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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 7 MARCH 2024**

Attendance/Apologies list

Attendance

Ms Rita Holmes	Fairlie CC (Chair)
Mr Stuart McGhie	EDF (Vice Chair)
Mr Jamie Woodburn	Largs CC
Mr John Lamb	West Kilbride CC

Operators and Officers

Ms Claire Aitken	Communication
Mr Mark Blackley	Magnox (Site Director, Hunterston A)
Ms Allison Adamson	Technical and Safety Manager, Hunterston B
Mr Richard Gibson	Magnox (Engineering and Infrastructure Manager)
Mr Colin Hargreaves	Magnox (Independent Site Inspector)
Mr Alistair Walker	Magnox (AGR Prog Development Manager)
Mr Joe Struthers	EDF (Station Director)
Mr Sohail Ashraf	AGR Transition Manager, NRS
Mr Keith Hammond	SEPA (Hunterston B)
Ms Melanie Hayes	SEPA (Hunterston A)
Mr Bill Hamilton	NDA
Cllr Eleanor Collier	North Ayrshire Council
Inspector Paul Gilmartin	Civil Nuclear Constabulary
Mr Matthew Dent	Minute taker

In Attendance

Mr Alan Rich	Member of Public
Mr Frank Bowman	Member of Public

Apologies

Mr David Wallace	NDA (Stakeholder Lead Scotland)
Mr Steve Saunders	ONR (Hunterston B)
Mr Peter Hughes	ONR (Hunterston A)
Ms Aileen Craig	North Ayrshire Council
Ms Diane Hamilton	Scottish Government
Ms Lesley Jeffery	NAC (Civil Contingences Team)
Mr Angus Cochran-Patrick	Hunterston Estate
Cllr Tom Marshall	North Ayrshire Council

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1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair opened the meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves. Apologies were noted from David Wallace, Steve Saunders, Peter Hughes, Aileen Craig, Diane Hamilton, Lesley Jeffery, Angus Cochran-Patrick and Cllr Tom Marshall.

The Chair noted sadness at the passing of Cllr Glover, who had been a regular attendee at past meetings.

Since the last meeting, the Chair and Vice Chair had had online meetings with station directors, as well as with the NRS socio-economic lead. All voting SSG members had been offered a chance to participate in the Scottish Government's presentation on its high-activity waste near-surface disposal policy. Three options had been presented for engineering disposal arrangements: a vertical silo, a tunnel, and a cabin arrangement. Only the Chapelcross site could accommodate the cabin arrangement. It had been suggested that a tunnel option could have access on land but extend below the sea. The four possible sites were Chapelcross, Dounreay, Hunterston, and eventually Torness. The suggested date for near-surface disposal was 2090.

On 19 and 20 March, there would be a meeting in Manchester of UK SSG chairs and vice-chairs to review the current UK SSGs. The SSGs had been set up almost 20 years ago and all functioned differently to each other. The Chair invited suggestions for the review of the SSGs.

A cross-party parliamentary group on nuclear had been set up with co-chairs Oliver Mundell MSP and Colin Smyth MSP, with Emma Harper MSP as deputy convener. It was anticipated that chairs and vice-chairs of the SSGs for the four Scottish sites would be members. The group was funded by the NDA. Bill Hamilton stated that he would be the NRS conduit for the group, and the group would regularly hear from senior people from NRS.

A response had been submitted to the NDA regarding the socio-economic strategy, which had been circulated to everybody. The EDF/ONR consultation on the future of Hunterston B had also been circulated. So far, the only thing the Chair had picked up on was the flowrate of cooling water.

No interests were declared. There had been no further correspondence.

2. ACTIONS AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

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

John Lamb noted there had been no communication from the Scottish Government regarding public engagement work. Claire Aitken noted that Diane Hamilton had talked about the attitude surveys, and a response had been provided which had been emailed out on 22 February. Claire Aitken would recirculate this at the end of the meeting.

