

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 10th September 2025
Item: 7
Subject: National updates on 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;
- New nuclear and fusion reports; and
- Defence.

Recommendation:

This report is for noting.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 Nuleaf has circulated a draft response to the current consultation on **NDA Strategy 5**. Any member wishing to provide feedback is requested to do so by COB on **Thursday the 18th September**. The consultation itself closes on the 29th September.

The NDA held an online engagement event on Strategy 5 on the 5th September as part of the consultation process. A number of Nuleaf members participated.

1.2 Hundreds of jobs could be created at the former **Berkeley** nuclear site, based on plans to create a 'nuclear centre for excellence'¹. Two nuclear energy companies, Quantum Leap Energy and Chiltern Vital Group, have signed deals to create technology centres at the Berkeley site.

Bill Eden, from Quantum Leap Energy, promised 'hundreds of jobs' creating fuel for nuclear fusion; while Chris Turner, CEO of developers Chiltern Vital Group, said Berkeley will become 'the centre of the world' in nuclear, low carbon and green

¹ [Nuclear fusion firms pledge 1,000 jobs at old Berkeley nuclear site - BBC News](#)

technologies, and 'up to 1,000' jobs would be created if the plans went ahead. Proposals include the development of a site to provide medical radioisotopes, in which the UK has no current domestic production.

1.3 Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) has announced that 25,000 tonnes of material has been used to backfill the basement of the demolished turbine hall at **Dungeness A**². The next stage will be to remove redundant boiler units and supporting infrastructure from the site's reactor buildings. The newly infilled area, covering more than 5,000 square metres, is expected to be a laydown area for the boilers ahead of their removal from the site. A planning application for the next stage of work has been submitted to Folkestone and Hythe District Council.

1.4 The NDA has published its **Annual Report and Accounts**³. The report notes progress with addressing the high hazard facilities at Sellafield and also looks at the wider impact of the NDA Group on the supply chain, local economies and the environment.

1.5 **Gwynedd Council** has heard that it is 'highly unlikely' that the Trawsfynydd site will host new nuclear development in the near future⁴. At a Council meeting on the 3rd July, Cabinet Member for Economy and Community Cllr Medwyn Hughes commented that due to uncertainty about the future, he was pleased Gwynedd Council was working with partners to establish a science park, to '*ensure the quality work continues in the Meirionnydd area for generations*'. The intention is to develop an Innovation Centre outside the boundary of the licensed site, to include opportunities for working and learning, and '*triggering new ideas and job opportunities for the future.*'

1.6 **Energy Coast West Cumbria Ltd (BEC)** has been commissioned by the **Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)** and **Cumberland Council** to undertake targeted market engagement around the potential development of clean energy on Pioneer Park, adjacent to Sellafield⁵. This follows the Government's announcement back in June, asking the NDA and the Council to work together to explore how the land could support energy security while also creating new jobs and driving economic growth.

The Leader of Cumberland Council, Mark Fryer, commented '*This is early but important progress on our development of Pioneer Park. I look forward to hearing what the market thinks of our proposal and I will be very interested in the ideas that are brought forward to benefit our community. BEC is ideally placed to lead this work on our behalf.*'

David Peattie, NDA Group CEO, added '*We've been working closely with Cumberland Council, the local MP and other stakeholders in West Cumbria to drive forward*

² [Dungeness A success paves way for major decommissioning project - GOV.UK](#)

³ [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority: Annual Report and Accounts 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [Trawsfynydd unlikely for new nuclear development, council hears | Cambrian News](#)

⁵ <https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/news/2025/bec-commissioned-undertake-market-engagement-clean-energy-development>

progress and this is a tangible step forward for Pioneer Park. We are committed to ensuring we get the maximum benefit from this land for the community and wider economy, while ensuring we don't compromise on delivering our mission.'

1.7 It has been confirmed that responsibility for decommissioning the Ministry of Defence (MOD) **Vulcan nuclear submarine reactor test site** is to be transferred to Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS)⁶. Located next door to Dounreay, the site was built in the 1950s and supports about 280 jobs. It was used for prototype testing of nuclear propulsion plants for more than 50 years, before the last reactor was shut down in 2015.

2. UK and devolved Government reports

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**⁷. The consultation closed on July 16th.

2.2 On the 28th August the UK Government announced that it had committed £154 million to investigate how best to dispose of the 140 tonne stockpile of Plutonium (Pu), currently stored at Sellafield⁸. This follows on from a decision in January that the safest, most economically viable solution was to immobilise all the UK's Plutonium prior to disposal in a GDF.

The funding will allow the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to build specialist lab facilities at Sellafield which would be used to test two emerging immobilisation technologies – Disposal Mox and Hot Isostatic Pressing. The two methods involve converting the plutonium into a 'mechanically and chemically stable ceramic material' which could then be disposed of.

2.3 On July 16th the Government published its response to the consultation on a new **National Policy Statement for fusion energy (EN-8)**⁹. This sets out the views expressed by those who responded to the consultation (including Nuleaf) and the Government's view. It will be used to inform the final NPS on fusion.

