

**Meeting:** Nuleaf Steering Group  
**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022  
**Item:** 5  
**Subject:** Update on Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process  
**Author:** Philip Matthews



## Introduction:

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

- Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting Process;
- Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) Update;
- CoRWM Update;
- International situation; and
- Nuleaf engagement.

**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

1.1 More information has been provided on the search area being considered in **Lincolnshire**<sup>4</sup>. The suggested area is centred around a disused gas terminal and encompasses Withern, Theddlethorpe and Mablethorpe as well as an area stretching

<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.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-60304295>

offshore for 22km. Jon Collins, independent chair of the Theddlethorpe GDF Working Group said members would look at '*local geology, environmental issues, transport, and safety*' and consult with the local community over the plan.

The Working Group has held a total of 23 events locally attracting just under 1,000 people. It is currently working towards becoming a Community Partnership.

1.2 More information has been published on the offshore geophysical surveys that will take place off the coast of **Mid and South Copeland** this summer<sup>5</sup>. These are intended to help build a better understanding of the local deep geology.

1.3 The **Mid-Copeland** Community Partnership became the first to award Community Investment Funding (CIF). Three projects in their area have been provided with grants totalling over £65,000 though it is understood applications with a total value of several hundred thousand pounds are under consideration. The largest sum awarded is for the revamp of a local BMX track, with smaller sums to a refurbishment of Reading and Recreation Rooms at Beckermest and for an electronic scoreboard at the Seascale Cricket Club.

The Partnership also held a series of in-person events in May in locations across the Search Area. The aim is to build on drop-in events in March which were attended by 116 people across 7 locations. A summary of the range of issues raised by the public can be found here<sup>6</sup>.

1.4 Meanwhile, **South Copeland** Community Partnership has appointed Ged McGrath as its Chair. Mr McGrath has lived in South Copeland for 20 years and has a wealth of experience working in and engaging with the local community. This includes previously owning and operating Millom Post Office, being elected as a local Councillor, and running a tourism business.

South Copeland has also announced the first two projects in its area to benefit from CIF. A total of almost £40,000 has been allocated to Millom Cricket Club for improvements to their facilities and to Around the Combe, a local community magazine.

1.4 In **Allerdale** the Community Partnership has issued an invitation to local people to apply to join, with the aim of creating a Partnership that is diverse and reflective of the community. In addition, the local Community Investment Fund is now open for applications.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/marine-geophysical-surveys-interview-with-the-project-manager/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Mid\\_Copeland\\_-\\_March\\_Drop\\_in\\_events-summary.pdf](https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Mid_Copeland_-_March_Drop_in_events-summary.pdf)

## 2. Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) Update

2.1 Nuleaf's Director Philip Matthews met with Guy Esnouf and Rachel Roffe of NWS on the 26<sup>th</sup> May. Important areas for local authority engagement in integrated waste management over this year were identified as Near Surface Disposal (NSD), the development of an integrated approach to waste management, the management of non-radioactive waste and further progress of the GDF siting process.

## 3. CoRWM Update

3.1 The **Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM)** met on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The meeting included an update on their work on the community aspects of the GDF process, with CoRWM indicating that they are considering a number of issues including the process through which a community might withdraw.

CoRWM noted that they are preparing a paper on the costs of a GDF now that new data on this has been released by NWS. The Committee is also undertaking work on the waste aspects of Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs) and looking at the residual wastes left over following the end of Magnox Reprocessing.

The meeting heard an update from Martin Walkingshaw on Nuclear Waste Services and their work on Low Level Waste. His presentation covered Near Surface Disposal (NSD), with a suggestion that the development of a NSD would likely be dealt with through the Town and Country Planning Regime rather than be designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

A further CoRWM meeting that was planned for May was postponed.

## 4. International situation

4.1 Nuleaf's Executive Director spoke at the 6th **International Conference on Geological Repositories (ICGR)** in Helsinki on the 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> April<sup>7</sup>. The event was attended by over 200 delegates from across the world including waste management organisations, engineers and scientists, regulators, local and national government, environmental NGOs and the public. It looked at both the technical and political challenges of GDF development. Due to the Covid pandemic it was the first such event held since 2016.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl\\_31984/sixth-international-conference-on-geological-repositories-icgr-6-advancing-geological-repositories-from-concept-to-operation](https://www.oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl_31984/sixth-international-conference-on-geological-repositories-icgr-6-advancing-geological-repositories-from-concept-to-operation)

The choice of venue was appropriate given that Finland is the first country in the world to begin construction of a GDF. Sweden is close to giving such a facility the final go ahead and a decision is expected this September on the preferred site in Switzerland<sup>8</sup>.

