



Nuclear Issues Board

Date: Monday, 8 January 2024

Time: 10.30 am

Location: Council Chamber, Allerdale House,
Workington, CA14 3YJ

Present: Cllr M Fryer (Chair), Cllr L Brown, Cllr B Cannon and Cllr Dr B Kelly

Also Present: Cllr D Moore, Cllr A Pratt, Cllr S Pollen, Cllr J Ghayouba, Senior Policy Advisor GDF Programme (NWS), Stakeholder Lead – Cumbria (NDA), Regional Affairs Manager (Sellafield Ltd) and Executive Director (NuLeaf).

In Attendance Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport, Nuclear Policy Advisor, Nuclear Industry Advisor, Principle Planning Officer and Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny).

NIB43/23 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

NIB44/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest received.

NIB45/23 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED - that the items in Part A be dealt with in public and the items in Part B be dealt with when the Public and Press are excluded.

NIB46/23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a true and accurate record of the meetings held on Tuesday 7 November 2023.

NIB47/23 Nuclear Issues Update

(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Holder: Leader's Portfolio

Subject:

The Nuclear Policy Advisor provided the Board with an overview of the report detailing the Nuclear Sector Developments within the Cumberland area and highlighted some key aspects including the responses from Sellafield, the Office for Nuclear Regulation and Cumberland (included within the report) to the series of articles published by the Guardian on nuclear safety and workplace culture at Sellafield and the Council Leader's response to a letter from the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) to Parish and Town Councils in West Cumbria (included within the report) about public views on a GDF.

A Member asked if there had been any response to the letter the Council Leader sent to the NFLA. The Nuclear Policy Advisor noted that the NFLA had published their response on 2 January 2024. The Chair highlighted that the NFLA press release had actually been quite helpful to those seeking information on the issue as it had included the Council's letter as well as weblinks to the appropriate page on the Community Partnership websites with information about the latest public opinion monitoring work undertaken by the Partnerships.

Four Members of the Council were in attendance as observers and during discussions the Chair invited the Members to ask questions and make comments. One of the observers, as Chair of the Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership and a representative of the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) said that the Community Partnerships and were happy with the response the Council Leader had provided to the NFLA's letter and noted that none of the Parish and Town Council's approached by the NFLA currently planned to undertake their own opinion surveys both due to the cost of doing so and because it is unclear what substantive action they could take in response to its results.

Another Observer commented on the Council's appropriate response to the Guardian articles, noting that changes had been implemented on the site with Union involvement and that the behaviours and cultural issues referred to in the article had already been challenged and addressed. The Chair highlighted that it was the local community and those who worked on the site who would be the first to speak up should there be any safety issues or concerns affecting the operator's social license to operate.

Alternative Options:

To not note the Nuclear Issues Update.

DECISION:

That the Nuclear Issues Update report be noted.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that the Nuclear Issues Board was fully briefed on the Nuclear Sector Developments within Cumberland.

NIB48/23 NDA Socio-Economic Strategy consultation

(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Holder: Leader's Portfolio

Subject:

The Nuclear Policy Advisor provided the Board with an overview of the report, highlighting that the consultation was still ongoing with a draft response to the NDA Socio-Economic consultation due to be drafted over the coming days before going to the Chair for approval.

A Member asked if any of the proposed changes to the strategy were seen as a surprise and whether those changes aligned with the Cumberland Plan. The Nuclear Policy Advisor noted that the changes being proposed were not a surprise due to conversations being had throughout its development on how those improvements could be made. The Nuclear Industry Advisor noted that the NDA's strategy was working to align with Sellafield's strategy which

would in turn align and work with the Council's priorities. The Chair highlighted that all the organisations within the area with a corporate social responsibility, including Cumberland, were working to align their strategies to invest in the community and help lift local people up.

A Member asked if consultation on the draft response could extend beyond the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear, which both the Nuclear Policy Advisor and the Chair agreed to extend to the Board as a whole.

A Member noted positively the intention to include a reference in the Council's response to the potential scope for NDA to work with the Council on its Nature and Climate Strategy as well as on its Economic Strategy.

An Observer commented on the importance of informing people within the community about the social impact funding available and the NDA's commitment to local towns and communities, raising awareness about the opportunities available. The Chair highlighted the strong community groups within the area and the need of the Executive, Sellafield and the NDA to work together to critique and not criticise. The Nuclear Policy Advisor noted that improved visibility about the social impact funding and resources available would be beneficial.

Alternative Options:

Cumberland Council could not respond to the consultation having already made an input during earlier discussions with the NDA about it.

DECISION:

That the Nuclear Issues Board noted the draft updated NDA socio-economic impact strategy and that officers would clear a draft response with Board Members before submission.

Reason for Decision:

Recognising the significant impact NDA activities have on the economy of Cumberland, it is appropriate for the Council to engage with the NDA about how best to ensure its mission in West Cumbria delivers lasting socio-economic benefits to local communities and is aligned with the Council's own priorities.

NIB49/23 NDA Business Plan consultation

(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Holder: Leader's Portfolio

Subject:

The Nuclear Policy Advisor provided the Board with an overview of the report, highlighting that the consultation was still ongoing with a draft response to the NDA Business Plan consultation due to be drafted over the coming days before consulting the Board for approval.

