

Minutes of 8th DECC Nuclear NGO Forum meeting, 28th February 2013

Attendees:

Baroness Verma, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DECC Present from 14.00
 Hergen Hays (Co-Chair), Office for Nuclear Development (OND), DECC
 Professor Andy Blowers (Co-Chair), Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG)
 Jo Brown, Parents Concerned About Hinkley (PCAH)
 Pete Wilkinson, Communities Against Nuclear Expansion (CANE)
 Barry Turner, Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG)
 Reg Illingworth, SANE
 Richard Bramhall, LLRC
 Alan Oaklawn, Bradwell for Renewable Energy (BRARE)
 Rita Holmes, Ayrshire Radiation Monitoring Group (ARM)
 Jean McSorley, Greenpeace
 Sean Morris, Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA)
 Nikki Clark, Stop Hinkley
 Sue Aubrey, Stop Hinkley
 Jill Perry, Save our Lake District
 Neil Crumpton, PAWB and Wales
 Dr. Ruth Balogh, West Cumbria and North Lakes FoE
 Phil Davies, Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates/University of Sussex
 Lydia Meryll, SERA
 Dr. Jill Sutcliffe, Low-level Radiation and Health Conference
 Alan McGoff, Environment Agency (EA)
 Annabel Lillicrop, Environment Agency (EA)
 Roger Yearsley, Environment Agency (EA)
 Bill Hamilton, (NDA)
 Elizabeth Atherton, (NDA)
 Bruce Cairns, Office for Nuclear Development (OND), DECC
 Tom Yates, Office for Nuclear Development (OND), DECC
 Tom Counsell, DECC
 Liz Owen, DECC
 Margaret Mary McLaren, Office for Nuclear Development (OND), DECC
 Jane Cantwell, Office for Nuclear Development (OND), DECC

A. Introductions and preliminaries

The Co-Chairs welcomed members to the 8th DECC Nuclear NGO Forum.

The minutes from the previous meeting in October were reviewed and agreed.

Hergen Hays provided an update on recent nuclear policy including:

- Legislation on the Electricity Market Reform was progressing well through its parliamentary stages

- The Nuclear Regulators confirmed in December 2012 that the UK EPR nuclear reactor is suitable for construction in the UK after a five-year assessment of its generic design.
- Hitachi had entered the UK nuclear market and Government have asked the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the Environment Agency (EA), to conduct a Generic Design Assessment (GDA) of Hitachi's ABWR, the Advanced Boiling Water Reactor design. It is anticipated that the GDA process will take up to four years.
- The Hinkley Point C Planning decision - DECC Ministers now had until 19 March 2013 to make the final decision.
- Discussions with NNB on the Strike Price were ongoing
- Centrica had withdrawn from the new build market
- Recent events in relation to Geological Disposal Facility decision in Cumbria

The following points were raised by the NGOs:

- Will the final agreement on the Strike Price be made public?
- Will commercial confidentiality have an impact on what can be made public.

Hergen Hays responded that all relevant information on the Strike Price agreement will be made public and presented to Parliament; however some information will be commercially sensitive and not released.

- NGOs commented further that although GDA for the UK EPR has been completed, there are still outstanding issues that have been put aside to be dealt with.

The Environment Agency commented that on GDA for the EPR tests for example on software that is not yet in place needed to be undertaken.

B. Energy Scenarios

NGO Neil Crumpton presented a paper, '2030 Non-Nuclear UK electricity system' and accompanying 'Report on Non-nuclear electricity scenarios to 2030'. This was followed by a presentation by DECC entitled "DECC scenarios and what they say about nuclear power". (Note that the papers are attached to the minutes).

The following points were made following Neil Crumpton's presentation:

- Can we look at deployability in terms of 2025 as DECC may need to look at their NPS forecasts for suitable sites for new nuclear and evaluate whether they are still accurate in light of forecasts.

- It will be ambitious to get Hinkley Point in place by 2025. DECC commented that the focus of this paper is 2030 scenarios, but, Government is looking ahead to 2050 scenarios
- DECC made the point that some of the cost assumptions on Neil's paper were future orientated and there is no certainty that they will be achieved. The fact that 8 sites had been designated for new nuclear under the NPSs, did not mean the Government had a target for new nuclear. The NPS stated that there was sufficient need for low carbon electricity and that nuclear should be able to play a full role but that ultimately in the long run this will be subject to competition i.e. those low carbon technologies that are most cost effective will secure the greatest share
- DECC commented that cross comparisons of energy costs do not account for systems costs (e.g. outages particularly for wind)

Action DECC: DECC offered to circulate a recent NEA study setting out cost comparisons accounting also for systems costs (Carbon Pricing, Power Markets and the Competitiveness of Nuclear Energy) to the Forum.