Canada is likely to announce in 2023 which of their potential sites, Ignace or South Bruce, will be selected. Deep borehole investigations, designed to understand the deep geology at both locations, have now been completed<sup>9</sup>.

4.2 Philip Matthews attended a **EURAD** event in Paris from the 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March. This was the first time that members had been able to meet in person since the programme was launched 2 years ago. Updates from national GDF programmes across Europe were provided along with discussion on a range of technical issues and on stakeholder perceptions around safety. A recoding of the event will be available soon via the EURAD website<sup>10</sup>.

EURAD is also hosting an online event on the Finnish GDF process on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June. The meeting is open to all and information on this and a range of other events can be found online<sup>11</sup>.

4.3 **GMF Europe** held its first face to face meeting in over 2 years in Krsko in Slovenia on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May. Krsko is a unique nuclear station in that the energy generated, and liability for its waste, is shared between Slovenia and Croatia, a legacy of its development when both nations were part of Yugoslavia.

The meeting involved discussion on the waste management challenges and future energy plans for Slovenia and workshops on the Spanish approach to waste management and the UK GDF siting process. In addition, Shin Horiguchi of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) spoke on plans to host an international meeting on local level engagement in Vienna this autumn.

4.4 The **SITEX Network** hosted an online seminar and published a draft report on the state of knowledge around deep borehole repositories<sup>12</sup>. The **University of Sheffield** and **Deep Isolation**, a company promoting the use of boreholes for disposal of spent fuel and high-level waste, have also published research on stakeholder views on the subject. This indicates a degree of support for borehole disposal, particularly for countries with a limited inventory<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dailysabah.com/life/science/options-considered-switzerland-plans-to-bury-radioactive-waste>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Canadian-waste-organisation-completes-borehole-pro>

<sup>10</sup> [A successful second annual event | Eurad \(ejp-urad.eu\)](https://www.ejp-urad.eu)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ejp-urad.eu/events>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.sitex.network/deep-bore-hole-repository-for-high-level-waste-report/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.neimagazine.com/features/featureis-it-time-to-consider-deep-boreholes-for-nuclear-waste-disposal-9612136/>

4.5 A number of Swedish NGOs have jointly requested a judicial review of the Swedish Government's decision to approve the development of a repository for spent nuclear fuel<sup>14</sup>. The NGOs argue that *'the government's .....decisions should be reviewed and overturned by the Supreme Administrative Court, as the decisions contravene the legal rules of the Environmental Code and are based on incorrect factual assessments. In addition, procedural errors have occurred as the Natura 2000 review has been incomplete.'* It is not clear whether the judicial review will be granted and, if it is, how long the process will take.

4.6 The **Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA)** has announced that, due to events in Ukraine, representatives of the Russian Federation will not be entitled to attend its official meetings. **GMF Europe** has also decided to suspend the membership of ANPPT, the Russian network of nuclear municipalities, while hostilities continue.

## 5. Nuleaf engagement

5.1 Nuleaf convened an online meeting of the local authorities engaged in the UK GDF siting process on the 27<sup>th</sup> May. The purpose of the meeting was to explore whether the councils involved saw value in dialogue and how Nuleaf could best support this.

It was agreed that it would be useful for Nuleaf to convene quarterly meetings open to any local authority that is formally engaged in the GDF siting process. The aims will be to share information on progress at the local level, offer their perspectives and identify areas which would benefit from further dialogue with NWS, BEIS and others.

5.2 Nuleaf and NWS are co-hosting a meeting on geological disposal at the 2022 **Local Government Association (LGA) conference** in Harrogate. The event will be held at 8.15am on Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> June. It is open to all Nuleaf members attending the conference and breakfast will be provided. Details have been circulated by email.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.mkg.se/en/the-swedish-society-for-nature-conservation-and-others-requests-a-judicial-review-of-the>