

**Meeting:** Nuleaf Steering Group  
**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020  
**Item:** 6  
**Subject:** Updates on national developments in radioactive waste management  
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## Introduction:

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

- NDA meeting reports;
- NDA update;
- Strategy 4 update;
- BEIS Update;
- Magnox Update;
- ONR Update;
- Planning news; and
- Nuleaf materials and website refresh.

## Recommendations:

This paper is for noting.

### 1. NDA meeting reports

1.1 NuLeAF's Executive Director participated in a joint **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR)** and **Integrated Waste Management (IWM) Theme Overview Group (TOG)** meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> September. He also took part in an IWM TOG on the 17<sup>th</sup> November, a **Critical Enablers (CE) TOG** on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November and a SDR TOG on the 1<sup>st</sup> December.

The main discussion points of relevance to Nuleaf were:

- A review by the Environment Agency of the decommissioning and waste management strategies for nuclear sites. This considered current plans in terms of developing national policy on waste management and in relation to wider

objectives for communities and intergenerational equity. It was agreed that there was a need to reflect more on intergenerational issues at future meetings.

- Forward planning for the Critical Enablers within Strategy 4. Important issues to be addressed in the workplan of the CE TOG over the next 5 years include:
  - Delivery of low carbon and the sustainability agenda within the NDA estate.
  - The role of local government, and especially planning officers in asset management and site plans.
  - Better opportunities for local and SME businesses to access opportunities through NDA procurement.
  - The enhancement and greater diversity of the workforce.
  - Delivery of the socio-economic strategy and better support for nuclear communities.
  - Reform and improvement of engagement processes, with a particular emphasis on reaching out to young people and other under-represented groups.
  - Transport including travel to work.

The SDR TOG on the 1<sup>st</sup> December included a discussion on Social Value led by Nuleaf's Director and Rob Ward of Copeland Borough Council. A verbal update on this will be provided to the Steering Group.

1.2 The first ever **International Relations (IR) TOG** was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> November. This included a review of the IR Topic Strategy within Strategy 4 and a discussion on the international engagement of all members of the group, including Nuleaf. It was agreed to develop better planning processes to co-ordinate this, ensuring appropriate representation at meetings and better feedback to stakeholders.

## **2. NDA Update**

2.1 Former Cabinet Minister and MP Hazel Blears has been appointed as the NDA's **Social Value Specialist**. Ms Blears is Chair of the Social Investment Business and a Trustee of the Social Mobility Foundation, and as an MP was an author of the Social Mobility Act.

NuLeAF's Executive Director held a phone conference with Hazel earlier this year to discuss social issues and nuclear decommissioning and has written to her following her appointment. The letter extends an invitation to Ms Blears to speak to Nuleaf at a future meeting.

2.2 The Executive Director participated in a net zero carbon webinar on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September, hosted by NDA as part of their **Net Zero Beacon Project Group** work. The aim of the Group is to set meaningful targets for carbon emission

reductions and develop a roadmap of opportunities for delivery. The work covers the whole of the NDA estate including nuclear sites and subsidiaries and is looking at both direct and indirect emissions. Nuleaf is the only external organisation represented on the Group.

The webinar heard from presenters including Prof. Mike Berners-Lee of Lancaster University, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA). Prof. Berners-Lee set out starkly the carbon challenge facing society and also discussed his work with a number of organisations including Cumbria County Council. The EA outlined their E-mission project which aims to deliver net zero carbon across their estate by 2030; while the OGA spoke of their plans for the large scale integration of hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, offshore renewables and oil and gas production rigs in the North Sea.

2.3 It is expected that the first **NDA Group Sustainability Report** will be published in the near future and Nuleaf will circulate this to members when available. It has also been announced that Davide Stonari has been appointed as the NDA's new Director of Sustainability. Davide joins NDA from Mott MacDonald.

2.4 The NDA held an **Integrated Waste Management (IWM)** online event on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> November. The meeting heard from David Peattie and others within NDA Group who outlined plans for an approach that is more integrated, places a clearer emphasis on risk, and is better informed by the waste hierarchy.

