



**BEIS Nuclear NGO Forum Minutes**  
**Thursday 13 May 2021**  
**10:00 - 12:00**  
**Microsoft Teams**

**1. Introduction – Stephen Speed (SS) and Andrew Blowers (AB)**

- Co-Chairs of the Forum Stephen Speed (SS; Director, Nuclear, BEIS, Co-Chair) and Professor Andrew Blowers (AB; Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group, Co-Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, with thanks to Minister Anne Marie Trevelyan (AMT) for attending for an hour.
- AB expressed hopes that the meeting would be a ‘conversation’ regarding key nuclear issues.

**2. Introductory remarks – Rt Hon Anne Marie Trevelyan MP**

- The Minister was pleased to attend the meeting virtually, having been unable to attend the February meeting and was grateful for the opportunity to engage on these important matters and the chance to have a two-way discussion.
- The Minister had been briefed on the purpose of this meeting by AB and Neil Crumpton (NC) on 28 April, with this meeting presenting an opportunity to engage on important matters.
- The Minister updated the Forum on her role as the COP26 International Champion on Climate Adaptation and Resilience and reflected that her work with developing countries on becoming resilient against climate shocks is equally important in the UK as in developing countries. She noted that the UK must show global leadership in tackling both climate change and COVID-19.



### **3. Q&A – Rt Hon Anne Marie Trevelyan MP**

#### **Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)**

##### **1) How can the government justify new nuclear and further radioactive waste when the problem of disposing current stocks has not been resolved? (Rod Donnington-Smith, Cumbria Trust)**

- The Minister noted that, as set out in the Energy White Paper (EWP), new nuclear development will help to secure the UK's decarbonised power system. The process to identify a site for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) is under way, and a GDF is internationally regarded as the best solution for dealing with nuclear waste. Other countries, such as Japan, France, and Canada, are pursuing similar options to the UK.
- Rod Donnington-Smith (RSD) responded that the Forum's primary concern is safety, and that the technical challenges for a GDF must be addressed properly.

##### **2) In what way can current search process be considered to involve and draw on the expertise of the local community? Or is the aim to ignore this? (Ruth Balogh, West Cumbria North Lakes / Friends of the Earth)**

- Ruth Balogh (RB) asked the Minister whether the process for the current search for a disposal facility will involve and draw on the expertise of the local community. RB noted that current working groups are very small and exclude certain groups who have a great deal of local knowledge.
- The Minister said BEIS must consider carefully whether we have all the right skill sets in the Working Groups and Community Partnerships, to effectively draw on the knowledge of the local people and the local authority and ensure voices are heard.
- SS added that no licensing or planning permission would be granted to an unsafe construction, and that a GDF will have the appropriate checks and balances to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- AB expressed concern that radioactive waste from new builds will be stored into the next century, and it is "impossible" to say categorically how we will manage it.
- Umran Nazir (UN) said that the government does have a process to ensure the UK has a storage facility when it is needed, and that the government has designed the process such that it will have to involve the local community.



- Pete Wilkinson (PW) asked BEIS how new waste can be justified when existing waste has not been dealt with and noted that a GDF solution still has technical uncertainties. He queried the claim that nuclear power is low carbon because of embodied emissions from the uranium fuel cycle.
- The Minister noted that we continue to maintain waste safely at Sellafield, but we are still searching for a solution in partnership with a community. A GDF is viewed by many international experts as the best solution.



## Regulated Asset Base (RAB)

### **3) Request for update, including expectations on timing, legislation, and importance of transparency (Alison Downes, Stop Sizewell C).**

- In addition to Alison Downes' (AD) question she also requested an update on the progress of negotiations with EDF on Sizewell C and what Value for Money (VFM) calculations have been conducted?
- The Minister said that the government is considering a range of financing models, including looking at how a Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model would work for a large-scale nuclear plant.
- The Minister noted that she and BEIS always strive to be clear and qualify that we are exploring options at this stage, and that no final investment decisions have been made. The Minister would not comment whilst negotiations are ongoing, but said VFM is and always will be important to the Government. Transparency is a priority for the department, especially for nuclear projects, and we will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders as we go forward.
- AD requested a commitment to publish details before any contracts are signed.
- SS noted there are limits on what details can be published due to confidential and commercial information, but the government will always publish transparency information where possible.



