

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY BRIEF FOR WCSSG DECOMMISSIONING SUB-GROUP

1 Introduction

This brief provides an update on key and emerging issues we have with the Sellafield decommissioning programme.

Note that it should be read in conjunction with our most recent reports to West Cumbria Site Stakeholder Group main committee.

2 Progress on current Issues

2.1 Lifetime planning and risk reduction

At the current time we are observing and providing advice to a review and assurance process designed to establish a contract baseline for the Sellafield life time plan for March 2010, against which the future performance of the new site management can be measured and incentivised by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The process challenges the current strategies and plans across the whole Sellafield site.

As previously reported, there have already been significant delays in implementing the clean-up of the major legacy plants at Sellafield and some important clean up milestones now extend well beyond dates specified in Nuclear Installations Inspectorate legal specifications. The latest review and assurance process, whilst incomplete, is suggesting that the clean up of the major legacy plants will take even longer. We remain concerned that the delays in clean-up and decommissioning will result in increased environmental impacts such as increased discharges, additional solid wastes and increased contamination of land and groundwater. Furthermore, the longer clean-up takes, the greater the potential for an incident with environmental consequences, given the degraded condition of the major legacy plants.

We will continue to work with Sellafield Ltd, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, to seek to ensure that robust strategies and plans are developed, implemented and where practicable accelerated.

We will also continue to support work to ensure that the legacy facilities are appropriately maintained, contingency plans are in place and risks are mitigated as far as practicable.

We understand that the new Sellafield management is fully committed to the development of a robust clean-up programme with the primary objective of early reduction in risk to people and the environment, and sees this as a top priority for the site. We are working with Sellafield Ltd, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Nuclear Installations Inspectorate to seek to bring greater transparency, clarity and integration to the strategies and work programmes and to develop improved means of measuring and reporting performance.

2.2 Decommissioning Development

Sellafield Ltd have taken the initiative in setting up a forum to discuss issues associated with future decommissioning development, a key component of which is the developing strategy and the mandate process which supports it. The core membership includes representation from the Regulators and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

An inaugural meeting was held in July 09 to agree the terms of reference. The opportunity was taken by Sellafield Ltd to provide an update on key issues, such as the delivery strategy, and technical development and post operational clean out. We are supportive of this forum and welcome the initiative taken by Sellafield Ltd.

Further work is due to commence in the next financial year at a 'strategic level' to determine the 'End point' for decommissioning, at a facility level and site level, and how this will be achieved. This will take the lead from the new Nuclear Decommissioning Authority strategy that is due to be published in 2011.