

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 10 March 2016
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:

- Community Representation Working Group;
- Update on National Policy Statement on the GDF; and
- National Geological Screening.

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).

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/>

1. Community Representation Working Group

The Community Representation Working Group (CRWG) met in February and March 2016.

The 4th February meeting explored issues around Community Representation. For the first time the Welsh Government was represented as a full member of the group rather as an observer, following the decision to include Wales in a future GDF siting process.

The particular issues explored were:

- Approaches to defining 'community' in any area interested in potentially entering the siting process;
- How that community could be represented, including roles and responsibilities of the community representation body; and
- The proposed means by which communities could enter the siting process and also manage community investment funding in the early years (up to £1million per annum)

Key issues raised in discussion included:

- The need to design a process that was clear but also flexible and able to reflect particular local circumstances.
- The need to design a process which was able to adapt to changing circumstances over time i.e. over the 15-20 years a community siting partnership will operate there could be significant reform of local government. It was also important to consider how inter-generational equity could be addressed given the very long timescales over which waste would have to be contained underground.
- The need to involve of all tiers of local government in an appropriate way, in particular recognising both the democratic mandate and skills held by Districts and County Councils.
- How to address any fundamental disagreements between members of a siting partnership and the rules by which a community might withdraw from the process before a final test of public support.
- How engagement in the early years could help set out a 'Community Vision' based on the much more significant investment that would flow to the chosen community.
- The role of regulators in the process and the importance of the technical safety case being critically and independently evaluated to build trust with the local community and wider stakeholders.

Given the need to further discuss and clarify the role of local authorities in the process, a further meeting was held on 17th February. This involved DECC along with NuLeAF's Executive Director and two other members of the CRWG with a particular interest in local government: Prof. Andy Blowers and Julian Wain, the former Chief Executive of Gloucester City Council. The meeting did help build a clearer consensus around a range of related issues. The

conclusions of that meeting will be fed into revised papers to be considered in March and April.

The CRWG also met on the 9th March with the discussion focussed on community investment and the test of public support. A verbal report on this meeting will be provided to Steering Group by the Executive Director.

The final meeting of the CRWG is planned for April 20th and this will seek to draw together the work and try to reach a settled view. If this is achieved there will 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.

At the CRWG meeting it was announced that stakeholder workshops on the community aspects of the GDF process would not now be held but that open dialogue meetings with selected members of the public would take place in February and March. These are being developed in collaboration with Sciencewise⁴.

2. Update on National Policy Statement on the GDF

A revised draft National Policy Statement (NPS) on the GDF has been produced, though it is not publically available as yet. Publication is due in the spring of this year.

The Government's response to the consultations on the Scoping Reports for the **Appraisal of Sustainability** and **Habitats Regulation Assessment** of the **National Policy Statement** on the GDF have also now been published⁵.

The full Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the National Policy Statement are now underway, being undertaken by Amec Foster Wheeler on behalf of DECC. The government plans to consult on the National Policy Statement, along with the full AoS and HRA, in spring 2016. NuLeAF will alert members to this consultation when announced.

In parallel, parliamentary scrutiny of the draft NPS will be undertaken.

3. National Geological Screening

The consultation on the draft **National Geological Screening Guidance** closed on 4 December. RWM will discuss the consultation responses and the updated draft Guidance with the Independent Review Panel (IRP) in March before publishing the final version.

⁴ <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/implementing-geological-disposal-working-with-communities/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/appraisal-of-sustainability-scoping-and-habitats-regulations-assessment-methodology-reports-for-geological-disposal-national-policy-statement>