## National Policy Statement (NPS)

### **4) Update on progress with reviews (Andrew Blowers, Blackwater Against New Nuclear, Mike Taylor, Together Against Sizewell C, Alison Downes, Stop Sizewell C).**

- Andrew Blowers (AB) noted concern from sites, such as Sizewell and Bradwell, that the National Policy Statement (NPS) is from 2011 and has not been updated. The NPS will have to be very different from the existing one, given how much has changed since 2011, so choosing sites based on the current NPS is a matter of “extreme” concern.
- The Minister said that the government is aiming to designate any NPS amendments by the end of the year to make sure it supports the policies we set out in the EWP. The UK should have a more up to date NPS by the end of the year.
- Mike Taylor (MT) noted concerns over how EDF behaves at Sizewell and said that they have been asked over 1500 questions by planning inspectors and have received over 1000 representations from local people concerned about the development. There are also concerns about the financing of the project.
- The Minister highlighted a road in her constituency as a major planning project and used this as an example to emphasise planning questions as part of the process. She was confident that the Planning Inspectorate would be thorough and would be ‘doing their job’.
- The Minister referred to looking at the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model for Sizewell C financing (with discussions ongoing).
- The Minister expressed confidence in ONR’s independent licensing, and emphasised, ‘don’t be surprised by the level of work from the planning inspectorate’.

### **5) Can BEIS confirm that a revised NPS on Nuclear Energy will be drafted in such a way that it confirms the ‘potential suitability’ of the designated sites for GW reactors? (Andrew Blowers, Blackwater Against New Nuclear, Mike Taylor, Together Against Sizewell C, Alison Downes, Stop Sizewell C)**

- Andrew Blowers (AB) sought reassurance as to whether NPS focuses on Nuclear New Build and highlighted the 2011 review as outdated.
- The Minister noted that the Government announced a review of the energy NPSs in the Energy White Paper (EWP) with the aim of designating any amendments to



the NPSs by the end of 2021, to reflect policies in the EWP. She expressed that our approach is to maintain the current role of the energy NPS, establishing an unambiguous need case for energy to meet our objectives – that energy supply remains secure, reliable, affordable, and consistent with delivering net zero emissions.

- The Minister noted that the current suite of energy NPS remain relevant during the review and provide a basis for decision making and will therefore not be suspended during the review.



## Relationship of BEIS and Nuclear Industry

**6) For some years, the NGO members of the BEIS/NGO Nuclear Forum have been concerned that members of the nuclear industry, including from EDF, have been given privileged access by way of secondments and lobbying to the Office of Nuclear Development at BEIS (and before it at DECC). This access has allowed members of the industry to influence policy and lobby on its behalf. Access has not been granted to nuclear NGO members, some of whom have a great deal of knowledge of the nuclear industry (Varrie Blowers, Blackwater Against New Nuclear, Pete Wilkinson, Together Against Sizewell C, Sue Aubrey Stop Hinkley Campaign).**

