

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 23 rd July 2015
Agenda Item:	5
Subject:	Update on the GDF siting process
Author:	Philip Matthews
Purpose:	To report on recent developments related to the Geological Disposal Facility

Introduction:

This report provides an update on recent developments related to the process for identifying a Geological Disposal Facility. It covers:

- Call for Evidence
- Community Representation Working Group
- Update on work on geology
- Progress with the NSIP
- Welsh Higher Activity Waste Policy

Recommendation:

This report is for noting.

Background information

The Call for Evidence can be found on the DECC website¹, as can information on the Communities Representation Working Group².

You can read more about the national geological screening exercise on RWM's website³ and find out about the Independent Review Panel on that of the Geological Society (see page 3, footnote 3).

Information about the consultation by Welsh Government on the Geological Disposal Facility siting process is available on their website⁴.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/implementing-geological-disposal-working-with-communities>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/implementing-geological-disposal-community-representation-working-group>

³ <http://www.nda.gov.uk/rwm/national-geological-screening/>

⁴ <http://gov.wales/consultations/environmentandcountryside/geological-disposal-of-higher-activity-radioactive-waste-community-engagement-and-implementation-processes/?lang=en>

1. Call for Evidence

1.1 DECC launched a 'call for evidence' on the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) at the start of July 2015.

The aim of the call is to gather evidence and information on the processes for working with communities in the siting process. The evidence gathered will help inform the proposals being developed by the Community Representation Working Group (CRWG), of which NuLeAF's Executive Director is a member.

1.2 Specifically the call is interested in information related to the following:

- How to define a community
- How to provide effective representation, governance and decision making
- How to manage and disburse Community Investment
- How to deliver a test of public support

DECC are looking for three types of evidence:

- Case studies or anecdotal evidence on actual projects which have relevance to the community aspects of the GDF
- Quantitative evidence
- Qualitative evidence

Information can come from academia, the nuclear sector and other industries and bodies. Examples and learning from other major infrastructure projects and from community organisations is also welcome.

1.3 NuLeAF has invited members to highlight any evidence they feel is relevant to the four issues covered by the Call. This should be mailed to NuLeAF by the 3rd August. A draft response will then be circulated and comments invited, with a final submission to DECC by the deadline of the **4th September**. NuLeAF would also encourage individual local authorities to submit evidence if felt appropriate.

The specific questions posed in the Call for Evidence are set out in the Appendices of this paper.

2. Community Representation Working Group

2.1 NuLeAF's Executive Director attended the Community Representation Working Group in London on the 11th June.

At the meeting it was agreed that, given the huge amount of information to be reviewed, there will now be additional meetings early next year with the work programme extended until April 2016.

2.2 The Group reviewed the draft template for the Call for Evidence which has now been published (see above). However the majority of the meeting was given over to a workshop on the principles for early engagement between communities and the developer (RWM).

2.3 Key questions that were considered included:

- How a community might signal its initial interest in entering into the siting process.
- Who within a community could make an expression of interest (e.g. should it only be a local authority or could others such as private landowners, LEPs or community organisations do so)?
- If another organisation did express an interest, at what stage should the local authority be involved?
- Should there be scope for 'off the record' discussions and, if so, at what stage would information have to be put in the public domain?

A range of views were expressed and recorded. These will be added to the evidence base and, combined with background research and the information from the Call for Evidence, a more detailed evaluation of options will be undertaken in the autumn.

2.4 Another meeting of the CRWG is scheduled for 23rd July, the same date as the NuLeAF Steering Group. While the Executive Director will therefore miss the CRWG meeting, he will feed back his views on the agenda through a phone conference held in the coming weeks.

3. Update on work on Geology

3.1 The Government White Paper – Implementing Geological Disposal (see footnote 1) - recognises the importance of the underground environment as part of the multi-barrier system which provides secure conditions for the disposal of the UK's Higher Activity Radioactive Wastes (HAW).

3.2 Feedback from the general public has highlighted the desire to have information on the geological nature of a communities' environment at an early stage in the engagement process. RWM has commissioned the British Geological Society to undertake a national geological screening project. This exercise will use existing data to provide a series of outputs in the forms of maps and supporting narrative showing the known geological structure of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Scotland has a separate and different approach to the management of HAW). The work is overseen by an Independent Review Panel of experts⁵.

3.3 The first output from the geological screening exercise is draft national guidance⁶. This guidance will provide information for RWM and communities interested in discussing siting of the Geological Disposal Facility. A first draft of the guidance was discussed at a meeting between RWM and the

⁵ <http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/irp>

⁶ <http://www.nda.gov.uk/publication/implementing-geological-disposal-draft-national-geological-screening-guidance-a-document-for-the-independent-review-panel/>

Independent Review Panel (IRP) on 23 June. The meeting was held in public and NuLeAF attended.

3.4 Points of interest arising during discussion were:

- The maps will explain what is known about the geology of an area, what is unknown, and where there is uncertainty the reason for this. There will be areas where there is no data and this will be indicated.
- A member of the IRP reminded RWM that the data they were using had been prepared for a specific purpose and they should go back to the original data set for unbiased information.
- It is feasible for the GDF to be sited in a location which has strata of differing rocks.
- The presence of a usable resource, e.g. mineral deposit, does not mean an area is unsuitable to host a GDF. The amount of separation between the resource and GDF will be a deciding factor.
- The draft outputs will be considered by a sample audience to ensure they are delivered in a format which meets their requirements.
- While the geological information contained in the output documents will require a understanding of geology at about GCSE level, RWM will hold stakeholder events with any community interested in order to explain issues at a simpler level.

