



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CHAPELCROSS STAKEHOLDER GROUP (SSG)
HELD AT ANNAN ATHLETIC FOOTBALL CLUB, ANNAN
WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2025**

Attendance/Apologies list

Attendance

Cllr Archie Dryburgh MBE
Cllr Sean Marshall
Willie McNairn
Carol Midwood
Ian Park
Peter Dreghorn
Cllr Stephen Thompson

Annandale East and Eskdale (Chair)
Dumfries & Galloway Council
2km Resident Representative
Federation of Community Councils/Canonbie and District CC
NRS Trade Union Representative
Restoring Annan's Waters
Annandale North

Operators and Officers

Claire Aitken
David Carson
Colin Hargreaves
Philip Carson
Bill Hamilton
Richard Murray
Peter Hughes
David Wallace
Donna Mounce
Jaime Nicholson
David Thompson
Helen Emberson
David Stone
Diane Hamilton
Matthew Dent

NRS
Amentum
NRS
NRS
NRS
Site Director, Chapelcross
ONR
NDA
SOSE
Dumfries & Galloway Council
Green Cat Hydrogen
Dumfries & Galloway Council, CX Programme Lead
SEPA
Scottish Government
Minute Taker

Apologies

Neil Carruthers
Cllr George Jamieson

Royal Burgh of Annan Community Council
Annandale South (Vice Chair)

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.00. He noted that the vice-chair of Sizewell SSG and the vice-chair of Hinkley SSG had recently passed away, and Chapelcross SSG expressed its condolences.

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Neil Carruthers and George Jaimeson.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Sean Marshall and seconded by Willie McNairn.

Claire Aitken noted an outstanding action around a site visit. She hoped to have some dates by the end of the week.

The consultation sub-group had met and taken forward a few actions around the skills agenda. A meeting had taken place with the college, and another was hopefully progressing with the NDA. There had also been some discussion around the role of SDS, which would be changing its format over coming years. Claire Aitken hoped to be able to report progress at the next SSG meeting.

4. CHAPELCROSS SITE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Richard Murray (Site Director, Chapelcross)

Richard Murray presented his report.

There had been one accident since the last SSG in which a colleague had slipped over. The floor was non-slip when dry, but on this occasion, it had been damp with condensation. The individual had been off work for longer than seven days, which had meant it had been a reportable event to the HSE. Following an investigation, some non-slip tape had been applied, and other locations across the site were being investigated.

The target had been to retrieve six skips from the pond, and due to various issues, two had been retrieved so far. The target had been to remove 40 CXPP drums to store, and 40 had been removed. There were four to go that day, and there was an intention to complete a further two over the coming weeks. All of the waste consignments had been dispatched, meeting the stretch target. The cooling tower design was completed, and permission to commence active commissioning had been received in January. This was about a month behind the plan due to various planning issues. Active commissioning on CXPP lines had been completed. The asset care improvement plan was on target.

There had been a lot of communications around the business plan for the next financial year. Funding had gone from £520 million to £540 million, but taking inflation into account, this was a net decrease. For CX, everything that was being done in the current year would carry on in the next year.

There had been a number of site visits since the last SSG meeting. A team from Sellafield had visited, as had a team from UKEA JET.

The first two Zeolite skips had been removed from the pond. Once removed, the water had to be drained, and one of the teething issues had been around how quickly that drainage took place. NRS was working with a company called NSG to remove the fuel skips.

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The programme around LLW had moved on significantly. 145 tonnes of rad metallics had been disposed of, as had 470 tonnes of rad non-metallics and 640 tonnes of non-radioactive waste. There had been 75 shipments from the site. There was a very low level of problematic waste on site that needed to be resolved.

Storm Éowyn had caused multiple areas of damage to the site, including missing cladding and missing windows. 105 individual pieces of work had been identified, constituting a significant amount of work that amounted to in excess of £150,000.

In terms of asset care, there had previously been discussion about removing the reactor blades, which had taken place. Reactor 4 would be completed by May, before moving into the east and west of the site. The potable water replacement works would be completed by August. Work was ongoing on a number of roofs and roads across the site.

On socio-economic funding, £28,900 had been spent in the local community in 2024/25 on various initiatives across Dumfries & Galloway.

Sean Marshall noted that on the Zeolite skips, two had been moved out of a target of six, but Richard Murray had mentioned there were over 50 in total. He queried how long it was expected to take to remove them all. Richard Murray anticipated that it would take two to three years. In the next year, the plan was to remove 17, and there was a learning curve to the process.

Sean Marshall noted good progress on the LLW legacy, and queried what percentage had been removed. Richard Murray stated that 90% to 95% of the programme had been completed. What was left was problematic waste, where there was a lack of knowledge of its history or a lack of a fingerprint for disposal.

