

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 2nd December 2025
Item: 5
Subject: National updates on radioactive waste management
Author: Philip Matthews



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
- Nuleaf news.

Recommendation:

This report is for noting.

1. NDA Group update

1.1 A significant number of the NDA's stakeholder engagement team have or will be departing in the coming weeks and months. These are:

- **Jonathan Jenkin**, who was responsible for community engagement and socio-economic work in North Wales. Jonathan left at the end of October.
- **Gillian Elliot**, who leads stakeholder engagement in West Cumbria. Gillian is leaving at the end of November.
- **David Wallace**, responsible for engagement in Scotland will leave at the end of December.
- **John McNamara**, Director of the stakeholder team, will leave in March 2026

In addition to these departures a number of key staff at Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) are leaving. Departures from Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) may also occur.

All departures are under the NDA's Mutually Agreed Voluntary Exist Scheme (Mave) which is being run across the NDA at present. It is anticipated that staff across the Group, in all functions, will depart through the scheme.

It is not clear at present what the plans are for the stakeholder engagement team following these departures, with John McNamara overseeing the transition over the coming months.

Paul Vallance, Group Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, has restated his and the NDA's commitment to stakeholder engagement, but there will clearly be concerns at the loss of so many experienced staff and the lack of clarity on plans for the future. Paul was invited to attend this Steering Group meeting but was not able to due to a prior commitment. John McNamara will be able to provide an update to members at this meeting.

1.2 Following the closing of the consultation on **Strategy 5**, Nuleaf has continued to feed in comments on the Strategy as it nears its final form. The Strategy will undertake a final review before being submitted to the NDA Board for approval on the 9th December. The plan is to launch it, in line with legal requirements, before the end of March 2026. Koulis Efkarpidis of the NDA will provide an update on the Strategy and answer questions at this meeting.

1.3 On the 19th November it was announced that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has reached an agreement with CX Power as the strategic developer to support the delivery of the green energy hub masterplan at **Chapelcross**¹.

The focus of the CX Power development is 135 acres of available land within the unlicensed landholding of the estate, adjacent to the former nuclear power site and wider nuclear licensed area. Their plans include potential for a 1GW data centre campus with a zero-carbon target in its energy operation. The scheme looks to harness the 3GW of renewable energy supplies within fifty miles of the site and the 1.2GW of planned and consented wind and solar developments in the region. In addition, the data centres would utilise advanced cooling technologies that don't place a burden on water resources and strive to achieve full water neutrality.

NDA Group CEO, David Peattie, said: *'CX Power coming on board is a significant step forwards, unlocking the combined potential of the public and private sector to accelerate the programme at Chapelcross. As well as powering economic growth, the development of the hub supports the UK's energy security ambitions and the drive for net zero. It demonstrates what can be achieved when organisations work together with a shared vision. Delivery of our mission is all about freeing up our land so it can be used to benefit the local community, environment and wider economy and I can think of few better examples when it comes to realising that goal.'*

The Leader of Dumfries and Galloway Council, Cllr Stephen Thompson, commented: *'It is a testament to partnership working to reach this significant milestone in the*

¹ [NDA working with private developer to accelerate Chapelcross Hub - GOV.UK](#)

development of Chapelcross. We look forward to working closely with CX Power and our partners to deliver a project that will bring real and lasting benefits to Dumfries and Galloway. The Chapelcross Green Energy Hub will be able to create high-quality jobs and attract new skills to our area, but can also play a vital role in supporting our ambitious transition to net zero.'

1.4 The NDA's Chief Executive **David Peattie** has announced that he intends to stand down in March 2027², by which time he will have served for 10 years as the leader of the organisation.

NDA Chair, Peter Hill, CBE said *'The Board and I are very grateful to David for the early indication of his intention to step down and when he leaves in March 2027 he will do so with our best wishes and gratitude for a job exceedingly well done.'*

We will now begin the process of finding a replacement for David who has achieved so much since he joined the NDA in 2017. We now have the time to enable a seamless transition and I look forward to working with David into 2027 as we continue to deliver our mission'.

Russell Reynolds Associates has been appointed to search for a replacement, with the aim to do so in time to allow an smooth handover. A final decision on appointment will be made by the Board with the approval of the Secretary of State at DESNZ and in consultation with Scottish Ministers.

1.5 Costain has been awarded a £70 million contract to halve the height of the two reactor buildings at the **Trawsfynydd** nuclear site³. The contract was awarded by Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS), and is set to begin later this year. The work will reshape the skyline, lowering the reactor buildings from about 54 metres to 25 metres.

