

ITEM 6: UPDATE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT



Report to the RWPG, 22nd October 2025

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

- NDA Group update;
- UK Government update;
- International 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)** closed on the 29th September.

Nuleaf submitted a detailed response, covering a range of issues including the need for more clarity on the decommissioning of each NRS site and joined up working with the wider UK nuclear enterprise. Action to enhance engagement, socio-economic support and sustainability was also highlighted, with strategic Master-planning identified as a key element of this at a site level. The final submission can be viewed on the Nuleaf website¹.

1.2 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.

1.3 It has been confirmed that responsibility for decommissioning the Ministry of Defence (MOD) **Vulcan nuclear submarine reactor test site** is to be transferred

¹ [Consultation Responses - Nuleaf](#)

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

to Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS)³. 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.

1.4 Hundreds of jobs could be created at the former **Berkeley** nuclear site, based on plans to create a 'nuclear centre for excellence'⁴. 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 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.

1.5 On the 6th of August a masterplan for the future of the **Chapelcross** site was unveiled, with a vision to turn the site into a Green Energy Hub⁵. The development includes plans for hydrogen production storage, advanced manufacturing, and energy and enterprise campuses.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) are now looking to identify a strategic developer to help deliver the vision for the site. NDA CEO David Peattie commented *'The masterplan marks tangible progress in making the hub a reality and is a testament to the value of partnership working. Selecting a strategic developer will enable us to build on this further and leverage the benefits of public and private sector collaboration.'*

2. UK Government update

2.1 On July 16th the Government published its response to the consultation on a new National Policy Statement for fusion energy (EN-8)⁶. This sets out the opinions 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.

2.2 The interim report of the Government's **Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce** has been published⁷. It proposes a radical reset and 'once-in-a-generation changes' to

³ [Military nuclear site at Dounreay to transfer to civilian firm - BBC News](#)

⁴ [Nuclear fusion firms pledge 1,000 jobs at old Berkeley nuclear site - BBC News](#)

⁵ [Masterplan Released for Chapelcross Green Energy Hub - GOV.UK](#)

⁶ [New National Policy Statement for fusion energy: government response \(accessible webpage\) - GOV.UK](#)

⁷ [Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce publishes Interim Report on UK nuclear regulatory system](#)

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 criticised for causing delays and lacking flexibility for innovative technologies. The Taskforce suggests:

- Reviewing the proportionality and effectiveness of NSIP.
- Introducing a "fleet approach" to streamline approvals for multiple similar reactor designs.
- Updating outdated policies, especially those concerning semi-urban population density criteria.

The Government is considering expanding land availability for nuclear development by:

- Adopting a developer-led, criteria-based site selection process.
- Reinvigorating older decommissioned sites for new nuclear use.

While the report doesn't propose specific new waste planning policies, it highlights several areas for reform in environmental regulation that directly affect radioactive waste management. Recommendations include simplification of **Environmental Assessment** and a re-evaluation of how the **ALARP (As Low As Reasonably Practicable)** principle is applied, especially in environmental contexts.

Members will be able to discuss the interim report with DESNZ during this meeting.

2.3 The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, has appointed **Lord Vallance**, widely known for his role during Covid, as **Minister for Science, Innovation, Research and Nuclear**, serving across both the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology..

3. International news

3.1 **GMF Europe** (the Group of Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities) celebrated its 25th anniversary at a General Assembly meeting in Paks, Hungary in late September.

The network has grown significantly over recent years and now includes host communities from 19 countries. GMF works closely with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the European Commission; and is a key partner in the developing Nuclear Communities Global Partnership.

The Assembly included discussion on debate on critical issues, including the impacts of decommissioning on the socio-economics of host communities. Also included were site visits to the existing and planned new nuclear site at Paks; and the Hungarian **Low and Intermediate Level Waste Repository** at Bataapati.

Nuleaf's Executive Director Philip Matthews is a Vice President of the network and attended the Assembly, speaking as part of a panel discussion. Nuleaf is also active in the Nuclear Communities Global Partnership and will be participating in an IAEA meeting in December that will further the development of that network.

4. Regulatory update

4.1. Nuleaf and SCCORS submitted a 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**⁸. 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.

4.2 On the 15th September, the ONR announced that they had signed a fresh Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)⁹ with the **US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)**. This reaffirms the agreement signed in 2020 to cooperate closely and exchange technical information around the deployment of nuclear technologies globally.

Supported by the MoU, ONR and the Environment Agency, alongside the NRC, have announced a new collaborative initiative that will, among other things:

- Cut duplication and fast-track decisions, targeting reactor design reviews within two years, and nuclear site licensing within one year. The Environment Agency will explore accelerating site permitting.
- Share the regulatory load. Regulators will lead on specific aspects of reviews and mutually recognise each other's assessment, with appropriate due diligence to ensure legal compliance and retain independent decision-making.
- Focus on technologies that are already in licensing, or ready to enter the process in the UK and/or the US.

⁸ [Review of Higher Activity Waste Management Guidance | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

⁹ [Nuclear regulators renew transatlantic collaborative agreement | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

4.3 The ONR has published the latest **Chief Nuclear Inspector's Annual Report**¹⁰. This finds that overall performance was satisfactory. There was a slight drop in reported significant events on nuclear sites, and a small rise (16%) in incidents overall.

The report highlights notable improvements in performance across Ministry of Defence sites but that some increased regulatory attention has been required at operating reactors and specific decommissioning sites. At Sellafield, ONR has sought improvements in the site's high hazard and risk reduction activities with progress at the legacy ponds and silos slowing due to technical difficulties, supply chain issues and equipment reliability challenges.

5. New nuclear and fusion updates

5.1 On the 30th of September the UK Government named 6 current nuclear decommissioning sites where there is an interest in new nuclear developments¹¹.

Great British Energy – Nuclear is already assessing **Wylfa** on the Isle of Anglesey in North Wales and **Oldbury-on-Severn** in Gloucestershire, as potential sites for each hosting three 470MW Rolls Royce Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

In response to a parliamentary question, newly appointed Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) minister of state Lord Vallance responded: '*Great British Energy – Nuclear [has] acquired the Oldbury and Wylfa sites. No decisions have yet been taken on specific projects at these sites. Any nuclear project would require development consent, subject to EN-7 once designated.*

The government is also aware of developer or community interest in nuclear projects at several other sites, including those being decommissioned. These include Pioneer Park (Moorside), Trawsfynydd (via Cwmni Eginio), Hartlepool, and Dungeness.'

5.2 Plans have also been announced for around 20 SMRs to be developed across England by the mid-2030s. As part of the recent UK-US nuclear deal, Hartlepool in County Durham, Cottam in Nottinghamshire and London Gateway port in Kent have been named as potential locations for hosting new small reactors.

At **Hartlepool**, Centrica and X-Energy have committed to building up to 12 new reactors, with this expected to lead to an investment of up to £12 Billion and the creation of around 2,500 jobs¹².

¹⁰ [Satisfactory performance in UK nuclear industry, reports regulator | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

¹¹ [Government names six decommissioning sites being considered for new nuclear | New Civil Engineer](#)

¹² [Thousands of jobs to be created in Hartlepool in major UK-US nuclear deal | ITV News Tyne Tees](#)

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband commented *'For nearly 50 years, Hartlepool nuclear power plant has been a powerhouse for the North East.....With the plant nearing the end of its life, this deal between Centrica and X-Energy could secure the next 50 years of clean, homegrown energy in the North East and marks the dawn of a new golden age for British nuclear.'*