



Report to Nuclear Issues Board

Meeting Date – 7 March 2024
Key Decision – No
Public/Private – Public

Portfolio – Nuclear
Directorate – Place
Lead Officer – Darren Crossley

UK GOVERNMENT'S CIVIL NUCLEAR ROADMAP TO 2050

Summary: The UK Government has published its Civil Nuclear Roadmap to 2050 along with two associated consultations. The Roadmap includes proposals for a revised approach to siting new nuclear power stations which will form the basis of a proposed new National Policy Statement (NPS) for nuclear power developments for the period after 2025 (EN7). The revised approach would move away from the approach whereby a limited number of sites are designated as suitable for nuclear development over a specified period. In future, developers will have the scope to apply the established siting criteria to any site they consider likely to meet them with the expectation being that brownfield and former industrial sites are most likely to be considered. Those sites such as Moorside that have already been designated under the current nuclear NPS for nuclear power (EN6) will remain potential options but will no longer represent the only locations available to developers. Cumberland Council's planning team is leading on a Council response to the siting consultation. As a member of the New Nuclear Local Authorities Group (NNLAG), Cumberland Council is also contributing to the response NNLAG will make to this consultation which will include comments about the need to ensure EN7 provides clarity about the continued status of sites already designated under EN6. There appears no need for the Council to respond to the consultation on alternative routes to market for new nuclear.

Recommendations: That the Nuclear Issues Board notes the Roadmap and;

- agrees the Council's planning team should lead on a response to the consultation on a revised approach to siting;
- agrees the Council should participate in development of the NNLAG response to that consultation - specifically in relation to the future status of sites designated under EN6.

- agrees there is no need for Cumberland to respond to the consultation on alternative routes to market for new nuclear;
- agrees the text included at paragraph 1.6 below represents an appropriate summary of the Council’s approach to potential nuclear developments within Cumberland.

Tracking

Executive:	Not Applicable
Scrutiny:	Not Applicable
Council:	Not Applicable

1. Background

1.1. In January, the UK Government published its Civil Nuclear Roadmap to 2050 along with two associated consultations. The proposals involve a revised approach to siting new nuclear power stations that moves away from the previous approach of undertaking a strategic siting process that results in a specified number of designated sites at which new nuclear power stations may be sited. Instead, a more flexible approach is proposed whereby developers may propose development at any site they consider meets the Government’s established siting criteria. The suggestion is made that former industrial or brownfield sites may represent appropriate sites. The revised approach reflects the conclusion that the previous approach did not result in the hoped for number of proposals, that the number of sites required to meet the target of 24GW of nuclear power by 2050 will be much larger and will include the need for sites for Small Modular Reactor (SMR) and Advanced Modular Reactor (AMR) facilities in addition to sites for large scale nuclear power stations.

1.2. The position of sites previously designated under EN6 as suitable for large scale nuclear power stations is addressed in sections 2.3.7 – 2.3.11 of the consultation document. This states that the previous designation under EN6 would be a material consideration in any decision on a Development Consent Order for a power station on those sites as would the provisions of the overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN1) which sets out the need for nationally significant energy infrastructure and designates low carbon energy development (including nuclear) as a Critical National Priority. Given that the intention of the proposals appears to be to provide that a much wider range of sites can potentially be proposed, it seems reasonable to consider the Government is not seeking to reduce the prospect of developments being proposed at previously designated sites. However, there is some concern about the risk of ambiguity on this matter and NNLAG proposes to address this concern in its response to the consultation.

1.3. The Roadmap goes on to address the question of scope to site new nuclear developments on land owned by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and states that the NDA will in future periodically publish information about landholdings

that will soon be made available for reuse. In doing so, the Roadmap also makes clear that the NDA's primary responsibility is the cost-effective delivery of its mission to decommission legacy nuclear facilities indicating that making land available for beneficial reuse is a desirable secondary outcome. This suggests the NDA's first duty must be to consider whether land it owns could be used in a way that helps achieve cost effective clean-up of legacy facilities before considering its release to potential developers which appears to reflect the NDA's existing approach. The Roadmap includes the following conclusion on this matter:

“The NDA will periodically publish a prospectus stating which of its land holdings will soon become available for reuse. Where there is commercial interest in available land, the NDA and the government will run fair and transparent processes to lease or option land, with the assumption being that sites go first to new nuclear projects, where that is feasible and represents value for money.”