NRS CEO Rob Fletcher commented *'After years of careful planning and preparation, we're now moving into the delivery phase of one of the most complex and ambitious decommissioning projects in the UK. We're delighted to be working with our supply chain partners to shape this next stage in the site's journey, ensuring the work is undertaken safely, securely and sustainably for all our futures.'*

1.6 The NDA has published a blog and a series of case studies on the early history of the Sellafield site, when it was known as **Windscale**. The blog is accompanied by a range of case studies on the early high hazard facilities and can be found here⁴. The Guardian has also published an extended article on the experiences of young people growing up near Sellafield⁵.

² [Leadership change at the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority - GOV.UK](#)

³ [Costain to reduce height of Trawsfynydd reactor buildings - World Nuclear News](#)

⁴ [Windscale: From Nuclear Pioneer to Decommissioning Landmark – Cleaning up our nuclear past: faster, safer and sooner](#)

⁵ ['It's Sellafield or nothing': what life is like growing up in the shadow of Europe's oldest nuclear site | Young people | The Guardian](#)

1.7 On the 14th November the NDA announced that it is making a £1million investment to develop a masterplan for **Pioneer Park**⁶, a clean energy development adjacent to Sellafield. The plan will be led by BEC, the local development company, with the aim of setting out how clean energy technologies and AI and data centre infrastructure could come together to drive long-term economic growth and jobs, taking into account Sellafield's existing requirements.

Cllr Mark Fryer, Leader of Cumberland Council, said *'This announcement shows that momentum is building behind Pioneer Park. The council has worked hard alongside BEC and our partners to make the case for new nuclear and AI investment, and today's funding gives us the resources to set out a detailed, ambitious plan for the site. It's a big step forward for our area and for the future of clean growth in West Cumbria'*.

2. UK and devolved Government reports

2.1 On the 13th November it was confirmed that **Wylfa** on Anglesey will be the site of the UK's first Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), backed by Great British Energy – Nuclear (GBE-N). The reactors are being constructed by Rolls Royce SMR⁷.

The initial plan is for three SMRs at the location though this has the potential to grow to eight. Work is due to start in 2026, with 3,000 jobs and billions of pounds of investment being made during the construction phase. It is predicted that electricity generation will begin in the mid-2030s.

On a visit to North Wales, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said Britain was once a world leader in nuclear power but *'years of neglect and inertia has meant places like Anglesey have been let down and left behind. Today, that changes.'*

Llinos Medi, the MP for Ynys Môn/Anglesey, said it was a *'game-changer'* for the area *'but only if local people see real and lasting benefits'*.

The decision means that the alternative site at **Oldbury-on-Severn** has lost out. The UK Government stated that Oldbury *'has great potential for new nuclear, including the potential to support the privately-led projects being developed by the nuclear industry'*.

The Government has announced plans for another Gigawatt (GW) reactor project similar to Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C, with the potential to power up to six million homes. GBE-N has been asked to identify suitable sites, and a spokesperson for the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) confirmed that Oldbury could be among those considered.

⁶ [NDA announces £1 million funding to accelerate clean energy in West Cumbria - GOV.UK](#)

⁷ [Wylfa nuclear power plant plans go ahead, creating Anglesey jobs - BBC News](#)

2.2 The Parliamentary Statement on the 13th November also announced the creation of a **North Wales AI Growth Zone**, a partnership between Stena Line, Bangor and Aberystwyth Universities, Menai Science Park (M-SParc), and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. It is predicted to create 1,200 jobs and has the potential to widen AI investment across the region, including at **Trawsfynydd**⁸.

2.3 The **Energy Security and Net Zero Committee** of the House of Commons has published a report on the new **National Policy Statement (NPS) for nuclear energy generation (EN-7)**.

The report argues that the planning guidance for building Britain's future nuclear energy generation brings a welcome 'presumption of consent' for low-carbon generation across a range of nuclear technologies.

However, it believed that the private development of new nuclear sites creates additional challenges. It concludes that new policy statement EN-7 'fails to present a truly joined-up approach across planning, safety, and environmental regulation' and so risks undermining its own purpose. The report can be viewed here⁹.

2.4 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. Regulatory news

3.1. On the 15th September, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) announced that they had signed a fresh Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)¹⁰ 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.

⁸ [Written Statement: Wylfa announced as the site for the UK's first Small Modular Reactor \(SMR\) nuclear power station and North Wales confirmed as a location for an Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Growth Zone \(13 November 2025\) | GOV.WALES](#)

⁹ [Committee calls for clear direction on Oldbury and Wylfa, and a "one-stop shop" to finally overcome excessive cost and delays in deployment of nuclear energy - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

¹⁰ [Nuclear regulators renew transatlantic collaborative agreement | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

- 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.

3.2 The ONR has published the latest **Chief Nuclear Inspector's Annual Report**¹¹. This finds that overall performance was satisfactory. There was a slight drop in reported significant events on nuclear sites, but 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.

