

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 23 October 2013
Agenda Item:	6
Subject:	An update on the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) programme
Author:	Stewart Kemp
Purpose:	To update members on developments in the MRWS process and on-going work of NuLeAF officers

Introduction:

This paper reports on the publication in September by DECC and the devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland of a consultation paper proposing changes to current policy towards siting a geological disposal facility. Advice of the Steering Group is requested to assist officers in a response to this consultation.

Recommendation:

That officers prepare and submit a response to the DECC proposals for a revising GDF siting process in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair.

Contribution to 2012/13 Service Plan:

This report is in pursuance of the following tasks under the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) work-stream for 2012/13 in the NuLeAF Service Plan 2012-14:

- *Continue to advise and assist any local authority wishing to engage with MRWS through Stages 1 to 3 or in Stage 4. Seek engagement with any future Community Siting Partnership to represent national local government views. Alert members to and advise upon relevant consultations.*
- *Advise Government and NDA with local government engagement nationally in MRWS Stage 4 and to identify any further interest in MRWS.*
- *Continue to represent wider local government opinion to CoRWM and RIMM, particularly in the development of the permissioning process and implementation of key MRWS principles.*
- *Monitor and engage as appropriate with international programmes addressing key PSE issues, and identify resourcing opportunities.*

1. DECC Consultation on a GDF Siting Process

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment are reviewing the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) siting process for a geological disposal facility (GDF). To assist its review, DECC issued a public consultation paper on 12 September 2013. This consultation paper is informed by views submitted to DECC between May and June this year following its 'Call for Evidence', and by other views obtained through direct engagement with stakeholders and international bodies. NuLeAF itself responded to this 'Call for Evidence' by letter dated 10 June 2013.

In response to this consultation NuLeAF officers issued a Briefing Paper (No.24) highlighting key points within the consultation and where appropriate including NuLeAF comments to the 'Call for Evidence'. A copy of the briefing is attached at Annex A to support Steering Group discussion and advice to officers about the terms of a NuLeAF consultation response.

The briefing will assist member authorities in their own consideration of DECC's proposals but NuLeAF officers have also asked for feedback from the wider membership on key points within the DECC consultation. These points include:

- in two tier areas, to give decision making powers to district level authorities, with county level authorities playing a prominent role in a newly proposed Consultative Partnership. Unitary authorities in other parts of England, and in Wales and Northern Ireland, would have decision making powers for their areas;
- to prepare a geological report and a socio-economic assessment for any area potentially interested to learn more about the costs and benefits of GDF development. These studies would be provided free of any obligation to continue local enquiries;
- to provide greater clarity on the scope of a community benefits package and release some funds early and before GDF construction; and
- to bring the development consent process for a GDF, and ancillary planning permissions required to facilitate GDF preparatory work, within the regime for 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects'(NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. Government intends to publish for public consultation in 2014 a draft National Policy Statement specifically for a GDF, if its consultation proposals are supported.

The deadline in the briefing paper for feedback from members to NuLeAF officers is 22 November 2013. The DECC deadline for responses to the consultation is 5 December 2013. Given the Steering Committee will not meet again until January 2014, it is recommended that officers prepare and

submit a response to the DECC proposals in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Waiting until December before submitting NuLeAF's consultation also allows observations and comments from the following meetings to be taken into account:

- The planned local authorities workshop organised by DECC/NDA contractors (Jacobs/3KQ) expected in November (date and venue TBA).
- Discussion at the next meeting of the New Nuclear Local Authorities Group (NNLAG). Again, the date is to be confirmed but a NuLeAF officer will attend in an observer capacity to hear the discussion and note key points.
- Discussion at the next open CoRWM meeting in London, 8 November where the Committee will discuss its response.

A key near term proposal within the consultation document is to raise the level of awareness nationally about the need for geological disposal of higher activity radioactive wastes. NDA has already appointed a new Director of Communications who will advise on the development of a communications strategy. Assuming DECC confirms this proposal when announcing the outcome of its review next Spring, probably after the Local and European elections, then NuLeAF will need to consider how it can engage with a national communications strategy.

Officers will seek a meeting with NDA's new Director of Communication to discuss this matter and report further to the January 2014 Steering Group meeting. Opportunities to contribute through the local government press and media would be one area to explore. A short opinion piece about the DECC consultation from the NuLeAF Acting Chair has been accepted by LGA *First* magazine for publication on 2 November. The text is attached at Annex B.

NuLeAF is advising DECC and NDA in the development of their programme of deliberative public events and stakeholder meetings in support of the GDF siting process review. In total 12 events around the country are planned including one specifically to hear the views from local authorities.

A small Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG - with representation from NuLeAF, the NGO community, and the Nuclear Industry Association) will meet during the course of the DECC review to advise on event organisational arrangements and information content. SRG members will also seek to observe at as many events as possible to provide independent feedback to DECC and NDA. The SRG next meets on 21 October, before the start of the NDA National Stakeholder Meeting near Bradwell in Essex. Officers will be able to update further verbally at the Steering Group meeting.

Annex A



BP 24 Review of the
Siting Process for a Ge

Annex B

TEXT FOR FIRST MAGAZINE'S 'LAST WORD' OPINION COLUMN

Government doesn't very often dangle a large carrot (in the shape of jobs, investment and additional community benefits) in front of local government but that's very much the 'offer' now being consulted upon for any community willing to consider providing a final resting place for the nation's nuclear waste.

Many of you will no doubt recoil in horror at such a prospect but I say at least seriously consider the costs and benefits for your area. There's little to lose and possibly much to gain, providing you are sitting above a suitable geology.

Government is keen to encourage all potentially interested areas to come forward. It is now proposing to conduct initial geological assessments and socio economic assessments to help any interested area to decide if it wants to delve deeper into the pros and cons of nuclear waste management. No commitment is expected in return. A community can withdraw at any time if it does not like what it sees.

The end point would be an engineered geological disposal facility with a significant kilometre square surface footprint and extensive deep subterranean galleries for waste emplacement. Total spend is likely to be well in excess of £10 billion and construction spend will be £200 million per year for at least 15 years. Waste emplacement would likely take place for over 100 years before facility closure. It could be a very significant long term regional as well as local catalyst for regeneration.

I'm not here to sell you this Government policy proposal though the content of policy has been significantly shaped by the LGA's special interest group on radioactive waste management – the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (NuLeAF). I do, however, want you to be aware of the proposals at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/geological-disposal-facility-siting-process-review>

The consultation is open to 5 December 2013. Why not comment? There will be a deliberative event specifically for local government, and public regional events. If you think you might be interested to attend any of these then send your contact details to catherine.draper@nuleaf.org.uk. She will keep you posted with details as they become available.

Richard Smith, MVO
Acting Chair, NuLeAF
Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Environment and Planning, Suffolk
County Council