MINUTES

Title of Meeting:	Steering Group
Date:	11/03/2026
Place:	Microsoft teams
Times:	10:00-13:00

Attended:	Cllr Joseph Ghayouba	Cumberland Council
	Cllr David Moore	Cumberland Council
	Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn	Gwynedd Council
	Cllr Tracey Henry	Hull City Council
	Cllr Aled Morris Jones	Isle of Anglesey/Ynys Mon County Council
	Cllr Joshua Roberts	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Mike Rigby	Somerset Council
	Cllr Leigh Readman	Suffolk County Council
	Cllr Richard Smith	Suffolk County Council
	Jonathan Cook	Cumberland Council
	Terry Burns	Essex County Council
	Jo Wynn-Carter	Folkestone and Hythe Council
	Amartya Deb	Gloucestershire County Council
	Iwan Robat Jones	Gwynedd Council
	Iwan Jones	Isle of Anglesey/Ynys Mon County Council
	Gwen Thomas	Isle of Anglesey/Ynys Mon County Council
	Diane Neville	Lancaster City Council
	Marianne Keen	Maldon District council
	Tessa Bond	Somerset Council
	Charlotte Rushmere	South Gloucestershire Council
	Jon Severs	South Gloucestershire Council
	Andrew Rutter	Suffolk County Council
	Louise Martin	Nuleaf/Somerset Council
	Chloe Atkinson	Nuleaf
	Philip Matthews	Nuleaf

Speakers	Koulis Efkarpidis	NDA
	Jonathan Evans	NWS
	Howard Falconer	NWS
	Paul Skelton	NWS
	Katie Mills	NWS
Minute-taker:	Chloe Atkinson	

1	**Welcome and apologies**
1.1	Apologies received from the following: Cllr Tom Daly — East Suffolk Council Martyn Fulcher — East Suffolk Council Bethany Rance — East Suffolk Council Cllr Paul Thomas — Folkstone and Hythe District Council Chadernnay Glenn — Gloucestershire County Council Cllr Gary Pritchard — Isle of Anglesey/Ynys Mon County Council James Holbrook — Somerset Council
1.2	The Chair, Cllr Joseph Ghayouba, opened the meeting and noted that the agenda was shorter than usual due to some NDA work being on a hiatus due to the Spending Review and the recent completion of Strategy 5. A later agenda item would consider future meeting formats. He also noted that Cllr Richard Smith would not be seeking re-election in May. As Nuleaf's longest-serving representative, and a former Nuleaf Chair and Vice Chair, Cllr. Smith's significant contribution was recognised by Cllr Ghayouba. Other members joined in, acknowledging Cllr Smith's service and his previous role as the Chair of the Sizewell SSG.
Actions Agreed, Target Date (s), Lead Officer (s):	

2	**Minutes of the meeting**
2.1	Cllr Moore requested that his name be added to the attendee list. With this, the minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record.
Action: CA to amend minutes and add minutes to the website	

3	**Matters arising**
3.1	The Executive Director highlighted a few Matters Arising: **Great British Energy – Nuclear** An initial meeting with Great British Energy Nuclear was held and was reasonably positive. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for later this month, with a further update to be provided thereafter. **NDA Stakeholder Engagement** The NDA's stakeholder engagement programme continues, with no significant updates to report at this stage. John McNamara is expected to return to a future meeting once the NDA's new engagement team structure has been confirmed. **Meeting with Paul Vallance** Philip met with Paul Vallance and John in London in January. Further detail from this discussion will be shared under the relevant agenda item. **International Engagement – Netherlands** The Director has participated in a meeting of the Borsele Conditions Group, an excellent example of deliberative democracy established by the municipality of Borsele, Netherlands. A meeting has also taken place with the NDA's new international lead, and an appropriate DESNZ contact has now been identified. A briefing for DESNZ is being arranged to outline Nuleaf's expanding international work programme.

