

# Bell Pottinger Communications

## **Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Public Affairs Agency Brief Response from Bell Pottinger Communications**

### **Introduction**

Bell Pottinger Communications is pleased to respond to the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency's invitation to tender for public affairs services. As a consultancy we can provide an unparalleled breadth and depth of experience of the nuclear industry and the sensitive political and communication challenges it faces.

In responding to this tender response we have put together a team of consultants who can provide the core public affairs and media relations advice and execution required as well as high-level strategic support for the NDA's communication activity. Full details of the team are set out in Appendix 1.

Bell Pottinger Communications' consultants have worked in a variety of capacities with the nuclear industry. These include:

- Providing strategic advice and support for the Chairman and Chief Executive of BNFL including crisis management
- Advising BNFL on corporate and financial communications
- Developing day-to-day public affairs programmes for BNFL and the BNIF
- Working with Parliamentarians with interests in the nuclear industry
- Monitoring and tracking nuclear issues ranging from Parliamentary committees to public inquiries
- Directly managing in-house communications for the UKAEA and AEA Technology through privatization
- Briefing and rehearsing industry executives appearing before Select Committees.

Dealing with any communication issue within the nuclear industry is rarely straightforward. With entrenched views among many stakeholders as well as important matters of public confidence at stake, it is essential not just to understand the issues but also the nuances of communication and how different audiences respond.

The Bell Pottinger team has the knowledge and experience required to help guide the NDA through the political, media and community minefield that so often surrounds nuclear issues.

### **The nuclear debate**

While the principal aim of the NDA is to carry out the cost-effective decommissioning of the UK's legacy nuclear sites, this work will not take place in isolation from the ongoing - and intensifying - debate about the future role of nuclear power in the United Kingdom. The fundamental communication issue that the NDA faces is how, in a sensitive and politically charged environment, it establishes its authority and builds trust from a diverse range of stakeholders with conflicting viewpoints.

The NDA's partial reliance on the income stream from reprocessing and fuel fabrication - which have generated huge controversy over a period of nearly thirty years - means that it

## Bell Pottinger Communications

is unable to completely divorce itself from the political sensitivities over continuing operations in these areas. While the ultimate responsibility for decisions on these operations lies with the Government and regulatory authorities, the NDA must ensure that it continues not to 'take sides' between the various protagonists in this debate. This dilemma of being responsible for both ongoing revenue generation while at the same time accelerating the pace of decommissioning is likely to be one of the NDA's toughest communication challenges.

The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) is due to produce its final recommendations on the long-term management of nuclear wastes by 2006. The inevitable reopening of the debate on the location of any permanent storage or disposal facility will almost certainly impinge on the operation of the NDA. The respective roles of Nirex and the NDA will almost certainly come under close scrutiny and will need to be resolved in a way that commands public confidence.

Over the next two years the Government intends to take a decision on whether to build a new generation of nuclear power stations. While the NDA will not wish to take a position on the central issue, it will inevitably be drawn into the debate. Two central issues will be the ease of decommissioning of new power stations and the availability of a suitable waste facility. In addition a number of the potential candidate sites for new build will be in the ownership of the NDA. The NDA will need to be authoritative while maintaining its independence and the confidence of stakeholders.

### **The NDA's challenges**

The communication challenges facing the NDA fall into a number of distinct phases over the early lifetime of the organisation. Each phase will need a distinct communications approach. We have identified three main phases which refer to as: post-launch; contracting; and established operations.

#### **• Post-launch phase**

On 1 April 2005 BNFL assets and liabilities were legally transferred to the NDA, the contracts for the management and operation of BNFL and UKAEA's nuclear sites entered into force, and the first NDA Annual Plan came into force. The period following 1 April 2005 is the key period for the establishment of trust and confidence from key stakeholders in the NDA's ability to fulfil its role.

#### **• Contracting phase**

The initial length of NDA contracts is two years with an optional additional year and a twelve months notice period. Therefore the first contract letting process is likely to begin sometime in the second year of the NDA's existence. In this phase it will be essential to communicate to key industry, political and community stakeholders that the contracting process is open, transparent and will provide the optimum outcome for all parties.

