

**Meeting:** Nuleaf Steering Group  
**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
**Item:** 5  
**Subject:** Update on Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process  
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## Introduction:

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

- Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting Process;
- RWM Update; and
- International Update.

## Recommendation:

This report 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. Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting Process

2.1 It was announced on the 14<sup>th</sup> January that a GDF Working Group has been established in Allerdale<sup>4</sup>. The group will initially focus on gathering information about the local area and the views of the local community along with identifying a Search

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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>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rwm-welcomes-launch-of-second-gdf-working-group>

Area for further detailed consideration. As is the position in Copeland, the Lake District National Park will be excluded.

The Working Group<sup>5</sup> is being Chaired by Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong. Jocelyn has held a variety of other roles, including as a member of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and an independent member of Cumbria Police Authority. The Working Group also involves Cllr. Marion Fitzgerald of Allerdale Borough Council, Andy Ross of GenR8 North Ltd. (the 'Interested Party'), representatives of RWM and an independent facilitator.

*Ms Manners-Armstrong stated 'Formation of the group is the just the beginning of a gradual, consent-based process. We have not committed to having a GDF here, and there will be a lot of further work needed to help communities find out everything they need to know ahead of making any decisions. I am passionate about protecting our natural environment, and also about the sustainability of our communities, so I look forward to starting this process, meeting local people and listening to their views.'*

Allerdale is the second community to formally enter the GDF siting process, following Copeland's announcement in November 2020. It is understood that RWM is also in discussion with interested parties in other parts of the country.

2.2 Copeland's Working Group has established a website<sup>6</sup> and publishes a regular newsletter<sup>7</sup> on the local siting process. The website contains a range of useful information on membership of the Group, community engagement team and interested parties, and on the defined search area and the initial evaluations that have been undertaken. A 'virtual exhibition' is also available<sup>8</sup>.

## **2. RWM Update**

3.1 RWM is working with Jacobs on a £5 million research project that will test an innovative engineering system designed to seal deep boreholes. This work is important to the GDF siting process, given that deep boreholes will need to be drilled in potential host communities to test the suitability of the geology.

The research project is beginning on NDA land at Harwell where the approach will be tested on the underlying lower-strength sedimentary clay. Once this is sealed in spring 2021, the project will move on to demonstrate its capabilities in Cornwall's higher-strength rock in late 2021/early 2022. Work to seal a borehole in an evaporite salt rock location will follow. Through this, the effectiveness of the approach in all

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<sup>5</sup> <https://allerdale.workinginpartnership.org.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/newsletter-issue-2/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/get-involved/>

three most suitable rock types will be assessed. The Environment Agency will review the research project as part of their wider regulation of the siting process.

3.2 Responses have been published to a series of Freedom of Information (FoI) requests covering a number of issues related to the GDF programme and RWM's operations. These can be found here<sup>9</sup>.

3.3 RWM has established a new forum, 'RWM Exchange', to help their engagement with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The forum is Co-Chaired by Guy Esnouf, RWM's Director of Communications and anti-nuclear campaigner Pete Wilkinson. The Exchange will act as a focus for discussion as the GDF siting process progresses. The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) participate in the Exchange.

3.4 Richard Griffin, Policy Manager Nuclear at Allerdale Borough Council, has been appointed as Senior Policy Adviser at RWM. Richard has been an active member of Nuleaf over many years and we wish him well in his new role.

### 3. International update

3.1 The Czech cabinet has shortlisted 4 potential sites for a deep geological repository<sup>10</sup>. These have been identified by a process of technical appraisal rather than community volunteerism, but a process of community engagement is now planned. The aim is for a site to be selected by 2030 and for the repository to be operational by 2065.

3.2 The **European Repository Development Network (ERDO)** was launched on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021<sup>11</sup>. Founded by the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway, the network will help countries work together to safely manage long lives radioactive wastes. This may include establishing shared multinational geological repositories. Other nations including Austria, Slovenia, Italy and Croatia are expected to join ERDO in the near future.

3.3 Italy has published a map of 67 potential sites for a nuclear waste repository<sup>12</sup>. The industry and environment ministries gave decommissioning company SOGIN permission to draft the national map of areas potentially suitable for the waste. All seven regions in which potential sites are located have objected and announced legal action against the move.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/search/all?parent=radioactive-waste-management&organisations%5B%5D=radioactive-waste-management&order=updated-newest>

<sup>10</sup> <https://world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Czech-Republic-shortlists-geological-repository-si>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/European-organisation-launched-for-cooperation-in>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.sogin.it/en/closureoftheitaliannuclearcycle/national-repository-and-technology-park/Pagine/default.aspx>

3.4 Nuleaf's Director participated in an international conference on the **Aarhus Convention and Nuclear**, held online between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January. The Convention establishes rights for the public to participate in environmental decision-making and to access information on public decisions on the environment. The conference heard about engagement processes on radioactive waste management from across Europe, including a discussion on the UK situation involving RWM Ltd. and Cumbria Trust. The agenda and presentations are available here<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nuclear-transparency-watch.eu/non-classe/acn-round-table-on-rwm-2021.html>