2.4 The interim report of the Government's **Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce** has been published¹⁰. It proposes a radical reset and 'once-in-a-generation changes' to the UK's nuclear regulation system, which the Report states is perceived to be unnecessarily slow, inefficient and costly.

Six areas for reform have been identified including Risk Management and Proportionality and Planning Regime Reform. On the latter, the current planning framework, including the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regime, is

⁶ [Military nuclear site at Dounreay to transfer to civilian firm - BBC News](#)

⁷ [Community benefits and shared ownership for low carbon energy infrastructure - GOV.UK](#)

⁸ [Sellafield plutonium disposal research handed £154m - BBC News](#)

⁹ [New National Policy Statement for fusion energy: government response \(accessible webpage\) - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁰ [Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce publishes Interim Report on UK nuclear regulatory system](#)

criticised for causing delays and lacking flexibility for innovative technologies. Proposals include adapting the National Policy Statement (EN-7) to enable a fleet approach for similar designs and updating population density criteria to reflect modern reactor types.

3. Regulatory news

3.1. Nuleaf and SCCORS submitted a joint response to a consultation on joint Guidance on Higher Activity Waste Management run by the **Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)** and the **Environment Agencies covering England, Wales and Scotland**¹¹. The Guidance was last updated a decade ago, and radioactive waste management has evolved significantly over that time. The aim of the consultation, which closed on the 22nd August, was to gather feedback from interested parties on the scope, clarity and technical content of the guidance, to help inform a review.

3.2 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 material¹². 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.

3.3 **Nucleo** has said that its 200MWe advanced lead cooled reactor has been accepted for the UK's Generic Design Assessment (GDA) process¹³. 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.

3.4 The **Environment Agency** has held a consultation on plans for the disposal of radioactive waste at the **Port Clarence landfill site** in Stockton-on-Tees, operated by Auegan¹⁴. The consultation closed on the 4th August. 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.

4. New nuclear and fusion reports

4.1 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

¹¹ [Review of Higher Activity Waste Management Guidance | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

¹² [Cumbria rail freight firm told to improve after nuclear failures - BBC News](#)

¹³ [UK Accepts Newcleo's Lead-Cooled Reactor Technology For Generic Design Assessment](#)

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

British Energy (GBE) and GBE-Nuclear, in line with previous commitments, with £2.5Bn earmarked for new SMR development¹⁵. 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.

4.2 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. Both GBE-N and Rolls Royce SMR will be presenting and responding to questions from Nuleaf members during this Steering Group meeting.

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.

4.3 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 complete¹⁷.

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.'*

Separately, the **National Audit Office (NAO)** has launched a review of the Sizewell C project¹⁸. The study will consider:

- DESNZ's work and spending on Sizewell C to date.
- the terms of the deal agreed and whether this provides value for money for taxpayers and consumers.
- remaining risks to value for money that DESNZ will need to manage.

It is expected that the study will report in winter 2025/26.

4.4 On the 14th July the UK Government signed an agreement with Czechia on SMRs¹⁹ that underpins a previous partnership agreement between **Rolls Royce SMR** and CEZ, Czechia's largest public company.

The agreement will support the delivery of up to 6 Rolls Royce SMRs to Czechia. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer commented *'This agreement is about delivering for Britain - cleaner energy, better jobs, and greater security. By working with our Czech partners on small modular reactors, we're backing British engineering, strengthening*

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

¹⁸ [Sizewell C - NAO work in progress](#)

¹⁹ [UK and Czechia to lead global race on small modular reactors - GOV.UK](#)

our industrial base, and putting the UK in a leading position to export the technologies of the future.'

4.5 On the 13th August, Rolls-Royce chief executive Tufan Erginbilgic stated in an interview with the BBC that the firm has the potential to become the UK's highest-valued company thanks to its SMR deals. He identified proposals to power Artificial Intelligence (AI) with nuclear reactors, and the defence industry, as two areas of potential growth²⁰.

4.6 A study by the Government backed **Midlands Net Zero Hub** has identified up to 21 sites in the region that could host SMRs, with a generation capacity of 20GW. However, it notes that a number of these sites are being lined up to host other development and that this poses a risk to large scale nuclear deployment²¹.

5. Defence

5.1 It was announced on the 1st June that the UK plans to build 12 new nuclear powered attack submarines²². The submarines, SSN-AUKUS, have been developed with the Australian Navy under the **AUKUS agreement**, which also involves the United States.

The UK currently has 21 former nuclear powered submarines, stored at Rosyth and Devonport, which are awaiting defueling and decommissioning.

²⁰ [Nuclear-powered AI could make Rolls Royce UK's biggest firm, says boss - BBC News](#)

²¹ [Dozens of nuclear SMRs tipped to restore Midlands as energy hub - edie](#)

²² [UK to build up to 12 new attack submarines - BBC News](#)