Minutes of 13th DECC/NGO Forum – Thursday 9th October 2014

Welcome and preliminaries

Co-chairs welcomed the group to the 13th DECC/NGO Forum. Apologies were received from:

- NGOs - Sue Aubrey, Barry Turner, Tim Deere-Jones
- EA - Alan McGoff and Annabelle Lillycrop
- ONR – Claire Lyons

The NGOs made reference to the recently revised Terms of Reference and pointed out that a couple of amendments were required to reflect correct names of organisations.

Action DECC: To make amendments as per NGO comments.

NGO Co-Chair, membership and location of meetings

- Prof. Blowers stated that he had been re-elected to the role of NGO Co-Chair for the next two years.
- In relation to the location of meetings, DECC had e-mailed the NGOs to offer the option of regional meetings to accommodate those outside of London who have to travel long distances to meetings. However, as there was little interest in this it was agreed that Forum meetings should continue to take place in London.

Short progress reports - Radiation and Health, Emergency Planning, Nuclear Security, GDF

The NGOs referred to the following progress reports:

Radiation and Health

Pete Wilkinson provided an update from the NGOs on their perspective of progress. His main concern was that he felt that no progress is being made. Other NGO comments were as follows:

- NGOs had been given Ministerial assurance from Charles Hendry at an earlier stage that DECC would help enable a process.
- Is there a possibility of taking this issue down a European route?

DECC agreed to take an action to reconsider what can be done to take this issue forward. Baroness Verma agreed to consider further evidence from NGOs, and that depending on her view of that evidence she would be willing to discuss the issues further..

Action DECC: DECC agreed to rethink whether a process can be set up to facilitate the discussion of NGO proposals on radiation and health, in conjunction with Richard Bramhall and Pete Wilkinson.

Action NGOs: Baroness Verma agreed to consider further evidence from NGOs in relation to the proposal for a Joint Fact Finding on Key Issues and Controversies concerning the effects of radiation on health (October 2011); A way forward (19th April 2013) with a view to lending her support to a new process to look at the issues. The NGOs were asked to provide evidence so DECC can consider what the next steps should be on this issue.

Emergency Planning (Sean Morris)

Sean Morris NGO, referred to the below report provided by NRAD:

- The DECC / ONR / EA / NGO Emergency Planning and Resilience group last met in April 2014. The discussion included updates from each represented organisation, development of the Nuclear Emergency Planning & Resilience Guidance, public consultation processes and work underway on REPPIR and the Basic Safety Standards Directive and the identification of additional EP&R topics to discuss at future meetings.
- One of the actions from the meeting was for a workshop to be scheduled with NGO representatives and other communications colleagues to collate feedback on the draft Warning and Informing chapter content and structure. This workshop took place on 2 September with representatives from ONR and the Cabinet Office also attending. It was a useful opportunity to share the proposed structure and content of the new Guidance and also highlight UK and international good practice communications examples. DECC will continue to consult with this group as the draft chapter develops.
- The next Emergency Planning and Resilience meeting with NGOs is scheduled for 12 November and a draft agenda will be circulated to participants shortly.

Nuclear Security

- NRAD hosted an hour long productive and helpful nuclear security meeting with NGOs before the full Forum. The meeting was set up to scope out how NGOs might get involved in and contribute to aspects of DECC's nuclear security work. It was agreed that a follow up meeting would be set up to further consider NGO involvement with nuclear security issues going forward.

- The nuclear security session took note of a number of requests for information from NGO representatives. DECC agreed to respond, ahead of the next meeting, either with the information requested, or with the reason why the information could not be shared.

- NGOs voiced their disappointment that it had taken six months for DECC to set this meeting up.

GDF

Prof Blowers provided a report on a meeting between NGO reps and DECC officials on geological disposal, 8 September 2014. Reference was made to a lack of clarity within the White Paper around public awareness-raising, and concerns were raised about the process taking time / being less urgent than previously indicated.

DECC commented that there is a clear plan in place, and that they have learned from international processes that it is best to build awareness gradually, and at an appropriate time..

Prof Blowers made reference to a paper that Neil Crumpton had revised on the GDF footprint estimates / June 2014 Pathways briefing and presentation paper. DECC agreed to e mail this paper to NGOs.

Action DECC: E mail the revised Neil Crumpton paper on the GDF footprint estimates / June 2014 Pathways briefing and presentation paper.

Foreign wastes and plutonium. Discussion of current situation and policy issues

Prof. Blowers referred to the NGO paper on Foreign Plutonium and Waste – issues of transfer, substitution and storage. He said that the paper raised a number of questions. In his view Government policy is muddled and should be reviewed, including public consultation.

The NGOs raised the following points:

- On the one hand there were dangers in any transportation of radioactive waste and so such movements should be minimised. On the other hand, countries should be responsible for their own wastes.
- Waste substitution, by reducing the volumes of waste being transported, was masking the true cost of nuclear power.
- The value of producing separated plutonium through reprocessing was unclear as there is currently no use for it.
- The process of converting plutonium into MOX creates issues for nuclear security.
- Where would the proposed MOX fuel be used and would the use of MOX fuel in new nuclear power stations require Justification?
- What was the nature of the wastes being kept in the UK under waste substitution contracts?

