

<b>Meeting:</b>	NuLeAF Steering Group, 12 October 2006
<b>Agenda Item:</b>	6
<b>Subject:</b>	Management of Low Level Wastes
<b>Author:</b>	Fred Barker
<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide an update on developments and propose next steps

## **Introduction**

This report covers:

- the Government's policy review
- competition for the operation of the LLW repository (LLWR) near Drigg and the longer-term development and implementation of a strategic plan for LLW arising from the NDA's 20 sites
- Copeland Borough Council's Community Prospectus for the LLWR competition
- Magnox Electric's programme for assessing options for managing LLW and
- UKAEA assessment of LLW for Harwell

## **Recommendations**

That the Steering Group agrees that:

- 1 Copeland Borough Council's Community Prospectus for the Low Level Waste Repository be promoted in the next issue of the e-bulletin, so that member authorities can consider adopting a similar approach as competition for other site contracts is prepared; and
- 2 The Executive Director contact Member Authorities around: (a) Hinkley Point and Dungeness to seek their views on Magnox Electric's feedback workshops and the way forward on LLW management at Magnox sites; and (b) Harwell to seek their views on the UKAEA assessment and consultation.

## **1 Government LLW Policy Review**

Government has been conducting a review of policy for the management of solid low level waste. The NuLeAF response to consultation took into account the views of member authorities and was circulated on 31 May. DEFRA has subsequently informed consultees that the number and complexity of responses has meant that analysis is taking longer than expected, and that the Government's response should be completed towards the end of the year.

## **2 LLW Competition**

Competition is underway for a contract to manage the operation of the LLW repository (LLWR) near Drigg and the longer-term development and implementation of a strategic plan for LLW arising from the NDA's 20 sites.

Following a call for competition made on 1st June this year under European Union procurement regulations, the NDA has announced that three bidders have qualified to be invited to tender for the Low Level Waste Management contract.

The successful bidders are:

- Babcock International Group PLC
- EnergySolutions
- Washington Group International

The Invitation to tender (ITT) will be issued in October and bid documents have to be returned by late January. An announcement on the contract award is due to be made in October 2007.

The NDA states that a vital aspect of the work is the development of the Post Closure Safety Case for the LLWR and subsequent regulatory approval for the long-term future of the site.

On the longer-term development and implementation of a strategic plan for LLW arising from the NDA's 20 sites, the NDA states that it is looking for "best practice and innovative thinking brought to bear on this considerable challenge".

## **3 Community Prospectus for LLWR Competition**

Copeland Borough Council is developing a Community Prospectus that the NDA has agreed to issue to bidders with the ITT documents. At the time of writing, the prospectus is in draft form.

The purpose of the prospectus is to act as guidance to the bidder on the local communities' aspirations and expectations. It will set out:

- the expectation of local partners as to what the bidders should include in their socio-economic plans;

- the expectations with regard to engagement with local democratically elected bodies, including the Parish of Drigg, Copeland Borough Council, Allerdale Borough Council and Cumbria County Council.

The prospectus will explain that the intention is not to provide an exhaustive list of expectations, but to provide the basis for further in-depth discussion. It will highlight that the overall expectation of the community and the NDA is that the successful bidder will become a key local partner and commit to delivering significant improvements to the quality of life experienced in the area. The prospectus will add that the commitments that bidders can make to these activities within their tender will be an important factor in the evaluation of tenders.

It is proposed that the Community Prospectus be promoted in the next issue of the e-bulletin, so that member authorities can consider adopting a similar approach as competition for other site contracts is undertaken over the next 6 years.

#### **4 Magnox Electric Assessment of LLW Management Options**

As reported to the last meeting, Magnox Electric has embarked on a project to determine the most appropriate means of managing and disposing of decommissioning LLW, focusing on the LLW at the lower activity end of the range. The 20% or so of higher activity LLW might be disposed of at the LLWR near Drigg or to a geological repository.

The options being considered for the lower activity LLW are:

- disposal on existing Magnox sites
- near-surface disposal at a site-specific facility near to site
- near-surface disposal in a national or regional facility appropriate for LLW
- near-surface disposal in a national facility designed to accept wastes suitable for the repository near Drigg

Site-specific workshops took place at Bradwell, Dungeness, Hinkley Point and Sizewell to weight the criteria used in assessing the options.

The Magnox Electric speaker at the last Steering Group reported that the option assessments were pointing towards a preference for disposal on existing Magnox sites.

Magnox Electric have subsequently provided the following update:

Feedback workshops have been held at Hinkley Point A and Dungeness A (see footnote below re: Dungeness A<sup>1</sup>) with stakeholders including members of the Site

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<sup>1</sup> Coastal evolution studies underway at Dungeness A, which are undergoing extensive peer review, are indicating that the coastal evolution situation at this site is less severe than originally thought. A number of options could potentially be practicable for the siting of a disposal facility, including a near surface facility located to the landward side of the site or a deeper facility sunk say 20 m underground (below the predicted ground level in 300 years time).

Stakeholder Groups, representatives of Local Planning Authorities, Environment Agency and NDA. Wider stakeholder views on the results of the technical MADAs and on non-technical issues were also captured at these workshops.

At both Hinkley Point A and Dungeness A, the technical MADAs point toward some form of On-site Disposal as being the preferred option from a technical perspective. There was a warm reception from stakeholders to the studies at both sites.

Similar feedback workshops are planned in October/ November with stakeholders from Bradwell and Sizewell A.

Work continues to complete the options assessment process at the 4 sites, including the collation of views of a wide range of stakeholders, consideration of matters of Government Policy (including local planning policies) and NDA Strategy.

Magnox Electric Ltd will then come to a view on the preferred strategy at each site and will make a recommendation to the NDA on implementation.

Magnox Electric will be sending copies of the workshop reports to the Executive Director. It is proposed that the ED then contact Member Authorities around Hinkley and Dungeness to seek their views on the workshops and way forward.

## **5 UKAEA Assessment of LLW Management for Harwell**

The UKAEA are undertaking consultation to produce a recommendation for the High Volume Low Activity Waste arising from the clean-up of the Harwell site.

The UKAEA has carried out a Multi-Criteria Assessment of 16 options, using comments from stakeholders to inform the creation of weightings for each of the assessment criteria. A preliminary recommendation report has been produced that is now the subject of local consultation.

The preliminary recommendation is that a new engineered near surface disposal facility be developed at the Harwell site. This is considered to be the Best Practicable Environment Option, subject to a period of public consultation and the Government's policy review.

According to the UKAEA, this option performs well against the attributes under a wide range of stakeholder attribute preferences and has no significant weak scores against the attributes.

It is proposed that the ED contact Member Authorities around Harwell to seek their views on the assessment and consultation.