- The Minister noted that BEIS have offered and encouraged secondment opportunities into its nuclear teams just as it does more widely. She spoke about her experience at DFID and the wide movement of individuals across teams. The Minister stated that since Oct 2015, there have been a total of 47 secondments into BEIS/DECC nuclear. Around half of these were secondments from Energus, linked to Nuclear Graduate Scheme, with many others being from Universities, the Nuclear Laboratory, or from BEIS associated organisations, such as the NDA.
- The Minister stated that we have not seconded people directly in from EDF. It is worth noting that under the terms and conditions of all our secondments, there is a strict confidentiality clause that prohibits the sharing of any information with the home organisation and any conflicts of interest need to be declared. She emphasised that secondments are therefore not used to influence policy or provide an opportunity to lobby on behalf of the home organisation.
- Pete Wilkinson (PW) expressed concern over the lack of influence and voice for local NGOs, and government spending on conferences for the nuclear sector. PW stated that the experience of NGO members is valuable and emphasised that the lack of consultation to local NGOs is denying opportunities and is not fair.
- The Minister reassured NGO members that all voices are heard by inspectors during the independent regulatory planning processes before decision making. She noted that it is important to update the NPS to provide clarity for the next generation of nuclear. The Minister spoke about her experiences of an application for an open-cast coal mine in her constituency, which herself and others fought hard against before the planning inspector eventually ruled against it after reviewing all the information. She used this as an example of her confidence in the planning inspectorate to source all opinions in decision-making.
- PW stated that regulators are 'enablers' rather than true regulators in the eyes of NGO members.



- The Minister noted that regulators ensure safety and fairness and are independent of government. She highlighted that regulators are there to oversee and ensure that plans are delivered.





## Civil and Military Nuclear Power

### **7) Can the minister confirm or deny any links between civil and nuclear power in the UK? (Ian Ralls, Friends of the Earth Network)**

- Ian Ralls (IR) expressed concern about nuclear power, given its cost vs value and its percentage contribution to the national energy mix, and noted the nuclear industry as cover for the nuclear weapons industry. IR requests confirmation from AMT over the civilian nuclear programme.
- The Minister noted the need to decarbonise the transport and infrastructure industries and the importance of electricity being produced from clean sources. She noted nuclear power as an important part of this future mix as a 'baseload'. The Minister discussed that gas consumption is expected to go down and scientific work for green hydrogen is ongoing and expected to be in the energy mix. She also noted the need to decarbonise the gas industry. Therefore, nuclear energy plays an important role in providing electricity, as well as supporting other technologies.
- AB interjected and noted that NGOs reject this viewpoint. AB emphasised that NGOs stand against nuclear power and he hopes that the Minister is open to alternative views. He then stated his belief that the nuclear industry is 'dying on its feet and propped up by government'.
- IR sought confirmation or denial of links between the civil and defence nuclear programmes.
- The Minister noted that the two sectors remain separate with distinct goals and missions. However, the Minister explained that there is cooperation where there are benefits to the taxpayer or environment, for example the important role that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority plays in the safe storage of irradiated fuel from submarine reactors.



## Further Questions / Discussion

### Druridge Bay

- Varrie Blowers noted the Minister's support for the communities, coastline, and environment in the case of proposals for coal mining at Druridge Bay in her own constituency and expressed the hope that she would, therefore, be sympathetic to the NGOs in their fight against new nuclear development in their communities.
- The Minister did not have time to respond.

### Overseas Aid and lack of COP26 in government

- Jill Sutcliffe (JS) expressed concern over overseas aid from the UK, and a lack of COP26 discourse from government.
- The Minister expressed pride in the Co-Vax programme and notes good progress in this area.

### The Minister left the meeting.



#### 4. Review and Feedback on Ministerial Discussion

- SS thanked everyone for the constructive discussion with the Minister, and the questions in the Teams chat. He explained the details of review of the NPS and associated timelines, and the assurance that a meaningful consultation will be held.
- **AB requested that BEIS send a note with those details to the Forum.**