3. AGR TRANSFER PROGRAMME UPDATE

Sohail Ashraf presented his update. NRS had a 10-year strategy that would be publicised in future and communicated to the SSG. This included four pillars, one of which was growth, concerning the AGR transfer. This specifically concerned Hunterston, but over the 10-year plan, it included all of the AGRs coming into NRS. In the future, 52% of NRS's organisation would be Scotland-based. The funding mechanism for the AGRs coming across was through the nuclear liabilities fund, which was purely for decommissioning of AGRs. NRS had a lot of experience of care and maintenance. Sohail Ashraf had previously been site director for Sizewell A and Bradwell, and that learning would be shared with colleagues at Hunterston B.

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Stuart McGhie noted that NRS would inherit a large landmass footprint and queried whether Sohail Ashraf saw any of these sites being used in the future for nuclear generation. Sohail Ashraf said this was not something he could answer, as it was a longer-term strategy. What would have to be looked at was the opportunity for repurposing. This could include nuclear generation or industrial use, but this had not been determined.

The Chair noted that the government had purchased Oldbury and Wylfa sites and queried whether this had anything to do with SMRs. Sohail Ashraf confirmed that this was the plan. The government had announced a multi-million pound scheme whereby it was buying land currently owned by Horizon, which had been due to build gigawatt reactors at Wylfa and near Oldbury. Great British Nuclear would be coming in to potentially plan new build at those sites, with engagement ongoing about other sites.

The Chair asked whether the new cross-party parliamentary group would discuss fusion and SMRs. Bill Hamilton stated that the initial focus would be on the 'here and now' and on decommissioning.

4. HUNTERSTON B SITE REPORTS

Hunterston B Site Report

Joe Struthers presented his report.

The defueling of reactor 3 had been completed to plan in September 2023, following which a five-week outage had taken place whilst plant upgrades and routine maintenance had been carried out. Reactor 4 defueling had started on 1 November with some difficulties in removing a non-fuel component. Around 35 days had been taken on this, for which defueling had been paused. This had been dealt with successfully, and a method had been developed to deal with future recurrences. One such recurrence had only taken five days to resolve. Another planned fuel outage had been completed through February, with 50 of the 308 fuel channels removed, allowing a return to peak flasking rates.

Organisation design was progressing for the people structure and the numbers of people onsite during deconstruction. A draft management of change paper had been prepared, working closely with NRS for the past year on an aligned position.

EDF had written to the Civil Nuclear Constabulary during the period to give notice of cessation of service once defueling was complete. Joe Struthers recognised the support provided by the CNC over the past 20 years, but protection would not be required once all nuclear fuel had been removed from the site.

On deconstruction delivery, the EIADR submission had been submitted in the period. Joe Struthers thanked the SSG, community councils and members of the public for their feedback and engagement through the two rounds of non-statutory consultation. He encouraged engagement with the ONR ahead of the 28 March deadline. All staff and contractors had been taken through the deconstruction plans.

In 2023, the total recorded injury rate for the year had been zero, but this was not taken for granted, so a safe start campaign had been undertaken to reinforce the fundamentals of safety. From a radiological protection perspective, there had been an increase slightly above plan in collective radiation exposure throughout the period due to the challenges with IFD fuel dismantling. From an environmental safety perspective, large volumes of seawater had been used as a tertiary cooling system in generation and defueling. Once all fuel was removed from the site, there was an opportunity to reduce the dependency, which reduced electrical power usage and maintenance resource significantly. An application had been submitted to SEPA to change the discharge permit.

Optimised emergency arrangements had been implemented with the first reactor now being fuel-free. These had been demonstrated recently through an externally assessed exercise.

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There had been staff sessions on TUPE transfer for those staff members who would transfer to NRS. A briefing on the legal position had been well received. An annual engagement survey had been conducted, and Hunterston B had the highest completion rate and best results, showing that people were happy, understood their roles and were confident in their futures.

ONR Report

There was no ONR inspector present, and no report had been submitted. The Chair noted that the ONR would only submit reports every six months.

SEPA Report

Keith Hammond presented his report.

There had been board changes at SEPA, with a new chair as well as five other new board members.

