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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HUNTERSTON SITE STAKEHOLDER GROUP (SSG)
HELD AT THE WATERSIDE HOTEL, ARDROSSAN ROAD, WEST KILBRIDE, KA23 9NG
THURSDAY 5 December 2024**

Attendance/Apologies list

Attendance

Ms Rita Holmes	Fairlie CC (Chair)
Mr John Lamb	West Kilbride CC
Cllr Tom Marshall	North Ayrshire Council
Mr Jamie Woodburn	Largs CC
Mr Graham Buckley	West Kilbride CC
Mr Alan Holden	Fairlie CC

Operators and Officers

Mr Joe Struthers	EDF (Station Director)
Mr Daniel Smith	Site Director (Hunterston A)
Mr Richard Gibson	Engineering Manager (Hunterston A)
Mr Keith Hammond	SEPA (Site Inspector, Hunterston B)
Ms Melanie Hayes	SEPA (Site Inspector, Hunterston A)
Mr Stewart Ballantine	SEPA (Commissioning Manager)
Mr Peter Hughes	ONR (Site Inspector, Hunterston A)
Mr Bill Hamilton	External Affairs Director, NRS
Ms Claire Aitken	NRS
Mr Colin Hargreaves	NRS Site Inspector

In Attendance

Mr Matthew Dent	Minute taker
Three members of the public	

Apologies

Mr Stuart McGhie	Vice Chair
Mr David Wallace	NDA (Stakeholder Lead Scotland)
Ms Diane Hamilton	Scottish Government
Mr Steve Saunders	ONR (Site Inspector, Hunterston B)
Ms Fiona McCall	EDF
Mr Craig Hatton	North Ayrshire Council (Chief Executive)
Mr Stewart McKenzie	North Ayrshire Council
Mr Ian Murdoch	North Ayrshire Council
Cllr Eleanor Collier	North Ayrshire Council
Mr Alastair Walker	NRS
Mr Angus Cochran-Patrick	Hunterston Estate

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1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair opened the meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves. Apologies were noted from David Wallace, Diane Hamilton, Steve Saunders, Craig Hatton, Stewart McKenzie, Alistair Walker, Ian Murdoch, Angus Cochran-Patrick and Stuart McGhie. Bill Hamilton would be arriving late.

No interests were declared.

2. CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR UPDATES AND CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair presented her report.

The Chair had attended the NDA NGO forum and received a presentation on the Radiological Response and Emergency Management System, which automatically measured, analysed and informed on background radiation levels on a 48-hour basis.

Meetings had taken place to discuss the SSG review report's findings and how it might shape future SSG meetings. The Chair noted concerns about attendance of voting members at the SSG meetings. JW noted that he found it challenging having to take time off work unpaid, and Larg CC was struggling to get someone who could attend the SSG meetings.

The cross-party group on nuclear would meet on from 18.00 to 20.00 on 17 December in Committee Room at the Scottish Parliament to discuss nuclear waste. The meeting would also be available online.

Alongside the chair of the Sizewell SSG, the Chair had toured Hunterston A and Hunterston B. They had been impressed by the teams at the A station, which had explained their work and the challenges they had met and solved.

The Chair welcomed Daniel Smith, who had taken up the role of Hunterston A Site Director from Monday 2 December.

3. ACTIONS AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

John Lamb proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved. RH seconded the motion. The minutes of the meeting of 5 September 2024 were approved as a true and accurate representation of the meeting.

Claire Aitken went through the actions from the previous meeting.

To provide an update on the weather barrier

Richard Gibson noted that, at the previous SSG meeting, Mark Blackley had explained that the current strategy was to retain the current weather barrier for longer than originally planned and not replace it with metal cladding. The site had investigated the possibility of changing the colour of the current plastic barrier. This was considered technically possible, but no similar applications had been found where this had been carried out. There was a risk that any new coating would not adhere effectively and could delaminate through time, resulting in a more unsightly exterior. It would also invalidate manufacturer warranties. The potential cost had been estimated at £1 million. It had been concluded that the risk of failure and cost had made this unviable.

Hunterston A and B to schedule a walkaround to view the external buildings.

The Chair explained that, as Stuart McGhie was unable to attend, this had been put on hold.

Joe Struthers to ascertain if more samples were tested regionally or on site.

Joe Struthers reported that sampling through defueling was as it had been through generation. There had been a small number of sample points at which frequency had been changed, and there was no intention to reduce sampling moving into deconstruction.

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Diane Hamilton to circulate a link to the draft higher activity waste policy to John Lamb.

