

MINUTES

Title of Meeting:	Steering Group
Date:	10/09/2025
Place:	Microsoft teams
Times:	10:00-14:30

Attended:	Cllr David Moore	Cumberland Council (Chair)
	Cllr Joseph Ghayouba	Cumberland Council
	Cllr Paul Thomas	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
	Cllr Carwyn Elias Jones	Isle of Anglesey County Council
	Cllr Chris Davies	South Gloucestershire Council
	Cllr Richard Smith	Suffolk County Council
	Jonathan Cook	Cumberland Council
	Eleanor Godesar	Dorset Council
	Terry Burns	Essex County Council
	Mark Woodger	Essex County Council
	Bethany Rance	East Suffolk Council
	Jim Selby	East Suffolk Council
	Martyn Fulcher	East Suffolk Council
	Rae Pickbourne	East Suffolk Council
	Jo Wynn-Carter	Folkestone and Hythe District Council
	Amartya Deb	Gloucestershire County Council
	Iwan W Jones	Isle of Anglesey County Council
	Diane Neville	Lancaster City Council
	Edward Wright	Lincolnshire County Council
	Richard Outram	Manchester City Council
	Simon Milson	Maldon District Council
	Annie Keen	Maldon District Council
	Jonathan Holland	NWC
	Louise Martin	Somerset Council/ Nuleaf
	Tessa Bond	Somerset Council
	Charlotte Rushmere	Somerset Council
Ross Walker	Suffolk County Council	
Andy Rutter	Suffolk County Council	
Roland Arbon	Suffolk County Council	
Jon Severs	South Gloucestershire Council	
Gillian Ellis-King	South Gloucestershire Council	
Chloe Atkinson	Nuleaf	
Philip Matthews	Nuleaf	

Invited Guests:	John Mcnamara	NDA
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Speakers	Sebastian Russell Smith Dan Gould Ieuan Williams	Rolls Royce SMR  Rolls Royce SMR GBE-N
Minute-taker:	Chloe Atkinson	

<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and apologies</b>
1.1	Cllr David Moore welcomed attendees, noting a total of 32 members present, including several new attendees.

<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b>
2.1	Previous meeting minutes were approved without objections.
<b>Action: CA to add minutes to website</b>	

<b>3</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>
3.1	Philip Matthews (PM) noted that the minutes were being presented in a new format. He thanked Chloe Atkinson for making the changes.  He also noted that one Matter Arising was outstanding. This related to a request for information that Brendan Sweeney had made to Tonima Saha of DESNZ at the Nuleaf Annual Gathering. Philip had written to DESNZ but had not received a response. He would contact them again.
<b>Action: PM to request response from DESNZ</b>	

<b>4</b>	<b>Nuleaf: Discussion on future engagement</b>
4.1	PM introduced that paper.  He noted that it was 20 years since Nuleaf and the NDA were founded and that the UK nuclear landscape has changed significantly over that period, as have means of engagement. In particular, recent years had seen an upsurge in activity around new nuclear. This included proposals for new types of reactors and the potential location of reactors in non-nuclear communities. There was therefore a need to further develop support for local authority members and officers.  This paper was also informed by the independent consultancy study commissioned by Nuleaf. This has suggested a range of actions by both the NDA and Nuleaf to help enhance local, regional and national engagement.  Lastly it was worth noting that local government was in a period of change in England with a move to unitary and combined authorities and mayors. Recent years had also seen changes in the ruling administration of many local authorities; and there were significant financial challenges facing both local and national government.  Taking all these factors together, it was timely to look again at how Nuleaf engages.
4.2	PM talked through each section of the paper and then asked for views on that and on the Recommendations. These were that Nuleaf:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 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.</li> <li>2. Establishes a dialogue with our members, the NDA and other stakeholders on how best to reform local engagement processes.</li> <li>3. 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.</li> <li>4. Develops our voice in the media and seeks to work with national politicians on issues of interest to our members.</li> </ol> <p>PM noted that any changes would need to be discussed with the NDA (as primary funder) and NNLAG (New Nuclear Local Authority Group). Representatives of both organisations were in attendance at this Steering Group and some discussions had already been undertaken with both organisations.</p> <p>The Chair invited comment and discussion on the paper and recommendations.</p>
4.3	<p>Each of the 4 recommendations were unanimously approved by members.</p> <p>In particular it was felt that there was a real need to build further support for local authority members and officers around new nuclear, particularly as some new developments were likely to be in areas that had no current experience of the nuclear sector.</p> <p>In discussion it was noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While recent NNLAG work had largely been with planning officers, Cllr Richard Rout was the Chair and there had been some previous involvement of elected members.</li> <li>• Nuleaf should engage with the Local Government Association (LGA) as well as with NDA and NNLAG.</li> <li>• That any expansion of work on new nuclear must not be at the expense of the important focus on decommissioning and waste management. There was a particular need at present to continue to press for the delivery of a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) and to recognise the significant impacts on communities of decommissioning and waste storage and management.</li> <li>• That the UK Government should be lobbied to back a joined up approach to community benefits, socio-economics and sustainability and must require GBE-N and the NDA to support proper local authority engagement across the nuclear cycle.</li> <li>• That support for local authority engagement through Nuleaf is of great benefit to the NDA and GBE-N.</li> </ul>
4.4	<p>Members also support the reaching out to new local authority members and to engage more actively in the media.</p>
4.5	<p>Regarding Nuleaf meetings, the current model of an in person Annual Gathering, with other meetings being held online was felt appropriate. There was some support for a second in person meeting to be held during the year, though with an acknowledgement of the cost and time implications of this.</p>
4.6	<p>PM committed to taking the recommendations forward in discussion; and to giving more thought to how Nuleaf meetings could be further enhanced in terms of the format.</p>

