

# UPDATE FOR LGA ENVIRONMENT BOARD – FOR INFORMATION



8 July 2008

## Introduction

This update covers:

- the launch of the Government's implementation framework for siting a geological disposal facility (GDF) for higher activity radioactive wastes and the response to date from local authorities;
- the development of strategies for managing Low Level radioactive Wastes (LLW) from (a) the nuclear industry and (b) non-nuclear industries; and
- the approach of the NDA to reviewing its strategy for managing the nuclear legacy.

## GDF Implementation Framework

The White Paper on the implementation framework for siting a geological disposal facility (GDF) was published on 12 June. This was accompanied by an invitation to communities to express an interest in the possibility of participating in the siting process.

As anticipated the WP sets out an implementation framework based on the concepts of willingness to participate, partnership working, support packages, right of withdrawal and a stepwise decision process ([GDF White Paper](#)). NuLeAF's input has been influential in the way the implementation framework addresses these concepts.

Points to note from the White Paper include:

- The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has reserved its position on geological disposal. Should a community within Wales wish to put forward an Expression of Interest (EoI) it should do so to the WAG. If this were to happen, the WAG would consider its position and the specific EoI.
- The Scottish Government was not a sponsor of the 2007 consultation on the implementation framework and supports long-term interim storage and continued R&D.
- Local authorities are given a key role in the EoI process. Government expects an EoI to be made in writing with explanation of actions taken to arrive at the EoI.
- Following an EoI, Government envisages that local authorities will have a key role in organising community engagement to inform a formal decision about whether to participate in the siting process. An 'engagement package' is likely to be available from Government to cover the costs.
- Following an EoI, initial geological screening will take place in that area to rule out any clearly unsuitable areas. The draft screening report will be published for discussion with the relevant local authority/ies prior to any formal local decision about participation in the subsequent process to find a suitable site.

The following initiatives were taken by NuLeAF and LGA in response to publication of the White Paper:

- An e-alert to officer and member contacts in NuLeAF member authorities (12 June)
- Press statements from the LGA ([Councils must have a say on how to deal with nuclear waste](#)) and NuLeAF ([NuLeAF press statement](#)) (12 June)
- A new section on the NuLeAF website on the GDF ([GDF web page](#)) (12 June)
- Publication of an article in LG First ([First article](#)) (14 June)
- An LGA alert to LA Chief Executives (18 June)
- A NuLeAF letter to member authority MPs (18 June)
- An interactive web discussion on the LGA's Environment Advisory Service website (25 June)

These initiatives have highlighted that NuLeAF can provide advice or assistance to any local authority that may wish to find out more about potential involvement in the siting process, for example, following a request from a local landowner that it consider making an EoI.

Press reports indicate that a number of authorities have already stated that they do not wish to participate in the siting process.

The preliminary views of key local authorities in Cumbria are available in press statements issued in response to the WP:

- Copeland Borough Council – welcomed the WP and explained that it has a long-held policy of being willing to talk to Government about long-term solutions, and that it will involve local communities, businesses and other local authority partners in considering any proposal to move forward;
- Allerdale Borough Council – welcomed the WP and explained that it will consult about a possible expression of interest, and work to identify a partnership approach with Copeland BC and Cumbria CC; and
- Cumbria County Council – welcomed the WP and explained that it is committed to working with its district partners to ensure a fully joined-up approach.

Subsequently, Copeland BC has resolved through full council to make a formal EoI and is in discussion with Allerdale BC and Cumbria CC about how best to carry the process forward.

Finally, NuLeAF is maintaining liaison arrangements with Government and NDA to discuss issues associated with the siting process. It is also meeting with members of the independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) to review the launch of the siting process.

## **Developing Strategies for Managing LLW**

### *a) Nuclear Industry LLW*

As reported in the last update, the NDA has established a national nuclear industry LLW Strategy Group (LSG) to promote innovation, value for money, application of the waste hierarchy and planning for effective approaches to disposal.

