

Meeting:	NuLeAF Steering Group, 6 th December 2017
Agenda Item:	6
Subject:	Update on the GDF siting process
Author:	Philip Matthews
Purpose:	To report on recent developments related to the proposed Geological Disposal Facility

Introduction:

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

- Consultations on the GDF framework;
- Proposal for GDF consultation workshop;
- CoRWM update;
- Geological Disposal: Regulators scrutiny of RWM's work; and
- NuLeAF web pages on international approaches to geological disposal.

Recommendation:

That, if the consultations are available, NuLeAF extend the planned Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) meeting on the 24th of January to incorporate a workshop on the GDF consultations. This part of the meeting will be open to all NuLeAF members, not just planning officers.

Background information

The UK Government **White Paper on Geological Disposal** and other information on government policy is available here¹. Information on the work of **Radioactive Waste Management** can be found here².

1. Consultations on the GDF framework

Two consultations (one on the community and one on land use planning/NPS aspects of the GDF siting process) were expected to be launched in late October 2017, but are still awaiting final clearance within Government.

The delays have meant that NuLeAF has had to postpone a planned discussion on the NPS consultation scheduled for the Radioactive Waste Planning Group (RWPG) meeting on the 15th November, and also an extended workshop on the Communities consultation scheduled for this Steering Group. BEIS has also had to postpone a series of regional consultation events it had planned for November.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/geological-disposal-facility-gdf-for-high-activity-radioactive-waste>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/radioactive-waste-management>

Current indications are that the consultations are most likely to be launched in early January 2018. It is understood that Government still has an aspiration that the siting process itself will be launched in summer 2018 although this is likely to prove challenging.

2. Proposal for GDF consultation workshop

As noted above, it has been suggested that early January 2018 is the most likely launch time for the GDF consultations, with a 12-week consultation period.

This timeframe is problematic in enabling proper consideration of the consultations by NuLeAF members within the existing meeting cycle. The next Steering Group meeting will not be held until March 15th 2018. This would be late in the consultation window and make it difficult for draft responses to be prepared and circulated for comment by members before the deadline for submission.

As such it is proposed that members consider extending the RWPG meeting on the 24th of January so that a workshop on both the NPS and Communities consultations can be held, and that this section of the meeting is made open to all NuLeAF members. The relevant BEIS Deputy Director, Umran Nazir, and RWM's Head of Community Engagement, Mike Brophy, have indicated that they are available and willing to attend.

James McKinney and David Loudon from NDA will be present at the RWPG meeting to speak about the developing Radioactive Waste Strategy and, given the wide interest in this, it is suggested that this section of the meeting could also be made open to all members.

There would be a short session at the end of the meeting, for RWPG members, to enable them to provide and discuss site updates. It is proposed that the meeting would begin at 11am with the following agenda:

11.00-12.15 Presentation and discussion on NDA Radioactive Waste Strategy
12.15-12.45 Lunch
12.45-15.00 Workshop on GDF consultations
15.00-15.30 Site Updates (RWPG members only)
15.30 Close

Members views on this proposal will be invited at the meeting.

3. CoRWM Update

NuLeAF's Executive Director attended a meeting of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) in Edinburgh on the 23rd November.

Prof. Laurence Williams has completed his term as Chair. At present Campbell Gemmill is Acting Chair until a recruitment process is undertaken to fill the vacancy. It is anticipated that the new Chair will be appointed in spring 2018. Delays in the launch of the GDF consultations has limited progress with some areas of the Committee's work, and some frustration was expressed at the slow progress being made.

CoRWM also heard an update from the Scottish Government on their plans for Higher Activity Waste (HAW) management, which are based around near surface, near site disposal. An Implementation Strategy for the Scottish Policy on Higher Activity Radioactive Waste was published at the end of 2016 and since then the Government has been taking forward work on options for implementation in partnership with the NDA.

4. Geological Disposal: Regulator scrutiny of RWM's work

As we progress towards the launch of the siting process, the Environment Agency and Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) have established agreements with RWM to review and scrutinise its work in implementing geological disposal and developing a Geological Disposal Facility. This work is intended to:

- Help RWM progress development of a GDF and develop a safety case
- Inform preparation of necessary applications for licenses and permits
- Inform the regulators in their decision making.

A joint EA/ONR annual report on their scrutiny of RWM in 2016/17³ was released in October 2017. The report concludes that RWM is making good progress in ensuring it has the correct people, skills and systems in place by the time it applies for an environmental permit and a nuclear site licence. It also highlights areas where the regulators believe RWM needs to improve its performance.

5. NuLeAF web pages on international approaches to geological disposal

The NuLeAF website has been updated to include information on the plans and current level of progress that nations around the world have in developing an approach to the disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Waste. This information is available here⁴.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scrutiny-of-radioactive-waste-management-annual-report-2016-to-2017>

⁴ <http://www.nuleaf.org.uk/our-work/siting-a-geological-disposal-facility/international-approaches-to-managing-high-level-wastes>