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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
JOINT BERKELEY/OLDBURY SITE STAKEHOLDER GROUP (SSG)
HELD AT OLDBURY CONFERENCE CENTRE, OLDBURY NAITE, THORNBURY, BS35 1RQ
WEDNESDAY 11 September 2024**

Attendance/Apologies list

Attendance

Members

John Stanton	Chair, Berkeley
Cllr Steve Chandler JP	Vice Chair, Berkeley
Cllr Matthew Riddle	Chair, Oldbury
Cllr Chris Jennings	Vice Chair, Oldbury
Cllr Chris Bloor	Thornbury Town Council
Cllr Chris Davies	South Gloucestershire
Cllr Maggie Dutton	Stroud District Council
Cllr Hugh Johnson	Tytherington Parish Council
Cllr Dominic Power	Chepstow Town Council
Brian Roberts	Thornbury Chamber of Commerce
Cllr John Crook	Monmouthshire County Council
Cllr Demelza Turner-Wilkes	Stroud District Council

Operators and Officers

John Alderton	Site Director, Oldbury
Tracy Braithwaite	Environment Agency
Stephen Bray	GBN
Emily Ciezarek	Site Integration Manager, Berkeley
Alistair Findlay	NDA
Bill Hamilton	NRS
Paul Jenneson	ONR
John McNamara	GBN
Vicki Simms	NRS
Rebecca Austin	Minute Taker

Members of the public

Peter Barrett	SGS
Diana Gash	STAND
Peter Hazelwood	
Janet Hellen	TRAPP'D
Trevor Hellen	Berkeley Research Group
Bill Otto	STAND
Cllr Turner-Wilkes	Stroud District Councillor'
Geoff Wheeler	Berkeley Research Group
Jon Severs	Officer South Gloucestershire Council
Angela Presdee	Officer Gloucestershire County Council

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Apologies

Barbara French
Elizabeth Norton
Mike Heaton
Cllr Kevin Evans
Cllr Tony Williams
Tony Acton
Cllr Brian Tipper
Peter Reynolds

STAND

NDA
NRS
Oldbury on Severn Parish Council
South Gloucestershire Council
Oldbury Parish Council Nuclear New Build Committee
Gloucestershire County Council
EA

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1. WELCOME

The Chair (John Stanton) opened the meeting. He noted that the meeting in June had been cancelled due to the election. No appropriate date had been found to reschedule prior to 11 September. There had been some issues with booking the SGS college, and it was hoped that the next meeting would be held there.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Barbara French, Elizabeth Norton, Mike Heaton, Kevin Evans, Tony Williams, Tony Acton, Brian Tipper and Peter Reynolds. Emily Ciezarek was standing in for Mike Heaton and Vicki Simms for Sharon Fry. Tracy Braithwaite would provide the Oldbury Environment Agency report on Peter Reynolds' behalf.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2024

A. Accuracy

Brian Roberts noted that he had been erroneously recorded as a member of the public rather than a member of the SSG. The Chair stated that Nick Easby had been incorrectly recorded as Nick Beasley.

B. Matters Arising

The Chair stated that the letter of appreciation to Eirian Vaughn-Lewis referred to at the previous meeting was in hand.

Cllr Matthew Riddle noted that the rationale behind the holding of joint Oldbury and Berkeley SSG meetings had been raised at the previous meeting. Communities located between the sites would be interested in operations at both and joint meetings prevented members having to attend twice. It was also interesting for those at Oldbury to hear the Berkeley perspective, as the Berkeley site was ahead in terms of decommissioning. The Chair concurred.

4. SITE DIRECTOR REPORTS

A. Emily Ciezarek – Site Integration Manager, Berkeley

Emily Ciezarek highlighted that the Berkeley site was no longer in enhanced security measures. The recent out-of-hours security exercise, witnessed by the regulator, had been a success.

Berkeley contributed between 50% and 60% of the company's overall target for intermediate-level waste retrievals. The site also dealt with low-level waste shipments, with a further six shipments planned for the 2024/2025 period. The target for the ISF waste store was 50 tonnes. Cllr Chris Jennings asked how much more needed to be done to reach the target. Emily Ciezarek explained that just under 50% of Vault 2 FED had been emptied and around 50% of Vault 1 FED. Vault 3 had only recently been opened. She approximated a small percentage of the total waste had been cleared as yet. The programme would run until 2032.