The main points from the meeting of the LSG on 19/20 June are:

- NDA is updating the LLW 'baseline' (inventory of wastes and management facilities).

- NDA is reviewing bids for contracts which will assess the scope for greater use of metal recycling, incineration and VLLW disposal to landfill. A summary of findings will be reported to a future meeting of the LSG.
- NDA is reviewing feedback on its draft LLW 'topical strategies' and will bring revised versions to a future meeting of the LSG.
- NDA is preparing a scoping report for a Strategic Environmental Assessment related to the development of LLW strategy. The scoping report will be issued for comment over the summer.
- NDA will examine the best way of capturing and promoting good practices.
- There is widespread recognition within the LSG that stakeholder confidence issues are critical to strategy implementation (and that proposals for new facilities are likely to lead to requests for associated community funds).
- NDA will review suggestions for establishing LSG sub-groups eg on stakeholder confidence and linkage to the commercial waste industry.

At its meeting on 7 July, the NuLeAF Steering Group agreed to prepare case studies about the development of LLW facilities at specific sites so that good practices in community and local authority involvement can be more widely promulgated.

#### *b) Non-Nuclear Industry (NNI) LLW*

Strategy for the management of non-nuclear industry LLW is being led by a DEFRA convened Project Board. The Project Board was formed because of concerns about increasing difficulties in the management of NNI LLW (fewer facilities and increased transport). The Board has commissioned research to establish the scale, nature and geographical distribution of NNI LLW arisings and management. It is also preparing a SEA scoping report and intends to consult on a draft strategy in February 2009.

Representatives of the DEFRA Steering Board met with NuLeAF's LLW Officer Working Group on 24 June. Discussion included the need to ensure consistency in treatment of the planning system in NDA and NNI LLW strategies and the need to ensure good practices in risk communication. On the latter, the Board has commissioned some work from the Health Protection Agency to enable the risks of LLW to be communicated clearly.

### **NDA Review of Strategy for Managing the Nuclear Legacy**

The NDA recognises an increasing need to become the 'strategic mind' that informs the decommissioning and clean-up of the nuclear legacy. To this end, it is designing a new system to manage development of its Strategy. This has three key elements:

- the NDA Strategy Document (the 'Strategic Plan')
- topic strategies
- site guidance

The Strategy Document is overarching, consolidating the key areas of strategy across the various topics. It will be consulted on formally and has to be approved by Government. The NDA intends to produce a new version by the end of 2010.

However, under the new system, development of strategy will continue primarily through work on 'Topic Strategies' including, for example, contaminated land, decommissioning, spent fuel management, ILW management, asset optimisation and socio-economics. Briefing material on potential topics is provided in National Stakeholder Group papers 45-50 on the NDA website ([NSG papers, May 08](#)).

Developing strategy through Topic Strategies should ensure that strategy is formulated at a rate appropriate to each topic, and should allow more effective stakeholder engagement. The NDA intends to prepare engagement plans for each of the topics under review. Some topics will warrant more substantive engagement than others.

Under the new system, each Site Licensee Company (SLC) will be issued with Site Guidance derived from the Topic Strategies. This is intended to improve alignment between site Lifetime Plans and NDA strategy.

At its meeting on 7 July, the NuLeAF Steering Group authorised the Executive Director to:

- participate in the reviews of key topics, reporting back to the Steering Group as appropriate;
- keep member authorities informed of the opportunities for participation in the reviews of key topics;
- prepare Briefing Papers as appropriate to inform participation;
- organise regional or national workshops for member authorities as appropriate to facilitating engagement in reviews of the topics of most importance to those authorities; and
- explore the scope for establishing a working group to contribute to NuLeAF's input to the strategy review.

### **Contacting NuLeAF**

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Further information about NuLeAF's activities is available on its website at [www.nuleaf.org.uk](http://www.nuleaf.org.uk).