

NDA NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER MEETING, 16-18 MARCH, MANCHESTER**Adam Scott****Summary**

1. I attended the latest in NDA's twice-yearly series of meetings, as part of CoRWM's scrutiny role for Task Group 6. The meeting was generally uneventful. Participants were broadly satisfied with its conduct but this may partly reflect the attendance, and NDA are reviewing their national stakeholder engagement. There were updates on geological disposal and other waste issues of interest to CoRWM, and some useful opportunities to meet individuals and organisations.

The meeting

2. The aim of this event was to update stakeholders on the development of Strategy II, ensure that they understood the Strategy at "theme" level, give them an early chance to comment and thereby help NDA refine its consultation on Strategy II.
3. The meeting was managed by The Environment Council, NDA's facilitator (also formerly used by CoRWM). It followed the usual pattern of plenary presentations and discussions, "breakout" group discussions, and opportunities for networking.
4. There will be a full NDA meeting report. This summary note mainly focuses on the engagement process and the issues raised by stakeholders.

Some highlights

5. *Fringe meeting: new nuclear power stations.* The EA and NII gave a joint presentation on their approach to regulation. NII described the way in which regulators were now working more closely and effectively, and mentioned one benefit: that NII had learned from EA who tended to consult more frequently. Stakeholder comments and questions were about
 - whether regulators had enough staff resources,
 - the need for waste storage potentially for very many years
 - the prospect of spent fuel being reprocessed
 - the inventory of fuel for disposal not yet agreed with a potential host community, and unwillingness to take new-build spent fuel which should be reprocessed
 - whether a change of Government would change the new-build / regulatory timetable
 - the location of proposed EDF sites and the need for more data including resilience to climate change
 - whether its heat generating properties would make new-build spent fuel harder or more dangerous to manage
 - how regulators identified and reached their stakeholders
 - whether alternative e.g. smaller reactor designs would be less obtrusive
 - the adequacy of local infrastructure at proposed new-build sites
 - timing and content of consultations by regulators.
6. *Opening plenary session.* CEO Tony Fountain gave an introductory address. Probably the majority of those present worked for NDA, site operators, contractors or others on or around sites, and his talk was full of praise for safety and other achievements and landmark events from site to site. (His leg was pulled by a subsequent NDA speaker as he had failed to praise 2 sites.) I got the impression that participants preferred this style compared with similar events a few years ago. He looked forward to the next 12 months' challenges including Strategy II and Dounreay competition.

7. *Strategy II*. Adrian Simper described the challenges NDA was seeking to address. Stakeholder comments and questions covered
 - whether NDA was reaching enough stakeholders and, especially, the wider public
 - whether the review of site end-states would modify existing plans or effectively start over again
 - where a Parent Body Organisation fitted into the Strategy, business planning and site lifetime plans.
8. *Site stakeholder group feedback*. SSG Chairs met before the NSG to exchange information. There was a brief report back.
9. *Geological disposal facility*. The meeting heard the regular 6-monthly update including
 - RWMD's progress towards becoming a SLC and the challenges that faced it, including some set by the regulators;
 - development of the Generic Disposal System Safety Case and associated documents for consultation later in 2010;
 - extension of NDA's disposability work to cover potential new-build wastes;
 - its communication strategy, including the **Planning for implementation** information pack that would be launched the following week. This included a DVD featuring an animation of the waste disposal process. We saw an extract of this. (See para 16 about postponement of the launch)and
 - progress in West Cumbria.Comments included: that the West Cumbria process was not a "done deal" and MRWS involved a small donkey carrying a huge load of expectations.
10. *Scottish HAW consultation*. A brief presentation followed by an opportunity for comment. Comments included:
 - how near is "near"-site?
 - the relative attraction to terrorists of "near"-surface
 - the probability of Scottish waste being spread across Northern England in the next period of glaciation.
11. *Strategic themes*. There were 3 group sessions spread over 2 days so that participants could attend each one: site restoration, spent fuel management, and integrated waste management. Each consisted of a presentation and opportunity to ask questions, then a set of questions for stakeholders to debate.
12. *Site restoration*. After the introductory presentation on objectives and challenges, stakeholders were told that the overriding priority was to reduce risk. As risk was progressively reduced, what other factors should come into play? e.g. effective use of resources? keeping open future opportunities? and ...? And what were their general views including on NDA's statement of priorities? Issues raised by stakeholders included
 - work already done with stakeholders and the need not to start all over again
 - timescales, and how changeable key dates might be
 - the need for end states to reflect the potential site uses, which could vary widely across the estate.
13. *Spent fuel management*. The presentation included Magnox issues, challenges and strategy; Oxide reference strategy and credible options; and exotics strategy, issues, risks and opportunities. One group of stakeholders were asked to debate NDA Magnox proposals, the other its proposals on oxides. Questions and issues raised by stakeholders included