## **5. Net Zero Energy Scenarios – Modelling the 2050 Electricity System - Neil Crumpton (NC), People Against Wylfa B**

- SS introduced Stuart Younger (SY) and Nick Hodgson (NH) from BEIS' Energy Systems Modelling team, who were invited to respond to Neil Crumpton's (NC) query on Net Zero Energy Scenarios.
- SY explained how BEIS uses the Dynamic Dispatch Model to perform analysis, using thousands of scenarios and different technology mixes. The outputs are used to narrow down what a low-cost, low-carbon system could look like.
- The model still has uncertainty, but we have learnt that a flexible system is beneficial. A low-carbon system will have a very high proportion of renewables, but there is also a role for hydrogen depending on its cost and availability, and for dispatchable technologies like nuclear and CCUS Gas.
- The Department is still unsure what the role of Direct Air Capture with Carbon Storage (DACCS) and Bio Energy with Carbon Capture & Storage (BECCS) will be, and where they could be most effectively deployed to negate hard-to-reach emissions.
- Future analyses will consider new technologies like Hydrogen and BECCS in more detail, as the evidence becomes available.
- NC stated his concerns with the modelling, and the need to understand BECCS, DACCS and hydrogen in greater detail.
- SY added that BEIS models the whole economy through a wider model which incorporates outputs from the Dynamic Dispatch Model, which was used for Carbon Budget 6.
- NH noted that the best use of biomass is still an open question. With Carbon Budget 6 and with Net Zero by 2050, we need to balance the need to make progress in emissions reductions now versus ensuring we find the most effective and value for money solution.
- NC stated that biomass could be used to balance out a renewable and CCUS powered electricity grid.
- Doug Parr (DP) queried why there was no sensitivity analysis in the Dispatch model on cost and scale of hydrogen.



- SY noted it is very much correct to say we can do more analysis, and we are continuing to develop our understanding of the potential of hydrogen. The modelling is a continuous work in progress, and we add in the best evidence as it comes available. There is still uncertainty on the cost, availability, method of production and best use for hydrogen.



## 6. Public Health England (PHE) Radioactive Liquids Review – Olu Ogunbadejo (OO)

- Olu Ogunbadejo (OO) summarised the 2017 consultation on the Government's Transposition of the Public Exposures and Justification of the 2013 Euratom Basis Safety Standard Directive. Various issues, including on the regulation of radioactive liquid discharges containing low levels of radionuclides were raised. PHE were asked to carry out a technical review of the radioactive waste management and environmental protection regulatory framework.
- OO noted that the January 2021 report found that the UK regulatory framework is consistent and in line with international standards, ensuring a high level of protection for the public and the environment. The report did suggest however that there is some evidence that in some instances, disproportionate regulatory control may be leading to disposal methods which are not the most environmentally friendly option, nor the most economically viable. The report contains 10 recommendations addressed to BEIS / Environmental Agency (EA). A government response setting out proposed approach will be released in 2021, with these recommendations expected to require further public consultation and NGO engagement.
- Andrew Blowers (AB) enquired whether the responses, from the NGOs to material on the review sent round prior to the forum, had been seen, and expressed concern that NGOs were not consulted earlier in the process. AB stated that the lack of NGO involvement is 'strange' and that the NGO responses had to be compiled hastily due to short notice, which raises serious issues. He also noted concerns of deregulation, exemptions, and the reduction of standards. He proposed a future session between the NGOs and BEIS to discuss this.
- **OO confirmed willingness to hold a follow up session on the Liquids Review with the NGOs, alongside the EA.** It was highlighted that the review was of a technical nature and focused on the framework at a 'high-level', hence there was limited NGO/public involvement. This is also PHE's and other regulators responsibility to take forward. OO stated that action from the recommendations within the report will follow normal consultation channels.
- Ian Ralls (IR) wanted to confirm whether tritiated water is classed as radioactive waste and expressed his concern if any implications from this are not considered.
- Alan McGoff (AM) confirmed that tritiated water is considered radioactive waste in reporting, with tritium included in nuclear waste management.



- Rita Holmes (RH) expressed her concern that no liaison or information has been received from Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) following their recent cyber-attack.
- SS highlighted that he recently received notice from SEPA that they are back up and running after the cyber-attack last year and recommends RH to contact them directly.
- OO noted that Public Health England (PHE) have been engaging with SEPA on environmental recommendations, and expects that if the consultation does go ahead, it will be a UK-wide consultation. The key aim of the recent PHE report was to harmonise UK discussions, including with SEPA.