**Action: PM/Nuleaf to take forward actions in partnership with key external bodies, and report back to Steering Group.**

5	<b>Review of membership benefits and costs</b>
5.1	<p>PM tabled the paper, which reflected on Nuleaf’s current membership model and proposed changes.</p> <p>Nuleaf currently offers two types of membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing members: Who pay an annual fee based on population size.</li> <li>• Corresponding members: Who do not have voting rights but are able to attend all meetings and receive other support.</li> </ul> <p>PM noted that Nuleaf’s current model was unusual in that there was not a great difference in benefits between the two membership types. Most other LGA Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and other comparable bodies such as Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) required all members to pay to participate in meetings.</p> <p>The paper recommended that members approve the proposed changes, that create a clearer differentiation between Contributing and Corresponding memberships. The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Nuleaf Constitution is amended so that only Contributing Member local authorities be able to attend Nuleaf Steering Group and Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) meetings. In relation to other events, including the Annual Gathering, Corresponding members will be able to attend on payment of a fee, to be determined by the Secretariat.</li> <li>2. In order to encourage Corresponding members to engage in Nuleaf, it is proposed that any Corresponding authority considering becoming a Contributing member be able to engage in Nuleaf for one year without charge.</li> <li>3. These changes will come into force from the start of the next Financial Year i.e. from 1 April 2026.</li> </ol> <p>The Chair invited comment and discussion on the paper and recommendations.</p>
5.2	<p>Members unanimously approved the Recommendations.</p> <p>It was proposed that Nuleaf should prepare a briefing/materials that set out clearly the benefits of membership, to help persuade new authorities to join.</p> <p>This was agreed. PM noted that he was planning to write to a number of local authorities with nuclear facilities to encourage them to become members from next year. He also offered to meet with or give a presentation to any local authority interested in affiliating.</p>
<p><b>Action: PM/Nuleaf to take forward proposals for membership changes and report back as appropriate.</b></p>	

<b>6</b>	<b>Review of Annual Gathering and proposal for 2026</b>
6.1	<p>PM tabled Paper 6 which included a review of the 2025 Annual Gathering and a proposal for the 2026 event.</p> <p>Feedback had been sought from attendees at this years' Gathering. This had been positive, in particular in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venue &amp; Accessibility: Well-rated for location and transport.</li> <li>• Seminar Content: Engaging speakers and strong audience participation.</li> <li>• Pre-event Communication: Over 90% found it clear and helpful.</li> <li>• European Input: GMF colleagues added valuable international perspective.</li> </ul> <p>The main area for improvement related to the site visit to Dungeness. Members found the presentations useful but were disappointed that there had been a lack of a full site tour.</p> <p>PM agreed with this assessment and would be speaking to NDA to ensure that the 2026 Gathering site visit was more comprehensive.</p>
6.2	<p>Philip then went on to outline options for the 2026 Gathering.</p> <p>The aim, over time, was to visit sites across England and Wales. Potential locations for 2026 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ipswich/Sizewell: Lots of activity at Sizewell across 3 sites.</li> <li>• Carlisle/Chapelcross: Focus on legacy site transition, green energy, and community regeneration.</li> <li>• Manchester/Springfields or Capenhurst: Central location; nuclear fuel cycle sites, though access may be limited.</li> <li>• Other options: Winfrith (fairly remote), Harwell (more accessible).</li> </ul> <p>In discussion the greatest level of support was expressed for a visit to Carlisle and Chapelcross, though support for Ipswich/Sizewell was also expressed.</p>
<p><b>Action: Nuleaf team to work up a proposal for Carlisle/Chapelcross and update members at the December meeting.</b></p>	

