

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 20 July, 2012
Agenda Item:	4
Subject:	Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS)
Author:	Stewart Kemp
Purpose:	To provide an update on the MRWS process.

Introduction

This report provides an update on:

- the West Cumbrian MRWS Partnership
- public consultation in Shepway to consider entering the MRWS process,
- the Geological Disposal Implementation Board

Recommendation

The report is for noting.

Contribution to achieving Strategic Objectives

The developments reported are relevant to the following objectives:

- Liaise effectively with any LA that may wish to consider, or makes, an expression of interest in the GDF siting process and to provide assistance as appropriate.
- Work with Government, the NDA, CoRWM, regulators and member authorities to help ensure that the approach based on voluntarism and partnership works robustly in practice.
- Ensure member authorities are briefed and up-to-date on developments in the GDF siting process.

1. Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) in Cumbria

1.1 The West Cumbria MRWS Partnership's generic evaluation over the last 3 years, covering safety, design and potential Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) impacts, is now drawing to a close and around the end July/early August it is expected that the Partnership will complete and submit its final advice to the three 'decision making bodies' - Cumbria County Council, Copeland Borough Council, and Allerdale Borough Council. During its life the Partnership has consulted on three occasions to understand key issues and public concerns about potential GDF development and surveyed public opinion across Cumbria by telephone on four occasions to measure public awareness and support. Regular newsletters have been posted to West Cumbrian households and other techniques used to raise awareness of the costs and benefits of engaging in a geological disposal facility siting process. Consultation feedback has shaped the development of Partnership draft advice.

Summary results from the first three opinion surveys about engagement with the MRWS process are set out below.

Results of first three surveys

	Favour	No opinion or D/K	Oppose	Net Support
Survey 1: All of Cumbria	50%	25%	25%	25%
Survey 2: All of Cumbria	43%	27%	30%	13%
Survey 3: All of Cumbria	48%	25%	28%	20%
Survey 3: Allerdale	52%	23%	25%	27%
Survey 3: Copeland	62%	20%	19%	43%
Survey 3: Rest of Cumbria	44%	26%	30%	14%

1.2 The results of a fourth and final statistically significant survey by IPSOS/MORI of 3000 households across Cumbria were presented to the MRWS Partnership on 22 May. The results from this final survey of opinion of West Cumbria households are one of three key Partnership indicators for considering continued engagement with MRWS. Overall net support (see below) remains strong though weakened in Allerdale:

	Favour	No opinion or D/K	Oppose	Net Support
All of Cumbria	53%	14%	33%	20%
Allerdale	51%	12%	37%	14%
Copeland	68%	9%	22%	45%
Rest of Cumbria	50%	15%	35%	16%

Figures may not always total 100% due to rounding

- 1.3 The 3 criteria that the Partnership will use to determine its advice are:
- a) broad support for the Partnership’s preliminary judgements from its member organisations and the public via consultation (the quality of responses, not the weight of responses, is important here).
 - b) evidence that issues raised have been fairly considered.
 - c) that the percentage of the surveyed public in Copeland and/or Allerdale that support without commitment participation in the process for identifying a potential candidate site is greater than the percentage that oppose it (ie that there is ‘net support’ in West Cumbria for moving to a candidate GDF site identification process).
- 1.4 Regarding the first criterion (a) the final opinions of the Partnership will not be decided until its final meeting on 19 July. NuLeAF will be represented at this meeting and a verbal report back will be provided to the Steering Group. However, at the Partnership meeting on 25 June concern was expressed about whether broad support existed for ‘preliminary judgements’ around the repository inventory, geology, and siting process workstreams. The 25 June Partnership leant towards concluding that its preliminary judgements were not supported – and that there is not sufficient confidence and knowledge about these issues. For other workstreams (repository design, safety and security, impacts, community benefits) the Partnership’s initial opinions were generally confirmed. These outstanding areas of greatest concern need not be ‘show stoppers’ but it is likely the Partnership will propose substantial further work if the ‘decision making bodies’ decide to continue with the MRWS process.
- 1.5 For geology, the main concern remains whether any site in West Cumbria could be potentially suitable for GDF construction given the

known geological complexities of the area. In the interim, stronger assurances from the Geological Society, DECC, NDA and the Governments Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, were sought and the firm general advice is that further investigation is required to assess potentially suitable areas. Not enough is known about West Cumbria to rule out the whole area at this stage.

- 1.6 Regarding a siting process, discussion continues within the Partnership about how to balance the interests of a potentially small unwilling 'host community' living close to a potentially suitable site for GDF development, with the interests of the wider community who may be supportive of GDF development. Striking the right balance will not be easy but the principle is now accepted that a small 'host community' cannot block a GDF potential site assessment if no alternative options are available and the relevant local authorities (decision making bodies) decide, with justification, that it is in the wider interests of their areas.
- 1.7 For the second and third criteria (b) and (c) above, the expectation is that the Partnership will conclude that these criteria have been fully met.

