 hour break for lunch; with RWPG meetings running for 2 and a half hours.

3.4 Members are invited to offer their views on the current meeting format and length. For example:

- Do members feel that the current length of meetings is appropriate?

- Is a meeting frequency of once every quarter right for both the Steering Group and RWPG?
- Do members find it useful to have the Secretariat talk through items on each paper, or would a high level presentation of key points be more appropriate?
- Would local and/or regional engagement meetings be useful and, if resources allow, would it be helpful for the Secretariat to visit individual local authorities and present to the Cabinet or other fora? The Executive Director already does this to a degree, with presentations over the last two years to the Cumberland Nuclear Issues Board and the Theddlethorpe GDF Community Partnership.