

NOMINATION OF THE SELLAFIELD SITE - NEW NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS

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RECOMMENDATION

Members support the nomination of sites to host nuclear new build within the boundaries of Copeland recognising that further site specific details will be discussed and debated after the initial site selection closing date of 31st March.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2008, following extensive consultation, the Government issued its White Paper 'Meeting the Energy Challenge: A White Paper on Nuclear Power'. The White Paper outlines the Government's belief that new nuclear power stations should have a role to play in the national future energy mix alongside other low carbon sources. It also states that that it would be in the public interest to allow energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations; and that the Government will take active steps to facilitate this. In addition, it will be for energy companies to fund, develop and build new nuclear power stations in the UK, including meeting the full costs of decommissioning and their full share of waste management costs.
- 1.2 The key drivers behind the energy and nuclear power policy are climate change and energy security; of the 22 GW of capacity that is likely to close over the next two decades, just over a half is from carbon intensive fossil-fuel generation and about 10 GW is from nuclear power and therefore low-carbon. Companies' decisions on the type of power stations they invest in to replace this capacity will have significant implications for the level of future carbon dioxide emissions particularly beyond 2020.
- 1.3 Currently, nuclear power provides approximately 19% of electricity generation and 7.5% of total UK energy supplies and 3.5% of total UK energy use. Without our existing nuclear power stations, UK total annual carbon dioxide emissions from all energy use would be 5-12% higher than they are today if gas or coal power stations had been built instead. A saving of 5% in the UK's CO₂ emissions is, for illustrative purposes, about the same as taking a third of the nation's 32 million cars off the road.
- 1.4 Section 2 in detailing progress on current nomination work also provides information on the progress with regards to work carried out on sites surrounding the Sellafield site. However, in light of further information becoming available with regards to further sites to be nominated, this report is seeking an endorsement of Copeland Borough Council for site nominations to host nuclear new build within Copeland.

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 In its response to the BERR consultation on draft nomination criteria, the Council supported the Cumbria Partners response, which broadly supported the proposed criteria and flagged work in hand to prepare the case for West Cumbria in relation to land next to the Sellafield site for strategic selection.
- 2.2 The work is being led by AMEC Nuclear Ltd under commission from Westlakes Renaissance (WLR) on behalf of our partnership and funded by the NWDA and West Cumbria Development Fund, to collate an evidence base to demonstrate that the Sellafield site can meet the Government's nomination criteria and is capable of development for new nuclear build before 2025.
- 2.3 The intention is for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) to make the nomination. NDA have suggested that they are willing to do this but final confirmation is awaited and is expected before the end of March i.e. prior to submission of the nomination case. The NDA has indicated that for all its sites it will make the nomination, with support from the utilities, where there is interest in developing specific locations.
- 2.4 Indications are that the NDA will purchase the nomination work undertaken by WLR at a commercial rate in view of the increased value successful nomination will give to the land proposed for future development. Negotiations about this with the NDA are ongoing.
- 2.5 A successful nomination will result in the Sellafield site being included in a 'national policy statement' (NPS) prepared under the new planning regime that received Royal Assent in November 2008. Such a 'national policy statement' would detail all sites capable of development before 2025 and would then guide an Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) in decisions about planning consent for new nuclear build. The purpose of the new planning arrangements for national infrastructure projects in England is to reduce risk to developers and narrow any local planning inquiry by precluding debate about national policy or alternative siting options (as these issues will be dealt with through the development of a NPS).
- 2.6 The stages in the Government's policy process are:

Stage 1

- consult on draft SSA criteria (complete)
- assessment and revision of SSA criteria (complete)

Stage 2

- publish final SSA criteria (complete)
- site nominations to be submitted for suitable sites around the end of March 2009
- preparation of draft National Policy Statement for Nuclear (NPS) - likely June to September 2009

Stage 3

- consult on draft Nuclear NPS, finalise Nuclear NPS, undertake Parliamentary Scrutiny and publish Nuclear NPS around the end of 2009
- Final NPS by early 2010