2. Other Areas

- 2.1 On 17 May Shepway District Council in Kent announced it would consult residents of Romney Marsh, around the decommissioned Dungeness nuclear power station, about whether to formally enter the MRWS process. Shepway's consultation is underway and open for comments until 20 July. Consultation responses will inform a decision by Shepway DC in September about whether to engage further with MRWS. Full details are available at: <http://www.romneymarshnrdf.org.uk/home.htm>. An update from Shepway DC has been provided to NuLeAF and is attached at Annex A.

3 Geological Disposal Implementation Board

- 3.1. On 11 July NuLeAF officers attended a meeting of the Government's Geological Disposal Implementation Board (GDIB) where DECC reported on MRWS progress over the past year and NDA reported on general developments and its preparations for MRWS Stage 4.
- 3.2 The DECC meeting report summarised the main points from its *Implementing Geological Disposal Annual Report, April 2011 – March 2012* published on the same day (see <http://mrws.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/11/meeting-energy-demand/nuclear/mrws2ndannualreportparliament.pdf>). It covered: last year's consultation on national criteria for site identification (to which NuLeAF responded); ongoing public engagement in West Cumbria; ongoing national engagement; updating of GDF inventory estimates; NDA progress; and further work to test whether it is

possible to bring forward ('accelerate') GDF site operation. The appointment of Professor Laurence Williams, Professor of Nuclear Safety at the University of Central Lancashire (and former Chief Nuclear Installations Inspector), as the new CoRWM Chair, was also reported. Eight other CoRWM Members will be replaced as their terms of office also expire on 31 October 2012.

- 3.3 Looking forward, DECC reported: it will continue to work with the West Cumbria Partnership and with Shepway DC; confirm plans for Strategic Environmental Assessment; and pursue with NDA the 'acceleration challenge'. DECC and NDA were both keen to clarify that their focus was the MRWS technical challenges, not the social challenges. As the DECC Annual MRWS Report says: "...there is no question of rushing the public engagement or local decision making processes."
- 3.4 NDA reported that its Radioactive Waste Management Directorate (RWMD), which leads its MRWS work, now reports into NDA's Director of Strategy and Technology (Adrian Simper). MRWS Stage 4 preparations include: developing methodologies for application of national criteria in site identification and assessment; establishing how tools such as Geographic Information Systems and the British Geological Survey (BGS) model can be applied; preparing to engage with stakeholders around proposed methodologies; and scoping reports for Strategic Environmental Assessment and related assessments (*note NuLeAF has been invited to an initial scoping workshop on 30 July*). Risks and 'issues' management; on going work to establish RWMD as a 'licensable entity' by way of subsidiary formation in April 2013; and identifying acceleration opportunities, also continue to be priorities.
- 3.5 An officer from Shepway DC provided a verbal up date to the GDIB on progress with public engagement to inform a council decision about a formal 'expression of interest' in MRWS. Over 3000 public responses have been received but as yet no analysis of responses has been undertaken.
- 3.6 Two issues arose for NuLeAF officers to consider. One was the GDIB meeting itself which lacked content and the other was a request from DECC for assistance with one 'final push' to generate further local authority interest in the MRWS process. On both counts NuLeAF officers agreed to come back to DECC with proposals.

Annex A

Note to NuLeAF: Nuclear Research and Disposal Facility - Romney Marsh.

Shepway District Council is taking soundings as to whether it should submit an Expression of Interest to government regarding a possible Nuclear Research and Disposal Facility (NRDF) on Romney Marsh.

The area has a long history of hosting the nuclear sector at Dungeness and this work is being undertaken largely in the context of the:-

- current decommissioning of A station
- expected closure of EDF's B station before 2030
- omission from the National Policy Statement of Dungeness as a site for a new nuclear power station

In 2011/12 NDA and Magnox socio-economic funding enabled the production of a decommissioning impact study and action plan for the area. The reports, by Regeneris, highlighted the sector's value to the local economy and community, and the need to consider alternative futures for the area in its absence.

The Council does not have a formal view as to whether the Marsh should host a NRDF but it could help to continue the area's association with the nuclear sector and provide support through the community benefits package.

In terms of the site selection process presented in the MRWS White Paper we are at "pre Stage 1" i.e. we have not gone straight to submitting an Expression of Interest but are firstly asking our community if they wish us to do so.

Working closely with DECC and the NDA we are taking soundings through a wide variety of methods including, for example:-

- writing to 10,000+ households and 650+ businesses on the Romney Marsh
- producing a web-site and hard copy newsletter to explain the idea
- holding public exhibitions in the area and "bespoke" meetings with groups such as parish councils where they have requested these
- discussion at the Dungeness SSG
- seeking views from neighbouring authorities, MPs, statutory organisations interest groups and others
- the issue has also been extensively aired in the press and broadcast media

We have asked for responses by 20th July 2012 and, using these, Full Council will meet in September to consider submitting an Expression of Interest.

Further Information

www.romneymarshnrdf.org.uk

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