



Please respond to:

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Dear Sir/Madam

NDA Local Economic and Social Impact Strategy 2020 to 2026

DSG welcomes the opportunity to provide further comment on the NDA Local Economic and Social Impact Strategy 2020 to 2026 having already held discussions with you and also submitting our views for the initial phase of the development of this strategy.

We welcome the new strategy and the refocus of effort by the 'nuclear partners' to the socio economic agenda in Caithness and North Sutherland.

Page 3: We agree with the focus on attracting sustainable investment especially where this will create new employment for the current workforce at Dounreay as well as those who wish to remain in the area to work in the future.

We note your revised strategy is aligned with other elements of NDA's work and ask that through examples and reporting these links can be demonstrated more fully. At times we believe that a decision in one part of the NDA could have a detrimental effect on the socio economic activity. Examples of this is through your people strategy where there is mention of worker mobility but not that of work mobility. Procurement shared services is another example where making a decision to 'share the service' across the NDA estate may reduce the costs for NDA it may equally have a detrimental impact on an area if the service was being provided from elsewhere.

We believe that when strategies are being developed, especially in the procurement and people strategy areas, it is important that socio economic considerations are brought to bear and would like to see more clarity on this taking place.

Page 4: We note the economic theory that when economic activity is clustered positive spill-over effects. This may be true but it means that NDA need to consider carefully that providing 'an economic activity in one area of the NDA estate' may be detrimental to another area.

While we appreciate the challenges of other sites we continue to question the requirements of socio economic interventions at Sellafield at this given time - they have a 100+ year programme, it is a national strategic site and with the millions that Sellafield pour into the community right now one needs to question whether the funding is being effective given the ranking of deprivation reported.

Page 8: We welcome and agree with the 'anchor' projects and that focus should be afforded to these. However, please do not under-estimate the support that local organisations require to ensure that these groups survive with small amounts of funding to allow them to operate. There is still a requirement for flexibility in the NDA's approach to funding albeit that the focus should remain on sustainable jobs. We have previously commented on the annual plan that there is no target identified for developing local businesses although we acknowledge that (p28) you say that preparations need to be scaled up at Dounreay with the interim end state looming.

Page 11: We welcome NDA's indication that they will carry out a full study of Dounreay, including a skills audit and ask that you co-ordinate this through CNSRP to ensure that there is a joined up approach. We also are aware that the STUC officials have offered to support a skills audit and therefore again it would be useful to join all this up. This is very much linked to the future jobs profile for Dounreay, something we have been pressing NDA about for some considerable time.

Page 25: Looking at all the funding streams across the NDA the funding for the Sellafeld site, especially at a time where they have a long programme of work ahead appears to be disproportionate to those other sites that will be closed in the next 10-15 years. You would think that the NDA would prioritise the sites that are heading towards closure so that lessons can be learned and can be taken into account when Sellafeld is the only site remaining and would have the ability to ramp up socio economic activity at the appropriate time. At this time, we believe that the majority of Sellafeld funding is allowing local authorities to simply sit back and ensure funding is provided by the NDA Group when, in some cases, it is a statutory obligation for the local authority to fulfil.

Page 26: We note the potential spend 'assigned' to the Caithness and North Sutherland area but note that the £300k from the Caithness & North Sutherland Fund was a community benefit package, negotiated and agreed in parallel to the planning submission for the low level waste disposal facility. This package of funding is completely separate from a socio economic fund (for example, even if NDA did not do anything on socio economic support that funding package would still remain as a condition of planning). Therefore we believe it is disingenuous to add this as part of the total offering of the NDA 'socio economic strategy'.

Page 28: In the document, NDA provides three distinctions of different sized projects. Small grants being up to £1000. DSG socio economic sub group currently considers and endorses funding via the Dounreay Communities Fund. The yearly funding is £25k for this but ensures small local groups receive support to ensure that social inclusion in a variety of ways continues to be provided. Our concern with the £1000 cap for small projects is that our cap to apply to this fund is that the total project cost should be £5k or under. This may result in a few hundred pound being approved to support the project through the Community Fund but it can also mean that from time to time an award of over £1k is made. We worry that capping small grants at £1k will lead to confusion for organisations who simply don't have the capacity to fill out a form in the medium category which we believe would be much more onerous to complete than a small grant application. We would ask NDA considers this before setting in stone the values of the three granting levels. We do however appreciate that the scrutiny and outcomes associated with a small grant should be commensurate of the total funding being asked for. [Having made this comment we note that there has been further discussions around the different sized projects and the thresholds of this may change.]

We welcome the conclusion that preparations need to be stepped up to diversify the Caithness & NS local economy and ask that the NDA alongside its site partners work in partnership with the CNSRP. We have been hearted to hear that the 'nuclear partners' (NDA, Parent Body and DSRL) wish to step

up their game in supporting the CNSRP. We recognise that the CNSRP is an informal body of agencies and each individual organisation involved now needs to step up its game too. We believe with the nuclear partners working together to support CNSRP you can also bring your influence to bear to ensure that other partner organisations are also playing their part. If ever there is a time to get everyone on board we believe the time is now.

General comments: While we appreciate this draft document sets out the strategic approach for NDA and its sites we would also welcome the opportunity to understand the process that will be adopted for applicants and those who will be administering that process. We note that while you have allocated a sum of funding for each site NDA is not proposing to amalgamate budgets. At times, NDA has been less clear on the projects that have been awarded funding which has subsequently led confusion, not only with the stakeholder group but at times within CNSRP as well. Therefore a clear understanding of the mechanics and process that the NDA corporately will work with needs to be clear and transparent and show a true partnership working focus. We thank those at the NDA who have been instrumental in recognising there was a need to reflect and update the strategy and are very supportive of this approach.

For our area, the need for action is now and we look forward to NDA, the parent body and DSRL all working in true partnership to support CNSRP and a future beyond Dounreay.

Yours sincerely

Sent electronically without signature

Roger Saxon
DSG Chair