

MINUTES

Title of Meeting:	Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG)	
Date:	28 th January 2026	
Place:	Microsoft teams	
Times:	10:00 – 12:30	
Attendees	Heather Morrison	Cumberland Council
	Terry Burns	Essex County Council
	Jo Wynn Carter	Folkestone and Hythe Council
	Amartya Deb	Gloucestershire County Council
	Chadernnay Glenn	Gloucestershire County Council
	Andy Denton	Hampshire County Council
	Richard Sharples	Lancashire Council
	Tessa Bond	Somerset Council
	James Holbrook	Somerset Council
	Ross Walker	Suffolk County Council
	Rachel Whaley	Westmorland and Furness Council
	Louise Martin	Nuleaf/Somerset
	Chloe Atkinson	Nuleaf
	Philip Matthews	Nuleaf
Speakers	Frank Wigley	NDA
	Matt Verlander	Avison Young
	Matthew Meldrum	NRS
	Laura Hogg	NDA
Minute-taker:	Chloe Atkinson	

1.	Welcome and apologies
	<p>Philip Matthews opened the meeting and welcomed members and guest speakers. Apologies were noted from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlotte Rushmere – South Gloucestershire Council • Jon Severs – South Gloucestershire Council • Eleanor Godesar – Dorset Council • Annie Keen – Maldon District Council.

2.	Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2025
2.1	PM asked if there were any amendments or corrections to the last meeting's minutes. No objections were raised and the minutes were approved.
CA to add minutes to website	

3.	Matters arising
There were no substantive matters arising.	
<i>Actions Agreed, Target Date (s), Lead Officer (s):</i>	

4.	Update from NRS – Matt Meldrum
4.1	<p>Matthew Meldrum provided an update on NRS activities across sites.</p> <p>He noted that the Ponds Demolition Project at Trawsfynydd remains ongoing with planning and permit preparation expected in 2028–29 pending discussions with Natural Resources Wales (NRW); a major Winfrith planning application is now due for submission next week following final engagement with Dorset Council’s Economic Team; the Dungeness boilers application is progressing smoothly with a decision expected in late February; and at Oldbury, the Screening Opinion for the Turbine Hall demolition has been submitted and further planning work will follow once received.</p> <p>Matt also highlighted increasing internal awareness of planning requirements across NRS, resulting in more Permitted Development (PD) queries and minor applications, and confirmed that local plan engagement continues alongside NDA colleagues.</p>
<i>Actions Agreed, Target Date (s), Lead Officer (s):</i>	

5.	PDR and PPG update -Frank Wigley (NDA) and Matt Verlander (AY)
5.1	<p>Frank and Matt opened by reflecting on the recent Nuclear Regulatory Task Force Review which had proposed a range of policy and regulatory changes affecting nuclear decommissioning and new build. These include measures to address delays across planning, permitting and DCO processes, and to cut duplication through a full review of EIA and EIADR. Actions would now be taken forward by Government and regulators, working with NDA Group. The aim will be to create a system that is more proportionate.</p> <p>One area that the report had looked at was around the application of Biodiversity Net Gain to decommissioning sites. There is ongoing work with DEFRA on more proportionate solutions, as well as discussions with DESNZ and DLUHC on tailored permitted development rights for NDA sites.</p> <p>Frank also noted forthcoming reforms to compulsory purchase powers to prevent obstruction of nationally significant projects like the GDF and protect NDA land. Matt raised concerns about the lack of an updated National Planning Policy for Waste, with a need for clearer, consolidated guidance.</p>
5.2	Question: Why is the National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) still separate from the NPPF? Any thoughts on the lack of an updated NPPW?

Answer: We plan to raise this issue formally in light of the government's aim to consolidate planning policy. Waste was previously kept outside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) because of its distinct legislative framework.

Comment: Is this separation justified post-EU exit? Important elements such as waste safeguarding are missing from the draft NPPF, creating uncertainty for waste planning authorities. The group agreed that this policy gap should be clearly highlighted in consultation responses.

Question: Regarding the potential implications of the NDA obtaining enhanced compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers, what changes might this bring and would such powers enable the NDA to exert greater influence over projects such as the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)?

Answer: Frank explained that the strengthened CPO powers are intended to secure essential access for GDF investigations, prevent deliberate obstruction, and help the NDA protect its land from external CPO attempts, especially as some sites move off nuclear licence. The aim is protection of mission-critical land, not wider acquisition.

Question: Will waste safeguarding be considered under the new NPPF, and should it be included?

Answer: Waste safeguarding is missing from the relevant sections of the draft NPPF, despite it logically needing inclusion. Matthew noted this omission should be challenged given its importance for both local authorities and nuclear-related land uses. He highlighted that the continued absence of an updated NPPW only adds to the uncertainty for planning authorities and the sector more broadly.

Question: Will the new Permitted Development (PD) Rights be published at the same time as the new Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)? And can PD explanations be included in the PPG?