Nuleaf chaired a discussion on local government and community perspectives on IWM, with contributions from the Executive Director, Cllr Aled Morris Jones of Wylfa SSG, and Sean Morris of NFLA. Nuleaf also participated in a panel discussion hosted by CoRWM.

2.5 A briefing for Nuleaf members on **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)**, and their implications for NDA sites and legacy wastes, was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> October.

### **3. Strategy 4 Update**

3.1 Consultation on the draft **NDA Strategy** has now closed. A total of 75 responses were received along with 7 responses to the consultation on the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). Around 70% of responded provided a formal response to the questions while others offered more general comment.

A final version of the Strategy is now in development and Nuleaf is engaged in this through the **Strategy 4 Development Group (S4DG)**. In addition to some textual changes to reflect the consultation responses it has been decided that:

- The Strategy will include a new, stand-alone section on Sustainability and Carbon.
- The NDA will undertake a review of its stakeholder engagement, with an emphasis on encouraging more participation from under-represented groups.
- The Strategy will provide a clearer statement on the management of staff transport.
- A full IIA will be undertaken on Strategy 5, as opposed to the more limited refresh of the Assessment applied to Strategy 4.

Finally, it has been decided that the revised **Value Framework** will not be published alongside Strategy 4 but will be released at a later date. This is due to the need for further discussion with stakeholders.

## 4. BEIS Update

4.1 Nuleaf's Executive Director attended a meeting of the **Radioactive Substances Policy Group (RSPG)** held on the 6<sup>th</sup> October. A draft of BEIS' **Nuclear Decommissioning and Radioactive Substances White Paper** was reviewed and Nuleaf fed in a number of comments. A consultation on the new policy is expected in early 2021, and Nuleaf plans to hold a dedicated engagement event with BEIS in February next year.

4.2 Nuleaf's Executive Director was interviewed by BEIS as part of their current **Departmental Review** of the NDA. This review is seeking stakeholder perspectives on the overall purpose and functions of the NDA; the respective roles of Government Departments, Regulators and the NDA in governance and policy sponsorship; and the choices, opportunities and challenges that changes to the broader civil nuclear landscape present. It is expected to report in 2021.

4.3 The UK Government published a **Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution**<sup>1</sup> on the 18<sup>th</sup> November. The plan includes significant commitments on renewable energy, and also to promote new conventional and modular nuclear reactors. As any new nuclear development is likely to be on or adjacent to existing NDA land, the proposals have clear implications for sites and for the waste inventory.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution/title#point-3-delivering-new-and-advanced-nuclear-power>

## 5. Magnox Update

5.1 The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report on the **NDA's management of the Magnox contract** was released on the 27<sup>th</sup> November<sup>2</sup>.

The report estimates that the mismanagement of the contract cost £140 million (almost £20 million more than the previous estimate) and that this episode '*seriously damaged the NDA's reputation*'. The report also notes that the estimated cost of decommissioning the UK's civil nuclear sites has now risen to £132Bn and will take 120 years to complete, with estimates for the clean-up of Magnox sites also increasing to between £6.9Bn and £8.7Bn. While the Committee supports the aspiration of the NDA to accelerate decommissioning, it states that '*We are concerned that the NDA's ambition....will be hindered by the perpetual lack of knowledge about the condition of the sites.*'

The report makes 10 recommendations:

1. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority should set out how it will develop a clearer means of reporting publicly on the level of uncertainty and risk across its sites.
2. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority should also set out how it will prioritise its work on its sites in order to decommission them in the safest and most efficient way.
3. Taking into account the feedback from its public consultation, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority should exploit opportunities to reduce the time taken to decommission its sites and should identify the impact of such reductions on the cost profile.
4. The Department and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority should take whatever steps are necessary to provide a firmer estimate of the cost of decommissioning the sites of the Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactors so that the public has a more reliable indicator of the scale of the public liability.
5. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and the Department should make it a priority to progress their plans to find a location for a Geological Disposal Facility in order to reduce interim storage costs at Sellafield and elsewhere, and should confirm when they consider such a Facility might feasibly become available for the storage of waste.
6. Within 6 months of publication of this report, the Department and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority should publish a detailed plan for how they plan to meet the demand for skills across the UK nuclear industry over the next 5–10 years.
7. On publication of the Holliday report and tailored review, the Department and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority should set out publicly what has been learnt from them and how the reports are being used to inform the development of the new delivery and governance models.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmpublic/653/65302.htm>

