

ITEM 6: UPDATE ON GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY SITING PROCESS

Report to RWPG, 24th January 2023

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

- Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting Process;
- Regulatory News;
- International situation; and
- CoRWM 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 Facility (GDF) Siting Process

2.1 More detailed information has been published on the survey of residents undertaken by **Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership**⁴.

The research found that 62% of those taking part in the survey would support a GDF within the local Search Area, with 23% opposed. In terms of the bigger picture, 65% support the national policy to construct a GDF in a willing community, with 16% against. Support for a GDF was higher among those with a direct connection to the nuclear industry.

Almost two thirds (64%) of respondents were aware that a Community Partnership had been formed in the area while 80% were aware that a Search Area for a GDF had been defined.

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/geological-disposal-higher-activity-radioactive-waste-guidance-communities>

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

⁴ [Mid Copeland Community Partnership resident research - Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership \(workinginpartnership.org.uk\)](https://www.workinginpartnership.org.uk/mid-copeland-community-partnership-resident-research)

Two-in-five (44%) felt that the local authority was the information source they would most like to hear from regarding geological disposal. Twenty eight percent wanted to receive more information from environmental groups, with the same percentage wanting to hear from the NDA.

This survey will provide a benchmark against which any changes in attitudes over time can be measured.

Over £710,000 has been awarded to date to Community Projects in **South Copeland**. Each search area can receive up to £1M in community benefits each year they are engaged in the initial GDF siting process. A list of the projects which have benefited can be found on the South Copeland Community Partnership website⁵.

It has been announced that the Search Area in **Allerdale** will change from April to reflect the ward boundaries of the new Cumberland Council⁶, with eight wards included. The Allerdale Community Partnership has also confirmed that the full £1million of community investment funding available in the first year has been allocated, with 28 projects benefitting.

In November, the second edition of GDF Voice⁷ was distributed to all homes in the search area in **Lincolnshire** around the villages of Theddlethorpe and Mablethorpe. It combines articles on local issues around the geological disposal facility siting process together with national and international GDF news.

3. Regulatory news

3.1 The **Environment Agency** and **Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)** have jointly issued the annual report on their scrutiny of Nuclear Waste Services work on geological disposal⁸. The paper notes that the agencies are monitoring the change from RWM to NWS. The regulators have highlighted to the developer that they have some concerns about proposals to reduce GDF funding in the short term and the implications this may have for the siting process later on.

4. International situation

4.1 SKB, the Swedish radioactive waste management company, has received permission to triple the size of its repository for low and intermediate level

⁵ <https://southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/community-projects-in-south-copeland-awarded-over-710000-in-funding/>

⁶ [Allerdale GDF announce new changes to search area for storage facility | News and Star](#)

⁷ https://theddlethorpe.workinginpartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/NWS_Issue_2_2022_interactive.pdf_safe.pdf

⁸ [Geological disposal: scrutiny of Nuclear Waste Services' work - annual reports - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

radioactive waste⁹. The facility is located 60 metres below the bottom of the Baltic Sea off the municipality of Osthhammer. The application for an extension was first submitted in 2014 and approval from the local authority was also required. This was granted in 2021.

4.2 A pilot project to develop borehole disposal of radioactive waste is underway in Malaysia and Ghana¹⁰. Supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and with funding from Canada, the project is focussed on the disposal of disused sealed radioactive sources (DSRS) used in medical, industrial and agricultural facilities. It is felt that borehole disposal may be appropriate for countries with a limited radioactive waste inventory, and it is hoped this research will be useful in better understanding the potential for such an approach.

4.3 EURAD is hosting an online seminar on the 22nd February which will provide information on the Swiss proposals for geological disposal in clay. This is open to all who register via the website¹¹.

5. CoRWM update

5.1 On the 6th January CoRWM issued their **Annual Report for 2021/22**¹². The report details the work of the Committee over the year and the range of advice they have provided to BEIS and NWS.

⁹ [SKB receives environmental permit for SFR expansion : Waste & Recycling - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/SKB-receives-environmental-permit-for-SFR-expansion)

¹⁰ [Borehole disposal projects under way in Malaysia and Ghana : Waste & Recycling - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Borehole-disposal-projects-under-way-in-Malaysia-and-Ghana)

¹¹ [Webinar: Lunch & Learn | Mission \(almost\) completed. The Swiss proposal for a combined repository in clay rocks. by SCK CEN Academy \(bigmarker.com\)](https://www.bigmarker.com/SCK-CEN-Academy/Webinar-Lunch-Learn-Mission-almost-completed-The-Swiss-proposal-for-a-combined-repository-in-clay-rocks)

¹² [CoRWM: 18th annual report, 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/108421/CoRWM-18th-annual-report-2021-to-2022.pdf)