Answer: There's uncertainty about whether the new PD rights and updated PPG will be released at the same time, though they may coincide. It would help if the documents cross-referenced each other, and since the PPG is easier to update, PD content can be added later if needed. Government sees PD reform as a quick win, so changes may move faster than expected. Frank confirmed they will keep both documents aligned.

Question: Will the draft PPG be shared with the group for review?

Answer: Yes. Frank confirmed that Matt is actively drafting the PPG. They intend to share the draft with the group to check whether it accurately reflects all feedback previously given.

Actions Agreed, Target Date (s), Lead Officer (s):

6.	Update on landfill study- (Laura Hogg) NDA
6.1	<p>Laura Hogg (NDA) gave a presentation on a UK wide study of landfill capacity undertaken by the NDA.</p> <p>The study showed that capacity for low-activity Low-Level Waste (LLW) is steadily declining and is increasingly constrained by policy ambitions such as 'zero avoidable waste to landfill', despite this currently lacking a clear definition.</p> <p>Laura noted that although sufficient permitted capacity exists on paper, it is not safeguarded for the nuclear sector and does not reflect sites losing planning permission, with all LLW-permitted landfills expected to close by 2046. Commercial viability is already weakening—particularly in Scotland, where no new capacity is planned and sites like Seater landfill face tightening legislation.</p> <p>The NDA review also highlighted inconsistent evidence requirements for new capacity, and the absence of policy recognition that some waste will always require landfill. Key recommendations include clarifying policy on unavoidable waste, defining 'avoidable waste,' improving long-term LLW forecasting, strengthening engagement with Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and operators, and monitoring market and tax-driven changes that could further reduce capacity.</p>
6.2	<p>Comment: Declining landfill capacity will force longer distance waste transport. It will be important for clear, consistent evidence to be provided by the industry to support effective planning – there is a challenge of aligning NDA's long-term mission with short planning cycles. Wider sector engagement and early dialogue with MHCLG is also needed ahead of the revised NPPW expected in early 2026.</p> <p><i>Answer: Laura agreed with these concerns and reflected on feedback from LPAs, noting many rely on regional waste contracts that function well until they expire, after which increasing regionalisation creates challenges and contributes to future landfill capacity risks. Laura acknowledged the tension between short-term planning cycles and the NDA's long-term mission, emphasising that this mismatch requires continued attention, and reassured members that DESNZ and DEFRA are supportive of the review and proposed next steps.</i></p> <p>Question: Given the carbon and sustainability impacts from longer transport distances, is the NDA exploring mitigation options beyond shifting transport from road to rail?</p> <p><i>Answer: Sustainability and carbon considerations are embedded across all decision-making, with dedicated teams reviewing transport modes, electrification trends, and long-term greenhouse gas impacts. NDA has ongoing work with NTS and NWS to plan long-term disposal routes and maintain access to viable facilities across regions.</i></p> <p>Question: There is a rapid loss of non-hazardous landfill capacity in the Southeast of England, increasing reliance on a small number of strategic sites. Waste planning authorities struggle to evidence provision at examinations. Does the NDA encourage landfill operators to put sites forward through Local Plans and has it considered the implications of shorter MHCLG plan-making cycles?</p>

	<p>Answer: <i>The NDA already works with LPAs around nuclear sites to ensure the right policy references are included in Minerals & Waste Plans and Local Plans but there is a gap because most permitted LLW landfills sit outside nuclear host communities, resulting in limited past engagement with those LPAs. Although landfill operators usually engage with these authorities, the NDA as the waste producer has not done so routinely, and improving this engagement is now a priority. Laura also noted she is not yet familiar enough with the proposed plan-making reforms to comment.</i></p>
6.3	<p>Laura Hogg concluded the session by noting that the NDA has raised landfill capacity concerns with DESNZ, DEFRA and government planners, stressing the need for better alignment between planning policy, waste strategy and sector requirements. All industries produce some waste that cannot be diverted up the hierarchy, meaning national and local strategies must continue to plan for disposal infrastructure.</p> <p>She highlighted the need to consider whether a regional or more distributed national approach is appropriate, emphasising that a single national site would not be viable.</p> <p>Philip welcomed her points, noted Nuleaf's ongoing engagement in Local Plan consultations beyond NDA host areas, and suggested re-engaging LPAs hosting key landfill facilities.</p>
<p><i>Actions Agreed, Target Date (s), Lead Officer (s):</i></p>	

7.	Update on developments in radioactive waste management
7.1	<p>Philip and Louise highlighted various items in the papers, including Louise's work in reviewing the draft NPPF and preparing a Nuleaf response.</p> <p>The paper was noted.</p>
<p>Action: Philip and Louise to draft Nuleaf's response to the NPPF, circulate for comments, and submit early March.</p>	

8	Update on the GDF sitting process
8.1	<p>Philip tabled the paper which was noted.</p>
<p><i>Actions Agreed, Target Date (s), Lead Officer (s):</i></p>	

9	Local site updates
9.1	<p>Gloucestershire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was noted that the County Council would feed in some general comments to the NDA Business Plan consultation response. <p>Cumberland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with Sellafield is being developed (the current one ends in March), with the aim of expanding scope and securing earlier engagement. The Sellafield Travel Plan is awaiting approval after a 2.5-year process and is on a three-year review cycle. Numerous minor applications and pre-applications are currently in progress. For the GDF, the council is awaiting NWS's recommendation and preparing a PPA for the next phase, should government approve progression to site characterisation.