Emily Ciezarek added that there were two contracts in place for Blower House: the first to remove metallic waste and conduct asbestos cleaning, and the second to build a waste management facility, where waste would be cleaned, packaged and removed. The facility would be operational in early 2025.

The Chair asked how the Blower House waste would differ from the intermediate-level waste being dealt with elsewhere on the site. Emily Ciezarek explained that Blower House primarily had metallic-type waste. Asbestos contamination also meant that it was characterised differently. Waste would be treated and would go off-site for cleaning at Nuclear Waste Services (NWS). The Chair asked how waste would be transported. Emily Ciezarek said that this was being determined. It was possible that waste would be size-reduced into drums and containers. As waste was processed and brought out, the transport plan would be finalised.

Emily Ciezarek summarised recent sustainability activities at the Berkeley site. A number of apprentices had been recruited from the local area. £1 million was available in soc-ec funding and Berkeley had had 10 requests, totalling just over £20,000.

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Cllr Chris Jennings asked if waste was moved to a national waste centre. Emily Ciezarek explained that waste was currently moved to an interim storage facility on site, until geological disposal facilities were established.

Peter Barrett asked how neighbours were communicated with when security exercises took place. There had been a simulated exercise over the summer and SGS college had not been contacted. Emily Ciezarek said that this had been an oversight. There had been a change in the security team and she would ensure that this was fed back. There was a list of parties the site contacted in the event of a security exercise.

Cllr Chris Davies questioned how much waste product could be loaded onto a 40-tonne truck. Emily Ciezarek explained that waste was currently packed into a concrete box before being loaded onto a truck. The weight of the concrete box would therefore have to be taken into account. She added after the meeting that a concrete box alone weighed 27 tonnes.

B. John Alderton – Oldbury Site Director

John Alderton introduced himself, noting that he had taken up his post in April 2024. The safety team had recently interrogated the data regarding a spate of hand injuries across the organisation in the past 12 to 18 months. While there had been no trends determined, the exercise had stimulated a successful hand safety campaign at the Oldbury site in July.

The C3 ponds de-planting work had concluded. Electrical isolation carried out over a number of weekends had significantly shortened the timeline for the cable cutting project in the Turbine Hall, with more than 1,900 of 2,130 cables cut. Waste projects were in the early stages. Mechanical installation had been completed and site acceptance activities and setting to work had commenced. Once this was finalised, the project would be paused until the advanced vacuum drying system was ready in summer 2026.

Environmental concerns had been taken into account throughout. “For example, an existing concrete slab will be used for the AVDS (Advanced Vacuum Drying System) which will help to significantly reduce vehicles on local roads”. The fuel element debris (FED) project was in its early stages, with radiological and material information sought to inform the future design and build of the main retrieval projects. This work was due for completion around July 2026.

John Alderton highlighted the launch day held at Oldbury in April, where there had been a focus on sustainability. The business case for a bio-processor for food waste had been completed and a purchase would be made in due course. Waste would be used on the site’s wellbeing garden and any surplus offered to local organisations.

James Hennessy was working on the Silt Lagoon 3 project, which was out to contract for design, with a view to implement work in the drier months of 2025. The team was also investigating the possibility of switching off vent plants where appropriate once de-planting work was fully complete. This had the potential to reduce the site’s electricity usage by between 10% and 30%.

The site’s soc-ec funding numbers were presented alongside a number of local initiatives funded in Oldbury in the past. A video of the Oldbury site launch day was played. Another day was planned for 2025.

Brian Roberts thanked John Alderton for his continued support of Thornbury Christmas lights.

Cllr Matthew Riddle asked if the electrical isolation had gone as planned and if there was any further work planned. John Alderton stated that the isolation had been a success. While there were no plans for further electrical isolations at Oldbury, there would be a lessons learned session held, which would be supported by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), with a view to rolling out similar projects across the NRS estate.

The Chair questioned whether there was a need to run vent fans at all if they had been successfully turned off during the electrical isolation. John Alderton clarified that the vents had been shut off only for a short period. The ongoing trial would switch them off for longer timeframes and determine if this was feasible.

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Cllr Chris Jennings noted that there had been a consultation held in Oldbury about the ongoing usage of Lagoon 3. He asked which proposed option had been taken up. John Alderton explained that the site would become wetlands. The civil design work coming up was intended to prevent water leakage. Cllr Chris Jennings asked about the level of water. Hugh Johnson observed that no feedback had been received after the consultation. John Alderton said that he was unsure as to the end state of the site once water leakage was halted. He would find out and circulate further details through Cllr Matthew Riddle.