Diane Hamilton was not present. John Lamb noted that he had not received this. Claire Aitken would chase it with Diane Hamilton.

4. HUNTERSTON B SITE REPORTS

Hunterston B Site Report

Joe Struthers presented his report.

There had been no significant safety events during the reporting period. Total Recordable Injury Rate (TRIR) remained at zero and the radiation dose was slightly below plan for the year.

Good progress continued with defueling, and at present reactor 4 had been 95% defueled. 14 of the 308 channels were still to be defueled, which was aimed to be completed by end of December or early January, for the site to be declared fuel-free by June 2025. Good progress was also being made on transfer and deconstruction, with the post defueling safety case being worked on with the NRS to deliver a seamless transfer. NRS training facilities were being set up on site. Deconstruction focus was on early works and preparations, and further early deconstruction work would commence early in the New Year.

Following individual consultation with staff about post-defueling and transfer to NRS, aspirations of 93% of staff had been met. Over the next 18 months, there would be further opportunities for staff, and it was hoped that there would be minimal or no compulsory redundancies. The best fit process had been used to match aspirations and skills to the deconstruction structure agreed with NRS. The trade unions had participated with a positive outcome. There were a few vacancies in the structure, and an internal recruitment phase would begin in the next few months. Opportunities had been provided for around 30 employees through the EDF Glasgow office.

Joe Struthers noted that he had been offered and had accepted a corporate leadership role within EDF based in Glasgow. Recruitment for his successor was nearing a conclusion and would be confirmed and communicated in due course. Handover was likely to be in Q1 2025, subject to necessary approvals. Therefore, this was likely to be Joe Struthers's last SSG meeting as station director for Hunterston B. He thanked the Chair and SSG members for their patience, support and healthy challenge.

ONR Report

There was no ONR report for Hunterston B.

SEPA Report

Keith Hammond presented his report.

The last inspection had taken place in October and had focused on issues with data returns. Good progress had been made, and SEPA was happy with this. SEPA was also looking at plans for the increased effluent discharge line, on which good progress had also been made. The for an EASR variance application had been duly made, and had gone out to the Scottish Government, ONR and Food Standards Scotland, none of whom had made any comment. It was intended to go out to consultation in early 2025.

Radioactivity In Food and the Environment (RIFE) 29 had been published in November. This included all the monitoring that SEPA had undertaken to demonstrate that discharges were within the 1 millisievert per year limit, which they all had been. For Hunterston, which was dealt with as a combined site due to proximity of the two stations, had been far below the limit

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at 0.13 millisieverts. The Scottish Pollutant Release Inventory (SPRI) had also been updated for 2023 and was available on the SEPA website.

Questions & Answers

John Lamb noted that the overall decommissioning strategy remained as early safe store, and this had been EDF's proposition from the beginning. In contrast, A Station was not safe store but effectively decommissioning the whole plant. John Lamb queried there was discussion around this between EDF and NRS. Joe Struthers explained that current strategy at Hunterston B was early safe store, and EDF were working closely with NRS to underpin this.

John Lamb noted that the old fish farm had been cleared internally and would be deconstructed in the following year. He asked whether application had been made for a demolition order. Joe Struthers stated that all necessary preparation works were proceeding, including engaging with the local authority and the necessary environmental surveys that needed to be in place before demolition began.

Jamie Woodburn asked whether there were any plans to mark completion of defueling and whether local schools were involved, and if not, whether they could be. Joe Struthers said this could be done jointly with NRS. He would take an action to provide an update on this.

ACTION: Joe Struthers to update on plans to mark completion of defueling.

The Chair queried whether there were still any hazards associated with the old fish farm. Joe Struthers reported that there were no industrial hazards associated with the buildings being empty. However, at deconstruction, they would need to ensure it was secure and access restricted to manage hazards.

The Chair queried the reference in the EDF report to emergent faults in the irradiated fuel dismantling. Joe Struthers explained that the majority of the emergent faults had been associated with the tie bar end fittings. A lot of upgrade work had been found to improve consistency and reliability. Since this, there had not been further issues. Keith Hammond explained that the sample was taken from a laminar flow within the stack in order to not get a false reading from the eddies at the edge.

Commented [DS1]: Tie bar end fittings

5. HUNTERSTON A SITE REPORTS

Hunterston A Site Report

Richard Gibson presented his report.

