

Briefing for SSG meetings March 2011



DSG(2011)C158

Summary

- A new suite of documents have been published for the Geological Disposal Facility
- Revised plutonium options paper published.
- The latest edition of the NDA's Insight magazine is now available.
- Work has started on construction of a new £20 million nuclear research facility in Cumbria.
- Magnox North and Magnox South have completed their reintegration into Magnox Ltd.
- Berkeley site has sealed up its reactor buildings, marking a major milestone for the UK.
- The NDA Annual Report & Accounts were published in November.
- NDA-supported socio-economic projects for Wales were showcased at an event in Gwynedd.
- Two consortia were formally invited to participate in dialogue as the competition to appoint a new Parent Body Organisation for the Dounreay site moves forward.
- The restructure of the NDA is now complete following a comprehensive organisational review.
- NDA has welcomed the publication of an initial geological report for West Cumbria, which concludes that a number of areas in Copeland and Allerdale are unsuitable for a deep geological disposal facility (GDF) for nuclear waste.
- The NDA and URENCO Ltd have signed a set of non-binding commercial principles to support a potential transfer of the NDA-owned Capenhurst site to URENCO.

Diary dates

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| • Formal adoption of Strategy II | 21 March 2011 |
| • UK Radioactive Waste Inventory update | 22 March 2011 |
| • Formal adoption of Business Plan 2011-2014 | Late March |
| • National engagement plan published | April (provisional) |

Disposal facility safety documents published

Safeguarding the public, the workforce and the environment from exposure to radiation through a multi-barrier approach is key to the safe disposal of the UK's higher activity radioactive waste. These are the major considerations for the NDA's Radioactive Waste Management Directorate's (RWMD) scientists and engineers who are working on plans to safely and securely build and operate a deep underground disposal facility which will need to keep the radioactive materials isolated from the environment for hundreds of thousands of years.

In July last year, the NDA published its Geological Disposal: Steps towards implementation report which set out the steps required to bring such a facility to fruition. As a next step in this process, RWMD has published a suite of scientific and technical reports, collectively known as the Disposal System Safety Case (DSSC), which explain all of the safety factors that need to be considered when an application is submitted to the nuclear regulators for permission to operate such a facility.

Plutonium options paper published

The NDA has published an updated version of the Plutonium Credible Options Analysis which takes account of a number of new developments since the original paper published in January 2009. In particular, a further option has been added, of reuse of plutonium as MOX fuel in UK new nuclear power stations for consideration. This updated report has been forwarded to Government with the aim of informing its consideration of the future policy framework which will facilitate decision-making in this area. To this end the Government has also launched a public consultation.

Newsletter available

The latest edition of the NDA's stakeholder magazine Insight is now published, available on the website or as hard copy.

Work starts on research facility

Construction work has started on the foundations for a new £20 million nuclear research centre in West Cumbria. The Dalton Cumbrian Facility (DCF) is being constructed on the Westlakes Science and Technology Park, near Whitehaven, and is scheduled to open in September 2011. DCF will be a new research base for The University of Manchester's Dalton Nuclear Institute and is the result of joint investment by the University and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). DCF is designed to expand the nuclear research and education capability of the UK's university sector and has the overall aim of delivering world-class nuclear research and transferring knowledge to industry.

Magnox reintegration

Magnox North and Magnox South have completed their reintegration into a single legal entity, named Magnox Ltd. The application to reintegrate was reviewed by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate at the end of last year and their Chief Inspector granted the regulatory permission for the necessary relicensing at the beginning of this year. In the short term, the Magnox South and Magnox North groups will become separate business groups of Magnox Ltd. In the longer term, they will transition to three groups that better fit with their plans to take forward operations and decommissioning.

Reactor closure marks a first for UK

Berkeley site became the first commercial power station in the UK to seal up its reactors in a major decommissioning milestone. The two buildings were placed in a passive state, known as Safestore, and will be monitored and maintained until the site, near Bristol, is completely cleared in about 65 years' time. Berkeley Power Station, the first built in the UK to produce electricity commercially, came into service in 1962 and closed in 1989. The total power supplied over the operating life of the plant was 40 terawatt hours (Twh).

Annual Report & Accounts

The Annual Report, laid before Parliament in November, details strong performance against budget with revenue generation of £1.0 billion, exceeding target by £0.1 billion. Alongside the efforts to drive up revenues, there is a continued commitment to reducing costs and driving further efficiency in delivery of the NDA programme. This resulted in £0.2 billion savings in the year, enabling £2.7 billion of work to be delivered from the NDA's £2.5 billion budget.

Energy Minister, Charles Hendry said: "The NDA should be congratulated for seeking ways to improve the affordability of its programme whilst maintaining a focus on safety and tackling the highest hazards. It is also showing strong leadership by reducing its own costs, and in doing so setting a good example to its sites."

Welsh projects under the spotlight

Welsh Assembly politicians and local authority representatives gathered at Trawsfynydd site to highlight a series of NDA-supported projects aimed at providing an economic stimulus to the North Wales region. The projects contribute to the newly launched Meirionnydd Employment Plan which aims to address the challenges facing following the decline of some key industries, including the ongoing decommissioning of Trawsfynydd nuclear site.

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Since 2005, NDA has invested more than £4 million in a wide range of North Wales socio-economic projects, of which around £2.5 million will benefit the Meirionnydd area specifically. The contributions have helped to leverage additional funding in the region of £12-14 million from various sources.

Dounreay competition moves ahead

A period of Formal Dialogue is currently taking place between the NDA and the two consortia who successfully prequalified in the competition to appoint a Parent Body Organisation for the Dounreay Site. This follows a period of formal site information-gathering when the participants were given access to the site and SLC personnel, reviewing information and visiting the site's key facilities and areas of work. This will assist them in the preparation of their final tender submission.

The consortia are:

- Babcock Dounreay Partnership: comprising Babcock Nuclear Services Ltd, CH2M Hill International Nuclear Services Ltd and URS International Holdings (UK) Ltd.
- Caithness Solutions: comprising Energy Solutions EU Ltd and Amec Nuclear Holdings Ltd.

Organisational changes

The NDA completed its restructure following a comprehensive organisational review that started in January 2010. The changes include a 30% reduction in the number of NDA staff from 300 to 210, ambitious targets for generating commercial income from NDA assets, deferral of some non-critical site activity into future years and tough efficiency targets for Site Licence Companies.

West Cumbria geological report

NDA welcomed the publication of an initial geological report for West Cumbria, which concludes that a number of areas in Copeland and Allerdale are unsuitable for a deep geological disposal facility (GDF) for nuclear waste. The screening does not show where a facility would eventually be located, but, based on high-level geological exclusion criteria, is simply intended to avoid unnecessary work. Cumbrian Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) partnership is talking to Government about the siting process for a GDF and has published the report on its website.

Capenhurst transfer in pipeline

The NDA and URENCO Ltd signed a set of non-binding commercial principles to support a potential transfer of the NDA-owned Capenhurst site to URENCO. Formal discussions will now commence with an aim of achieving final agreement by mid-2011. The proposal would transfer the land and operations to URENCO under a long lease and services contract. This is anticipated to reduce NDA's net liabilities for managing and clearing the site, provide continued employment opportunities for the site workforce and pave the way for investment by URENCO, which occupies neighbouring facilities.