As part of this agenda item DECC illustrated and explained how to use the 2050 pathways calculator on the DECC website. This tool helps members of the public to engage in the debate about how to secure a low-carbon future for the UK by creating their own pathway. The model lets users create their own UK emissions reduction pathway and see the impact on deployability and costs.

Further issues were raised by the NGOs on DECC's paper and the usefulness of the calculator:

- Questions around cost estimates for generation technologies and how accurate and reliable they are.
- How long ago were predictions made?
- How is Government modelling nuclear waste? Has Government costed different scenarios for handling nuclear waste?
- Importance of looking at demand side as well as the supply side for the UK.
- What work has Government done on recommending LED lights to the public.
- It was noted that a number of the DECC scenarios demonstrate that a future energy supply environment can be achieved without new nuclear in the mix. DECC confirmed this but pointed out that such scenarios would be significantly more expensive to consumers.

In summary the following actions were agreed:

Action DECC / NGOs: Neil Crumpton to liaise further with DECC on this theme.

Action DECC: Ensure that the NGO paper and views made available to the relevant officials and ministers within DECC who lead on energy scenarios

Action DECC: DECC to update Neil and forum on any progress and views resulting from the above actions

C. How do different parts of society participate in the decision making process for nuclear policy and particularly how the views of women are accounted for in policy development and decision making

DECC presented a paper on 'Understanding public attitudes towards nuclear power' and then Nikki Clark presented a jointly authored paper on 'Gender Bias and Inequalities in Nuclear policy, legislation and practice'.

DECC set out the work it undertook to understand consumers and their views and referred to the Department's public attitude tracker.

The NGOs raised the following concerns:

- Questions on surveys can be very leading, i.e worded in a way to encourage a particular answer. It was felt the question DECC is asking was somewhat leading
- Have we consulted experts in phrasing the question to avoid bias?
- Results from surveys vary enormously and therefore are not reliable.
- Eurobarometer polls are more in depth on nuclear issues
- Government should pursue the question of regional variation DECC

It was confirmed that government had consulted experts on the issue of bias in question formulation.

Following Nikki Clark's introduction of the paper the following observations were made:

- That it was a very rich commentary on the subject matter and highlighted the fact that the role of women in policy making was seen too often as an after thought
- It was important to take particular care in undertaking proper policy impact assessments to ensure all possible impacts on women and other groups in society are understood and mitigated
- DECC confirmed that these were not easy issues and that policy officials were probably stretched in appropriately assessing specific impacts and that impact assessments often occur once much of the policy has already been developed. There is certainly more to be done to reflect those impacts from the outset.
- More broadly speaking DECC observed that in the UK and Europe much of the senior energy industry is still very male dominated; however, this is

slowly changing but in decision making broader consultation is required to avoid unconscious gender bias in policy making.

- DECC noted that the issue relates to a much wider issue and that the subject matter was more properly dealt with by the Cabinet Office who ensure proper guidance on consultations, policy making and impact assessment requirements.

Action: DECC to circulate the paper to those in Government who deal with policy making processes i.e. Cabinet Office and to DECC diversity champion to assess whether further work could be undertaken and to report back

D. Introduction from Baroness Verma

Hergen Hays introduced **Baroness Verma**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State to the Forum. Professor Blowers, NGO Chair provided Baroness Verma with an overview of NGO papers on waste policy from previous meetings and outlined the Forum's on-going concerns on interim and long term waste storage policy.

The minister then set out the recent developments in Cumbria and what this means for the siting process for a geological disposal facility. Furthermore Baroness Verma explained that she was very interested in hearing the views from the NGO community with particular focus on ideas on how to proceed. She was in the market for constructive ideas which addressed the issue rather than just hearing about concerns.

The NGOs raised the following issues with the Minister:

- West Cumbria's nuclear history means that residents have been constantly disappointed with decisions Government have made. People assume that Cumbria will take whatever the nuclear industry "will throw at them".
- Level of trust in Government processes is incredibly low. The level of participation was inadequate.