At the end of August, it had been identified that some of the laboratory equipment might not have been calibrated to the required standards. Site investigation had been carried out and had identified a number of issues relating to work constructions, training and instrument testing. A copy of the investigation had been provided to SEPA, and the shortfalls had been sufficient for SEPA to write to Richard Gibson and instruct that NRS cease the use of its site laboratory for any sampling related to authorised discharge limits. Any drift in reading would have been minor against the authorised discharge limits. It was not believed that any authorised limits had been exceeded or any environment harm caused as a result. Nevertheless, NRS was taking the issue very seriously.

As a result of the restriction around use of the laboratory, there had been changes to activities to minimise the requirement for laboratory testing. This had meant shutting down one of the waste recovery facilities, with staff redeployed to other duties. Progress had been made in implementing arrangements for alternative laboratory services at another NRS site and a commercial laboratory, which would hopefully allow the relaxation of site operational restrictions soon.

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A security demonstration exercise had been held in September with the support of Police Scotland. It had been a particularly challenging scenario centred around protester activity and a drone crash. Richard Gibson had been pleased with the professionalism shown.

Active commissioning had commenced for the Wet Intermediate Level Waste Recovery & Encapsulation Plant (WILWREP) system, and three of the drums of acid had been successfully encapsulated. The waste facility had been repaired and returned to service, allowing the early completion of the annual waste recovery target.

The reactor roof repairs had been completed, and the contractor had been demobilised. The replacement of the old safety netting around the package store had been replaced.

Commented [DS2]: contractor

ONR Report

Peter Hughes presented his report.

During the period from 1 July to 30 September, Peter Hughes had been on site for one inspection at the end of August. No issues had been found from that inspection.

The site had reported a Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) event due to an individual suffering a cut on their head. The site actions undertaken had been deemed to be appropriate.

The ONR had had to issue the roof contractor an enforcement letter due to the use of paint, which was an isocyanide affecting respiration, without adequate equipment in place to protect workers. This enforcement letter had been complied with.

The ONR had been aware of the issue with the laboratory and was looking at activities required to support SEPA and the site in terms of a return to service.

Peter Hughes had been onsite that week with a joint security focus on maintenance, which had been appropriate. The ONR had issued its chief nuclear inspector's report, and Hunterston A remained at normal regulatory attention level. The report was available on the ONR website.

SEPA Report

Melanie Hayes presented her report.

An information notice had been issued to the site at the start of the year relating to the discharge returns. NRS had failed to meet the 31 October deadline for two of the actions and had requested an extension, which had been provided. With the various laboratory issues a further extension had been requested to the remaining actions to 2025. This was processing through SEPA internal processes.

The variation request for gaseous discharges relating to the authorised discharge point for SILWE was still available for consultation until 20 December. It was very likely that the determination period would not meet the deadline in October 2025.

A regulatory notice had been issued to the site on 12 November requiring immediate cessation of use of the onsite laboratory for the purpose of demonstrating compliance with the site EASR permit, following SEPA review of the NRS internal investigation into shortcomings regarding acceptance into service and use of equipment, failure to follow or have in place adequate processes and procedures to achieve compliance, and potential shortfalls in staff training. SEPA would undertake its own investigation over the coming months before the laboratory could be put back into use.

Questions & Answers

John Lamb noted the gaseous radioactive discharges and queried whether the numbers provided were cumulative or total. Richard Gibson explained that it had been over the previous

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12 months. John Lamb queried whether it represented a normal amount of discharge. Richard Gibson confirmed that it did.

Jamie Woodburn queried the life expectancy of the current white cladding on the weather barrier. Richard Gibson explained that the design life had been 10 years. It had been installed 11 years previously. Indications were that it was in a good condition with no significant failures or issues. Jamie Woodburn summarised that the answer to the earlier it was likely that any coating would not work, but regardless NRS would not pay for it as it was too expensive. Daniel Smith explained that it was not solely the cost being prohibitive, but the likelihood of the solution being successful. Jamie Woodburn queried how old the roof on the structure was. Richard Gibson explained the resealing which had been recently completed, subject to another resealing in four years, should be good for another 10 years. Most of the fabric had been replaced at least once. Every indication was that there were five to 10 years left of life in the material. Jamie Woodburn noted that, to members of the community, it was 'a carbuncle' that it seemed they were stuck with. Richard Gibson noted that the maintenance plan had been for the reactors to remain for 60 to 100 years with the metal cladding. It was not the strategy to keep the temporary weather barrier for that same timeframe. Jamie Woodburn said the situation was unsatisfactory.