Sean Marshall asked whether there had been any damage from Storm Éowyn to the new cladding and glazing. Richard Murray confirmed there had not been any damage, which demonstrated the benefit of having replaced it. Sean Marshall asked whether there had been any further progress on the old admin building. Richard Murray explained that the asbestos had been being stripped out. There was one further piece of asbestos, within the steam trenches below the roads.

Sean Marshall queried whether NRS still used agencies. Richard Murray confirmed that they did, but at the moment there were no vacancies. Ian Park queried the recruitment of trainees, and the availability of funding to replace recent and upcoming retirees. Richard Murray confirmed there was funding to replace people who were leaving. NRS was still looking to bring in trainees where possible.

5. NDA UPDATE

A. David Wallace (NDA)

David Wallace presented his report.

The spending review had been very challenging. In total, the NDA had been awarded just over £4 billion for the next year, an increase of £30 million over the previous year. The challenge would come in the year after next, on which discussions were taking place with the government. The outcome would not be known until the summer.

The Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Civil Nuclear Industry would be coming to Annan Athletic Football Club on 24 March. A site visit was being arranged, for all of the MSPs in the Cross-Party Group. The meeting would happen at 13.30, and the agenda would be sent out shortly along with a Microsoft Teams link. A meeting of the Cross-Party Group had been held in December on the subject of waste policy, as a result of which the Cross-Party Group had written to the Cabinet Secretary for assurances around the upcoming public consultation, which had been given. Minutes from the meetings of the Cross-Party Group were available on the Scottish Parliament website.

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Since the last SSG meeting, the UK government had announced a disposition centre to be built at Sellafield for plutonium to be moved into to be processed for a geological disposal facility. It was anticipated that the design stage would be five to 10 years, with construction creating around 3,000 jobs, and 500 to 600 jobs once the site was operational.

The NDA had put out a business plan to six-week consultation. There had been some revisions due to the spending review. The strategy five consultation would be issued imminently. A regular stakeholder survey had been issued. The SSG output review had been undertaken looking at best practice.

The Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances had been provided funding for an engagement officer, and a 12-month engagement plan had been agreed. SCCORS had not been active since COVID.

Sean Marshall noted that the last but one meeting of the Cross-Party Group had been around skills and had been attended by a number of members of the SSG. There was frustration across the board about skills development and a lack of effort by Skills Development Scotland in particular. The SSG had drafted a letter to the Scottish Government, the NDA and NRS to raise their concerns. David Wallace noted that the chair of the Cross-Party Group would report back on the responses they had received.

Sean Marshall noted the publication of the Chapelcross Masterplan, and that the NDA had a number of bids in around potential strategic partners. He queried whether there had been a healthy bidding process. David Wallace confirmed that there had, and the process was ongoing.

6. NRS UPDATE

A. Bill Hamilton (NRS)

Bill Hamilton presented his report.

For 2025/26, the settlement had ended up better than had been initially expected. There was an ongoing review for the following three years, with the outcome anticipated at some point in the summer.

NRS had just completed a restructure into three operating divisions, each led by an MD. These divisions were Dounreay, standalone sites, and sites with B stations. The idea behind this was to give site directors more direct access to MDs. These changes were purely internal.

NRS had been tasked by the NDA to investigate ways to work more innovatively and effectively, and to review the decommissioning strategy. The previous care and maintenance strategy had changed to rolling programme of reactor decommissioning, but this was expensive. Different ways of decommissioning were being investigated, with a new strategy still a few years away. NRS needed to engage better with communities, beyond the SSGs. A polling company had carried out polling around all NRS sites, particularly young people, which had shown that a lot of people believed the sites were shut, and did not know much about NRS. In response, NRS had decided to undertake deep dives into their communities. Polling had been undertaken, followed up by an exhibition. This had been in the car park of Tesco Annan since the previous day and until the following day from 10.00 to 16.00. Focus groups would be carried out with participants chosen by the polling company.

Sean Marshall asked whether this deep dive was an opportunity to look at how NRS communicated with the site communities. Bill Hamilton confirmed that part of the engagement was around how to communicate better.

Sean Marshall asked whether a future SSG meeting could see the restructure of NRS once it had been fully agreed. Bill Hamilton confirmed this.

Sean Marshall asked whether bad news from the comprehensive review would change decisions around spending for 2025/26. Bill Hamilton stated it would not. Programmes and projects for 2025/26 were agreed and locked down.