3.5 RWM will now consider the comments made at the meeting and redraft the guidance as necessary before putting it out to public consultation in the autumn.

4. Progress with the NSIP

4.1 As noted in papers prepared for the May 2015 Steering Group, the Infrastructure Planning (Radioactive Waste Geological Disposal Facilities) Order 2015 was passed by Parliament in February 2015, establishing the GDF as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

This requires the production of a **National Policy Statement (NPS)** and an **Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS)**.

4.2 The NPS will guide the Secretary of State, Planning Inspectorate and developers in the consideration of any applications for the development of a GDF. Their consideration must be guided by extensive consultation with local authorities, communities and other interested parties.

The NPS will in this case be non-site specific and focussed on high level assessment principles against which applications for either the GDF itself or exploratory boreholes could be assessed. It will apply to England only – oversight for any applications made in Wales will be the responsibility of the devolved administration.

4.3 The AoS is a requirement of all NPS. It is intended to ensure that the likely environmental and socio-economic impacts are identified and evaluated. Amec Foster Wheeler has been commissioned to undertake the AoS and also

Steering Group, Item 5, Update on the GDF siting process, 23 July 2015

a **Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)**, which is another legal requirement.

4.4 There is a statutory requirement for consultation on the NPS, AoS and HRA. To this end, early scoping work will be undertaken with statutory and selected consultees between now and August 2015, leading to the production of a draft NPS in parallel with the AoS and HRA by February 2016. A public consultation will take place in Spring 2016.

4.5 NuLeAF, on behalf of the LGA, has been invited to take part in the early work and the Executive Director will attend planned scoping workshops and report back.

5. Welsh policy on Higher Activity Waste

5.1 Following a consultation to which NuLeAF responded, the Welsh Government announced in May 2015 that it had agreed to support the geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste.

5.2 The Government has stated that geological disposal can only be delivered in Wales through a voluntary partnership with the community or communities who may express an interest in hosting such a facility. It has now launched a further consultation⁷, seeking views on the processes by which a GDF might be sited in Wales, and to provide information to possible host communities who may want to enter into discussions related to the GDF. The consultation closes on the 18th August and NuLeAF will submit a response.

⁷ <http://gov.wales/consultations/environmentandcountryside/geological-disposal-of-higher-activity-radioactive-waste-community-engagement-and-implementation-processes/?lang=en>

Appendix 1: Call for Evidence Questions.

How to define a community

- 1.1 Siting a GDF will involve a process of working with willing communities – but what constitutes a community in this context has not yet been defined. Do you have any evidence, examples or experience about how 'the community' should best be defined, in the context of a community considering whether or not it wishes to host a GDF?
- 1.2 Please provide examples of where this approach has been used and how it contributed to effective community representation during the delivery of a major infrastructure project. Please also identify any barriers and challenges that should be taken into account
- 1.3 Is this approach written up and available?

How to provide effective representation, governance and decision making

- 2.1 Do you have any evidence, examples or experience of effective ways for the views of a local 'community' to be represented in formal discussions in the delivery of large infrastructure projects?
- 2.2 Do you have evidence, examples or experience of community representation bodies or structures that have worked well in the siting of large projects? What roles and responsibilities were necessary for the body to properly represent the community? Please identify any innovative or best practice examples, as well as any barriers or challenges.
- 2.3 A community representation body (or bodies) will need to ensure that the developer is held to account in providing information to the community engaging in formal discussions. It will also hold the responsibility for deciding if and when to withdraw from these discussions. Do you have any experience of governance and decision making approaches in relation to community involvement in large scale infrastructure projects that would be applicable to the community representation body for the siting of a GDF?
- 2.4 Could you provide examples of where the approach set out above has been used and how it contributed to the successful delivery of a project? Please identify any innovative or best practice examples, as well as any barriers or challenges.
- 2.5 Is the approach written up and available?

How to manage and disburse Community Investment

- 3.1 Substantial investment will be made to communities engaging in the siting process for a GSDF (up to £1m per community initially, rising to £2.5m later in the process). Do you have any evidence, examples or experience of methods for disbursing community investment of this

scale – including the body that manages the funding, how capacity can be built to disburse investment in the most productive way, and the ability of communities to influence investment within their geographic areas?

- 3.2 Please provide examples of where this approach has been used and how it contributed to the successful delivery of community investment projects. Please identify any innovative or best practice, as well as any examples or challenges.
- 3.3 Is this approach written up and available?

How to deliver a test of public support

- 4.1 The policy set out in the 2014 White Paper is that a GDF will not be constructed unless there has been a positive test of local support for hosting a GDF at the site in question. This test of public support will be a direct community based decision, taken by the people in the local community. Do you have any evidence, examples or experience of how the views and opinions of a community can be most effectively sought? Responses could include the method by which a final public test of support should be taken, and methods to identify whose views should be sought in such a test (e.g. territorial, interest or population extent.)
- 4.2 Could you provide examples of where this approach has been used? Please identify any innovative or best practice, as well as any barriers or challenges.
- 4.3 Is this approach written up and available?