- The authority is awaiting further updates on plutonium disposition and plans for Pioneer Park.

Westmorland & Furness

- Intention is to begin formal work on the Westmorland & Furness Local Plan in late 2026.
- Further engagement with Nuleaf may be required as sites and issues emerge.
- Formal notice of Local Plan commencement is expected in the summer.

Folkestone & Hythe

- Boiler applications for Dungeness A (via NRS) are under consideration; Jo will coordinate with planning colleagues.
- A district-wide economic appraisal focusing on Dungeness has been commissioned.
- A public and business survey launches tomorrow to capture: local economic conditions, community needs and mitigation opportunities linked to the Dungeness site. Emerging findings will be shared at future meetings.

Somerset

- Hinkley B site is fully defueled, completed on schedule, budget position still unknown.

On Hinkley Point C:

- A second reactor has been delivered to the site.
- A DCO issue has arisen. Reactors were expected to be operational by 31 Dec 2025. Somerset Council and EDF are working on a procedure to amend the DCO.
- EDF proposes a dry spent fuel store, differing from the current consent. A Material Change Application for HPC is expected July 2026, focused on shifting from wet to dry Interim Spent Fuel Storage.

Suffolk

- Local focus remains on associated infrastructure sites.
- East Suffolk is not currently processing new applications relating to Sizewell B.
- Suffolk Minerals & Waste Local Plan is scheduled for review later this year, including existing policies for: Nuclear waste storage and Sizewell development
- Nuleaf will be invited to engage once consultation begins.

Essex

- Essex continues to accept some waste from Dungeness, although none was received this quarter.
- Awaiting future containers from Sizewell, but none have yet been received.


Actions Agreed, Target Date (s), Lead Officer (s):

10	Date of next meeting
10.1	This will be on the 29 th April 2026, online.
<i>Actions Agreed, Target Date (s), Lead Officer (s):</i>	

11	Any other business
11.1	No AOB was recorded.

INTERNAL FOI CHECKLIST FOR MINUTES OF OFFICER MEETINGS

To be completed by the chair in respect of ALL minutes.

<p>The full minutes of this meeting are assumed to be accessible to the public and to staff, unless the chair claims an exemption under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Detailed guidance about applying the exemptions is available from foihelpdesk@libher.suffolkcc.gov.uk or call x720 4618</p>																																						
<p>Please indicate opposite any exemptions you are claiming.</p> <p>Remember that some exemptions can be overridden if it is in the public interest to disclose – as decided by the FOI multi-disciplinary team.</p> <p>Exemptions normally apply for a limited time and the information may be released once the exemption lapses.</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>	<p><u>These minutes contain information;</u></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 5%;"></td> <td style="width: 85%;">1. That is personal data</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>2. Provided in confidence</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>3. Intended for future publication</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>4. Related to criminal proceedings</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>5. That might prejudice law enforcement</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>6. That might prejudice ongoing external audit investigations</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>7. That could prejudice the conduct of public affairs</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>8. Information that could endanger an individual's health & safety</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>9. That is subject to legal privilege</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>10. That is prejudicial to commercial interests</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>11. That may not be disclosed by law</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>12. Other Please describe</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		1. That is personal data			2. Provided in confidence			3. Intended for future publication			4. Related to criminal proceedings			5. That might prejudice law enforcement			6. That might prejudice ongoing external audit investigations			7. That could prejudice the conduct of public affairs			8. Information that could endanger an individual's health & safety			9. That is subject to legal privilege			10. That is prejudicial to commercial interests			11. That may not be disclosed by law			12. Other Please describe		<p>Please insert an "x" if relevant</p>
	1. That is personal data																																					
	2. Provided in confidence																																					
	3. Intended for future publication																																					
	4. Related to criminal proceedings																																					
	5. That might prejudice law enforcement																																					
	6. That might prejudice ongoing external audit investigations																																					
	7. That could prejudice the conduct of public affairs																																					
	8. Information that could endanger an individual's health & safety																																					
	9. That is subject to legal privilege																																					
	10. That is prejudicial to commercial interests																																					
	11. That may not be disclosed by law																																					
	12. Other Please describe																																					

Remember to destroy all drafts and routine correspondence once the final version of these minutes is agreed.