#### **• Established operations**

Once the NDA has let contracts for all its decommissioning work under the schedule to be published later this year, it will enter a more stable period of operation when external

# Bell Pottinger Communications

scrutiny is likely to focus more on the ongoing operations of the NDA, its achievements against its initial plans and on wider issues such as the achievement of socio-economic objectives.

This latter phase of operations will also include the run down of operations at the four power stations and at other nuclear sites with the attendant local issues coming to the fore.

## **Site issues**

The NDA's sites are diverse in the nature of their operations, where they are in their lifecycle, their geography and the communities in which they lie.

In most cases local communities have adapted to the presence of nuclear facilities in particular ways: in some the industry plays far less of a role in the local economy, for example Oldbury, where a relatively small number of people work in an area of low unemployment, compared to Sellafield or Dounreay where the sites are the principal employers in isolated communities.

All the sites have their own distinctive groups of stakeholders including local residents, employees and their trade unions, MPs, local authorities and councillors, as well as national political interests in Scotland and Wales.

The NDAs strategy must involve understanding the different views and agendas of these stakeholders, the historic 'baggage' they carry in relation to sites and the industry. The NDA must be sure-footed to learn from the past and forge a distinctive identity for itself in each location.

## **The role of the consultancy**

A consultancy needs to be able to display a range of characteristics that can deliver real added value to its clients. For the NDA we believe these characteristics are:

- solid understanding of the issues that the NDA faces and the sensitivities that surround them
- experience of dealing with the industry's key stakeholders including politicians, journalists, trade unions and activists
- the ability to take an independent view and to give candid, authoritative advice
- the capacity to deal with diverse demands on a day-to-day basis
- skills across a range of communication disciplines.

The Bell Pottinger Communications team meets these requirements and we set out how we will address the brief below.

## **Meeting the brief**

- **Strategic Advice**

# Bell Pottinger

## Communications

The NDA needs to do a number of things to establish trust and confidence in the first phase of its operation. It needs to:

- Build up its relationship bank
- Explain its role
- Establish its position in the landscape at a national and local level
- Demonstrate its sound management of its assets and liabilities

Our strategic advice will help you to develop the key messages and communications approach required. This will involve working with you on a better shared understanding of how the NDA and its role is perceived, what steps are required to change those perceptions, what types of messages those stakeholders will best respond to and how a programme of interaction can be developed to deliver this in the most effective way.

Overall strategic input will be provided by Kevin Murray, who will also work with Mark Herbert and Kevin Read on strategic advice on media relations. The lead on government, political trade union and local government strategic issues will be taken by Tim Walker, working with David Sowell.

### • **Monitoring and intelligence**

BPPA offers daily, weekly and monthly bulletins (depending on the client's needs) covering the activities of both Houses of Parliament, the work of Parliamentary committees and groups, media releases from government departments, regulatory bodies, political parties, and from other relevant bodies such as think tanks and pressure groups. We are also able to monitor activities in the EU. For our monitoring services we subscribe to a wide range of electronic information services but we also draw on our wide range of political and other contacts to provide analysis and insight into events as they take place. We also provide all our clients with a number of general briefings on key political developments as they take place throughout the year.

Information is tailored to suit the client's individual needs. We also provide a complete guide of forthcoming business and events that are likely to be of importance to the client. Furthermore we carefully track events as and when they occur and deliver information as soon as it is required. BPPA also offers monitoring services for one-off events such as party conferences and select committee inquiries and has a full and complete database of information on which to draw.

Our products are structured to be understood and for ease of use. They are presented in user friendly, bulletin format, and are normally distributed via e-mail. We make a commitment to our clients to deliver our monitoring to rigorous standards of service and reliability.

The basic monitoring service will be delivered by Giles Broom and Matt Lister with input and guidance from Tim Walker.

A sample copy of a weekly monitoring bulleting for the NDA is attached at Appendix 2.

### • **Media relations advice and execution**

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The nuclear industry is complex and issues-rich and, as it moves increasingly centre-stage politically, will attract even more media attention. This requires media advisers and handlers

who can see the big picture, are acutely aware of the differing stakeholders, are conscious of the bear traps and can navigate a way through the complexity clearly and effectively.

We have extensive experience of providing strategic media advice and execution to senior players and organisations in the industry. We are familiar with the challenge of engaging with journalists who have an agenda or are merely ignorant and confused about what is really happening and what a particular development or announcement means.

