

<b>Meeting:</b>	NuLeAF Steering Group, 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>Agenda Item:</b>	8
<b>Subject:</b>	Update on the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process
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<b>Purpose:</b>	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:

- Communications tools on Geological Disposal;
- Annual report on regulatory scrutiny;
- RWM staff Update;
- RWM Funding for NuLeAF; and
- International Update.

### **Recommendation:**

This paper is for noting.

### **Background information:**

The UK Government's policy on **Working with Communities – implementing geological disposal** was published in December 2018<sup>1</sup>, with the equivalent policy for Wales published in January 2019<sup>2</sup>. The **National Policy Statement**, governing the planning aspects of the GDF in England, was published in July 2019<sup>3</sup>.

## **1. Communications tools on geological disposal**

RWM has launched three videos, intended to explain what a GDF is, the benefits for communities, and the process by which RWM will work in partnership with local communities. The videos are available online:

- A world-class solution <https://youtu.be/sMNC3OsSCgY>
- How a GDF can benefit a community <https://youtu.be/6irCmnoiIck>
- Working together <https://youtu.be/NpENPvDSvcI>

A short introductory piece by Dr Clare Corkhill of the University of Sheffield sets the scene for RWM's search for a willing community.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j\\_UF6rfoqrE&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_UF6rfoqrE&feature=youtu.be)

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

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

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

## 2. Annual Report on Regulatory scrutiny

2.1 The Environment Agency and Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) have jointly published their annual report on **Regulatory scrutiny and engagement for geological disposal**<sup>4</sup>. The report states that:

- RWM has significantly improved its generic Disposal System Safety Case. Whilst the regulators did not identify any fundamental regulatory issues that would prevent RWM from developing a fully scoped safety case in the future, they note a number of areas that RWM will need to improve when it does. RWM still has a significant amount of work to do to develop a comprehensive, site-specific safety case and many aspects can only be fully evaluated once a site has been selected and specific designs produced.
- The regulators are satisfied with RWM's approach to identifying and addressing new legislative requirements and that its internal system for interpreting them is adequate.
- RWM has made significant progress towards addressing the need to protect groundwater resources and human health from the non-radioactive component of the inventory for disposal and is providing the necessary advice to waste producers.
- The Environment Agency provided advice on RWM's generic programmes for surface-based site investigation and have asked RWM to clarify several areas relating to its proposals, associated with the link between land-use planning and environmental permitting.
- ONR continued to work with BEIS on the legislative changes needed around the disposal of radioactive waste. The result will be that a nuclear site licence must be in force before any work to build a future GDF starts.

## 3. RWM Update

3.1 RWM has appointed a new Chief Executive, Karen Wheeler, who will take over from Bruce McKirdy in March 2020 following his retirement. Karen was formerly Director General for the cross-government Border Delivery Group, managing work across government, private sector and industry to ensure a functioning border following EU exit. Previous roles in government have included NHS England's National Director for Transformation and Corporate Operations from 2014-17. She has also sat on the Board of RWM since 2018 as an independent Non-Executive Director.

3.2 It has also been announced that Steve Reece has been appointed as Acting GDF Siting and Engagement Director; while Rachel Roffe takes up a role as Interim Head of Stakeholder Engagement.

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<sup>4</sup> [file:///C:/Users/phili/Desktop/January%20SG/Scrutiny\\_of\\_RWM\\_s\\_work\\_on\\_geological\\_disposal\\_-\\_annual\\_report\\_2018\\_to\\_2019.pdf](file:///C:/Users/phili/Desktop/January%20SG/Scrutiny_of_RWM_s_work_on_geological_disposal_-_annual_report_2018_to_2019.pdf)

3.3 It is understood that RWM's final Site Evaluation document has been completed and is ready for publication, awaiting clearance from Government. It is hoped it will be available soon. NuLeAF has invited RWM to give a presentation on this at the March 2020 Steering Group.

#### **4. NuLeAF's work on Geological Disposal**

4.1 NuLeAF's Briefing Paper on Geological Disposal has now been published<sup>5</sup>. This provides an overview of all aspects of GDF policy and plans for the process itself. It complements Briefing Paper 19 on CoRWM's guidance on geological disposal and Policy Statement 3, which sets out agreed NuLeAF policy. A further Briefing Paper, on Retrievability, is being prepared.

Following a review of procurement processes, RWM has decided that the contract for providing support to local government should be subject to a competitive tender process for 2020/21. A verbal update on this will be provided to the meeting.

#### **5. International Update**

5.1 NuLeAF's Executive Director has been elected as a Vice President of GMF Europe. In this role he will sit on the Presidium of the organisation, responsible for guiding the organisation's work and setting the agenda for meetings. As a member of the Presidium, Phil's costs for attending meetings will be borne by GMF, thereby reducing NuLeAF's expenditure. It will also be useful in giving NuLeAF influence within the network and building relationships helpful to, for example, the organisation of international site visits by UK local authorities.

The election to the Presidium were held as part of the GMF's General Assembly in Finland on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The meeting saw significant changes in the Governance of the network, with the appointment of a new General Secretary and President. The new President is Pia Almstrom. She is Mayor of Kavlinge municipality in Sweden, the site of the decommissioned Barseback nuclear power plant. Meritxell Martell becomes the new General Secretary. She has worked with GMF for many years and is a consultant specialising in the engagement of stakeholders in environmental issues.

The General Assembly meeting also involved a visit to Eurajoki on the Baltic coast, the site of the Onkalo geological repository for spent nuclear fuel. This will be the world's first operational GDF, due to open in the next few years.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nuleaf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BP-17-Geological-Disposal-Siting-Process-finalV2.pdf>

Construction work meant it was not possible to visit the underground vaults, but the trip did include presentations from the local municipality and a tour of the exhibition centre.

5.2 As noted at the last NuLeAF meeting, the IAEA is considering the establishment of a standing forum of local representatives to help advise on all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle. The original plan was for this to meet for the first time in March 2020, but it is understood now that it is more likely the inception meeting will be in late 2020 or early 2021.