The Chair said that, if the deconstruction of the reactor building took place, then the weather barrier would be removed. Jamie Woodburn noted that there was no timeline for this. The Chair stated that the site was waiting for the NDA and NRS to decide which stations would be deconstructed and which would be kept in the safe store. Bill Hamilton noted that there was an indicated timeline for all sites. It was being worked on. A major decision had been taken with the NDA not to go for a care and maintenance strategy. Therefore, full metal cladding was not required. Patience was required, as plans for decommissioning were developing. The speed of decommissioning would be dependent on the finances received.

Daniel Smith suggested that Jamie Woodburn visit the site in the New Year to discuss the cladding. Jamie Woodburn welcomed the invitation.

Jamie Woodburn queried the calibration of laboratory equipment and the order of magnitude by which readings had been out. Richard Gibson said verification of this was taking place, but indications suggested that they had not drifted significantly. Jamie Woodburn stated that it was 'embarrassing' that the equipment had not been tested and expressed concerns about what else might have been missed and how faith could be restored. Richard Gibson noted that a significant internal investigation was ongoing and acknowledged Jamie Woodburn's concerns.

Jamie Woodburn asked whether samples were being transported offsite and whether there was any danger to this. Richard Gibson confirmed that an offsite laboratory was being used and transport regulations were being followed. Samples were very small. Peter Hughes confirmed that the regulatory notice would not be lifted until the ONR was content that everything appropriate was in place and the issues had been dealt with. Any further issues that were uncovered would be addressed through the enforcement process.

Cllr Tom Marshall supported Jamie Woodburn's comments regarding the cladding of the weather barrier. He queried why it could not be painted or coated. Daniel Smith noted that there was always a budgetary requirement. A number of paint specialists had been contacted to explore what was possible, but no certainty could be given on the viability of solutions because of the wind movements of the barrier.

The Chair queried what a percussion[?] water tap was. Richard Gibson stated that he thought it was a push-button tap.

The Chair queried whether work had stopped until the laboratory was back in service. Richard Gibson said that, once the regular sampling was covered at another site or laboratory, restrictions in operations would look to be lifted. The Chair queried whether a radiochemist would be recruited for the site. Richard Gibson confirmed this.

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The Chair queried how the new effluent treatment plant was monitored. Richard Gibson explained that it was going through active commission and was not in active usage at present. Once it was online, it would be monitored.

The Chair noted 21 vacancies on site at the moment and queried whether this was higher than normal. Richard Gibson confirmed that it was and that it amounted to around 10%. It raised challenges in some areas, as some technical trades were hard to recruit to in the area.

6. UPDATE FROM NDA

David Wallace was not present but had sent a report.

7. NRS CORPORATE UPDATE

Bill Hamilton presented his report.

There was an engagement strategy with local communities and a trailer that outlined what NRS did and the potential futures for the Anglesey site. A similar exercise would be taken in the Hunterston area in the 2025/26 financial year.

Polling had shown that the biggest concern of communities nearby to sites was safety, but also that there was not a large degree of awareness of what was being done on site.

A restructure was taking place at an executive level within NRS and would not affect the Hunterston site. The sites, aside from Dounreay, were being split between two businesses. One business would be solo sites, and the other combined sites. As the further EDF AGR sites came through to NRS, they would come into the combined sites business. The idea was to have more senior strategic focus on sites.

Questions & Answers

John Lamb noted the announcement that Torness would be extended for another two years and asked if NRS had already started on decommissioning on paper. Bill Hamilton said that it had not. At present, decommissioning was the responsibility of EDF. John Lamb queried whether NRS had an outline of what it would do. Bill Hamilton said it did not. As the handover approached, there would be multiple complex relationships between NRS and EDF.

Jamie Woodburn noted that Bill Hamilton had called for patience and asked how patient people needed to be. He had found the statement very patronising. Bill Hamilton said it was not the job of NRS, EDF or the NDA to decide the future of the site. Ultimately, it would be up to the community. At every site, NRS was doing the work to get to the point of dealing with the reactor buildings, which would take several years. NRS was doing everything it could to find the decommissioning strategies that were acceptable to the community and the regulator and would be financed by the government. Jamie Woodburn stated that he felt that pressure needed to be put on Ministers for something to be done.

8. UPDATE FROM SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Diane Hamilton was not present. Claire Aitken reported that Diane Hamilton had said her report was as it had been at the previous meeting.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair noted that it was Joe Struthers's last meeting. Joe Struthers was presented with a gift in recognition of his service to the SSG. The SSG wished him good luck in the future.

The Chair thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting.

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Next Meeting date: Thursday 6 March 2025.

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