A Member noted the ambitious 2029 timeline for return of foreign owned High Level Waste (HLW) and queried whether there would be an income stream for Sellafield holding the waste for an extended period. The Regional Affairs Manager acknowledged that the target date is stretching. He went on to note that the schedule of returns is partly dictated by whether foreign customers have in place the facilities and infrastructure to receive the materials and also by operational issues around licensing and dealing with foreign governments. The Board were

assured that the proportion of HLW at Sellafield that is foreign owned is relatively small and is being stored safely pending return to its owners. The Regional Affairs Manager also noted that the income from storing the HLW forms part of the original contract and that any discussions around further income would need to be held at a government level.

An Observer queried whether there would be a benefit to Sellafield if the customer can't take the waste and whether there was enough storage capacity. Another Observer noted that HLW was represented a small percentage of the waste stored at Sellafield and that progress in managing Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) was of a higher concern with the supply chain needing confidence that Sellafield will meet scheduled project deadlines to commit the necessary investment in resources and people.

A Member asked if there was a process in place to insist that foreign countries take their waste back. The Chair and Nuclear Policy Advisor answered that there was a process in place to ensure that the contract is upheld, and the waste taken back as they are contractually obliged to with a working relationship in place between the UK Government and the respective governments to help deal with this.

Alternative Options:

Cumberland Council could choose not to respond to the annual consultation on the NDA's rolling three-year business plan, but this would represent a missed opportunity to engage on the detail of the NDA's programme of work and express views on it.

DECISION:

That the Nuclear Issues Board noted the draft NDA Business Plan and that officers would clear a draft response with Board Members before submission.

Reason for Decision:

To provide a brief response is appropriate identifying certain detailed matters on which the Council will wish to engage further with the NDA.
The Council will wish to engage further with the NDA.

NIB50/23 Sellafield Showcase Report

(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Holder: Leader's Portfolio

Subject:

The Chair highlighted the report and the showcase held at Lilyhall before inviting Members and Observers to ask questions.

An Observer noted that two issues for Sellafield were the lack of skills and recruitment issues, highlighting the need to use local people and provide opportunities for all. They also commented on the competition with Barrow for staff rather than working with them and how the creation of a 'Nuclear Passport' might help improve that relationship. The Nuclear Industry Advisor noted that recruitment was a priority for the Council, to look at how to get the most out of those in the area and how to bring more people in.

Another Observer noted that the current vetting period for Sellafield was averaging around six to nine months, compared to the three months for Barrow, which was causing a recruitment issue and highlighted that the 'Nuclear Passport' would be a bonus if it would help speed up the process. The Nuclear Industry Advisor agreed to follow up the issue with the Sellafield HR department and the Regional Affairs Manager suggested to have someone from HR/Recruitment present an update to the Board, which the Board agreed would be beneficial.

The Board and Observers discussed the multiple avenues that would help break down the barriers to help increase recruitment. The Chair noted that recruitment was an issue for more than just Sellafield, but also Cumberland, and that the focus for Cumberland would be on investing in people and the correct areas of the community to help build up the workforce as a whole.

Alternative Options:

To not note the Sellafield Showcase Report.

DECISION:

That the Sellafield Showcase Report be noted.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that the Nuclear Issues Board was fully briefed on the forward pipeline of major projects that Sellafield Ltd. are producing.

NIB51/23 NuLeaf Presentation

(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Holder: Leader's Portfolio

Subject:

The Executive Director of Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (NuLeaf) provided the Board with a presentation on the role of NuLeaf and on forthcoming changes in government policy on radioactive waste management and potential impacts of this with a Cumberland focus.

The Board thanked the Executive Director (NuLeaf) for the presentation.

An Observer queried the merits of Drigg as a potential site for a Near Surface Disposal (NSD) facility for ILW and also whether communities in West Cumbria were receiving an appropriate level of benefit from the amount of waste being stored at sites in the region. The Executive Director noted that the NDA may have an aspiration for more than one ILW NSD facility but there seems reason to expect they will consider the Drigg Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) site as a potential location. NuLeaf has submitted views to the Government on the proposals and has successfully pressed for the policy to include provision for a Performance Planning Agreement with relevant Local authorities. On the community benefits associated with storage of radioactive waste, the Executive Director highlighted that NuLeaf were currently investigating comparable international systems for community benefit to help inform arguments around appropriate community benefits and noted that there are comparisons also with community benefits related to renewable energy projects.

Another Observer noted the great success that had been achieved in diverting waste from the LLWR, extending the site's operating life and enabling the prospect of using it also for a NSD facility but queried how local communities in West Cumbria would receive such a development, noting the cumulative impact of hosting existing waste management facilities and also being considered as a potential location for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). The Executive Director agreed that diversion of waste from LLWR showed good progress in sustainable waste management and noted that NuLeaf also recognised the need to consider the combined effect on communities of multiple nuclear sector projects in one area.

A third Observer, the Chair of NuLeaf, highlighted that NuLeaf was seeking funding from Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) to carry out research into international best practice on community benefits geological disposal facilities to help inform UK policy on benefits to local communities. The Executive Director noted that this was part of Nuleaf's role to help inform policy making.

Alternative Options:

To not note the NuLeaf presentation.

DECISION:

That the NuLeaf presentation be noted.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that the Nuclear Issues Board was fully briefed on NuLeaf and the work that can be done with them in Cumberland.

NIB52/23 Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held Thursday 7 March 2024 at 10.30am in Conference Room A&B, Cumbria House, Carlisle.

NIB53/23 Public and Press

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business of the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraph Number 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the 1972 Local Government Act.

[A 10 minute break took place to allow for members of the press and public to leave as the meeting entered Part 2]

NIB54/23 Nuclear Planning - Verbal Update

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of Paragraph 3)

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Board with a verbal update on the current Nuclear Planning situation and allowed the Board to ask questions and receive clarifications.

The meeting finished at 12.51 pm