

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 15th September 2022
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 site for a Geological Disposal Facility and activities at RWM. It covers:

- Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting Process;
- CoRWM Update;
- International news; 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 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.

1. Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting Process

1.1 It was announced on the 30th June that a Community Partnership has been established at **Theddlethorpe** in Lincolnshire, the first outwith Cumbria. The Partnership will focus on a Search Area covering two electoral wards of Withern and Theddlethorpe and Mablethorpe, with the former gas terminal the focus in terms of a possible surface reception facility.

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>

Jon Collins, who has been asked to be the interim Chair of the Partnership, commented *'Community Partnership is an exciting new phase of work, that will take place over a number of years, where all aspects of the proposal to develop a GDF in the area can be explored and discussed. To do this, the Partnership needs to reflect the community, and this is the chance for people to get involved, share their views and work alongside others looking at what this could mean for the area. The process of recruiting new members has begun, to both the Partnership itself and to the stakeholder forums planned in future, so that we can build wider public involvement and debate.'*

In August, the Community Partnership delivered the first edition of their newspaper, **GDF Voice**, to all homes in the Search Area. Topics covered included what a GDF is and why geological disposal is the preferred international solution. It also included feedback from recent community events and offered people the opportunity to be involved in the continuing conversations and work of the Community Partnership⁴.

1.2 A new Chair has been appointed for the **Mid Copeland** GDF Community Partnership⁵. Andy Pratt is a member of Copeland Borough Council's Executive and runs a milk delivery business. Mr Pratt commented *'I'm passionate about this area, its people and the caring communities we have here. As Chair of the Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership I'll continue to help take forward the conversations which have started about whether Mid Copeland is the right place for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) - what it could mean, listen to questions, discuss concerns and also look at the opportunities.'*

Mid Copeland GDF Partnership has awarded a further £218,000 to local projects⁶, including £85,000 to upgrade a play area and £42,000 to replace an adventure trail and revamp an outdoor space at Gosforth School.

1.3 The **South Copeland** GDF Community Partnership has opened discussions with communities in Canada involved in a similar siting process⁷. The Mayor of Ignace, Penny Lucas, and the Chair of the local Nuclear Liaison Committee, Brad Grieves, delivered online presentations to the Partnership on a range of topics.

Ignace is one of only two communities remaining in the Canadian GDF siting process out of a total of 22 that initially registered their interest. They, along with another community in Ontario, South Bruce, will hold Tests of Public Support before a final decision is made in late 2023.

⁴ <https://theddlethorpe.workinginpartnership.org.uk/gdf-voice-delivered/>

⁵ <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/new-chair-appointed-to-mid-copeland-gdf-community-partnership/>

⁶ <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/mid-copeland-gdf-community-partnership-newsletter-issue-3/>

⁷ <https://southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/south-copeland-calls-on-canada-to-share-learning-about-gdf/>

Ged McGrath, Chair of the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership, said: *'We were pleased to be able to speak to representatives of the Ignace Community Nuclear Liaison Committee in Canada, to understand more about their siting process, the ways in which the local community has engaged, and the benefits the process has brought and a GDF will bring to the area if it is selected.'*

'There is a lot that we can learn from Ignace and other communities who are considering the possibility of, or are developing a GDF, and I look forward to our Partnership continuing such conversations as we continue to engage with and understand the views of our community here in South Copeland.'

South Copeland GDF Community Partnership is also seeking new members, in particular those with experience in agriculture, business, landscape and environment and tourism; as well as those representing young people and the seldom heard⁸.

1.4 Marine **geophysical surveys** off the coast of Copeland were completed on the 18th August⁹. These have been undertaken to better understand the deep geology offshore.

Some concerns were raised locally regarding the impact of the surveys on the marine environment¹⁰. Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) used on board observers to look out for marine and bird life. They state that no safety or environmental incidents were recorded, with all mammal sightings reported to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

Detailed analysis of the data collected from the surveys will be undertaken over the next 18 months. The conclusions will be shared with communities to support discussions about the potential of an area to host a GDF. Further such surveys are anticipated off the coast of Allerdale and Lincolnshire.