Keith Hammond had been onsite a number of times during the period. There had been a minor issue with some of the data returns, and this was being monitored to ensure accuracy. The non-radioactive biodegradable leak from transformer 3 was being worked on, and ways forward had been agreed.

SEPA was running a consultation on the levels of authorisation required with the changes to EASR, which would be bringing in regimes of wastewater and industrial activities. This consultation finished on 12 April and sat alongside the Scottish Government's consultation on the proposed amendments.

Questions & Answers

Jamie Woodburn noted that Larg Community Council had participated in the non-statutory consultation. However, the detail of the responses suggested the consultation was merely a tick box exercise. There was no evidence of EDF having made any changes as a result of feedback. There had been no consideration about future use of the site. The Chair asked whether Jamie Woodburn had been through all of the ONR consultation documents. Jamie Woodburn stated that he had not, but he had been through EDF's responses to the feedback. The Chair noted that the exercise carried out had been a high-level one, and EDF could not know what was going to happen in the future, especially because the site would be taken over by NRS.

Jamie Woodburn asked why a commitment had not been made for structures to be made less visible and blended in. The Chair asked whether funding was a constraint. Bill Hamilton explained that there was funding from the nuclear liabilities fund, which was ringfenced for Hunterston B, but this was not without limit. The Chair queried whether it was possible that NRS may decide to reduce heights. Bill Hamilton said this was possible. Sohail Ashraf said there would always be site-specific strategies in the background, incorporating transformation and innovation, and these would adapt and change with more information. It was not only about NRS, but there would be investments from the private sector and local government. Discussions were ongoing. Joe Struthers extended an invitation for Jamie Woodburn to come to the site for further conversations.

Stuart McGhie noted that the staff were happy but asked whether there had been any problems. Joe Struthers said the staff members were keen to know what the future held for them, and this would come following the consultation. There was an appetite for information and having Sohail Ashraf present to talk to the staff had been helpful to explain the NRS future.

John Lamb queried the correlation between the graphite bricks and the issues with defueling. Joe Struthers confirmed that there was not one. John Lamb queried whether the ground around Hunterston B on which EDF had an option was being transferred as well. Joe Struthers said one of the streams the transfer group was looking at this, and there was not yet a definitive position. The Chair asked whether John Lamb was surmising that EDF might hold onto the land. John Lamb said it would be transferred back to the estate.

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The Chair expressed a concern around the EASR permit variation concerning flow rate and tidal windows, as there was a big change in the volume of water with a lack of certainty around it. Keith Hammond said a report had been submitted as part of the application and was being assessed. This was not a straightforward question.

The Chair queried whether the EDF onsite internal regulator covered SEPA. Joe Struthers noted that the team covered all regulatory issues and talked to all external regulators.

The Chair queried whether the diesel generators onsite would need to remain through decommissioning. Joe Struthers noted that the current thinking was that they would not be needed after defueling.

5. HUNTERSTON A SITE REPORTS

Hunterston A Site Report

Mark Blackley presented his report.

There had been no significant new safety issues during the reporting period. In relation to the final warning letter from SEPA about site ventilation, Melanie Hayes had conducted an inspection of the improvements made, and the Site had returned to compliance. Work had been committed to on the bunker waste characterisation following a meeting with SEPA at the end of 2023. A scope document had been produced for this work.

1,208 boxes had been retrieved from SAWBR. Box 1,209 had been anticipated to be the final box, but this had been delayed due to a fault requiring repair. A back-out plan was being prepared for the bunkers to remove the remaining materials outside of the bulk industry.

It had been anticipated that the active commissioning of the WILWREP acid storage facility would have started, but a technical issue with the sampling system had led to a delay. The New Effluent Treatment Plant was planned for commissioning starting that month, as was decontamination of the delay tanks on site.

There were continuing issues with the Kuka robots, which had not been resolved. Feasibility was being investigated of processing packages without using the robots. This would require additional shielding to protect operators.

