

DSG/AGM(2024)M01

**DOUNREAY STAKEHOLDER GROUP
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Minutes of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group, Annual General Meeting, held at 18:30 on Wednesday 20 March 2024 in Pentland Hotel (Ballroom), Thurso and via MS Teams.

Present: Cllr Struan Mackie	DSG Chair (The Highland Council)
David Alexander	DSG Vice-chair (Thurso and Wick Trade Union Council)
Gillian Coghill	DSG Site Restoration SG chair (Buldoo Residents Group)
Roger Saxon	DSG Site Restoration sub group deputy chair
Peter Faccenda	Focus North
Eann Sinclair	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Niall Watson	NRS Dounreay Trade Unions
Ron Gunn	CHAT
Tor Justad	HANP
David Broughton	DSG co-opted member of the public
David Craig	Caithness West Community Council
Thelma Mackenzie	Thurso Community Council
Cllr Andrew Jarvie	Highland Council
Cllr Michael Baird	Highland Council
Cllr Stephen Clackson	Orkney Council
Christian Nicolson	NHS
Tina Wrighton	Stakeholder & External Relations
Dawn Clasper	Minute secretary
Ferne Mill	NRS Dounreay Communications Administrator
Emma MacDonald	NRS Dounreay Business Apprentice

MINUTES

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Struan Mackie, DSG Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that this meeting was using a blended approach.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Trudy Morris Caithness Chamber of Commerce
- Debbie Murray UHI North West & Hebrides
- Murray Lamont North Highland Tourism
- Sandy Mackie Scrabster Harbour

3. MINUTES OF AGM, MARCH 2023

Cllr Struan Mackie noted that the minutes of the last AGM held on 22 March 2023 – DSG/AGM(2023)M001 refers – had been circulated to members shortly after the AGM had been held.

David Craig noted that there was a typo on item 7 where the word 'afield' was misspelt.

This was proposed by Cllr Struan Mackie and seconded by David Craig.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr Struan Mackie read his report verbally and noted that this would be circulated with the minute (DSG(2024)C007).

When I became Chair of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group in March of 2020, no member of this forum could have anticipated the sustained period of societal, economic and environmental change that would face communities in Caithness and North Sutherland. It is a topic that I have explored before, but I believe it remains the theme that dominates our work.

The 'joining' of the Magnox and Dounreay businesses to create NRS has understandably dominated much of the bandwidth of the DSG, our members and secretariat support. These changes alone would represent a huge undertaking in any given year but it has been only one such theme that has run through the DSG.

Safety has become a hot-button issue and one that has garnered significant press attention. Our Business Meeting and the Site Restoration Sub Group, led by Gillian Coghill, have forensically engaged with the site, with regulators and of course you, our wider membership. We are rightly proud of our site, but safety above all other factors is paramount. The DSG will continue to apply pressure on the site to improve and demonstrate meaningful progress on safety issues.

The supply chain and the lack of pipeline for our local firms, continues to be an issue that is raised both inside the DSG forums and in the wider public domain. We continue to push for a change to the make-buy approach onsite, and hope that a robust lifetime plan will provide scope for business confidence. It is undeniable, regrettable and I believe avoidable that much supply chain uncertainty, hardship and indeed job losses have happened due to the changes on site.

It would be remiss not to acknowledge the significant press coverage regarding the Dounreay Site in the last number of months. It is not for the DSG to take positions on industrial relations and meddle in what are complex labour matters. But I do believe, like the concerns regarding safety and supply chain, it is with regret that we have found ourselves in this position. There have been mistakes made, and it is now clear that relationships need to be better and trust must be rebuilt.

Despite these aforementioned themes getting the headlines; particles, branding, the new executive team, regulatory compliance and a host of other issues have all been given robust discussion in both full meetings, our sub-groups and ad-hoc meetings held on behalf of the DSG. These do not happen just by accident, and I would like to thank Dawn Clasper and Tina Wrighton for their efforts in the DSG Secretariat. But also Gail Ross (Head of Communication), who has been supportive of the work that we do and understands the importance of this forum and the engagement with our community, the organisations that we represent and bringing those voices to the site.

Last year, I intimated my ongoing frustration that the DSG has become an increasingly reactive force, responding to external factors rather than working as a partner embedded in our community organisations. Whilst we all understand the extremely challenging environment we all operate in; clarity and honesty is valued above all else by our members. A great deal of this frustration has can be found due to the absence of a LTP, a plan that we can scrutinise and hold as the 'one version of the truth'. I hope that this frustration can be eased as we begin to see sight of the plan.

We have all heard murmurings and rumours about the dates contained in the LTP and the assumption that the 'interim end state' will shift to the right by many decades. We all know that the publicised dates, the milestones communicated to our community, to our politicians and to our supply chain for the last two decades have not been founded in reality. I believe that when the dust settles, the dates originally published by the UKAEA on the plants shutdown will ring as true today, as they did in the mid-1990's. Dounreay is a complex site, it will take many decades to safety decommission.

It then poses the question of how we have got into this position:

Members, let me be clear. Caithness has been misled by the promises presented by the PBO (Parent Body Organisation); enthusiastically endorsed by successive governments, sponsor departments, regulators and agencies. We were sold a promise of decommissioning at a speed never possible, never technically practicable. The dates that entered the public domain were never achievable, and we have been sold a false economy.

Hundreds of millions of pounds, tax payers money, that should have been invested in our community, into frontline decommissioning across the nuclear estate, into socio-economics and building resilience in our nuclear communities, was funnelled into a failed experiment. At the detriment of our community and at the detriment to the nuclear industry, and to our workforce who throughout it all, continued to do their jobs and work.