On this point, Baroness Verma commented that it would be useful to hear how we can move forward to build trust and how do we maximise stakeholder engagement.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were made:

- Whole new organisation to break links with past programmes may be required.
- Voluntarism is viewed positively as the best approach
- The huge amount of discussion about voluntarism in the process has been positive.

- The use of independent facilitators in the process has been professional and fair.
- The appointment of an Independent Chair to oversee the process would be useful for the future.
- Engagement process needs to be more open and transparent and inclusive. People need information and evidence before making decisions.
- Baroness Verma's attention was drawn to 'The Flowers Report' from 'Nuclear Power and the Environment' – 1976 report by Sir Brian Flowers, nuclear physicist.
- There would be no movement on legacy waste while new build remains on the agenda. If Baroness Verma is open to questioning policy she will want to think about this and respect the original CORWM decision for a process deal only with legacy waste.
- Worries about future safety of children – this is an intergenerational issue.
- Whatever the process for legacy waste will be, it would be better not to start new build on Hinkley C until the waste issue is resolved.
- EU countries such as Sweden bring doubters in to the process and have overall handled the process better than in the UK.

Responding to the issues raised by the NGOs, Baroness Verma stated that a common theme coming through in the discussion was that we need to look at a better way of engaging, but that she wants to look in more detail at the specifics that have been mentioned. However, she hoped that Government could have a broad dialogue on waste issues and thinks it advantageous to be tested on thought processes.

The NGO Chair Professor Blowers then summarised the key view of disappointment in believing that a solution (voluntarist process) was in place for legacy and that trust had been built, but that new build broke that trust and that the lack of trust was the issue preventing progress. He believed that the NGOs would see the exclusion of new build would enable the process to move forward.

Action DECC: Follow up Forum discussions on waste issues with advice to Baroness Verma including on the Flowers Report.

E. AOB

Three supplementary issues were then raised:

Funded Decommissioning Programme:

Jean McSorely, raised the question on progress regarding the negotiations with EDF on the waste transfer price and what the timescale was looking like? Hergen Haye responded by outlining the three documents involved with the Funded Decommissioning Programme i.e. the Funded Decommissioning Plan; the waste transfer contract; and a Section 46 document. The

negotiations were progressing well and the results would be made public once completed.

Concerns around radiation exposure

NGO, Richard Bramhall, raised his concerns regarding the health effects of low level radiation exposure. It was noted that the COMARE meeting held on 18th October 2012 only raised a few points on this subject area. The NGOs suggested that there needs to be more joint working.

Hergen Hays asked for more details regarding the issues in mind before we can assess what should be discussed and who would need to be involved.

Action NGOs: It was agreed that the NGOs would give thought to ideas surrounding the topic of radiation exposure and to pick one or two issues to take forward at the next meeting.

Sean Morris, then raised the issue of recent articles regarding lavish hospitality OND officials received from the nuclear. The issue of secondees from industry working in OND was also raised.

Hergen Hays explained that DECC value secondees as they bring a certain skills set which many civil servants do not have, particularly science, engineering and commercial skills. It was noted that DECC also send out officials to companies to allow them to get private sector experience. All inward or outward secondments are governed by clear rules to avoid conflicts of interests. Full details are held on public record. Hergen was happy to forward our policy document governing secondments to the Forum if there was interest.

In reference to hospitality and gifts received by OND officials it was explained that much of the hospitality was from foreign Embassies and occurred during foreign travel where officials accompany Ministers and/or are associated with speaking engagements. It was also stated that this is not something which is OND specific, hospitality is offered and where appropriate received by all parts of the civil service. Any hospitality has to be recorded in line with Cabinet Office guidelines

It is important that officials, within reason and governed by transparent rules, do engage with stakeholders and do attend functions and dinners or lunches. It is common practice to entertain ministers and officials at these events which are very much work events. However, it is clear that attendance by officials does not constitute an advantage for these stakeholders and that it is important that any hospitality and gifts are properly recorded and that certain hospitality is declined, for example for sporting or other events.

F. Meeting Close

The meeting then closed after thanks were given by Forum members to both co-chairs; Hergen Hays and Andy Blowers.

Summary of actions:

Action DECC: DECC offered to circulate a recent NEA study setting out cost comparisons accounting also for systems costs (Carbon Pricing, Power Markets and the Competitiveness of Nuclear Energy) to the Forum.

Action DECC / NGOs: Neil Crumpton to liaise further with DECC on this theme.

Action DECC: Ensure that the NGO paper and views made available to the relevant officials and ministers within DECC who lead on energy scenarios

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