The transfer of all three electrical supplies onsite from an old substation to a new one had been completed. This had required an electrical outage over two weekends. Reactor roof repairs had been slowed by poor weather and was forecast for completion for the end of May/start of June.

Commented [MB1]: back-out

ONR Report

There was no ONR inspector present, and no report had been submitted. The Chair noted that the ONR would only submit reports every six months.

SEPA Report

Melanie Hayes presented her report.

On 6 and 7 February, Melanie Hayes had been onsite to look at information provided to satisfy the requirements of the information notice served in relation to the ventilation system. Subject to some minor amendments to the reports prepared by the site, Melanie Hayes was content that the site had returned to compliance.

On 7 December, Melanie Hayes had attended a walkaround of the SILWE facility to support the variation application received. Further information had been required and subsequently requested.

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On discharge returns, in March 2023 there had been issues with reporting of gaseous discharges. Hunterston A and Chapel Cross had both been served with information notices in February 2024, to outline timelines for delivery of information.

The ESA permit variation for the SILWE facility had been received. Additionally, a variation application had been received for aqueous discharges, similar to at Hunterston B.

In terms of characterisation of bunker waste, since the December SSG further information was awaited from NRS. The scoping document had been produced and SEPA would review and make any comments.

Questions & Answers

The Chair queried whether the purpose of the re-characterisation was to look at what was in the bunker waste with a view to seeing if anything could have been disposed of in a near-surface facility. Melanie Hayes noted that the work was to understand what the actual contents was, as the characterisation to date was not adequate. Melanie Hayes was happy to send a formal response to any questions from the SSG. Mark Blackley outlined that it was expected to be in early 2025 that NRS could engage with SEPA regarding proposals for additional pieces of work to improve knowledge and understanding of package records. NRS' preferred option was still to encapsulate all five bunkers' waste. Melanie Hayes noted that SEPA had not been satisfied that the package records had enough information for people in the future to know what was in the packages. Cllr Eleanor Collier noted that the situation was not ideal.

Commented [MB2]: noted that the work

The Chair queried whether there was a prospect of WILWREP being used by Hunterston B for treating acids. Mark Blackley stated that options were being looked at around facility sharing in the future.

The Chair queried how long the Kuka robot would be given. Mark Blackley anticipated a decision would have been made by the next SSG. A concept design had already been done regarding necessary shielding if the robot would not be used.

The Chair queried how bad the cooling pond roof was. Mark Blackley noted a two-year programme of work on the reactor roof had been ongoing and the intention had always been to move into the pond roof next. Funding was allocated for the coming financial year, and NRS would go out to the supply chain regarding methodology.

Melanie Hayes noted that at some point in 2024 a consultation pack on SILWE would be assembled with a certain amount of information regarding bunker re-characterisation. This would hopefully answer some questions.

Commented [MB3]: re-characterisation

6. UPDATE FROM NDA

David Wallace was not present but had submitted a report, which was taken as read.

7. UPDATE FROM MAGNOX

Bill Hamilton presented his report.

Magnox had rebranded as NRS and, over the next few weeks, this would be taking effect. Email addresses were also changing over, although the Magnox email addresses were being maintained for six months.

There had been a major piece of engagement around the future of the site, decommissioning strategy, and end-state, which Bill Hamilton would bring to the next SSG meeting.

A 10-year strategy was being developed under the impetus of the CEO, responding to changes over the last five years moving away from care and maintenance to site-specific decommissioning strategies. A community newsletter was being designed to go out to the community elaborating on the 10-year strategy.

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Questions & Answers

Stuart McGhie noted that the cross-party group at Holyrood had already been mentioned. He requested that the agenda and terms of reference be sent to himself and the Chair. Bill Hamilton noted that the terms of reference had not been fully worked up yet, but he would share what he had. SSG chairs and vice-chairs would be welcome to the meetings. Bill Hamilton would make sure invites and all available information were sent out.

Commented [MB4]: not been

8. UPDATE FROM SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Report

Diane Hamilton was not present but had submitted a report, which was taken as read.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

Next Meeting date: Thursday 13 June 2024.

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