Geoff Wheeler asked about the recycling of cables and other non-nuclear waste. John Alderton stated that a consideration for the Turbine Hall demolition contract would be the realisation of scrap value.

5. NRS UPDATE – INTRODUCTION TO THINKS INSIGHT

Bill Hamilton explained that NDA had long supported NRS reviewing its 'care and maintenance' strategy to create something site-specific. This required engagement and knowledge-building within the community, of which the Thinks Insight project was part.

Thinks Insight were an independent polling company engaged to speak to ordinary people in the communities surrounding NRS sites about their knowledge of nuclear power and possible future options for their nearest site. Next, there would be deep dives carried out in individual communities. Bill Hamilton would liaise with the respective SSG chairs on this.

A video was played sharing the views of participants from the first round of focus groups and surveys conducted by Thinks Insight. Bill Hamilton noted that the more detailed results circulated were not yet statistically significant at the local level. The survey supported the notion that the UK overall had a positive view of nuclear power.

Geoff Wheeler highlighted that participants had been particularly interested in what might happen to their local site. He recommended that this be seen as a new chapter of the history of nuclear power in the UK. The Chair encouraged attendees to read the detailed statistics provided. Bill Hamilton noted that attendees were welcome to contact NRS with any specific queries.

Cllr Chris Jennings asked which area had been targeted by the survey. Bill Hamilton explained that the first round of surveys had been deliberately general. The upcoming deep dive would likely target a radius of 10 miles around NRS sites.

Trevor Hellen noted the importance of educating the general public on energy as a whole, including consideration of the picture outside of the UK. It would be beneficial to put nuclear power into proper perspective by considering other energy sources, as all had positives and negatives. Bill Hamilton observed that views on renewables, for example, and the broader energy landscape naturally came through during NRS's surveying efforts. However, it was not NRS's place to lead the conversation beyond nuclear power.

Janet Hellen added that, although clean energy was highly desirable, the general public did not understand the costs involved or the unreliability of sun and wind.

Peter Barrett stated that more non-partisan information would be beneficial. This might be an ask that NRS could make of the government. Alistair Findlay noted that the Climate Change Committee gave government advice on the energy mix. Peter Barrett suggested that such bodies must engage more with the public. Awareness was low.

6. NDA UPDATE

Alistair Findlay reported that the new Minister of State for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), Lord Hunt, had worked on nuclear under the past Labour government and understood the NDA mission. He had visited Sellafield in recent months.

The newly appointed chair of the NDA board had previously been chair at NWS. The upcoming NDA summit would provide an opportunity for the organisation to engage with its stakeholders. SSG reviews were ongoing, with an update meeting held in July 2024. The outcome would

be shared with SSG chairs shortly, and the annual stakeholder survey would be circulated in due course.

The government had published a new decommissioning policy in April, the first for almost 20 years, presenting a unified policy across the UK and tasking the NDA with considering intermediate-level waste stores. The NDA's next five-year strategy would be published in 2026, with consultation due to start in 2025. A National Audit Office report on the NDA would be published towards the end of October 2024, with a Public Accounts Committee session expected in January 2025.

Bill Otto urged the NDA to take into account the views of the new intake of south Wales MPs who had a keen interest in Oldbury and Berkeley, such as Matt Bishop MP. Alistair Findlay stated that Matt Bishop MP would be added to the existing list of stakeholders with whom the NDA interacted.

The Chair asked if the NDA had a specific engagement programme for MPs. Alistair Findlay explained that a new member of staff had been brought on board specifically to focus on political engagement and understanding, although, as a public body, the NDA did not lobby. For example, an MPs dinner was held every year. Bill Hamilton highlighted that the new Berkeley and Oldbury MPs would be visiting the sites in November.

7. ONR REPORTS

Paul Jenneson explained that the recent CNI visit to Berkeley had been a routine meeting with the NRS CEO and not related to any issues at Berkeley. ONR reports would be provided twice yearly going forward. Site managers provided regular updates on any live issues and the ONR email conveyed any Oldbury or Berkeley-related topics to Paul Jenneson directly.