We will live with the failed era of the PBO for many years and potentially decades to come. But when the Lifetime Plan is published, this forum has a power of work to do. I will need your help... because of our scrutiny of this plan. A plan that will lead us into real dates, real activity and real expectations... will be the basis of the work this forum does for decades to come.

As hard as it might be to do, as a community, we need to draw a line under the past the mistakes, the false-promises and the distrust. We now need to find a new baseline; to find a way for Dounreay and the decommissioning mission to be outward facing with a plan that is understood by our community, embraced by our supply chain and providing inspiration and opportunity for our people.

We know that this forum is enshrined in Law, the Energy Act (2004) and that we are given the opportunity as a nuclear community to put our representation to site operators, regulators and of course the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority itself. I am very proud that we command the respect of all the aforementioned organisations,

and that they don't just facilitate our discussion and listen to our contributions... we can, and do, make a difference. We can and do influence for positive change.

I have made it very clear in the past that proper engagement is vital. Our influence as local, regional and national stakeholders can be far-reaching and we must use this forum to ensure our voice is heard. We know all too well the unintended consequences of decisions being taken without proper consultation and appropriate communication.

Having returned from the Dounreay Site last week with a number of DSG Members, I welcome the regular meetings with senior members of the NRS Dounreay team. These are complemented by periodic meetings with the NDA and with the Chair of NRS Lawrie Haynes. These have proven very useful and informative and I want to make clear that your representation can, and does, make its way to the ears of the most senior and influential figures within the industry.

Throughout the 2023/24 term, the DSG Business meeting have continued to meet fortnightly ensuring information flowed between the business meeting and members. I would like to thank my Vice-Chair Davie Alexander, who also acts as Chair of the Socio Economic Sub Group. Gillian Coghill, Chair of the Site Restoration Sub Group and Buldoo Residents Group, Peter Faccenda, Vice-Chair of our Socio Economic Sub Group and Roger Saxon, Vice-Chair of the Site Restoration Sub Group. Their time, effort and contributions cannot be understated and I believe it is one of the most capable and knowledgeable Site Stakeholder Groups in the Country.

I would like to thank the wider members for their continued contribution in commenting on documents, taking part in meetings both physical and virtual, attending conferences and providing comment/views for various consultations. I would also like to thank those who have attended our business meetings at various times throughout the year to provide useful information to ensure DSG were kept fully informed.

5. FINANCE REPORT

Cllr Struan Mackie noted the Finance report – DSG(2024)C001. Again, there was an underspend compared to the annual budget. He remarked that all expenditure was considered very carefully – for example, the hiring of a consultant.

Tor Justad noted that there was an underspend and asked if this would be reflected in the next financial year. Cllr Struan Mackie responded that this has been maintained year on year, so he does not expect this to be reduced. He also noted that the financial report does not include the NDA Dounreay employee time and support.

The finance report was approved.

6. FORWARD DIARY

Cllr Struan Mackie noted the forward diary – DSG(2024)C002 refers. The diary was approved, and publication on the website was approved.

7. WEBSITE REPORT

Cllr Struan Mackie drew members attention to the website report – DSG(2024)C003 refers. The website report was approved, and publication on the website was approved.

8. DSG TERMS OF REFERENCE

Cllr Struan Mackie proposed a change of the DSG Terms of Reference, and this is to consider changes in the operation of the Dounreay site, removal of the reference to DSRL, Magnox and Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership. We also wish to see a greater emphasis on value for money.

David Broughton proposed the use of site operator as the preferred language over operating company and decommissioning rather than cleanup. He also disagreed with the first paragraph on page 2 that the Dounreay Travel to Work area the DSG should involve people outside the Dounreay Travel to Work area. Anything outside the travel to work should deal with NRS Dounreay directly. He also noted that there is confusion in the different paragraphs whether co-opted members have voting rights.

Cllr Struan Mackie noted he was happy to make changes to any grammar and language. This was agreed by members present. Cllr Struan Mackie would clarify the voting rights and confirm this at the next public meeting.

Action: DSG/AGM(2024)M01/A01: Cllr Struan Mackie to provide clarity on the voting rights of the DSG Members.

9. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Cllr Struan Mackie handed over to the Secretariat for the election of the office bearers.

Tina Wrighton noted that nominations were being sought for four posts, these being the Chair, Vice-Chair, Socio Economic sub group Chair and Site Restoration sub group chair.

Ron Gunn proposed Cllr Struan Mackie. This was seconded by Thelma Mackenzie.

No further proposals were forthcoming, and no objections were made.

10. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Roger Saxon proposed Davie Alexander for Vice-Chair. This was seconded by Gillian Coghill. No further proposals were forthcoming and no objections were made.

11. DSG SOCIO ECONOMIC SUB GROUP CHAIR

Ron Gunn proposed Davie Alexander for DSG Socio Economic Sub-Group Chair. This was seconded by Niall Watson. No further proposals were forthcoming and no objections made.

12. DSG SITE RESTORATION SUB GROUP CHAIR

David Craig proposed Gillian Coghill for DSG Site Restoration Sub-Group Chair. This was seconded by Tor Justad. No further proposals were forthcoming and no objections made.

Tina Wrighton then handed back the chair to Cllr Struan Mackie.

13. CLOSE OF AGM

Cllr Struan Mackie thanked members for returning him to the Chair and alongside the Vice-Chair and business meeting members he stated they would continue to work on behalf of all DSG members.

There being no further business, Cllr Struan Mackie thanked the members for their attendance and formally closed the AGM.

Cllr Struan Mackie
DSG Chair
5 April 2024