

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, March 20 th 2019
Agenda Item:	6
Subject:	Update on national developments in radioactive waste management
Author:	Philip Matthews
Purpose:	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) and associated meetings;
- Submarine Dismantling Project (SDP);
- BEIS Update;
- NDA Update;
- BEAM; and
- Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) Update.

Recommendation:

This report is for noting.

1. Reports from Theme Overview Group (TOG) and associated meetings

1.1 NuLeAF's Director attended a **Site Decommissioning and Remediation (SDR) Theme Overview Group (TOG)** on the 11th December.

Much of the discussion was on the developing **national narrative** for the management of wastes through sustainable remediation of nuclear sites. NuLeAF and some individual local authorities have submitted detailed comments on the various drafts of the narrative, and NuLeAF also took part in a phone discussion on the latest iteration of the document held on the 18th January. The narrative is intended to help support engagement with local authorities and stakeholders on proposals for the remediation on sites, with a focus on options for in-situ or on-site disposal of low-level wastes.

1.2 The SDR TOG also received a presentation from Lucy Howe of NDA on a current review of the risk analysis tools used, given concerns that the current means of scoring **Safety and Environmental Detriment (SED)** has some weaknesses. SED scoring is used as part of the overall risk and hazard reduction assessment that forms part of the NDA's Value Framework.

Following the presentation NuLeAF has written to NDA with a series of questions and comments on the planned revision of the SED assessment. NuLeAF noted the need to properly address the environmental and public acceptability aspects of the approach and has requested more information on whether there are plans to review any other aspect of the Values Framework at the present time. Although a response has not yet been received, we hope to be able to provide a verbal update at the meeting.

2. Submarine Dismantling Project

2.1 NuLeAF was involved in the Advisory Group for the **Submarine Dismantling Project (SDP)** from 2006 - 2016, which considered how to manage the radioactive waste from the decommissioning of the UK's out of service nuclear powered submarines. Currently located at Rosyth and Devonport, these submarines contain some Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) within their Reactor Pressure Vessel (RPV), and some Low-Level Waste (LLW).

It was decided in 2016 that the ILW waste arising would be stored at Capenhurst awaiting final disposal in a GDF and, following this decision, the Advisory Group was disbanded. A contract was signed with Capenhurst, understood to be worth around £3million per year, but as yet no ILW has been transported to the site.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD), working with the regulators, has now indicated it is considering alternative options for the management of the waste. It is understood that they are in discussion with the NDA who will be managing an engagement process to gain stakeholder input. NuLeAF, local authorities and the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) will be involved in the planned engagement and we will notify members we receive more information.

NuLeAF has already noted to the MOD our concerns about the re-opening of this process and the need to engage local authorities fully. This is particularly the case in West Cumbria given that one option under consideration may be to store the ILW at Sellafield.

3. BEIS update

3.1 In response to a parliamentary question, the Government has set out its estimate on the financial impact of proposed changes to the regulatory framework for the final stages of nuclear decommissioning (**'Proportionate Regulatory Controls'**). The Government concludes that the proposals would result in environmental improvements and significant savings for the tax payer – estimated as £400 million (net present value) over 17 years and over £2 billion over the next 100 years, as the Sellafield site is cleaned up. The Parliamentary statement also notes that, under the proposals, land will be available for re-use earlier. However, it will remain under regulation by the relevant environment agency until it can be released for unrestricted use, which could take many decades.

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3.2 NuLeAF planning officer members have also been providing comments to BEIS on the **Nuclear Reactors (Environmental Impact Assessment for Decommissioning) Regulations (EIADR)**. BEIS has sought local government views on whether local authorities would be willing to regulate any Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) required as part of any work undertaken on sites after the end of the nuclear license. A significant number of responses were received and fed back to BEIS. The general view of members is that local authorities do not have the staff or financial resources to lead on EIA and could only do so if funding was provided. Members were uncomfortable about committing future planners to additional responsibilities.

3.3 NuLeAF has been invited to join the **Radioactive Substances Policy Group (RSPG)**, and the Executive Director participated in a Group meeting in London on the 6th February. The RSPG involves the UK and Devolved Administrations along with regulators. It is a forum providing strategic oversight, direction and collaboration in the UK's radioactive substances landscape. The group is developing a recommended work programme and NuLeAF will attend as and when appropriate.

The 6th February meeting discussed future work plans and also a range of other issues including Brexit/Euratom, the Nuclear Sector Deal and work on risk-based disposability. The NDA delivered a presentation on Near Surface Disposal (NSD). It was stressed that such a facility would only manage a small proportion of Higher Activity Waste (HAW) and that a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) would still be required. Credible strategic options are under discussion and will be reported back to the RSPG and more widely as and when available.

4. NDA Update

4.1 The NDA has begun work on preparing a new socio-economic strategy. This is in response to the **Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report on Sellafield**, published in autumn 2018, which criticised the level of economic benefit that the large amount of public funding allocated to the NDA had delivered at Sellafield and across the estate¹. The PAC recommended action on education and skills, stimulation of the supply chain and to maximise the impact of NDA spend on the local, regional and national economy.

NuLeAF's Executive Director has recently met twice with Andrew Van Der Lem, NDA's Head of Government Relations and Socio-Economics, to discuss the planned Strategy. Further meetings are planned.

It is intended that the Strategy will be published within a year and the NDA has committed to engage fully with NuLeAF and local authorities. Jacq Longrigg, Head of Skills and Talent at the NDA, will be giving a presentation on socio-economics and skills as part of the March Steering Group meeting.

¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/1375/137507.htm>

This will provide an early opportunity for members to discuss the planned strategy, with further engagement planned in the coming months.

4.2 The NDA Stakeholder Summit will be held on Anglesey on the 9th and 10th July 2019. As in previous years NuLeAF will be working with NDA to encourage local government attendance and manage travel and accommodation needs. More information will be circulated in the near future.

4.3 It was reported on the 5th January that the former Chairman and Chief Executive of the NDA, Stephen Henwood and John Clarke, are involved in a legal dispute over the conclusions of the Holliday Report into the flawed process for awarding the Magnox decommissioning contract. It is understood that the report has been complete for several months, but the legal challenge has delayed its publication.

5. BEAM

5.1 NuLeAF's Director recently held a meeting, by phone, with Prof. Richard Taylor of Manchester University. Prof. Taylor leads The Beam², a cross-disciplinary research network hosted by the university's Dalton Nuclear Institute.

The Beam supports a range of projects, involving physical and social scientists. Current projects include research on community vulnerability and wellbeing in Trawsfynydd with other research involving study in West Cumbria, Anglesey and Somerset. Prof. Taylor is interested in engaging with local authorities as part of research and has accepted an offer to speak at the NuLeAF meeting in June.

6. Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) Update

6.1 LLWR continues to collaborate with RWM and the NDA on the **Integrated Radioactive Waste Programme (IRWP)**. NuLeAF attended a workshop on the IRWP held in Manchester on the 10th of December and has submitted comments on the series of draft topic reports that have been developed and were issued to stakeholders for review. The topic reports and the output from the stakeholder workshop will be used to inform the overarching Baseline Review Report, scheduled for completion by the end of March.

4.2 LLWR has reported that in recent months around 96% of Low-Level Waste (LLW) has been diverted from the LLWR site, with around 10,000m³ of Very Low-Level Waste (VLLW) being sent to permitted landfill. Forward projects for LLWR include the development of an outline business case for decay storage of an exemplar short-lived ILW waste, with a Sellafield example being used. Engagement with stakeholders on this is expected shortly.

² <http://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/thebeam/category/research/project/>