<b>7</b>	<b>Update on national developments in radioactive waste management</b>
7.1	<p>PM tabled the paper which covered key developments across the UK nuclear sector. The paper was noted.</p>

<b>8</b>	<b>Update on the Geological Disposal Facility siting process</b>
8.1	<p>PM tabled the paper.</p> <p>He focussed on item 1, concerning the decision of Lincolnshire County Council to withdraw from the GDF process, ending engagement in the area. This left two Community Partnerships, both in Cumberland, as active participants.</p> <p>He also noted the recent publication of a report by Nista (National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority) that had concluded a GDF was 'unaffordable.' In response, the Government had restated their support for a repository.</p>
8.2	<p>Members reflected on the updates.</p>

There was concern about timetable slippage around the next milestones in the process, with NWS' report to Government now expected in spring 2026. The GDF's central role in nuclear strategy and long-term viability was emphasised, especially with SMRs and rising energy demand.

Members from Lincolnshire and elsewhere also reflected on the challenges of the process and the reasons for the withdrawal. The change of administration at Lincolnshire following local elections had precipitated the decision, but there had been issues around the Area of Focus and some elements of local engagement.

9	<b>Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) Election of Chair and Vice Chair</b>
9.1	An EGM was held as part of the meeting. This followed the decision to delay the election of new officers from the June Annual Gathering due to the proximity to the local elections.
9.2	<p>One candidate was standing for the role of Chair (Cllr Joseph Ghayouba of Cumberland Council), seconded by Cllr Richard Smith of Suffolk County Council. One candidate was standing for the position of Vice Chair (Cllr Paul Thomas of Folkestone and Hythe District Council), seconded by Cllr Tom Daly of East Suffolk Council.</p> <p>As such, Cllr Ghayouba and Cllr Thomas were elected unopposed.</p> <p>Cllr Ghayouba thanked Nuleaf members and the Secretariat and said that he looked forward to taking the organisation forward. He also expressed his appreciation to the outgoing Chair, Cllr David Moore; and Vice Chair, Cllr Mike Caswell, for their service to Nuleaf over many years. As Cllr Caswell was unable to attend the meeting it was agreed that a letter should be sent, thanking him on behalf of the group.</p> <p>Cllr Thomas thanks colleagues for the opportunity, and also acknowledge the positive legacy of his predecessors. Thanks to the outgoing Chair and Vice Chair were also expressed by Cllr Richard Smith, and John McNamara of the NDA.</p> <p>Cllr David Moore, noted that he would continue to Chair the meeting until lunchtime, after which Cllr Ghayouba would take over.</p>
9.2	<p>PM tabled the Nuleaf Service Plan for 25/26 which had been prepared in consultation with NDA Group colleagues.</p> <p>The Service Plan was approved by members without amendment.</p>
<b>Action: PM to write to Cllr Caswell to thank him for his service.</b>	

10	<b>Date of next meeting</b>
10.1	It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday the 2 <sup>nd</sup> December from 10am.

11	<b>AOB</b>
11.1	No other points were raised under AOB.

11	<b>Great British Energy – Nuclear (GBE-N): Update and forward plan: Ieuan Williams, Head of Communications, GBE-N</b>
11.1	<p>The Chair, Cllr Ghayouba, welcomed members back and introduced Ieuan Williams, Head of Communications, GBE-N; along with Dan Gould and Sebastian Russell-Smith of Rolls Royce SMR.</p> <p>He invited Ieuan to present to members.</p>
11.2	<p>Ieuan provided an overview of the current situation.</p> <p>Great British Nuclear had recently been renamed Great British Energy – Nuclear (GBEN). In the recent spending review GBE-N had been allocated £2.5 billion to progress the UK SMR programme, and Rolls Royce SMR had been selected as preferred bidder after a two-year competition.</p> <p>The process of identifying the first SMR site was at an advanced stage. The location would be either Wylfa or Oldbury and the decision rested with the Secretary of State, with an announcement expected in autumn 2025. The choice of site involves technical, scheduling, and cost factors; and both sites remain strong candidates.</p>
11.3	<p>The Chair thanked Ieuan and invited questions and comments:</p> <p><b>Question: What is the appropriate way for us to engage with you?</b>  <i>Answer: All communications are ultimately routed through Ieuan. Direct contact is preferred by email.</i></p> <p><b>Question: Is it fair to say this is just coming down to a political decision between the two sites for the SMR? And secondly, what happens to the other one?</b>  <i>Answer: The final decision on the site is political, made by the Secretary of State, but GBEN will retain ownership of both Wylfa and Oldbury regardless. The deferred site will remain actively managed and could offer future opportunities, including new nuclear technologies or expansion under evolving frameworks.</i></p> <p><b>Question: What can you say about local community impacts, benefits and opportunities?"</b>  <i>Answer: SMRs are expected to generate hundreds of long-term jobs and there is a strong commitment to leaving a positive legacy, engaging closely with local communities. Their smaller footprint and modular construction mean benefits will be more distributed and potentially longer-lasting, especially through localised manufacturing.</i></p>