3.3 The ONR has granted formal consent to EDF Energy's (EDF) project to decommission **Hinkley Point B** nuclear power station. This decision comes after a public consultation (which Nuleaf responded to¹²) and a detailed assessment by ONR specialist inspectors of EDF's environmental statement and Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Dan Hasted, ONR Director of Regulation – Operating Facilities Directorate, commented: *'After careful assessment and public consultation, we are satisfied that EDF's decommissioning plans for Hinkley Point B include appropriate measures to protect people and the environment. We will continue to proportionately regulate the Hinkley Point B site throughout the decommissioning phase to ensure the licensee complies with applicable legislation to safeguard workers and the public.'*

The published project assessment report, which provides an overview of ONR's decision, and public consultation response can be viewed here¹³.

3.4 The Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and other bodies have published their latest report on **Radioactivity in Food and the Environment**¹⁴.

Overall exposure of the UK public to radiation in 2024 was low and well within the legal limit of 1 millisievert (mSv), with the greatest source being natural occurring radon and thoron in homes (44% of the total).

¹¹ [Satisfactory performance in UK nuclear industry, reports regulator | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

¹² [Consultation Responses - Nuleaf](#)

¹³ [ONR gives consent to decommission Hinkley Point B | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

¹⁴ [Radioactivity in food and the environment \(RIFE\) report - GOV.UK](#)

In terms of exposure from nuclear sites:

- In England, people living close to the **Capenhurst** site were estimated to be the most exposed from sources of artificial radioactivity. The exposure was approximately 22% of the annual dose limit.
- In Scotland, people living close to the **Dounreay** site were estimated to be the most exposed from sources of artificial radioactivity. The exposure was approximately 2% of the annual dose limit.
- In Wales, people living near the **Trawsfynydd** site were estimated to be the most exposed from sources of artificial radioactivity. The exposure was approximately 4% of the annual dose limit.

3.5 A 'significant' category particle of radioactive waste has been found on a beach near **Dounreay** for the first time in three years¹⁵. The particle was identified during regular monitoring, on a stretch of foreshore not used by the public. It is likely the result of the disintegration of a larger fragment on the seabed.

4. New nuclear and fusion reports

4.1 On the 30th of September the UK Government named 6 current nuclear decommissioning sites where there is an interest in new nuclear developments¹⁶.

In response to a parliamentary question, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) minister of state Lord Vallance responded that, in addition to Wylfa (since announced as the site of the first SMRs), and Oldbury, *'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 Egin), Hartlepool, and Dungeness.'*

4.2 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 jobs¹⁷.

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.'*

¹⁵ [Dounreay waste particle 'most radioactive' find for three years - BBC News](#)

¹⁶ [Government names six decommissioning sites being considered for new nuclear | New Civil Engineer](#)

¹⁷ [Thousands of jobs to be created in Hartlepool in major UK-US nuclear deal | ITV News Tyne Tees](#)

4.3 A new £10m grant scheme has been launched to support environmental enhancement projects along the Suffolk and Essex coast¹⁸. The **Natural Environment Improvement Fund (NEIF)** will be funded by Sizewell C as part of its Deed of Obligation, and is designed to mitigate the landscape and visual impacts of the new nuclear station.

Grants will be distributed throughout Sizewell C's construction phase, and during the first three years of its operation. An awards panel has been established to oversee the fund, comprising representatives from East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Sizewell C, Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape, and Natural England.

5. Nuleaf news

5.1 It can be confirmed that the **2026 Nuleaf Annual Gathering** will be held in Carlisle on the 14th and 15th July.

The agenda is in the process of being finalised but it is anticipated that the event will include a site visit to the Chapelcross nuclear site and a seminar on nuclear developments in Cumberland, as well as a dinner and opportunities for informal networking. Members living far from Cumberland will be able to travel up on the 13th July and stay over.

Please note the dates in your diary and more details will follow soon.

5.2 Philip Matthews joined a **GMF Europe** executive meeting on the 3rd to 6th November. The trip began with a visit to the final meeting of the **Borsele Conditions Group**, a 100 member citizens panel that has been deliberating on what conditions they would like to impose on the potential development of a new nuclear station in the area. The GMF Group also visited the world nuclear exhibition in Paris and were able to meet a range of contacts including the Welsh Government and Rolls Royce SMR. A presentation on the visit will be made at the Steering Group meeting.

5.3 It has been confirmed that the NDA will continue funding of **SCCORS (Scottish Council Committee on Radioactive Substances)** for another year, through to February 2027. This positive news means that Louise Martin is able to continue to work in support of both SCCORS and Nuleaf through an extension to her secondment from Somerset Council.

A well-attended SCCORS meeting was held in Glasgow on the 12th November, and Louise has also been able to build the membership and establish relationships with the Scottish Government and Parliament, CoSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and a range of other stakeholders. The continued funding is recognition

¹⁸ [New £10m Natural Environment Grant Fund launched in East Suffolk - Suffolk County Council](#)

of the good work done and the need to maintain the momentum around the network.