The Oldbury de-cabling work had been a positive example of collaboration between the NRS, ONR and site staff on a new and novel approach outside of established practice. NRS had worked with the regulator from the start to manage risk. A recent inspection on FED had been positive with high-quality safety submissions. There had been no issues found since the SSG had last met.

The Berkeley site had moved back into routine measures. There had been good work done on the safety case for stacking concrete boxes in the ISF, with no overall issues noted since the last SSG meeting.

Bill Otto asked if the ONR had any knowledge of the gaseous release of C14 and beta particulate at the Berkeley site. Paul Jenneson explained that he was responsible for the Health and Safety at Work Act and anything related to the nuclear licence. Environmental impact and off-site concerns were under the remit of the Environment Agency (EA). Tracy Braithwaite noted that she and Paul Jenneson were in regular contact.

8. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY REPORTS

A. Berkeley

Tracy Braithwaite stated that she had taken over regulation of the Berkeley site in April. There had recently been changes made to the guidance issued alongside permits, but Berkeley and Oldbury guidance had not been impacted. No events of concern had been noted at either site. Both had stayed well within the environmental discharge limits permitted and monitored by the annual discharge dose assessment.

Increases in C14 and beta particulate levels had been noted at Berkeley and an investigation launched. Staff had reported that the levels were due to a spreadsheet error. The EA would seek to determine for itself whether or not this was the case. Tracy Braithwaite had begun her own investigation and had not found that any particular facility was responsible for the change. Despite ongoing investigations into the issue, the reported C14 and beta particulate levels were nowhere near the upper permitted limits.

During the last quarter, the environmental safety case for Berkeley and the site's waste management plan had been reviewed. The results would be reported in due course. In the

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following month an inspection into solid waste management would be conducted. An aqueous and gaseous waste management inspection would take place in Q3. An EA report describing the previous year's sampling would be published in November. The generic design assessment (GDA) process underway had created a resource squeeze for the EA.

The Chair questioned the systems and management behind the C14 and beta particulate reporting, if indeed there had been a spreadsheet error. Tracy Braithwaite confirmed that management arrangements and methodologies would be part of her investigation. The personnel in place at Berkeley had long tenures and were well qualified. She would report back at the next SSG.

Dominic Power noted that it had been suggested in the past that environmental discharge levels would naturally increase as the Berkeley site began to process more waste material. Tracy Braithwaite said that this was broadly true and would clearly explain increasing environmental discharges. However, in this case, no specific facility had been found to be responsible for the C14 and beta particulate increase. When there was such a small change, it was challenging to determine whether it might be related to, for example, weather conditions.

Cllr Steve Chandler expressed concern that the investigation had made such little progress since the last SSG meeting. Tracy Braithwaite explained that she had restarted the investigation upon taking over responsibility for the Berkeley site. She was not willing to accept an explanation unless she had seen the evidence for herself. Cllr Steve Chandler asked about cooperation from site staff. Tracy Braithwaite confirmed that relevant site staff were cooperating with her enquiries. There had been some delays over the summer due to staff leave.

Cllr Steve Chandler observed that a spreadsheet error might have led to underreporting in other areas. Tracy Braithwaite said that this was possible. She was due to visit the site in October to discuss the matter and had been meeting with the head of environment every two weeks.

B. Oldbury

Tracy Braithwaite summarised Peter Reynolds' report in his absence. He had visited the Oldbury site in March, looking into runoff PCBs in light of the Hinkley Point B fire. This would also be considered during the upcoming aqueous waste inspection at Berkeley. At Oldbury, there had been adequate generic arrangements, but Peter Reynolds would prefer to see site-specific plans put into place. His July inspection into solid waste management had evidenced the sufficient and compliant measures in place. Projects underway were utilising the best available techniques.

Peter Reynolds held fortnightly meetings with the head of radiological protection to consider events and EA recommendations. Discharges at the Oldbury site were equal to less than 1% of the upper limit. Tracy Braithwaite invited attendees to utilise the contact details provided at the end of the EA reports if they had specific questions.

9. Great British Nuclear

Stephen Bray stated that, as of July, Great British Nuclear had acquired two sites, including one at Oldbury, for the purposes of nuclear rebuild. GBN was an arms-length body of DESNZ and delivered, enabled and advised on the nuclear programme, including developing a programme for small modular reactors (SMR). The GDA process was underway in this regard with final decisions yet to be made. The possibility of a further gigawatt station would form part of secondary deliberations.

