

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 7th October 2026
Item: 8
Subject: Annual Gathering review and proposal
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Introduction:

This report reviews the Nuleaf Annual Gathering 2026 and proposes a date, location and outline agenda for the 2027 event.

Recommendation: Members are invited to comment on the recent Gathering and the proposal for next year.

1. Background

1.1 The aim of this Annual Gathering is to enable members to explore nuclear matters in greater depth and to allow time for socialising and networking. Gatherings have included a site visit to a nuclear facility and a seminar on a topic of interest, along with a dinner and social activities.

1.2 The Gathering is held a different part of the country every year, with previous events in Somerset, Conwy/Gwynedd, London/Kent, and Cumberland (twice). All travel, accommodation and catering costs are met by Nuleaf, with two places available to Elected Members and Officers from each Contributing Member local authority.

1.3 Meetings have been well attended by our members and invited guests from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) Group, Government and others.

2. Review of 2026 Gathering

2.1 The 2026 Annual Gathering was held on the 13th to 15th July in Wetheral, Cumberland. Wetheral is an historic village just outside Carlisle, and accommodation and dinner was provided by the Crown Hotel.

Many members from outside the area arrive on the 13th and dined together. On the morning of the 14th members joined a walk around the village and along the River Eden.

2.2 This was followed by a site visit to the former Chapelcross nuclear power station, currently being decommissioned. Following presentations on plans for a future green energy park by Nuclear Restoration Services, Dumfries and Galloway Council and South of Scotland Enterprise, members were given a tour of the facilities.

After returning to the hotel members met for drinks and dinner, where they were welcomed by Nuleaf Chair Cllr Joseph Ghayouba and Cumberland Council Leader Cllr Mark Fryer.

2.3 The next day members travelled to the Cumberland Council offices in Carlisle for a seminar on the current and future nuclear landscape in Cumbria. This included presentations on plans for Pioneer Park; key projects at the Sellafield site; work at the Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR); and the strategy for UK nuclear skills, with this being followed by a lively discussion. The session also included a Steering Group meeting and Nuleaf's AGM, where the current Chair and Vice Chair were re-appointed for a further year.

2.4 Following the event a feedback form was sent to all attendees, and around 50% responded.

2.5 Overall feedback has been very positive, with an average rating of 4.9 (out of 5). Everyone stated that the event had either met or exceeded their expectations.

In terms of the specific parts of the event (all figures rated out of 5):

- The hotel was rated as a maximum of 5 by all respondents.
- The site visit was rated as an average of 4.7.
- The speakers at the seminar were given a rating of 4.6.
- Transport, time management and the venue provided by Cumberland Council were all also rated highly.

Positive comments included:

Everything came together nicely: the site visit, presentations, and the walk around the conservation area of Wetheral.

Excellent site visit with brilliant guided tours, very informative. Event worked really well with the site visit on the first day and steering group/presentations on the second day.

For me it was my first time, so meeting other people from the various areas/sites, in a lovely setting (the hotel was great) - the site visit to Chapelcross was a particular highlight as we discovered so much about the projects being undertaken there to support the community - the presentations were insightful and relatable.

Members were also asked how future events could be improved:

- A couple of members noted that they found it quite hard to hear the discussion during the AGM/seminar, though this improved once speakers began to use the microphones that were available.
- One member felt that aspects of the presentations at Chapelcross were too technical. They suggested that it would have been better to focus a bit more on the plans for the redevelopment of the site and in particular the CX project.
- More focus more on the challenges and delays around the 'back end' of the fuel cycle was proposed.
- A choice of dishes for the first night dinner, rather than a set menu, would have been welcome.
- It was felt that it would have been nice to have more time for presentations and discussions as these are complex topics to unpack.

As always, this feedback will be taken on board in planning future events.

3. Proposal for 2027 Annual Gathering

3.1 The date for the 2027 Annual Gathering is **Tuesday the 22nd and Wednesday the 23rd June**. Members with a long distance to travel will be able to arrive on Monday 21st June and stay over. **Please note these dates in your diary if you are interested in attending.**

There are local elections in Wales and in some areas of England on Thursday 6th May 2027. It is hoped that by selecting a date in late June for the Gathering, Councils facing elections will have been able to agree their Nuleaf representative prior to our event.

3.2 It is proposed that next years Gathering is held in Suffolk, potentially in Ipswich or Aldeburgh, near the Sizewell site. We have not previously hosted a Gathering in East Anglia.

Sizewell is unique in Europe in hosting a decommissioning, operational and a new nuclear station that is under construction. Suffolk County Council hosts both Nuleaf and our sister organisation NNLAG (New Nuclear Local Authority Group), and the area is also host to a range of other significant energy projects and action on nuclear skills.

3.3 The Gathering will include:

- A site visit to one or more of the Sizewell nuclear stations
- A dinner and drinks reception
- A seminar on strategic energy issues – potentially covering regional nuclear networks; the evolution on Nationally Significant Energy Projects (NSIPS) and the planning framework for energy; the Devolution agenda and the role of Combined/Mayoral Authorities; and the integration of nuclear projects with renewables and grid reinforcement etc.

3.4 Members are invited to comment on the proposal.