1.4. Other key points to note about the Roadmap are:

- Through the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023, Environmental Impact Assessments are being replaced by Environmental Outcome Reports which the Government believes will provide for a more streamlined and outcomes based approach to the assessment process and providing information for decision makers;
- The Government will consult on classifying nuclear energy as “environmentally sustainable” within the UK's Green Taxonomy giving it access to the same investment incentives as renewable energy projects. This will also make it easier for mainstream finance providers and investors to participate in nuclear projects since they can do while continuing to meet their commitments to invest only in environmentally sustainable projects;
- A clear statement that “The UK will not support the use of plutonium stored at Sellafield by advanced nuclear technologies, whilst high hazard risk reduction activities are prioritised at site” providing clarity that proposals for AMR designs based on fuel made using UK civil plutonium stocks are not being sought;
- An emphasis on promoting careers in the nuclear sector within communities at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum; and
- A recognition of the unique value of the Cumberland based National Nuclear Laboratories (NNL) and a commitment to conclude a strategic review of NNL's future role by the end of Financial Year 2023/24.

The Two Consultations

1.5. Cumberland Council has the option to submit a response to each of the two consultations that accompany the Roadmap. The consultation on the revised approach to siting new nuclear developments is the first step towards developing a new National Policy Statement (NPS) for nuclear (EN-7) which establishes the national needs case for new nuclear power stations and provides the framework against which development consent applications are considered. The Government

intends to consult on a draft of EN-7 later in 2024 with a view to formally designating it in 2025. The consultation asks respondents to consider the extent to which they agree with the Government's conclusions about the proposed revised approach to siting and on the siting criteria that should apply. Given the technical nature of these questions, the Council's planning team is considering what points Cumberland might wish to make in response. Separately, our concerns about ensuring the status of sites previously designated under EN6 remains unchanged under EN7 will be raised in the consultation response being made by NNLAG.

1.6. On the consultation on alternative routes to market for new nuclear, while views from local authorities and local communities are specifically invited, it is not clear what particular contribution a local authority would have to make on the matters dealt with in the consultation questions. The issues raised appear ones more appropriately addressed by industry parties, developers and investors although any private individual could of course also choose to submit views about those issues. The Council could similarly choose to submit its own observations but it is not obvious what specific points we could make that would add value. The Council's broad position of being open to the prospect of new nuclear power developments within Cumberland has been expressed previously and need not be reiterated in this context. The Council's approach to potential new nuclear power developments in Cumberland is summarised in the text below which was developed in discussion with the Nuclear Portfolio Holder, Chief Executive, Director of Place and the Council's Communications team:

- Cumberland Council is open to potential new nuclear developments within Cumberland provided these contribute to a more resilient economy, provide a positive legacy to the local community and that any adverse social, environmental and economic impacts are mitigated appropriately.
- Any proposed development must be examined on its merits with conclusions based on a rigorous assessment of benefits and costs.
- A new UK nuclear programme presents an opportunity for Cumberland irrespective of where new facilities may be located. We have a strong existing nuclear skills base and supply chain and could help provide the workforce and the engineering and construction capabilities that will be required.

2. Proposals

2.1 That officers in the planning team be delegated responsibility for preparing a Cumberland response to the consultation on a revised approach to siting and that the Nuclear Policy Adviser works with NNLAG on the text of its separate response.

3. Alternative options considered

3.1 Cumberland Council could choose to respond additionally to the consultation on alternative routes to market rather than concluding that the questions raised fall outside its area of responsibility and expertise.

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

4.1 In view of the potential for new nuclear developments in the UK to have implications for Cumberland, the Council has reason to monitor strategic policy developments in this area and to respond to consultations where this appears appropriate.

Implications: None.

Contribution to the Cumberland Plan Priorities - The proposals support the economic development and sustainability priorities in the Cumberland Plan.

Relevant Risks – No risks arise from the proposals.

Consultation / Engagement – No other parties need be consulted about the proposals.

Legal – The proposals raise no legal issues.

Finance – The proposals have no financial implications.

Information Governance – No restrictions apply to this information.

Impact Assessments – No impact assessment is required.

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Appendices attached to report:

- None.

Background papers:

The Government's Civil Nuclear Roadmap document and links to the two associated consultations can be found [here](#).