1.5 **Allerdale** Community Partnership has expanded with four new members joining¹¹. The new members are all based in the local area: two are local businessmen while another represents the Cumbria Youth Alliance. The fourth member has a background in the nuclear industry including having previously worked for Nirex and the NDA¹². The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) have

⁸ <https://allerdale.workinginpartnership.org.uk/new-members-join-the-allerdale-gdf-community-partnership/>

⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-nws-marine-geophysical-survey-successfully-completed?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=8c1f421a-679e-494e-829e-81c56025b808&utm_content=immediately

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-62142459>

¹¹ <https://allerdale.workinginpartnership.org.uk/new-members-join-the-allerdale-gdf-community-partnership/>

¹² <https://allerdale.workinginpartnership.org.uk/new-members-join-the-allerdale-gdf-community-partnership/>

criticised the fact that three of the appointees have some connection to the nuclear industry¹³.

2. CoRWM Update

2.1 CoRWM held a special online Open Plenary on the 30th June, focussed on the French approach to local engagement in their geological disposal siting process. The speaker was Benoit Jacquet, General Secretary of the Local Information and Monitoring Committee (CLIS) for the Underground Research Laboratory at Bure. CLIS is an independent body which collects information and makes it available to the public so they can make up their own minds about the issues around GDF. It is neutral on nuclear power generation.

M. Benoit's presentation explained that the research laboratory site was chosen by central government with no community veto. The main criteria for selection were suitability and the level of local political support, though the low population density at Bure was also seen as a positive. Significant funds have been provided for the area, up to 30million Euros per year. The event proved popular, with 37 attendees including Catherine Draper from Nuleaf and a number of local authority representatives.

3. International news

3.1 Canada's **Nuclear Waste Management Organisation** (NWMO) has completed a full-scale demonstration of the engineered barriers that will contain and isolate the country's nuclear fuel in a deep repository.

As part of the demonstration, technical teams built a life-size model of one of the repository's underground storage rooms at the NWMO proof test facility in Oakville, Ontario, with the exact dimensions and interior walls lined with simulated rock tiling.

During the process, the durable used fuel containers – made of thick carbon steel for strength and coated with corrosion-resistant copper – were encased in protective layers, called buffer boxes. Made of compressed bentonite clay, the boxes, weighing 8 tonnes, provide additional protection against corrosion or degradation. Once the boxes were placed into the storage room all the remaining space from floor to ceiling was filled with loose granular bentonite.

¹³ <https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/news/nuclear-free-local-authorities-question-independence-of-allerdale-appointees-linked-to-nuclear-industry/>

In-depth analysis is now underway to assess the results and yield insights that will support the ongoing design and planning of the deep geological repository.

3.2 EURAD has announced a number of online events on geological disposal, all of which are open to Nuleaf members. These are:

- A symposium on the role of optimisation in radioactive waste geological disposal programmes¹⁴ (20th-22nd September)
- An event on the Pathway Evaluation Process (PEP) a tool for dialogue on radioactive waste management, being held on the 28th September¹⁵.
- An event on the NEA's Forum for Stakeholder Confidence, held on the 2nd November¹⁶.

Information on how to register for each event is contained in the footnotes below.

4. Nuleaf engagement

4.1 Nuleaf convened an online meeting of the local authorities engaged in the UK GDF siting process on the 24th August. These meetings are held quarterly and allow local authorities to reflect on their experiences of the GDF siting process and share issues of interest.

4.2 Nuleaf and NWS held a successful fringe event at this years' LGA Conference in Harrogate on the 29th June. The breakfast meeting heard presentations from Nuleaf's Executive Director and Steve Reece of NWS with these being followed by a discussion on a range of topics. Representatives of local authorities from across England took part, and further conversations were held with NWS across the three days that the conference took place.

¹⁴ <https://www.ejp-eurad.eu/events/igd-tp-symposium-and-webinar-role-optimisation-radioactive-waste-geological-disposal>

¹⁵ <https://www.ejp-eurad.eu/events/lunch-and-learn-session-pluralistic-tool-dialogue-rwm-pathway-evaluation-process-pep>

¹⁶ <https://www.ejp-eurad.eu/events/lunch-and-learn-session-nea-forum-stakeholder-confidence-platform-share-knowledge>