We envisage offering advice at the national level on the following:

- Advising on positioning the company and its management team in features and profiles. For example, which managers, which key messages, what sort of timing, what sort of language?
- Advising on the handling of particular announcements. For example, identifying the issues and the bear traps in advance, advising on messaging, media strategy and tactics, questions and answers
- Providing feedback on key issues on what a journalist really feels about the organisation, its management, its handling of an issue, the challenges it needs to face
- Advising on an appropriate contact programme ie who are the journalists that should be courted, what are their issues, how best to handle them
- Helping with preparation for key media briefings ie subjecting spokesmen and senior managers to a rigorous bout of questioning prior to a media announcement or briefing.

We would also provide some implementation at this level, for example:

- Acting as an additional spokesman around a key issue
- Setting up interviews
- Sitting in on interviews when the Director of Communications is not available
- Providing off the record information

In addition to the national level, which, we stress, should encompass broadcast and print media, we make two further points:

### *International*

The nuclear industry is an international issue and will attract international media. We have real experience of dealing with the international media, particularly around crises. At the right time ie with some tangible successes under its belt, international media should be introduced to the NDA.

### *Local*

Developments at site level can quickly escalate to the national level. It is essential that strategy, messaging and communications processes are aligned between the centre and the sites. We can provide valuable advice on how best to co-ordinate and manage local media relations.

# Bell Pottinger

## Communications

### • **Supporting senior representatives**

We envisage a range of distinct roles in support of senior NDA representatives. These include:

- Advice on suitability of events as a platform for the NDA and advice on key messages and desired outcomes.
- Advice on how to maximise the impact of presentations/appearances on public platforms, for example industry conferences or set-piece media appearances.
- Support for appearances before Parliamentary Select Committees where a short period of intensive support is required to develop lines to take and to rehearse appearances.
- Ad-hoc support for media interviews in London where no member of NDA staff is available to support the Chairman.

We expect the precise nature of the day-to-day support required in this role to evolve over time as the communication challenges facing the NDA change and particularly where there is any requirement for dealing with high-profile issues or crises.

### • **Account management**

In addition to the monthly progress and planning meetings anticipated by the brief we would anticipate further ad-hoc meetings as well as regular telephone/e-mail contact between the NDA's Chairman, Communications Director and the Bell Pottinger team.

We believe that it is essential for a good working relationship to have an agreed system of quality assurance. Therefore, we prefer to draw up a service level agreement (SLA) to set out in specific terms the nature of our working relationship and to define precisely what BPPA will do for a client. The SLA can, for example, define the consultancy's objectives, set out the names and roles of account team members and identify specific deliverables.

In addition for our monthly meetings we anticipate preparing a written report of work undertaken, outcomes achieved and a summary of proposed activity for the coming month.

Our approach to servicing our clients is based on providing advice from senior consultants who are known by and available to clients on a day-to-day basis with referral upwards when a consultant is not available rather than delegated to more junior support staff.

### **Fees**

We anticipate the core fee for this work to be £8,000 per calendar month exclusive of VAT and incidental expenses. The fee would be broken down approximately as follows:

High-level strategic support for the NDA Chairman  
Media relations advice and implementation  
Public affairs advice and support  
Monitoring and intelligence



A more detailed breakdown is shown in the table below:

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Team Member	Position	Normal hourly rate	Less UK Government agency discount @ 30%	Discounted hourly rate	Average hours per month	UK £ pm
Kevin Murray	Strategic Adviser	██████	██████	██████	██	██████
Mark Herbert	Media relations	██████	██████	██████	██	██████
Kevin Reid	Media relations	██████	██████	██████	██	██████
Tim Walker	Public Affairs	██████	██████	██████	██	██████
David Sowell	Public Affairs	██████	██████	██████	██	██████
Giles Broom and Matt Lister	Monitoring	██████	██████	██████	██	██████
<b>Monthly Fee Total</b>						██████
<b>Average team rate = ██████ per person per hour or ██████ per day</b>						

We anticipate that, in addition to the fee above, should additional support be required for media, presentation or Select Committee training, then this would necessarily be treated as an additional expense or project fee subject to negotiation on a case-by case basis.