

West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group

Minutes of the 11th Meeting of the LLWR Sub Committee Wednesday 13th June 2007 held at Drigg Village Hall

Attendees:

Sue Brown (chairman)	Cumbria County Council
June Shield (secretary)	British Nuclear Group
Glyn Davies	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Ian Streatfield	Environment Agency
Amy Gill	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Frank Duffy	Copeland Borough Council
James Millington	Low Level Waste Repository
James Fisher	Low Level Waste Repository
Nigel Lister	Low Level Waste Repository
Malcolm Richardson	United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Steve Barnes	British Nuclear Group
David Harris	Civil Nuclear Constabulary

Observers:

David Millington	Drigg & Carleton PC
Marjorie Higham	Drigg Resident
Jimmy Naylor	Drigg & Carleton PC
Kneale Thompson	Drigg & Carleton PC

Apologies:

Sue Brett	Cumbria County Council
Richard Evans	Cumbria County Council
Dave Weatherburn	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Geoff Grint	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Mark Dixon	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Chris Halliwell	Low Level Waste Repository
Cath Giel	Low Level Waste Repository
Eileen Eastwood,	Copeland Borough Council
Adrian Dalton	Drigg & Carleton PC
Stephen Shepherd	Drigg & Carleton PC
David Moore	West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group

1. Welcome/Introductions/Apologies:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, asked those around the table to introduce themselves and he acknowledged the apologies. She welcomed Robert Jackson from DEFRA and thanked him for travelling from London to address the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting held on Wednesday 13th December, 2006

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

3. DEFRA Low Level Radioactive Waste Management Policy, Robert Jackson, DEFRA

Robert Jackson thanked the committee for inviting him and explained that he was here to talk from the Government's perspective.

Recent Government policy initiatives include:

Creation of the NDA

Review of policy for long term management of higher activity waste (CoRWM)

Review of LLW management

Consultation on the future of nuclear power

Robert pointed out that 98% of LLW comes from the nuclear industry with the other 2% coming from hospitals, research etc etc.

Over 90% of future radioactive waste will be LLW but it will contain a very small amount of the total activity.

The management of LLW should not be viewed in isolation and an appropriate sense of proportionality should be used.

The existing policy on LLW (Cm2919) was set up in 1995 without any real thought being given to future decommissioning. Since then the NDA has been established (April 2005), decommissioning is likely to be accelerated and large volumes of slightly contaminated waste will be created. This raises the question does it make sense to transport large volumes of slightly contaminated material over long distances?

In June 2005 the Environment Agency announced its review of the LLWR's authorisation where it questioned the ongoing capacity of LLWR. One of the EA's key deliverables for May 08 is to say what space is available at LLWR so that its lifetime can be worked out.

Two million cubic metres of LLW requiring disposal will come from decommissioning and there could be up to 18 million cubic metres of lightly contaminated soil arising from the clean-up of nuclear sites (mainly from Sellafield). So at best we have a shortfall of space for about one million cubic metres of waste and that does not include the soil from clean-up.

Non-nuclear industries also have LLW which is mainly disposed of via incineration and landfill; however increasingly landfill sites which accept VLLW are refusing to do so and incinerator operators are less inclined to accept LLW. Hence disposal routes are reducing and transport requirements are increasing.

The new LLW management policy is more coherent and is more suited to future arisings. Options could include in-situ disposal i.e. landfill sites at nuclear sites. After all it doesn't make sense to dig up VLLW and then transfer it to somewhere else. Future management of LLW should include minimisation via the application of the waste hierarchy i.e. avoidance of generation, minimisation, recycling and re-use.

The Government will be looking to develop a UK strategy for the management of non-nuclear LLW whilst tasking the NDA with the responsibility for the development of a UK strategy for the management of nuclear industry LLW. This will include the optimum future of LLWR and whether further LLWRs will be required. The NDA will also be required to engage with communities and independent regulators.

Q. What progress has been made regarding alternatives to the LLWR at Drigg – why does everything have to come to Drigg?

A. It is clear that Drigg cannot accept all the waste from decommissioning and clean-up. The NDA has a wider UK understanding of all the wastes and will come up with a strategy which may include finding a replacement for Drigg.

Q. Vault 8 will soon be full and Vault 9 will not be ready for a number of years – why can't the rest of the country take more responsibility? Can DEFRA be involved in 'diverting' the waste to other sites?

A. It will be for the NDA in consultation with the community and regulators to come up with a strategy which will hopefully deliver a solution to the problem we have here on the ground.