4	**Update on LLW management – Paul Skelton and colleagues, NWS**
4.1	The Chair welcomed Paul and his colleagues. Following the NDA funding settlement, responsibilities have been reshaped, and NWS is working with a renewed focus on value for money and efficiency. Delivery activity is now concentrated on three priority areas: the GDF programme (continuing preparatory work), the Low Level Waste Repository (maintaining safe operations, optimising existing assets and progressing vault capping), and Waste Solutions (providing integrated technical, packaging and coordination support to waste producers). Despite funding pressures, Waste Services performance remains strong. Outcomes highlighted included metal recycling, treatment of combustible waste, diversion of VLLW from disposal, and reduced demand on LLWR capacity (with approximately 786 containers avoided). Transport capability has been strengthened. Forward activity includes planned Sellafield pond skip shipments, treatment trials aimed at expanding waste processing options, scheduled shipments from AWE Aldermaston and Harwell, and continued delivery of face-to-face Waste Practitioners Meetings.
4.2	**Question: It is welcome that NWS is managing waste for a wider group of clients. Do these external bodies meet the full costs of their waste management?** Answer: Support to organisations such as the MOD and new nuclear build is provided on a full cost-recovery commercial basis and does not draw on the NWS core annual settlement. **Question: Is the Low-Level Waste Repository part of Sellafield?** Answer: The Low-Level Waste Repository is not part of Sellafield Ltd. It is a separate, independently licensed site located approximately five miles south of Sellafield and is part of Nuclear Waste Services, another pillar of the NDA. **Question: What is the status of the Near Surface Disposal Programme?** Answer: Initial high-level suitability analysis has been completed; however, the programme is currently paused due to uncertainty over when waste will arise. No near-term outputs are expected. **Question: Why have programmes on metal recycling, asbestos treatment and characterisation been paused?** Answer: The pause reflects strategic uncertainty rather than any loss of capability. The work could be restarted if demand increases, most likely as an NDA-wide initiative. Most technologies are mature, with thermal treatment being relatively more novel. **Question: What is the current status of Scottish policy on higher activity waste?** Answer: It was confirmed that Scotland's policy remains in place though a review is expected following upcoming elections to the Scottish Parliament. Requirements for near-surface facilities are anticipated around 2070, with development potentially

	commencing from around 2050. Interim learning will continue through international programmes and NDA-led Intermediate Level Waste (ILW)work. **Question: Is current funding sufficient for the GDF DCO process and borehole work?** Answer: It is too early to determine whether the current five-year settlement is sufficient, as funding requirements depend on future decisions by the Secretary of State. Additional funding could be allocated by the NDA if required.
4.3	The presenter then moved on to provide an update on the Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) site in Cumberland. This continues to manage legacy and ongoing waste with capacity for many decades. The Environmental Safety Case is being updated, with submission planned for May 2026. At present, Repository capping is the primary activity, with the Southern Trench Cap Interim Membrane (STIM) under development and completion expected in 2028. The Northern Trenches final cap is in development, dependent on government funding and approval, running to 2034/35.
4.4	**Question: How does waste diversion operate in practice, and is this creating risks of waste accumulating on decommissioning sites?** Answer: NWS confirmed that it engages with sites as early as possible to help identify the most appropriate treatment, recycling or disposal routes. Diversion activity is not causing waste accumulation on decommissioning sites. **Question: How is complex or difficult waste managed where diversion routes are not immediately available?** Answer: It was explained that challenging waste is managed through established mechanisms, including the problematic waste register, dedicated project teams to assess individual waste streams, and disposal at LLWR where treatment or recycling options are not viable. **Question: How does NWS apply the waste hierarchy when managing waste?** Answer: NWS reiterated its commitment to enforcing the waste hierarchy: prioritising recycling and treatment where possible, using LLWR disposal when necessary, and working with industry partners to develop new treatment routes where none currently exist. **Question: Did the trenching and capping works require planning approval, and what is the long-term land use for the site?** Answer: The trenching and capping works required full planning approval, which was granted by Cumbria County Council in 2016. Biodiversity net gain is incorporated into the scheme. Both interim and final caps will be grassed, and in the long term the area is expected to become publicly accessible as part of the site end state. **Question: Is Vault 9 expected to be full by 2035?** Answer: This remains uncertain. Waste diversion has significantly reduced the number of LLW containers received, and funding delays have postponed some waste arisings. If LLW volumes continue to reduce, the NDA may review how best to preserve and potentially reuse remaining capacity. Final capping of Vault 9 will only take place once the capacity is no longer required.

