

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY SITING PROCESS

Report to RWPG, 23rd April 2020

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

- Geological Disposal and Covid 19;
- NuLeAF Briefing Paper on Retrievability;
- Meeting with Karen Wheeler; and
- International Update.

1. Introduction

1.1 The UK Government's policy on **Working with Communities – implementing geological disposal** was published in December 2018¹, with the equivalent policy for Wales published in January 2019². The **National Policy Statement**, governing the planning aspects of the GDF in England, was published in July 2019³.

2. Geological Disposal and Covid-19

2.1 Current restrictions have impacted on the work of all organisations, including RWM. Given the present situation, it is not clear when any interested parties may become formally engaged in the GDF siting process.

While face to face meetings are not possible at this time, RWM remains keen to discuss geological disposal with any local authority via email and phone. NuLeAF also welcomes any enquiries from local authorities on the GDF process.

3. NuLeAF Briefing Paper on Retrievability

3.1 NuLeAF has prepared a draft **Briefing Paper on Retrievability**. Retrievability is the ability to recover nuclear wastes that have been emplaced within a GDF and is likely to be an issue of great interest to communities and local authorities involved in GDF siting. The Briefing defines retrievability; explains the options that are potentially available in relation to the development of a GDF; and considers whether the ability to retrieve waste is desirable as part of the UK Siting Process. Current policy is explained, along with the approach taken in some other countries.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementing-geological-disposal-working-with-communities-long-term-management-of-higher-activity-radioactive-waste>

² <https://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/190116-geological-disposal-of-higher-activity-radioactive-waste-working-with-communities-en.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-geological-disposal-infrastructure>

Any comments on the draft Briefing Paper are welcome. This new paper augments other NuLeAF resources on geological disposal, namely:

- A **Policy Statement on Geological Disposal (Policy Statement 3)**, agreed with members at the June 2019 Steering group⁴.
- **Briefing Paper 17: The Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting Process** which explains the context for and development of the final English and Welsh policies for geological disposal and the geological information that is available.
- **Briefing Paper 19: Guidance on Geological Disposal from the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM)** which sets out the views of CoRWM on geological disposal.

4. Meeting with Karen Wheeler

4.1 NuLeAF's Chair and Executive Director met Karen Wheeler, recently appointed Chief Executive of RWM, in London on the 16th March. It was a positive discussion, with NuLeAF able to explain our role and objectives and discuss the pivotal role that local authorities have within the GDF siting process. We look forward to further meetings with Ms Wheeler in future.

5. International update

5.1 The **Group of Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities (GMF)** has postponed its planned meeting in Slovenia due to the impact of Covid19. It was due to take place in June but is now likely to be held in spring 2021. The GMF General Assembly is scheduled for the 5th to 7th October 2020 and as things stand will go ahead. It will involve meetings at the European Commission and a site visit to the Netherlands main decommissioning site at Borsele.

5.2 NuLeAF's Executive Director has been selected to become a member of the Civil Society group advising the **EURAD (European Joint Programme on Radioactive Waste Management)** research programme. EURAD was launched in June 2019, with its aim being to coordinate activities between national RWM programmes, Waste Management Organisations (WMOs) and academia. The programme involves 52 national organisations from 23 European countries and will look at a variety of issues around radioactive waste management and geological disposal. The Civil Society group has been convened in recognition that wider stakeholders also need to be involved in considering the implications of and best practice in radioactive waste management.

The first meeting of the Civil Society Group will take place on the 5th and 6th May and, due to current restrictions, will be held online. EURAD have committed to cover any costs incurred by NuLeAF in participating in future meetings. Other UK representatives on the Group are Ian Ralls of Friends of the Earth and Colin Wales of the Cumbria Trust.

⁴ <http://www.nuleaf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PS3-Geological-Disposal-final.pdf>

5.3 NuLeAF's Director has been invited by the Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC) of the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) to speak at their **International Conference on Geological Repositories (IGCR) 2020**. The event will be held in Helsinki on the 8th-12th November and RWM will also be attending. The FSC will cover all participation costs.

5.4 The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** have decided to postpone their planned Technical Meeting on Municipalities with Nuclear Facilities until March 2021. The meeting will build on previous work on local perspectives in radioactive waste management, which several members of NuLeAF participated in.