- reprocessing: opinion was split, with some wanting investment in more capacity to deal with existing or new (e.g. overseas) business, and others questioning the economic or other practicalities
- exotics: timescales and implications e.g. for capacity and location of stores; how far the UK was using overseas experience
- Magnox: the relationship between the target dates for ending reprocessing and for ending Magnox generation
- MOP: if 2016 was unachievable, at what date a decision would be made to switch to a contingent strategy
- assets: the need to be realistic about how long equipment &c could last
- new-build: NDA's remit should be clarified so that it could better examine opportunities and synergies
- finance: could sustained funding be relied on to implement any strategy?
- the extent to which conflict between NDA, BE and others' plans and priorities could be avoided
- the scope for dry storage at reactor sites
- the extent to which GDF disposal requirements constrained options
- reputation: the need for any approach to be credible, given past failures.

14. *Integrated waste management.* The presentation included the development of GDF proposals, other opportunities for managing ILW (treatment and storage in fewer locations, new packaging concepts, thermal treatment, and the need to invest in transport infrastructure) and new challenges taken on since Strategy I, including responsibility for implementing the LLW strategy, and for producing a strategy for HAW in Scotland. Stakeholders were asked what question on IWM they would like NDA to include in its next consultation. The answers led to some heated debate:

- a question on NDA performance against objectives (counter: done elsewhere)
- a question on whether your community might benefit from having a waste facility (objected to: cut across MRWS process)
- a question about the proximity pr
- a question on whether you favour a local or national waste solution (objected to: one national administration said it would cut across another policy process and it would instruct NDA not to ask this).

15. *Future arrangements for national engagement.* After 5 years NDA needs to review its national engagement process including the NSG. Other mechanisms include the website, publications and specific consultations, and individual fora e.g. with unions, with regulators, and with the supply chain. The Environment Council is managing the review and will gather comments from stakeholders and NDA as well as using its own experience of other engagement processes. It will make recommendations to NDA around July and NDA will circulate proposals in advance of the next NSG in September. The meeting was split into groups to discuss what stakeholders themselves needed from a national engagement process. Suggestions included:

- we need (or particularly value):
 - the opportunity to influence NDA at national level and challenge its plans and their achievability
 - the opportunity for strategic updates that we don't get at site level, and the ability to tell local communities how they fit into the bigger picture
 - the opportunity to build and maintain relationships with NDA and other stakeholders, including key policy "drivers"
 - the ability to moderate or refine one's viewpoint having heard from other participants
- we suggest:
 - a main theme for each event (as, in this case, Strategy II)
 - better advance briefing

- doing more work in task groups
- more opportunity to meet policy makers including Ministers
- better VFM including less frequent NSGs or less palatial premises.

16. *Final updates and closing comments.* These included

- geological disposal **PFI** launch: following comments on the DVD, this element would not be included in the launch. (I later heard the launch itself had been postponed until possibly after the Election.)
- key messages from the NSG: included
 - the need for NDA to use clearer explanations and terminology
 - issues with the volume and nature of information provided, e.g. some wanted more, others less
 - integrated waste management: broad agreement with the general approach, but need for very early local engagement as specific proposals developed
 - site restoration: welcome for proposals for interim states, but concern not to compromise / lose sight of end-states
 - spent fuel management: broad agreement with strategy but varied views on details: oxide fuels - some want reprocessing, others oppose; can't reconcile these views but must take evidence-based decisions and explain why.

17. The meeting was an opportunity to hold or observe some useful conversations with NDA and its national and local site stakeholders. A number of CoRWM stakeholders (including local as well as national) attend these events and there were a number of questions about our past reports or current work.

Observations on NDA's engagement process

18. The event seemed to be reasonably successful and regarded as such by participants. There is a feedback session at the end of each meeting. On diversity, one particular group of stakeholders seemed to be under-represented for a variety of reasons (possibly reflecting the value that individual invitees placed on attending the event) and I discussed this with some NDA staff and stakeholders. I think some stakeholders were glad no longer to have what some saw as disruptive contributions; but there was recognition of the value of challenge, and avoiding too "cosy" an environment.

19. NDA have a process for evaluating the success of each NSG and learning and applying lessons. See <http://www.nda.gov.uk/news/events/nsg-nov-09.cfm> for a note of the November 2009 meeting (my summary note was doc. 2731) and the evaluation report. That page also has the briefing documents provided for the meeting. (I have the documents for the March 2010 meeting if anyone wants to see them.)

20. And (see above) they are now carrying out a review to see whether and how this should continue. Among other things, this will doubtless look at the diversity of representation.

21. This is only part of NDA's overall engagement process. More information is contained in its 19 February response to Brian Clark's 11 January letter asking them, Government and others about their strategies and processes.

22. This summary note has been shown to the NDA meeting organiser to ensure that it complies with NSG "ground rules" - for example, not attributing comments or viewpoints to individual stakeholders.