Q. Are there any expectations about timescales?

A. The Government expects a coherent statement within the next year.

An observer commented that there was no sense or logic in transporting huge slag pots that contain a trace active material, 150 miles up the motorway (at 20mph) to be stored at Drigg which is already short of space!

Another observer asked that the NDA be mindful of the fact that the water table at LLWR is rising and also that they take into account the amount of energy used to transport waste to Drigg and the traffic problems that this creates.

Amy Gill of the NDA was actioned with arranging for a member of the NDA's strategy team to come along to one of the LLWR sub-committee's future meetings.

4. Update on LLWR Planning Applications, James Fisher, LLWR

James gave an update on the key milestones involved with the Vault 9 application with the current target for Vault 9 being available for operations in December 08. He also thanked the community for the positive turnout to look at the proposals. One of the key concerns to the community is visual impact so LLWR are developing new sidings and a transient store for which planning approval has been received.

An observer commented that there will be a six month overlap between Vault 8 being full and Vault 9 being available.

There is the potential that Vault 8 could be full before Vault 9 is ready, so there is the possibility that hard standing areas could be used as storage and a 'change of use' would be submitted. There is also the possibility of using existing stores, in other words LLWR are putting in place potentials for extra storage.

Regulators are one of the statutory consultees in the planning process and LLWR are currently working together with the Environment Agency on the design of Vault 9.

Higher stacking will be removed and put in Vault 9 unless the community can be persuaded that it is acceptable to leave the containers where they are.

A comment from an observer was that because LLWR have speeded up their programme, the community are concerned about traffic movement and management.

The traffic management plan will be shared with the community, probably towards the end of July.

5. Update on Large Consignment to LLWR on 26/6/07, James Millington, LLWR

James started with giving an update on the current position with regards to PCM. LLWR are currently operating a double day shift system carrying out PCM work. A five day double day system will continue until the end of the financial year to cover retrieval work.

The work with PCM is very close to finishing and the magazines are now empty. There are six very large items waiting to be cut up and hopefully these will be done by 1st July.

Over the next two weeks there will be 4-6 lorry moves carrying empty Gemini containers through the village and there will still be movements of 'secondary' wastes to Sellafield. All PCM waste is consigned by rail.

The large consignment soon to arrive at LLWR is from a smelting company at Sheffield where a heart pacemaker was inadvertently smelted resulting in the four slagpots being assigned as LLW; with the LLWR being the preferred option for disposal. LLWR are legally obligated to accept this waste.

The load will weigh about 150 tonnes and will take three days to get here travelling at 20mph and when it arrives, a 1000 tonne crane will be needed to lift the slagpot. The first one will arrive on 26th June, the second one on 31st July, the third on 11th September with the fourth being delivered sometime in December/January. The vehicle transporting the slagpot will be escorted by Cumbria Constabulary throughout its Cumbria leg of the journey.

Because of the size of the vehicle and its load there will be the need to ensure that there are no parked cars in the village. There will be a letter drop to residents who live along the route and alternative parking has been arranged.

Q. Some parishioners have enquired whether they can observe the slagpot being lifted by the 1000 tonne crane?

A. James Millington responded that he would bear it in mind but that they wanted as few people around as possible for safety reasons.

6. Update on NDA Competition Process, Amy Gill, NDA

This is the first competition the NDA have run. The scope covers the Management & Operations of the site and Delivering Proposals & Options on LLW. The contract duration will be from five years up to a maximum of 17 years (5+5+5+2) and will be awarded in October. The flexibility of duration of the contract will protect against poor performance of the successful bidder. The value of the contract is between £200m-£500m.

The three successful consortia are Babcock, Energy Solutions and Washington Group International. Back in December 2006 the bidders met with the community and gave presentations. In turn the SSG gave a presentation outlining community aspirations and would be interested in receiving feedback from the successful bidders on that presentation.

Q. When will the next update be – can the community have more involvement/interaction with the bidders?

A. Amy took an action to obtain feedback from the bidders on the community prospectus document.

The NDA would like to suggest a change of name for the new Site Licence Company. Instead of it being LLWR SLC Ltd, the NDA would like to propose – LLWR Repository Ltd. There were no objections.

7. Future Topics

Suggestions for the next meeting:- An update meeting i.e. Planning Applications, New PBO etc. Industry Consultations. Lessons learnt from the large consignment.

8. Any Other Business

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and reminded them about the date of the next meeting – Wednesday 12th September 2007, at Drigg Village Hall.