

To: All SSG Chairs/Deputy Chairs

cc Richard Smith

Please find below the text of a letter that Richard Smith has sent to Tony Fountain. This is the letter that was agreed he should send when you met recently in Dounreay,

LETTER TO TONY FOUNTAIN

Dear Tony

NDA AND SSGs

In the margins of the recent SSG Chairs and Deputy Chairs visit to Dounreay, my colleagues and I took the opportunity to discuss a number of issues, including the current Organisational Effectiveness Review, the Review of NDA National Engagement and, an old favourite, funding. I would like to make clear upfront that we entirely support the need for both reviews and completely understand the philosophical drive of our new coalition government and the state of the nation's finances. However, we do have a number of questions and your views on each of the points listed below would be much appreciated.

1. We understand that you are looking to reduce the size of the NDA by as much as one-third and that this will almost certainly mean a drastic reduction in the number of Site Programme Managers (SPMs). This is a concern for us as the SPMs provide SSGs with independent reports on contractor performance, as well as being our first point of contact with the NDA. Could you please explain how you see the NDA managing contract performance without having at least some form of site presence? Similarly, how will you maintain the link between SSGs and the NDA if there is no NDA representative at our meetings and nobody for the Chairs to touch base with on an ad hoc basis as we do currently?
2. On a related point, you are quite rightly challenging the SLCs to deliver more for less, but we are already seeing cracks appearing in the quality of service some of the SSGs are receiving from their secretariats. Given the continued pressure on funding and the likelihood that we will not have an SPM to fight our corner, how will you ensure that the SLCs continue to provide the support that the largely voluntary SSG representatives require to deliver the role you ask of us?
3. As you know, NDA socio-economic support is of great interest to the SSGs. How do you see the NDA delivering its statutory duty in this area with a third less staff? Previously, the NDA has committed to a "virtual" pot of £10 million per year for socio-economic support. We understand that this money has only ever been indicative and that it is dependent on efficiency savings at the sites, but can you reassure us that this commitment will continue?
4. On behalf of my colleagues I took part last week in the Environment Council-led review of NDA national engagement and I was disturbed to hear that the

trend is for a maximum of one national face-to-face meeting each year. This is not what my colleagues need, nor was it the wish of the whole NSG when their opinion was taken at, I think, NSG7. We accept the need to cut costs but where is the cost/benefit analysis for such a dramatic change? A once-yearly assembly will be much less effective and the benefits gained from the NSG, many of which are intangible, will be lost. Many of the members of the SSG Chairs' Forum have more than five years experience of engaging with the NDA both at site level and through attendance at the NSG meetings. May I therefore suggest that you put the draft recommendations from this Review to the Chairs for comment and suggestions for possible cost savings before taking a final decision? We are due to meet on the morning of 21 September (before the NSG starts at lunchtime), so perhaps you could join us for part of our meeting?

5. Finally, we are concerned that the outcome of the organisational effectiveness review will have a negative impact on the trust and relationships that the SSGs have built up with key individuals, for example Richard Waite and Bob Churchill, at NDA HQ over the last 5 years. These relationships have provided great benefit to both sides and are not easily transferable to any replacements. While we accept that people move on in their careers, we would be interested to know how you intend to ensure the NDA retains the corporate memory that these individuals have and what plans you have in place for re-building relationships with key stakeholders after the Review has concluded?

I am copying this letter to my fellow SSG Chairs and we look forward to hearing from you.

Received by email on 19th July 2010