DECC answered these points by referring to developing policy around these issues:

- Reference was made to the December 2011 DECC response paper which set out the basis of the Government's policy. DECC had concluded that converting plutonium into MOX was the most credible and technologically mature option for reuse. However DECC had also said that the Government was open to any alternative proposals that offered better value to the taxpayer. DECC said it would circulate this paper for reference.
- DECC confirmed that further Justification would be required before MOX fuel could be used in a new nuclear power station.
- DECC would provide further information on the nature of the wastes being retained in the UK under the waste substitution contracts.

Prof. Blowers reiterated that clarification is required around these issues. He said that the NGO paper, which had been circulated as a draft, would now be finalised and sent to DECC, providing a record of their thinking on these issues.

Action DECC: DECC to provide further information on the nature of the wastes being retained in the UK under the waste substitution contracts.

Action DECC: DECC to circulate the 2011 Government response setting out its policy on plutonium management.

Action NGOs: NGOs agreed to formulate questions derived from the paper and discussion for DECC to respond to.

Update from EA on step 3 of GDA for Hitachi ABWR

David Bennett from the Environment Agency provided an update to the Forum on step 3 of GDA for the Hitachi ABWR.

Action EA: To share information with NGO Pete Wilkinson on contractors the Environment Agency has used to support work on GDA, as well as future plans.

Update on latest nuclear policy developments

Baroness Verma joined the meeting and provided an update on recent policy developments including:

- The recent announcement on the approval for the Hinkley Point C State aid case,
- The NuGen consortium having been newly configured with Toshiba-Westinghouse and GDF Suez,
- The initial consultation on justification of the ABWR having been concluded and the Secretary of State's draft conclusion currently out for consultation
- And the recently published White Paper on geological disposal which sets out a renewed process for siting a Geological Disposal Facility for the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste.

Questions and comments were then taken from the NGOs. Points raised included:

- Concern that only limited information had been made available about the HPC State Aid decision. All documents in the process should be published on the DECC website for transparency.
- Whether the decision included a decision on the Funded Decommissioning Programme.

DECC and Baroness Verma confirmed that:

- The European Commission had been very thorough and would be publishing their full decision shortly.
- The full decision would include a lot of further detail, but some information that had been provided by the UK to the Commission would not be disclosed as it was commercially sensitive.
- The Government was not going to notify the Funded Decommissioning Programme as there was no question of state aid in those arrangements. However there was an outstanding case regarding the waste transfer pricing scheme. This was not covered by the Hinkley Point C decision and would be handled separately.

Other points raised by the NGOs included:

- Noting that the Austrian Government was likely to be launching a legal challenge to the Commission's decision.
- Concerns about how construction cost over-runs would be handled.
- Whether risks relating to storm surges had been taken into consideration.
- Whether the public had enough information to reach an informed view.
- Whether the Hinkley Point C deal gave a 'Green light' for all other proposed new nuclear power stations.

DECC and Baroness Verma responded that:

- The Commission would not have made this decision unless they considered it was legally robust. If there was a legal challenge the UK would work with the Commission to defend their decision.
- Cost over-runs during construction are a risk borne by the operator.
- Risks around storm surges were a consideration in the planning decisions that were made.
- The rationale for the UK's overall policy has been set out and provided for in the Energy Act 2013l.
- There will be individual negotiations for each new nuclear power station. However, DECC considers this decision should strengthen investor confidence for both nuclear and other low carbon technologies.

NDA presentation on ILW management. Long term strategy

James McKinney and Bill Hamilton from the NDA provided a presentation on Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) management.

The main concern raised by the NGOs was their view that the NDA's approach to public engagement was not satisfactory. Recent issues that were discussed were the possible consolidation of ILW stores and Fuel Element Debris (FED) dissolution. The NDA responded that, while they accepted that with public engagement there is always more that can be done, a lot of work had been done in this area. It was agreed that if NGOs had specific questions for the NDA then they should put them to them after the meeting.

Other business and Chairmens' closing remarks

Consideration was given to themes for the next Forum meeting.

Prof. Blowers invited members to get in touch with him to propose issues that they thought should be covered in the future.

Attendees:

Baroness Verma, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DECC
Rachel Solomon Williams (co-chair) Office for Nuclear Development (OND), DECC
Professor Andy Blowers (co-chair) Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG)

Neil Crumpton,
Jo Brown, Parents Concerned About Hinkley (PCAH)
Geoff Betsworth, Cumbria Trust
Sean Morris, Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA)
Rita Holmes, Ayrshire Radiation Monitoring Group (ARM)
Ruth Balogh. West Cumbria and North Lakes FoE
Lydia Meryll, SERA
Phil Davies, NWAA
Richard Bramhall, LLRC
Pete Wilkinson, Communities Against Nuclear Expansion
David Lowry, NWAA
Val Mainwood, Bradwell for Renewable Energy (BRARE)
Doug Parr, Greenpeace
Stephen Newson, CORWM Observer

Bill Hamilton (NDA)
Dave Bennett, (EA)
Robert Middleton, Office for Nuclear Development (OND), DECC
Shameen Shah, Assistant Head, Enabling Commercial, DECC
Matt Clarke, Nuclear Resilience and Assurance (NRAD), DECC
Margaret Mary McLaren, Office for Nuclear Development (OND), DECC