

<b>Meeting:</b>	NuLeAF Steering Group, 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
<b>Agenda Item:</b>	7
<b>Subject:</b>	Update on national developments in radioactive waste management
<b>Author:</b>	Philip Matthews
<b>Purpose:</b>	This paper provides an update on recent developments in radioactive waste management and Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) operations.

## **Introduction:**

This paper updates members on recent developments in radioactive waste management and NDA operations. It covers:

- Reports from Theme Overview Group (TOG) meetings;
- NDA Update;
- Strategy 4 Update;
- Magnox update;
- Sellafield Update;
- BEIS Update;
- ONR Update; and
- Decommissioning AGR fleet meeting update.

## **Recommendation:**

This report is for noting.

### **1. Reports from Theme Overview Group meetings (TOG)**

1.1 NuLeAF's Director attended a **Critical Enablers (CE) Theme Overview Group (TOG)** meeting in Carlisle on the 4<sup>th</sup> February. Of most relevance to NuLeAF members was an in-depth discussion on forward plans for public and stakeholder engagement to be set out in Strategy 4. The aspiration of Strategy 4 in this area is to *'pursue the goal of open and transparent engagement that is tailored and proportionate to the topic or issue'*. There is a recognition of the issues that NuLeAF has been highlighting some time, namely that NDA should:

- Prioritise its stakeholders
- Really understand what stakeholders are interested in and how they feel
- Coordinate engagement more effectively
- Act on what stakeholders say

At the meeting, NuLeAF continued to stress the need to better recognise the critical role of local authorities, both elected members and planning/economic development officers, in delivering the NDA mission; and to develop an approach that was clear, consistent and focussed on the distinct characteristics of individual sites. There was also recognition by NDA of the important role NuLeAF can play in providing a forum for engagement for all aspects of NDA work.

A **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR) TOG** was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> February and attended on NuLeAF's behalf by Rachel Whaley of Cumbria County Council. NuLeAF is grateful to Rachel for this. The meeting heard updates on:

The **Winfrith Pipeline**, which is still operational, but which will cease use in 2021. The NDA has been looking into options for its decommissioning but there are a range of complexities including the need to deal with multiple landowners. Options under consideration include the removal of all or part of the pipeline, while leaving other sections in-situ, and the strategy for the pipeline still needs to be optimised. This work will be useful in informing similar decommissioning challenges elsewhere.

**Proportionate Regulatory Controls (PRC)**. For these changes to be enacted, primary and secondary legislation will have to be taken through Parliament. At present BEIS are looking at a slot in Parliament in May next year meaning the new legislation could be in place by summer 2022.

**Planning Guidance for in-situ disposal**, intended to help planning officers and inspectors. A first draft has been reviewed and a final draft should be available in March at which point BEIS will be looking to hold workshops with planners. NuLeAF is discussing engagement plans with BEIS and will keep members informed.

## 2. NDA Update

2.1 A consultation is underway on the NDA's **Local economic and social impact Strategy 2020-26**<sup>1</sup>. NuLeAF has prepared a draft response which has been circulated to members. There will be an opportunity to discuss this at the Steering Group meeting, and written feedback is also welcome until noon on the 12<sup>th</sup> March. The consultation closes on the 13<sup>th</sup> March.

2.2 It has been confirmed that the **NDA Stakeholder Summit 2020** will take place in Edinburgh on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October. The meeting will begin at 1pm on the Monday, with a lunch served from noon. There will be a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nda-local-economic-and-social-impact-strategy-2020-to-2026-draft-for-consultation>

conference dinner on the Monday evening, and the event will conclude at lunchtime on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Following feedback, the event is intended to be more interactive this year. NuLeAF will be advising NDA on the programme which it is hoped will provide opportunities for more local government input than was previously the case.

NuLeAF is also looking to host a special session for our members. This could be either a morning meeting before the formal event begins or, if most members will not be in Edinburgh before the formal start, a drinks reception prior to the dinner on the Monday evening.

2.3 The NDA has published its '**Grand Challenges**' i.e. the key areas where innovation is required to enable the organisation to deliver its mission. By 2030, the NDA aims to achieve:

- 50% of waste, produced from decommissioning and clean-up, being recycled
- Over 70% reduction in the generation of 'secondary wastes' - particularly those associated with decontamination.
- All new buildings to be self-monitoring and energy neutral by 2030 - with a 50% lifetime cost reduction
- A 50% reduction in decommissioning activities carried out by humans in hazardous environments.

Priority areas for innovation are the use of autonomous technology to manage infrastructure and reduce the need for human exposure to hazardous environments, and the better utilisation of digital technology.

2.4 It was announced on the 4<sup>th</sup> February that the NDA is bringing its transport and logistics operations together as part of moves to simplify structures in the NDA Group.

International Nuclear Services (INS) and its subsidiary (PNTL) will be merged with Direct Rail Services (DRS). It is hoped this move will enhance the capability, knowledge and assets required to transport radioactive and nuclear materials in support of the NDA and wider UK nuclear and transport strategic priorities. Phil Edge of NDA will address the March Steering Group meeting on the transport of radioactive materials and will be able to respond to member questions on these structural changes. He will be joined by Gavin Smith of the ONR who will give a regulatory perspective, and by Tony Smithers of NDA who will speak on the transport of people.