12.	<b>The Rolls Royce SMR programme: Dan Gould, Head of Communications and Sebastian Russell-Smith, Manager, Government Affairs, Rolls Royce SMR.</b>
12.1	<p>Dan Gould began by providing an overview of Rolls Royce SMR. The major shareholder is Rolls Royce with others being Constellation Energy (US nuclear operator), BNF Resources (capital management), and ČEZ (European utility).</p> <p>Globally it is estimated that 111.3 Terawatts (TW) of new electricity capacity needed to reach net zero, which is equivalent to ~25,000 SMR units worldwide.</p>


	<p>The value of SMRs is that they are seen to be a deliverable and repeatable product designed for scalability and global deployment. This should ensure costs are competitive and will reduce project risks compared to large nuclear.</p> <p>The Rolls Royce SMR is based on a 470 MW per unit design which is large for a SMR but which has a compact footprint. Roll out will be through factory-built modules (pressure vessels, civils, mechanical/electrical/plumbing). The aim is to minimise on-site construction, maximise repeatability and supply chain participation.</p> <p>Sebastian Russell-Smith then spoke on in more detail on the technology. The SMR is a pressurised water reactor (PWR) with three steam generators. It uses standard PWR fuel and so avoids costly re-validation, with multiple vendor options. Reactors are designed for road transportability in UK.</p> <p>Safety systems are based on a 'defence in depth' approach with multiple redundant layers.</p> <p>In terms of waste, the profile is comparable to existing PWRs. Over a 60-year lifespan around 283 m<sup>3</sup> of Spent Fuel will be generated per unit (equivalent to a tennis court stacked 1m high). The aim is to for on-site storage until a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) is available.</p>
12.2	<p><b>Question: Will SMR construction or operation trigger COMAH regulations (Lower or Upper Tier)?</b>  <i>Answer: It's too early to confirm. Construction will resemble a conventional large-scale civil project.</i></p> <p><b>Question: Can you provide further information on water abstraction requirements, the Spent Fuel (SF) storage method and cybersecurity measures?</b>  <i>Answer: SMRs use water for cooling without consuming it and avoid boron in their design, reducing hazardous waste. Spent fuel is stored wet for 7–10 years, then in dry casks licensed for 100 years. Cybersecurity is managed through a defence-in-depth strategy.</i></p> <p><b>Question: Why SMRs now? Why not earlier if they seem to have so many advantages?</b>  <i>Answer: SMRs have gained momentum due to the recent energy crises, high electricity prices, and grid reliability concerns, alongside political support and public interest. Their lower capital costs and faster build times make them easier to fund and deploy, offering a practical and scalable energy solution today.</i></p> <p><b>Question: Will Rolls Royce SMR support a national framework for community benefit payments?</b>  <i>Answer: On community benefits, a Head of Social Value is being recruited and formal offers will be developed during the DCO process.</i></p> <p><b>Question: Is there a risk to the nuclear renaissance in terms of finding people with the right skills to do the job?</b>  <i>Answer: There is a real skills challenge. GBE-N is working with nuclear skills bodies and planning ahead during the pre-construction phase. They are looking outside the</i></p>

*nuclear sector, including to manufacturing, automotive, and aviation, to broaden the talent pool. It is important that nuclear is seen as an attractive industry.*

The Chair thanked the presenters and Nuleaf members and closed the meeting.

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	1. That is <b>personal data</b>	
	2. Provided in <b>confidence</b>	
	3. Intended for <b>future publication</b>	x
	4. Related to <b>criminal proceedings</b>	
	5. That might prejudice <b>law enforcement</b>	
	6. That might prejudice ongoing <b>external audit</b> investigations	
	7. That could prejudice the <b>conduct of public affairs</b>	
	8. Information that could endanger an individual's <b>health &amp; safety</b>	
	9. That is subject to <b>legal privilege</b>	
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	11. That <b>may not be disclosed by law</b>	
12. <b>Other</b> Please describe		

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