GBN would be the parent organisation and would form subsidiary development companies through which SMRs would be built. There was around £20 billion in available funding for two SMR projects. Government investment was anticipated to bring forward additional private investment. Once two vendors were finalised, each would be allocated a site.

Stephen Bray noted that the Oldbury GBN site had been previously run well by Hitachi. Colleagues were staying on for 18 months to ensure a smooth transition. Current site activity

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was low level and non-invasive. Into 2025, depending on a variety of factors, ground investigation work might begin and more of a site presence would be evident. Engagement programmes were in their infancy. The intention was to develop a community forum wherein strategic conversations could be held. GBN's aim was to have the first SMRs to be commissioned before 2035. The purpose that the Oldbury site would be used for would become clear over the coming months.

The Chair asked how many SMRs would be placed on each site. Stephen Bray explained that this would depend on which design was chosen. The submissions ranged from 200MW_e to 450MW_e. John McNamara added that SMRs could be stacked together. The Chair questioned whether multiple SMRs placed on the same site would be housed in the same building. Stephen Bray stated multiple SMRs would share services on the same site, though on separate nuclear islands.

Brian Roberts suggested that a deal be struck between the various parties at Oldbury to stockpile second-hand material until it was needed. Stephen Bray noted that any decisions of this nature would have to wait until a final design was selected. All options were on the table and the more sustainable an approach taken the better. Tracy Braithwaite added that a permit would be required to reuse material at a different facility. The EA, alongside the NDA and DESNZ, were considering how legislation might be changed to facilitate more stockpiling on site.

Cllr Matthew Riddle urged close cooperation between those at the NRS and GBN Oldbury sites to reduce inconvenience and disruption to the local community. Trevor Hellen asked about transmission lines. Stephen Bray explained one existing connection would likely be upgradable but, as regulation currently stood, another connection point would be required. This was the responsibility of the National Grid. The full context of connection requirements would be provided in ongoing consultations carried out by both GBN and the National Grid.

Bill Otto asked if the proposed designs would be made public. Stephen Bray highlighted that all requesting parties were required to share an overview of their submission to the regulator via their own websites.

Angela Presdee noted the Severn Edge team were keen to work with GBN to ensure that benefits were felt across the wider area. Stephen Bray replied that there would likely be a GBN presence at Severn Edge meetings going forward. The STEP bid had provided a good starting point in terms of pulling together appropriate parties for consultation.

Cllr Steve Chandler highlighted reports that the previously college-owned land at Berkeley might be utilised for SMRs in future. Stephen Bray explained that at least one of the vendors under consideration had talked about the Berkeley site in various contexts, such as its use as an administrative or training centre. It was hard to see a future for the Oldbury site without some connection to Berkeley.

The current GDA process was not the only way that SMRs might come to market. It was hoped that developers would start to move towards such project independently. DESNZ was considering a policy statement for 2025 that looked at the possibility of bringing multiple new sites along on the journey. Advanced modular reactors (AMR) were also on the horizon.

Cllr Dominic Power asked if there was anything share in terms of steelworks. Stephen Bray stated that any future strategy in this regard would depend on which reactor vendors were successful. The Chair invited Stephen Bray and John McNamara to attend future SSG meetings.

10. AOB

A. Railhead Issue

Cllr Steve Chandler explained that a productive meeting had been held between relevant Nuclear Transport Solutions (NTS) staff and the Vale of Berkeley Railway (VoBR). Although no operating system had been established, NTS staff had seen no reason in principle to oppose some joint use of the line, subject to appropriate assessments and processes. VoBR

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were in the process of developing proposals for their use of the line. The Chair added that he had made notes at the meeting if any attendees wanted more information.

B. Berkeley History Book

Geoff Wheeler and Trevor Hellen presented their book on the history of Berkeley labs, which included contributions from around 100 ex-colleagues at Berkeley. They sought to finance a printing of 100 copies if there was interest. Bill Hamilton recommended that the book's authors contact NRS, as there was a possibility of up to £2,000 in funding to this end.

C. SGS College

Peter Barrett explained that the science park had been sold to Chiltern Vital Group (CVG). He was now an interested part of the college, rather than a landowner at Berkeley. CVG was significantly better funded and connected to take the site forward.

D. Oldbury Technical Centre (OTC) Demolition

John Alderton noted that final negotiations with the contractor were ongoing, with mobilisation to start in November 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed.

Next meeting dates: TBC