8. In responding to this report, the Department should set out clearly its rationale for relying on UK Government Investments to represent it on the Board of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, rather than such oversight being provided directly by its own team which is dedicated to looking at the NDA.
9. The NDA should develop a strategy for maximising the economic benefits of developing and, where appropriate, exporting its knowledge and assets to alleviate the burden on the taxpayer. These include the skills and experience of the UK nuclear industry, the decommissioning technologies it has developed, and the land and other physical assets the NDA holds.
10. NDA should be more transparent about its current and future plans with the local communities surrounding its 17 sites to strengthen public accountability and make clear the socioeconomic impact of its planned activities.

5.2 The PAC report echoes many of the findings of the National Audit Office (NAO) progress report on **Terminating the Magnox Contract**<sup>3</sup>, which was released on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September.

5.3 Nuleaf's December Steering Group meeting includes an opportunity to discuss all aspects of Magnox's operations with Bill Hamilton, Director of Communications.

## 6. ONR Update

6.1 The UK's Chief Nuclear Inspector has published an annual report<sup>4</sup> on the performance of the nuclear industry in relation to safety and security.

It notes positive progress with hazard and risk reduction at Sellafield and the safe defueling of the final Magnox reactors at Wylfa. Despite this, the Chief Inspector has challenged the industry to maintain increased attention on three key themes: management of ageing facilities; conventional health and safety performance; and the need for industry to deliver a holistic approach to nuclear security.

## 7. Planning news

7.1 Nuleaf's Executive Director, along with officers from South Gloucestershire, Maldon and Copeland Councils, met with NDA on the 27<sup>th</sup> November to discuss plans for an NDA **'Town and Country Planning Group'** and the integration of **Social Value** into the NDA's work.

The discussion was positive. Key points made by Nuleaf/local authorities included that:

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/terminating-the-magnox-contract/?slide=1>

<sup>4</sup> <http://news.onr.org.uk/2020/11/chief-nuclear-inspectors-annual-report-on-great-britains-nuclear-industry-2/>

- Ongoing and active dialogue on how to best advance the agenda of economic, social and environmental benefit is needed. Planning as an important component in this, both in terms of statutory policy but also wider place making.
- Magnox has no planners in house. This is a significant weakness and limits the effectiveness of their engagement on these issues.
- Work should be undertaken to better define the terms we use. For example, Social Value is, in terms of legislation, about procurement but often when we use it we are also referring to the wider socio-economic and environmental benefits to host communities.
- NDA should recognise the resource constraints on Nuleaf and local authorities and that these limit the ability to engage. Some modest additional support by NDA could assist and is likely to be a more cost-effective means of taking this work forward than employing consultants.

7.2 Nuleaf also has submitted response to two planning consultations being undertaken by the UK Government:

- Changes to the current planning system<sup>5</sup> – which set out proposals intended to improve the effectiveness of planning
- Consultation on the Waste Management Plan for England<sup>6</sup>

While both are concerned with wider land use and waste planning, they do have implications for radioactive waste management.

## **8. Nuleaf materials and website refresh**

8.1 Following the approval by Steering Group of a new Nuleaf logo, further progress has been made in updating the organisation's communications materials. This has included the production of a new, more professional look for the Newsletter and Ebulletin, headed paper and PowerPoint presentation template.

The website is currently being redesigned to make it more attractive, up to date and accessible, with better functionality on phones and tablet devices. It will feature a blog and better integration with social media. It is hoped that the new site will go live before Christmas.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

<sup>6</sup> <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/waste-management-plan-for-england/>