

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 24 July 2014
Agenda Item:	4
Subject:	Potential for NuLeAF engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in relation to the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process
Author:	Philip Matthews
Purpose:	To consider the role that LEPs may play in the delivery of a GDF

Introduction:

In discussion with NuLeAF, RWM Ltd. indicated an interest in engaging with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to promote the revised GDF site selection process.

While NuLeAF does not currently work with LEPs, as an LGA representative body there is potential for NuLeAF to act as a conduit for discussion, and to help advise LEPs, and the individual local authorities involved, on their possible participation in plans for a GDF.

This paper provides information on the structure and role of LEPs and considers the potential for NuLeAF to work with LEPs to encourage greater involvement in the revised GDF process.

It is intended to help inform discussion of this issue at the July meeting. At the April 2014 meeting, Steering Group members were requested to engage with their LEPs to explore whether there may be any interest in the GDF process.

Recommendation:

That NuLeAF include a proposal on LEP engagement, based on the approach highlighted in this paper, into its wider proposal on engagement and support for local government to DECC and RWM Ltd.

Contribution to 2013/15 Service Plan:

This report is in pursuance of the following tasks under the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) work-stream for 2013/14 in the NuLeAF Service Plan 2013-15:

- *Fully engage with the review of the MRWS siting process and advise DECC and RWMD as appropriate.*
- *Respond to any consultation to develop a National Policy Statement for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF).*
- *Help DECC and RWMD develop an informed national debate about the case for geological disposal.*
- *Continue to support the interests of local authorities (including those hosting wastes earmarked for geological disposal) in the GDF process as it develops.*
- *Promote relevant aspects of the generic advice generated by the WCMRWS Partnership, and other learning from international experience, should other areas in England or Wales wish to consider engagement with MRWS.*
- *Advise planning authorities in the development of policies for higher activity waste storage and/or disposal.*
- *Continue to advise DECC, NDA and regulators in the delivery of Government policy for HLW locally. Seek to engage with any new Geological Disposal Implementation Board.*
- *Continue to monitor and contribute to relevant international programmes and disseminate international best practice.*

1. What are LEPs?

The **Local Growth White Paper**¹ set out the Government's role in supporting local growth, encouraging business investment and promoting economic development.

At the heart of this are **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)**, established by the coalition Government in 2010 to provide strategic leadership on local economic priorities, based on a partnership of the public and private sector. There are 39 LEPs, replacing the former Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). Each covers what is felt to be a 'natural economic area' whether that be a county or a city-region.

The Enterprise Partnerships are the prime vehicle for delivering economic development at a local and regional level in England. The LEPs decide what the priorities are for infrastructure investment, and have a role in addressing planning and housing, local transport and infrastructure, employment, enterprise and the transition to a low carbon economy, as well as supporting business start-ups. Business and civic leaders are expected to have an equal representation on the LEP Board, with the Chair usually drawn from the business community.

Every LEP has negotiated a **Growth Deal** with the Government which will give them freedom, flexibility and influence over resources provided by Government, as well as a share of the new **Single Local Growth Fund** with a budget of £2Billion per annum. Resources are also available through the **Regional Growth Fund**.

In July 2013, the Government published guidance for LEPs on the Growth Deal². Each Growth Deal should be based on ambitious, multi-year **Strategic Economic Plans**. These are due for publication in July 2014.

In line with the principles of the Localism agenda there is no set format for Strategic Economic Plans. However there are a series of set criteria for the SEP, namely:

- The setting of strategic objectives for the local area and barriers to growth.
- Demonstration that proposed action is feasible and draws in wider resources.
- Offers value for money.
- Is based on partnership strength and commitment.
- Considers capacity and risk management.
- Provides a delivery route and monitoring mechanisms.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-growth-realising-every-places-potential-hc-7961>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/growth-deals-initial-guidance-for-local-enterprise-partnerships>

Looking forward, it is likely that LEPs will remain following the next election, regardless of which party or parties form the Government. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats both remain committed; while Labour has recently announced plans to strengthen the economic power of LEPs while reducing their number to better match city regions.

2. Membership and structure of LEPs

As noted earlier, LEP Boards are made up of local government and business representatives, and are chaired by a business leader.

There are 13 LEPs covering nuclear decommissioning sites. These LEP cover large and diverse areas – ranging from individual counties to the 'South-East of England' of 'New Anglia'. Board members are not, in general drawn from the nuclear industry, the main exception being the Chair of Cumbria LEP, George Beveridge from Sellafield Ltd. Some Elected Members on Boards are likely to come from areas where the nuclear industry is significant.

Given the large areas most LEPs cover, and the representation on the Boards, nuclear issues are unlikely to be especially prominent. There is little mention of nuclear issues in existing LEP literature, with any interest in nuclear issues largely restricted to plans for new nuclear.

3. Assessment of potential for NuLeAF to engage LEPs on the GDF

The analysis does not indicate that there will be a naturally high level of interest among LEP Board members in engaging with the GDF process. The Local Growth White Paper also makes clear that nationally important infrastructure projects, of which the GDF will be one, will not be the direct responsibility of LEPs but rather of the Major Infrastructure Planning Unit.

Despite that, LEPs are powerful local drivers of economic development, and the support of a LEP for entering into the GDF process could be useful to a local authority interested in engagement. It is also the case that a GDF could add a significant boost to the economy of an LEP area, both in terms of direct spend and employment, and in relation to the community benefits package.

Following the publication of the Government's revised plans for the GDF siting process, NuLeAF will enter into discussion with RWM Ltd. and DECC to determine what role NuLeAF might play in supporting local government engagement. It is important that NuLeAF focusses its activity in ways that are most beneficial to councils and communities, but also demonstrate the worth of NuLeAF to DECC and RWM Ltd, our main funder. Establishing NuLeAF as a channel for engagement with LEPs may therefore be useful.

The following are ways in which NuLeAF could help increase awareness of and potential support for a GDF among LEPs:

Strategic Economic Plans

Strategic Economic Plans are the central document guiding the work of the LEP, and are due for publication this month. A mapping of the SEPs could establish whether there are potential linkages between entering into the GDF process and the strategic priorities and aspirations for an area laid out in the SEP. This could be in terms of the overall vision for an area, the value that GDF community benefits packages and investments in infrastructure could provide, or the economic activity and job creation that would be delivered.

Direct engagement with the Local Enterprise Partnerships Network³

The Network is a collection of 9 LEP Chairs and a CEO, set up to co-ordinate LEP input on strategic issues and to share best practice among all Partnerships. Interestingly, one of the projects highlighted on their website is the Harwell Science and Technology Park in Oxfordshire. NuLeAF could explore with the Network whether they would be interested in a presentation or information on a GDF.

Work through the LGA

The LGA is in the process of creating a 'Superboard' covering Economy, Transport, Environment and Housing and has two other Boards dealing with City Regions and Counties. The LGA lead on LEPs, Kamal Panchal, felt that these may not prove as fruitful as engagement as the LEP Network, but that there was scope for some limited engagement. Engagement with LGA Boards might be best focussed on raising general awareness of the GDF process among local authorities, with the LEP issue being an element of this.

4. Conclusions

Local authorities will continue to have the lead role in taking forward local engagement with the GDF process, but there is still scope for LEPs to play a significant role, either in supporting local involvement or in resisting in. Some NuLeAF engagement with LEPs would therefore seem to be appropriate, if supported by adequate resources from RWM Ltd.

It is proposed the NuLeAF integrate a proposal on LEP engagement, based on the approach highlighted above, into its wider proposal to DECC and RWM Ltd for engagement and support for local government.

³ <http://www.lepnetwork.net/>