

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 7 July 2008
Agenda Item:	4
Subject:	Launch of the Repository Siting Process
Author:	Fred Barker
Purpose:	To provide an update on the launch of the siting process for a Geological Disposal Facility

Introduction

The White Paper on the implementation framework for siting a geological disposal facility (GDF) was published on 12 June. This was accompanied by an invitation to communities to express an interest in the possibility of participating in the siting process.

This report provides an update, covering:

- headline comments on the White Paper
- NuLeAF and LGA initiatives
- NDA developments
- Regulatory Interface Management Meeting, 13 June
- Response from local authorities
- Liaison meeting with Government, 2 July
- Meeting with CoRWM, 17 July

Recommendations

That the Steering Group:

- 1) encourage member authorities to keep the secretariat informed of any developments in their area in response to the invitation to express an interest in the possibility of participation in the GDF siting process; and
- 2) identify issues that should be discussed with CoRWM on 17 July.

1 **Headline Comments on the White Paper**

As anticipated the WP sets out an implementation framework based on the concepts of willingness to participate, partnership working, support packages, right of withdrawal and a stepwise decision process ([GDF White Paper](#)). NuLeAF's input has been influential in the way the implementation framework addresses these concepts.

Government has also developed a tiered approach to web-based information about geological disposal ([Defra, UK - Managing Radioactive Waste Safely - Home](#)), including responses to Frequently Asked Questions ([FAQs](#)).

Points to note from the White Paper include:

- The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has noted the proposals and reserved its position on geological disposal. Should a community within Wales wish to put forward an Expression of Interest (EoI) it should do so to the WAG. If this were to happen, the WAG would consider its position and the specific EoI.
- The Scottish Government was not a sponsor of the 2007 consultation on the implementation framework and supports long-term interim storage and continued R&D.
- The UK Government will take forward inclusion of new build waste in the inventory for disposal "in discussion with host communities" (WP, 3.22).
- The issue of the retrievability of wastes from the GDF is being kept open (WP, 4.22).
- The Government wants to develop only one GDF (WP, 4.25 for rationale)
- The purpose of GDF related R&D is explained (WP, 4.31)
- The Government clarifies how possible new disposal technologies and options will be kept under review (WP, 4.32)
- The Government explains that "It is also likely that some high level engagement with Host Communities and their Decision Making Body/ies will need to be led by central Government" (WP, 4.37)
- Government confirms that it is looking for opportunity to amend legislative powers to enable staged authorisation process by the Environment Agency (WP, 5.14)
- Government confirms that it is minded to apply planning reforms (including IPC) to the GDF, but final decision not yet taken (WP, 5.30)
- The anticipated text on staged planning permissions is set out (WP, 5.34-5.37)
- Government points out that "in the event that at some point in the future, voluntarism and partnership does not look likely to work Government reserves the right to explore other approaches" (WP, para 6.5)
- The anticipated three tier definition of community is provided, including LAs as decision makers (WP, 6.8)
- The anticipated table setting out indicative steps leading to a decision about participation is provided (WP, 6.13)
- Explanation of expression of interest process, with key role for LAs and need for EoI to be made in writing to Govt with explanation of actions taken to arrive at the EoI (WP 6.16-6.20)
- Explanation of key role for LAs in organising community engagement to inform a decision about participation (WP, 6.22)
- Provision of anticipated statements on Community Siting Partnerships (WP, 6.27 onwards)
- Provision of anticipated statements on Right of Withdrawal (WP, 6.38 onwards)

- Explanation that discussion of engagement packages would take place following an EoI (WP, 6.48)
- Provision of anticipated text on benefit packages - emphasis on developing packages through discussion with local communities (WP, 6.57-6.59)
- Explanation of initial geological screening and commitment to publish draft screening reports for discussion with local community (WP, 7.12).

