

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 28 January 2016
Agenda Item:	4
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:

- Community Representation Working Group
- GDF siting process in Wales

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. Community Representation Working Group

The Community Representation Working Group (CRWG) meeting scheduled for November 2015 did not take place. This was because DECC felt that not enough progress had been made in analysing the results of the Call for Evidence or developing the evidence base required for the Group to consider its view on the key questions.

Delays have led to a re-evaluation of the support provided to the CRWG and a review of the programme of remaining meetings.

DECC has decided to bring the administrative and research support for the CRWG back in-house, meaning that Local Partnerships will no longer fulfil this function. They will however continue to be represented on the CRWG itself. DECC's team in support of the GDF and CRWG has been increased in number to help deal with the workload.

DECC has also concluded that the three remaining planned meetings of the CRWG will be sufficient to complete the programme of work. It is now intended that the February meeting will deal with the issues around community representation; the March meeting will focus on community investment and the test of public support; and the April meeting will draw together the work and try to reach a settled view.

If this is achieved there would be a public consultation on the proposed framework over summer 2016 ensuring that the siting process could begin in earnest at the end of the year or in early 2017. The exact date is dependent not just on progress with this work but also on the development of the framework for land use planning and geology.

In parallel to the CRWG, DECC intends to hold public dialogue and stakeholder engagement workshops in late February and March. These are being developed in collaboration with Sciencewise⁵ and further details should be released in the near future. NuLeAF will circulate information on these events as soon as it is available, and would encourage members to attend.

As noted above, DECC's resources to support work on geological disposal have been bolstered in recent weeks, despite significant reductions in the overall staffing on the department. This, along with the broadly positive financial settlement for NDA, is taken as a sign that Government is keen to make progress on the GDF and in supporting the wider NDA mission.

2. GDF siting process in Wales

The Welsh Government announced in May 2015 that it had agreed to support the geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste.

A consultation ran over summer 2015, 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

⁵ <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/implementing-geological-disposal-working-with-communities/>

the GDF. NuLeAF submitted a response to the consultation which closed on the 18th August. NuLeAF's response is available on the website⁶.

In December 2015 the Welsh Government published its adopted **policy on Community Engagement and Siting Processes**⁷. The paper sets out the context for the policy, planned engagement processes for potential host communities in Wales and arrangement to ensure that any interested community is able to engage in the GDF siting process in a fair and open way.

The Welsh Government states that it is keen to develop an approach that is compatible with that for England and Northern Ireland, while noting some differences that will have to be recognised in taking the siting process forward in Wales, in particular the different planning system.

The Welsh Government has now joined DECC's Community Representation Working Group and, drawing on the CRWG's recommendations, will consult later in 2016 on proposals for the approach to the siting process in Wales.

⁶ <http://www.nuleaf.org.uk/document-library/consultation-responses/consultation-responses-2015>

⁷

<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/chemicalsradioactivity/radioactivity/radioactivewastemanagement/?lang=en>