5	Launch of NDA Strategy 5 – Koulis Efkarpidis, NDA
5.1	Koulis delivered a presentation on NDA Strategy 5, outlining its two-year development, extensive consultation process, and strong engagement from stakeholders. He noted that this included significant contributions from Nuleaf, via the Strategy 5 Development Group (S5DG) and elsewhere. This feedback directly influenced several post-consultation changes. Koulis explained that Strategy 5 builds on and enhances the previous strategic direction of the NDA and improves integration under the One NDA model. He concluded by noting that the strategy will be kept 'live' through governance arrangements and through business plans, mission progress reporting, site strategies and ongoing communications work.
5.2	**Question: How will success be measured for Strategy 5, and when will clearer site end-state plans be available?** Answer: Success indicators are not set out directly within Strategy 5 but are reported through the Mission Progress Report. The NDA may develop clearer public-facing measures in future. It was also noted that detailed long-term plans and end-state clarity for individual sites (such as Magnox or NRS) are unlikely in the next 6–12 months, as internal engagement and discussions with site leadership are ongoing.
Action: Koulis to share presentation with CA.	

6	Update on national developments in radioactive waste management
6.1	The Executive Director tabled the paper and highlighted a few items. Significant staff changes were noted across the NDA, NRS and NWS. Bill Hamilton will be leaving his post, while John McNamara will remain in role until the end of the year. The NDA is currently reviewing its future team structure, with an announcement expected in the coming months. Nuleaf had received a response from Lord Vallance at DESNZ to a letter that members had requested be written, stressing the need for the NDA to have a properly resourced engagement team. The Minister had been supportive of the need for an effective approach to engagement. The Executive Director had also held a meeting with Paul Vallance and John McNamara of the NDA to discuss future engagement plans and to explore Nuleaf's potential role within future engagement frameworks. It was noted that the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) network has ceased to operate on a UK-wide basis, with limited continuation in Scotland and Wales. NFLA Secretary Richard Outram has retired. Cllr Tracy Henry commented that it was disappointing to see the end of the NFLA in its current form. It was stressed that all NFLA authorities were welcome to continue to attend Nuleaf meetings. A DESNZ-led review of the NDA is underway, with a scope that covered the governance, function and performance of the NDA. Members raised concerns that local authority engagement had been difficult during the previous review process and sought assurance that local authority views would be properly incorporated this time. Philip Matthews expressed a hope that there would be more engagement this time,

	noting that the lead civil servant for the review had already been in contact to arrange a meeting.

7	**Update on the Geological Disposal Facility siting process**
7.1	The paper was tabled. The main item of note was related to the next stages of the GDF process, with a decision expected from the Secretary of State this summer as to whether to proceed to the characterisation phase in Cumberland. Members warned there is no viable alternative to a GDF; without progress, waste will remain on sites like Sellafield for decades, increasing community, environmental, and infrastructure burdens. Delays to the GDF were also highlighted as having direct knock-on impacts on national nuclear policy, with calls for long-term waste infrastructure to be treated as critical national infrastructure. Concern was expressed that a GDF siting process that now involves only Cumberland, suggested that there was a flaw in the original policy.

8	Nuleaf meetings and communications – member views
8.1	The Executive Director presented a paper that sought members views on the current Nuleaf meeting format and communication tools. He noted that this was part of an ongoing process of engaging with members to ensure that Nuleaf offered the best possible service. In discussion many of the proposals made in the paper met with approval. It was agreed that: • Shorter, more interactive meetings would be preferable. The standard meeting should be 3 hours long, held between 10am and 1pm, with more workshops, presentations and discussion and less time spent on the review of update papers. • Additional topics that members would like to see more coverage of include regional nuclear networks, planning, best practice case studies (including international examples), regulation, youth engagement, and new nuclear/defence. • There was strong support for the development of simple briefings for new members who may not have much prior knowledge. • Communications were seen as clear but should be more visual and outward-facing, with a stronger thought leadership role for Nuleaf. • A website refresh and a move to a single bi-monthly newsletter were supported to improve engagement.

9	Date of next meeting
9.1	The Chair thanked everyone for their input. He confirmed that the next Nuleaf meeting will be in person on the **14-15th of July in Carlisle,** including a visit to **Chapelcross** site. He looked forward to seeing many of our members there.

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