

NGO forum meeting with Lord Vallance
Date, time and location: 16:00 – 26:56, 19/11/2025
Online only

Summary Minutes of the Meeting:

Following a brief introduction by Chris Heffer (Co-Chair of the Forum), Lord Vallance, Minister of State for Science, Research & Innovation and Nuclear, welcomed the members of the Forum and expressed an interest in hearing from all attendees and understanding how the format could ensure effective input. He acknowledged he might not have immediate answers but emphasised the importance of getting up to speed and establishing ongoing interactions.

Alison Downes (Co-Chair of the Forum) made a short statement on behalf of all NGO Forum members. Following this, members introduced themselves and made brief statements, outlining their perspectives on a number of issues.

Lord Vallance thanked the members for their input, noting in particular that points made around language, processes, regulations, optics and waste (including Geological Disposal Facilities) had been heard.

The meeting moved to specific questions as below.

Question 1: With the Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce due to report shortly, will the Minister make a commitment NOT to allow any weakening of the independence and powers of the ONR, and assure us that ALL future nuclear vendors must comply with UK safety regulations.

Response:

The UK has a strong and trusted regulatory framework, overseen by independent regulators (the Office for Nuclear Regulation and the relevant environmental regulators). Nuclear safety is a top priority for government, and our arrangements are kept under regular review, including peer review by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The regulators would not allow a nuclear installation to be built or to operate if they judged that it was not safe to do so.

Ministers do not have any responsibility for regulatory decision making. As a public corporation, ONR operates at arm's length from central government, with operational and regulatory independence.

The reforms of the Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce are designed to align nuclear regulatory changes with environmental objectives, ensuring compliance with the Environment Act 2021 and international commitments.

Question 2: *Will the minister remove those sites deemed ‘potentially suitable’ under EN-6 but which are clearly wholly unsuitable and unacceptable from any further consideration for new build or radioactive waste facilities?*

Response:

EN-7 has now (12th November) been laid in Parliament for designation, which is due to occur on 18 December. As EN-7 says, the sites listed in EN-6 retain inherent physical and other advantages that are likely to make them attractive for nuclear deployment, including the potential for a grid connection, and a large site area. Many also have a skilled local workforce.

Robust criteria on safety related issues including population density, flooding, and proximity to military activities will be retained to ensure that nuclear power stations are sited in appropriate locations.

On the siting of individual new nuclear projects, it is for the owner of any potential site to decide their approach to utilising their land. Any proposed project would be subject to robust regulatory requirements overseen by independent regulators

Question 3: *Why is the target completion date for **Sizewell C** kept secret as being “commercially sensitive” when the project’s target cost (£38bn 2024) is not? [Comment: Is there not more rigor in evaluation and public accountability if a date is publicly known?] Are the dates on the NESO website (July 2035 for Reactor 1 and July 2036 for Reactor 2) the same as the Minister’s internal understanding of likely completion?*

Response:

As confirmed by SZC, the project is due to begin operating from the mid-late 2030s.

The exact schedule estimate owned by SZC Ltd is considered to be commercially sensitive. This is to ensure sufficient commercial tension with the supply chain to incentivise efficient delivery. This is in the interests of consumers and taxpayers and ensures Sizewell C actively embeds lessons learnt from other projects.

Rigour and accountability for the project will be ensured through the incentives on the project’s investors to deliver Sizewell C as quickly and cheaply as possible. As a shareholder, the government will be working with its partners in the project to keep Sizewell C on track.

As a ‘megaproject’, a Strategy and Delivery Plan for the project will be laid in Parliament in the coming months. This will be followed by regular updates to Parliament throughout the construction period.

The dates held by NESO are not proxies for the project commencing operations. These dates are used for the planning of grid connection infrastructure and ensuring this is in place for when projects come online.

Question 4: *Will the minister commit to visiting East Suffolk to meet with members of the local community affected by Sizewell C?*

My office is developing plans for a visit to Sizewell, but I am unable to make commitments at this stage as the visit agenda is being developed.

Following revenue commencement the government is a minority-equity stakeholder in the SZC project, and therefore representations on the impacts of project construction itself are best made to the Sizewell C company directly. However, where matters concern wider government policy, I do of course welcome continued engagement with the forum.

Question 5: *What are HMG's plans for the Oldbury Site?*

Response

Great British Energy – Nuclear (GBE-N) owns sites at Oldbury-on-Severn (Gloucestershire) and Wylfa (Ynys Mon/ Anglesey).

As announced on 13 November, GBE-N's SMR project will be sited at Wylfa

As a site which has previously hosted a nuclear power station, Oldbury also has great potential. It remains under active consideration for future projects.

GBE-N will continue early work to evaluate the site, to ensure it is ready for future deployment as part of our broad nuclear programme. This includes the potential to support any privately-led projects that might be developed by the nuclear industry.

Lord Vallance closed the meeting by reiterating that he had heard and will consider the concerns of the NGO Forum members. He reiterated the government's position that nuclear power is essential to the government's Clean Energy Mission, while acknowledging the difficulty of the issues and the concerns raised. He committed to taking points into account, particularly around the language used by the Government, and continuing interaction, emphasising the need to move carefully in an area he believes is important for the country's clean energy goals.