### 3. Strategy 4 Update

3.1 NuLeAF's Executive Director attended a meeting of the **Strategy 4 Development Group (S4DG)** on the 5<sup>th</sup> February. A large part of the meeting was devoted to discussion of NDA Strategy on Security and Resilience including a session on the challenges around cybersecurity.

The Group also heard a presentation on the proposed Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) on the draft Strategy. IIA is similar in approach to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) but includes more consideration of social and economic impacts. A consultation on the IIA will be undertaken in parallel to that on Strategy 4 in the autumn of 2020.

### 4. Magnox Update

4.1 A response has been received to the letter NuLeAF wrote to Magnox CEO Gwen Parry-Jones following her appointment. In the letter Ms Parry-Jones offers a response to issues raised by NuLeAF and recognises the importance of NuLeAF and local authorities to the delivery of Magnox decommissioning. A copy of the letter is below.



CEO Letter to  
NuLeaf 111119.pdf

4.2 Construction has started on a new specialist radioactive waste management facility at Winfrith. The plant is being developed by Tradebe Inutec and is intended to deal with Low Level Waste (LLW) from Winfrith and elsewhere.

Until 2019, Tradebe had operated on the site as a tenant of Magnox under their nuclear site licence. However, the existing Magnox site licence has been revoked and a new licence issued to Tradebe who have acquired the site from Magnox. This is the first site licence granted by ONR to an operating facility in 15 years.

### 5. Sellafield Update

5.1 Sellafield Ltd. as announced that Martin Chown has been appointed as their new CEO<sup>2</sup>. Mr Chown's previous role was as Sellafield's Deputy Chief Executive and Supply Chain Director. He has past experience of working in the Cabinet Office and for a range of private companies including Balfour Beattie and Toyota.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/sellafield-ltd-appoints-martin-chown-as-new-chief-executive>  
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5.2 It was announced on the 27<sup>th</sup> February that the Environment Agency (EA) has approved a Radioactive Substances Activities (RSA) permit variation for Sellafield. The permit review is designed to reflect the changes that have taken place in site operations following the end of fuel reprocessing, which will significantly reduce radioactive discharges and change the site to one solely focused on decommissioning.

This is the most significant permit review for almost 20 years. It will build more flexibility into the permits to allow for post operational clean out and clean-up of the high hazard legacy facilities.

## 6. BEIS update

6.1 NuLeAF's Director attended a meeting of the **Radioactive Substances Policy Group (RSPG)** in London on the 30<sup>th</sup> January.

Updates included:

**BEIS work plan** which noted the wide range of work being undertaken by the Department on climate change, including on the delivery of the 2050 Net Zero carbon targets and preparations for the COP26 global summit in Glasgow.

Presentations on the UK's exit from **Euratom**, with negotiations due to start shortly on the future relationship around nuclear issues following the current transition period. The **Northern Ireland Executive** highlighted the potential issues arising from the separate arrangements for Northern Ireland post-Brexit, although the implications for nuclear waste management are less than for other sectors.

The **BEIS Decommissioning and Radioactive Substances Policy Review**. The Policy Review aims to revise and update the policies of Command Paper 2919 and add in additional policy areas as required. BEIS believes that the Policy Review carries a number of potential benefits, including:

- coherent policy framework and clarification of policies
- c.£2.5b savings over lifetime of decommissioning and clean-up
- c.£1-5b savings on waste management practices
- support for a 20% reduction in decommissioning costs by 2030 as part of Nuclear Sector Deal
- optimisation of the LLWR and unlocking of alternative waste management routes / infrastructure

BEIS are planning a 3-stage engagement process for the new Policy, including information gathering and targeted engagement leading to a full public consultation this spring/summer. The aim is that the policy review will be completed and ready for publication in autumn 2020. In part this is due to the need for the review to be complete before NDA Strategy 4 is finalised.

6.2 As part of the recent Ministerial reshuffle, Alok Sharma MP has been appointed as the new Secretary of State for BEIS<sup>3</sup>, taking over from Andrea Leadsom. Despite recent rumours, it now appears that BEIS will remain in its current form for the time being, though some changes to departmental structure may be considered in future.

## **7. ONR Update**

7.1 NuLeAF submitted a response to the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) consultation on its draft **2025 Strategy**<sup>4</sup>, this closing on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020. There has subsequently been contact with ONR to discuss engagement, something that has led to the invitation to ONR to present to this Steering Group on the transport of nuclear materials.

7.2 It has been announced that Janet Wilson and Tracey Matthews have been appointed to the ONR Board as Non-Executive Directors. Janet was a long-term member of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) while Tracey has a background working for water utilities.

## **8. Meeting to discuss decommissioning of AGR fleet**

8.1 Following advice from BEIS, and subject to no further slippage in the timetable, the meeting to discuss the decommissioning of the current AGR fleet will be held at the Steering Group meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> September in London.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/secretary-of-state-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nuleaf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ONR-Strategy-consultation-response-Feb-2020.pdf>