- 2.7 As a result of efforts to promote the Sellafield site several commercial utilities are showing interest in developing on land at Sellafield and at other sites in Copeland and different options between 2 and 3 commercial reactors are being considered. These will be based on the Areva European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) or the Westinghouse Advanced Pressurised (AP) 1000 designs. Any more than this would present additional grid transmission and other technical challenges. However, there is sufficient space on the defined site for up to 8 reactor units.
- 2.8 Each reactor would likely employ about 350 permanent skilled staff when operational and create many thousands of jobs during the construction phase.
- 2.9 Subcontractors (AMEC, Arup, Jacobs Engineering, and Sellafield Limited) have been hired for technical and engineering evaluation of the Sellafield site against the Government's siting criteria set out in the DECC paper 'Towards a Nuclear National Policy Statement'. The new build project team, led by AMEC Nuclear Ltd, is confident at this stage that all of the proposed and draft exclusionary and discretionary assessment criteria can be achieved for the site adjacent to Sellafield.
- 2.10 A local stakeholder and media engagement programme is in place and Copeland officers are leading the development of the stakeholder engagement programme that will culminate in a large public event on March 18th 2009 in Whitehaven Civic Hall.. Briefings have been provided to many local council, trade union, and industry supply chain representatives across the County. The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Environment Agency have also been briefed.
- 2.11 Resolution of electricity grid transmission issues will be crucial to new nuclear build in Copeland. In order to carry electricity from any new generating station on the West Coast it may be necessary to build new 400kV power lines with visually intrusive (but fewer) 50 metre pylons. The provision of new 400kV power lines could also lead to some beneficial rationalisation and removal of some of the existing 132kV power lines in some areas. Transmission is not only an issue for new nuclear development. It is also an issue for the development of significant new on and off shore renewable capacity.
- 2.12 Our partnership has commissioned National Grid (NG) to undertake a transmission option study. NG will report on the optimum power line routes and infrastructure necessary to export the electricity generated from any new reactors into the high voltage national grid transmission system. A report is expected by the end of February 09.
- 2.13 For a number of months, the new build project team has been consulting with all of Cumbria's planning authorities and their representatives. A Planners Working Group (PWG) is meeting with the aim of developing a consensus with regard to power line routes. The Lake District National Park (LDNP) and Friends of the Lake District (FOLD) are key members of the PWG and have commented favourably on the process. In parallel, the new build project team have been assessing transmission via a sub-sea route
- 2.14 Discussions with the Joule Centre have highlighted some more attractive alternatives for onshore connections, including (a) less intrusive high-voltage pylons (b) the replacement of some existing, unsightly and complex infrastructure with less obtrusive alternatives, and (c) the possibility of a short sub-sea connection across Morecambe Bay thus avoiding a crossing of the southern part of the Lake District. Discussion of these alternatives will continue with the technical authorities and in the meetings with planners.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 Members support the nomination of sites to host nuclear new build within the boundaries of Copeland.
- 3.2 Members could decide to note this report and take no decision.
- 3.2 Members could decide not to support the nomination of any sites in Copeland for new nuclear build.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. Council has previously supported the principle of new nuclear power generation in our area and have been instrumental in triggering the partnership work that has taken place. That support has been consistent and should therefore continue and be reflected in our support for the nomination of any site at this stage.
- 4.2 We know work is advanced to collate evidence to demonstrate that the Sellafield site can meet Government strategic siting assessment criteria and is capable of deploying new nuclear generating capacity by 2025. Major energy utilities are showing interest in this site and others and are willing to give support to allow nominations for inclusion in a national policy statement about new nuclear development. That policy statement will be tested through public consultation before finalisation.
- 4.3 If any nuclear development were to be proposed in future at the Sellafield site or elsewhere in Copeland then this could contribute positively to local economic development and assist national energy security and CO2 reduction targets.
- 4.4 The Council is therefore recommended to support nomination of sites within the Copeland area. Doing so will not prejudice any future decision-making by the Council or its officers in relation to any specific development that may come forward.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 There are no resources or value for money implications for the Council at this stage. The NDA have indicated that they will acquire the preparation work and reimburse the funding bodies.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The main project will continue to be managed by AMEC and WLR on behalf of Copeland Borough Council and with our continuing support. It is proposed that the stakeholder programme remains to be done by the Sustainability & Nuclear Policy Advisor until the end of March when the nomination deadline will need to be met. After the 31st March 2009 nomination date is met there will be further discussions with partners to discuss future work plans.

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

7.1 The process of new nuclear power stations will progressively develop for a number of years over several of stages. This may have impacts, yet undefined, on current corporate objectives with regard to refinement and review.

List of Appendices:

None

List of Background Documents:

- Towards a nuclear national policy statement - Consultation on the Strategic Siting Assessment Process and Siting Criteria for New Nuclear Power Stations in the UK – BERR
- White Paper: Meeting the Energy Challenge - A White Paper on Energy - DTI
- White Paper: Meeting the Energy Challenge - A White Paper on Nuclear Power - BERR

List of Consultees: Cllr Elaine Woodburn, Nuclear Working Group, Fergus McMorrow, Corporate Team, Ian Curwen, Julie Betteridge.

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	None
Impact on Sustainability	Developments impact on local and ultimately national sustainability issues
Impact on Rural Proofing	Strategies and action plans need to consider the rural community
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	The work needs to take account of the Council's policies on equality and diversity.
Children and Young Persons Implications	The issues are intergenerational and will therefore effect future local communities
Human Rights Act Implications	None
Monitoring Officer Comments	None.
Section 151 Officer Comments	No comment at this time.

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision **Yes**