Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 13 April 2011
Agenda Item:	4
Subject:	Fukushima Nuclear Accident: UK Government Response
Author:	Fred Barker
Purpose:	To report on the steps being taken to consider the implications for the UK

Introduction

This report outlines the steps being taken to consider the implications of the Fukushima nuclear accident for the UK.

Recommendation

That the Steering Group receive a report at its July meeting which gives further consideration to the implications for nuclear legacy management.

Contribution to Achieving Strategic Objectives

NuLeAF does not have any strategic objectives which specifically address major nuclear accidents. However, the outcome of the review initiated in the UK may be relevant to a number of specific strategic objectives about nuclear legacy management.

Background

The Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons on 14 March included the following:

> The whole House will have been concerned at the worrying situation at the nuclear power station at Fukushima. The Japanese government has said that the emergency cooling system at three reactors at the plant have failed because of the Tsunami. And there have been explosions due to the release of Hydrogen gas at both the Fukushima 1 and Fukushima 3 reactors. This is clearly a fast moving and rapidly changing picture, and the Japanese Government are doing everything they can to manage the situation they are facing. We are in close touch with the Japanese authorities and have offered our nuclear expertise to help manage this very serious incident. Mr Speaker, the Energy Secretary has asked Chief Nuclear Inspector, Dr. Mike Weightman, for a thorough report on the implications of the situation in Japan. The UK does not have reactors of the design of those in Fukushima and nor does it plan any. Nor are we in a seismically sensitive zone. But if there are lessons to learn, then we will learn them.

On 17 March, it was reported that the Energy Secretary has asked Dr Mike Weightman for an interim report by mid May 2011 and a final report within six months, and that both reports will be made public.

Speaking at the Nuclear Development Forum, Mike Weightman stated:

> This is a difficult time for Japan and we are ready to provide support as necessary. We must establish the facts on these unprecedented events and determine if there are lessons to be learned for the UK, to add to our very robust safety standards and arrangements. My report will be public, independent, evidence based, comprehensive, wide in scope and based on the best technical advice, consulting nationally and internationally with colleagues and organisations who, like us, have the safety and security of people and society uppermost in our minds.

The Energy Secretary also told the Nuclear Development Forum that Government would consider the Nuclear National Policy Statement in light of the emerging nuclear crisis in Japan before proceeding with the ratification process. Other processes that could be affected by the current review include the Generic Design Assessment process for new nuclear power stations and the timetable for investment decisions in new build.

Although the full terms of reference for the Weightman review are not yet available it is understood that it will cover all nuclear installations in the UK, including spent fuel storage and facilities for the treatment and storage of radioactive waste. A limited amount of further information is available in an HSE press release at: Statement on the implications of the Fukushima nuclear accident.

The review is also likely to encompass the sort of approach reported to have been agreed by EU Energy Ministers on 15 March. According to The Guardian:

> Senior national officials and industry representatives meeting in Brussels on Tuesday unanimously backed rapidly drawn plans to test all such installations to ensure their safety against earthquakes on the scale of that which hit Japan on 11 March, but also relating to threats from tsunamis, terrorism, disruptions of cooling systems, the integrity of operational systems, back-up systems, overall design and the possibility of power cuts.