2 NuLeAF/LGA Initiatives

The following initiatives were taken in response to publication of the White Paper:

- An e-alert to officer and member contacts in NuLeAF member authorities (12 June)
- Press statements from the LGA ([Councils must have a say on how to deal with nuclear waste](#)) and NuLeAF ([NuLeAF press statement](#)) (12 June)
- A new section on the NuLeAF website on the GDF ([GDF web page](#)) (12 June)
- Publication of an article in LG First ([First article](#)) (14 June)
- An LGA alert to LA Chief Executives (18 June)
- A NuLeAF letter to member authority MPs (18 June)
- An interactive web discussion on the LGA's Environment Advisory Service website (25 June)
- A Briefing Paper for member authorities (in preparation).

These initiatives have highlighted that NuLeAF can provide advice or assistance to any local authority that may wish to find out more about potential involvement in the siting process.

3 NDA Developments

Associated NDA developments include:

- Publication of the Radioactive Waste Inventory (for information at [Inventory Exec Summary](#))
- Publication of a proposed R&D Strategy (for comment by end November and subject to stakeholder workshop in autumn – see [GDF R&D Strategy](#))
- Publication of a proposed site assessment process (for comment but not subject to formal consultation yet – see [Proposed site assessment process](#))
- Preparation of a Public and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (not yet published, but will be subject to autumn workshop)
- Preparation of a preliminary implementation plan (not yet published, but key assumptions to be made available to members of the Regulatory Interface Management Meeting).

Draft comments on the proposed R&D Strategy and proposed site assessment process will be reported to the October meeting of the Steering Group.

A briefing for NuLeAF was provided by NDA on 13 June. This covered many of the issues addressed in the publications or plans above and helped to focus thinking on what would need to be in place to ensure that any local authorities that might wish to take a decision to participate have all the information they need to make a well informed decision (eg GDF funding arrangements).

4 Regulatory Interface Management Meeting, 13 June

Two key issues discussed were:

- the NDA's early thinking on its approach to sustainability and environmental assessment in the GDF siting process – a preliminary draft will be developed into a consultation paper;
- the Environment Agency's approach to public and stakeholder engagement during GDF siting – draft proposals are being developed in discussion with RIMM members.

The RIMM is also meeting in August to consider the assumptions underpinning the NDA's preliminary GDF implementation plan

5 Responses from Local Authorities

With the issue of the invitation to communities to express an interest in the possibility of participating in the siting process the spotlight now falls on the response of individual local authorities. Press reports indicate that a number of authorities have already stated that they do not intend to participate in the siting process.

The preliminary views of key local authorities in Cumbria are available in press statements issued in response to the WP:

- Copeland Borough Council – welcomes the WP. Explains it has a long-held policy of being willing to talk to Government about long-term solutions, and that it will involve local communities, businesses and other local authority partners in considering any proposal to move forward;
- Allerdale Borough Council – welcomes the WP. Explains that it will consult about a possible expression of interest, and work to identify a partnership approach with Copeland BC and Cumbria CC; and
- Cumbria County Council – welcomes the WP and explains that it is committed to working with its district partners to ensure a fully joined-up approach.

A seminar to brief Cumbrian elected members was held in Kendal on 17 June. Speakers included DEFRA, NDA, NuLeAF and Cumbria CC officers.

It is anticipated that the membership and role of the NuLeAF MRWS Officer Working Group will evolve as appropriate in the light of any Expressions of Interest in the siting process communicated to Government. It is suggested that the SG encourage member authorities to keep the secretariat informed of any developments in their area.

6 Liaison Meeting with Government, 2 July

Officers have identified a number of issues for discussion with Government. These include: what needs to be in place prior to local decisions to participate; the pros and cons of applying the planning reforms to GDF siting; the Government's arrangements for engaging with interested parties in the siting process; and the way forward in two-tier areas. A verbal update of discussions with Government will be provided at the meeting.

7 Meeting with CoRWM

Following discussion with CoRWM members at the last meeting of the SG, a further meeting has been planned for 17 July in Carlisle. A draft agenda will be prepared after the liaison meeting with Government and will be finalised in liaison with CoRWM. Members are invited to identify issues that should be discussed with CoRWM.