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Ian Park noted that every time there had previously been a change there had been a lag which had led to losing people. He felt the approach was as close to correct as possible currently, and the danger with a change in strategy was a lot of money being wasted for a loss of efficiency. Bill Hamilton stated that at all NRS sites there was a decade or more of work to do. The discussions taking place were in respect of beyond that decade.

7. OTHER REPORTS FROM SSG BODIES

ONR

Peter Hughes presented his report.

A compliance inspection focused on training and baseline recruitment had taken place in October and been rated as adequate. The ONR had also been onsite in November for retrieval of the skips from the pond. A live fire safety inspection had also taken place in November, which had been rated adequate. Since the New Year, Peter Hughes had been onsite in February for an aging management inspection which had been rated adequate.

The ONR had removed some legacy specifications from when Chapelcross had been operational. This had removed unnecessary regulatory burden from the site. Peter Hughes would provide more detail in his report to the next SSG meeting.

There had been a reportable incident around a slip. ONR had taken a view that the actions by the site had been appropriate. During the last three months an unknown fragile surface had been discovered by a contractor. Q&A sessions had been held by the ONR with the site and the contractor and were currently formulating their response.

Sean Marshall queried whether there had been any specific issues around the routine inspections which had been carried out. Peter Hughes confirmed that there had not been any specific issues.

SEPA

David Stone presented his report.

In November, an inspection had been undertaken of procedures and equipment for the large article monitors used onsite. Suitable procedures had been in place, along with training and maintenance schedules. No issues had been identified.

SEPA had joined the ONR's inspection of the aging facilities. There had been a good outcome from this inspection.

A number of consultations were live on the SEPA website, including concerning the principles of radiological protection, the disposal of radioactive waste and the impact of radioactivity in groundwater. The Chair noted that the SSG sub-group would be looking at and responding to the consultations.

Scottish Government

Diane Hamilton presented her report.

Oliver Smith, who was a secondee from NRS, had returned to his role. The Scottish Government hoped for another secondee going forward.

On the review of the higher activity waste policy, there were a complexity of issues which required addressing, hence the timetable was felt to have been too ambitious. The intention was still to consult in the current year, but there was no date yet.

Claire Aitken queried whether a lot of comments had been received. Diane Hamilton confirmed that there had been, but not many from SSGs. Sean Marshall noted there had been good engagement outside of the consultation with the SSGs,

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8. EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND INVITATIONS

The Chair noted there had been a number of meetings with SSG chairs and vice-chairs.

There was a Microsoft Teams meeting the following week with a company external to the NDA regarding the open consultations about the business plan.

9. CHAPELCROSS PROJECT UPDATE

Helen Emberson, Donna Mounce and David Thompson presented the report.

Site infrastructure that might be required had been looked at in terms of services, including roads. This would be moving forward in the 2025/26 financial year. The things which would include the case of need, the cost, design structure, organisation structure and interventions, the jobs it would bring, and the benefit to the larger region. The outline business case would then be submitted. The expenditure needed to have been incurred by 2031.

There had been a number of interested parties in contact, due to the market testing. There would be a formal approach to market shortly. David Thompson and his company were moving forward and making progress.

David Thompson introduced himself and Green Cat Hydrogen, which was a Scottish-based green hydrogen developer. The plans for the site were a green hydrogen production facility, using electricity from renewable sources to split water into hydrogen and oxygen. A 45MW facility was planned, which would be the largest planned hydrogen development in the UK. Green Cat Hydrogen were looking to take a 10.5-acre portion of the site, outside of the CX project itself, and were planning to be operational by 2028. The planning application had been submitted that week, with the first public consultation on 1 April.

Peter Dreghorn queried whether the consultation would be through a survey. David Thompson explained there would be link on the website and an option to submit views online and in person.

Stephen Thompson queried the location of the public consultations. David Thompson said more were planned and suggestions for venues would be welcomed.

Sean Marshall asked whether the masterplan for the SOSE site could be viewed by the SSG. This was confirmed. Sean Marshall asked whether improvements to roads were being looked at in the development. Helen Emberson confirmed this would be looked at after the first consultation. She could not offer guarantees, as it would depend on where the best interventions could be made.

Ian Park queried the likelihood that the jobs created would be locally employed people. Donna Mounce explained there was work ongoing to put in place upskilling for local people, which was the starting premise. David Thompson explained that the workforce had been part of the attraction of the Chapelcross site. Green Cat Hydrogen would be running 24 hours a day and the vision was that local people would be working at the plant. Ian Park noted that the road network to bring people to the site was not currently good enough. This was acknowledged. Donna Mounce noted that a lot of the work hinged on who the development partner would be, and their infrastructure needs.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

11. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no comments.

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Next Meeting date: Wednesday 20 August 2025.

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