## **7. Summary and Next Steps**

- AB expressed that the meeting had been useful. AB highlighted issues with the meeting structure, having raced through several issues quickly, with lack of time to address them comprehensively. Especially the issues with low-level radiation and communication with government departments.
- AB noted this was a cooperative and forbearing discussion. He then pointed out that it was SS's last NGO Forum meeting before retirement and congratulated and thanked SS for all his hard work and being receptive to NGO's input.
- SS reciprocated thanks to AB for Co-Chairing and thanked NGO members, expressing that he hopes it was a constructive meeting of discussion rather than presentation (he highlighted the difficulty in striking the balance within this forum).
- SS noted his successor will be based in Salford, Manchester.

## **Review of Actions**

- **OO confirmed willingness to hold a follow up session on the Liquids Review with the NGOs, alongside the EA.**





**Attendee List**  
**BEIS NGO Nuclear Virtual Forum - Thursday 13 May**

**Members**

	Rita Holmes	Ayrshire Radiation Monitoring (ARM) Group
	Dr Jill Sutcliffe	Low Level Radiation and Health Conference
	Andrew Blowers	Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG)
	Varrie Blowers	Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG)
	Peter Banks	Black Water Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG)
	Ian Ralls	Friends of the Earth Network
	Ruth Balogh	West Cumbria North Lakes Friends of the Earth
	Doug Parr	Greenpeace
	Richard Bramhall	Low Level Radiation Campaign (LLRC)
	Sean Morris	Nuclear Free Local Authorities Secretariat
	Neil Crumpton	People Against Wylfa B (PAWB)
	Allan Jeffery	Stop Hinkley Campaign
	Sue Aubrey	Stop Hinkley Campaign
	Alison Downes	Stop Sizewell C
	Mike Taylor	Together Against Sizewell C (TASC)
	Chris Wilson	Together Against Sizewell C (TASC)
	Pete Wilkinson	Together Against Sizewell C (TASC)
	Rod Donington Smith	Cumbria Trust

**BEIS Officials**

	Minister Anne Marie Trevelyan	BEIS
	Stephen Speed	BEIS
	Umran Nazir	BEIS
	Scott Hudson	BEIS
	Christopher Bowbrick	BEIS
	Katrina McLeay	BEIS
	Jon Sutton	BEIS
	Mike Kitching	BEIS NGO Secretariat
	Jo Bernstein	BEIS
	Stuart Younger	BEIS
	Nick Hodgson	BEIS
	Olu Ogunbadejo	BEIS
	Daniel Kapadia	BEIS



	Lucy Wordsworth-Russell	BEIS
	John Bilton	BEIS
	Timothy Radbourne	BEIS
	Jacob White	BEIS
	Aman Grover	BEIS
	Cathy Alexander	BEIS

## External

	Simon Napper	Radioactive Waste Management (RWM)
	Daniel Jones	Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)
	Rachel Grant	Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)
	Penny Harvey	Committee of Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM)
	Gerry Thomas	Committee of Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM)
	Caroline Richards	Environment Agency (EA)
	Alan McGoff	Environment Agency (EA)



## Unanswered Ministerial Questions

The following questions were not addressed by the minister in full as there was either insufficient time or the NGO member was not present. BEIS have provided responses to these questions below.

### Fusion

#### **Progress on bid for Dounreay and issues of cost and waste (Tor Justad, Highlands Against Nuclear Transport).**

- Dounreay's nomination is being assessed, a final site will be selected in 2022. Fusion does not produce long-lived waste, so handling cost is significantly less.

### Fukushima

#### **Any comment on report that Government approached nuclear companies to draw up a coordinated public relations strategy to play down Fukushima accident in wake of accident before extent of radiation leak was known? (Ian Ralls, Friends of the Earth Network)**

- As was confirmed at the time, the BIS official quoted was not responsible for nuclear policy and their views were irrelevant to ministers' decisions in the aftermath of the Japanese earthquake.