

**Meeting:** Nuleaf Steering Group  
**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
**Item:** 7  
**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;
- Regulatory Update;
- International news; and
- CoRWM 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>.

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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>

## 1. Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Siting Process

1.1 It has been announced that the Search Areas in **Allerdale**<sup>4</sup> and **Mid**<sup>5</sup> and **South Copeland**<sup>6</sup> will change from April to reflect the ward boundaries of the new Cumberland Council. Wards in the new authority are significantly larger in size and therefore there has been a need to redefine the wards included to ensure the Search Areas remain relatively similar to what they are at present.

1.2 The **Allerdale** Community Partnership has confirmed that the full £1million of community investment funding available in the first year has been allocated, with 28 projects benefitting<sup>7</sup>.

1.3 More detailed information has been published on the survey of residents undertaken by **Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership**<sup>8</sup>.

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. 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.

Mid-Copeland has also announced the appointment to the Partnership of Deborah Naylor of Inspira<sup>9</sup>, who will lead on engagement with young people; and a series of local events on the technical, safety and transport aspects of the project<sup>10</sup>.

1.4 Following a meeting with representatives of Ignace, one of two communities remaining in the Canadian GDF siting process, **South Copeland GDF Community**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://alderdale.workinginpartnership.org.uk/announcing-changes-to-our-search-area/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/mid-copeland-search-area-boundary-to-change-due-to-local-government-reorganisation/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/south-copeland-search-area-boundary-to-change-due-to-local-government-reorganisation/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://alderdale.workinginpartnership.org.uk/weve-granted-1million-to-local-projects-in-our-first-year/>

<sup>8</sup> [Mid Copeland Community Partnership resident research - Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership \(workinginpartnership.org.uk\)](https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/mid-copeland-gdf-community-partnership-resident-research/)

<sup>9</sup> <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/champion-for-local-youth-joins-mid-copeland-gdf-community-partnership/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/want-to-find-out-more-about-safety-and-technical-aspects-of-a-gdf/>

**Partnership** has published a useful article<sup>11</sup> on the Canadian process and its socio-economic impacts. It has also been confirmed that the full £1million of Community Investment Funding (CIF) was allocated in year one<sup>12</sup>.

1.5 The **Theddlethorpe GDF Community Partnership** will stage a series of film themed community events during February and March. Entitled 'The Big Picture'<sup>13</sup>, the events will include short films along with an opportunity to engage with experts.

1.5 The **Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA)** have published a briefing setting out their concerns as what they see as a lack of transparency and accountability in GDF Community Partnerships<sup>14</sup>. The Briefing details correspondence between the NFLA and the four Partnerships on a range of topics.

## 2. Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) Update

2.1 Nuleaf's Executive Director has participated in work commissioned by NWS related to the **Test of Public Support**. The work is being undertaken by Yonder, a research consultancy, and is being used to inform internal thinking on issues including the strengths and weaknesses of potential mechanisms for determining the test of support and how it can be ensured that any test is 'fair and robust'. The research also included discussion of the developers' **Right of Withdrawal**, and how this might be achieved while retaining goodwill in the communities concerned.

2.2 NWS has published a 'first look' paper on the **sustainability of the GDF programme**<sup>15</sup>. Their approach is framed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and considers where the most significant impacts on communities and the environment could be made. It identifies three priority areas of focus:

- The Community – a GDF must work for the community, both as an infrastructure programme and as a long-term operating facility. Priorities include the building of social and infrastructural resilience, education and skills and diversity and inclusion.
- The Environment – NWS wants to ensure they minimise the impact on the local environment, and ideally enable the environment and ecosystems to be maintained and supported sustainably. Issues identified include responsible resource consumption, carbon net zero, natural capital enhancement, sustainable infrastructure and sustainable waste management.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/international-focus-canada/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/1m-in-south-copeland-awarded-by-gdf-programme/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://theddlethorpe.workinginpartnership.org.uk/you-are-invited-to-join-the-big-picture/>

<sup>14</sup> [A371-NB257---Democratising-the-GDF-Process-Feb-2023.pdf \(nuclearpolicy.info\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> [GDF Programme Sustainability - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- The Supply Chain – NWS aims to ensure that the supply chain they use to deliver a GDF will also support sustainability commitments to both the community and the environment. There is a focus on Social Value creation and Strategic Partnering.

2.3 NWS has also published a bibliography of published material on geological disposal<sup>16</sup>. The report covers the period 2007-2021 and provides links and details of relevant work. Information on some significant publications from prior to 2007 is also included.

2.4 Dr Mina Golshan CBE has joined the board of Nuclear Waste Services as a Non-Executive Director (NED) and will Chair the Environmental, Safety and Security Committee<sup>17</sup>. She replaces Neil Baldwin MBE and has over 20 years' experience in the nuclear and high hazard sector. This includes work at the Sizewell C site and as Director of the Officer for Nuclear Regulation (ONR).

### 3. Regulatory Update

3.1 The **Environment Agency** and **Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)** have jointly issued an annual report on their scrutiny of Nuclear Waste Services work on geological disposal<sup>18</sup>. 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 news

4.1 SKB, the Swedish radioactive waste management company, has received permission to triple the size of its repository for low and intermediate level radioactive waste<sup>19</sup>. The facility is located 60 metres below the bottom of the Baltic Sea off the municipality of **Osthammer**. 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 Following the selection of **Nordlich Langern** as the potential site of the Swiss GDF, plans for engagement with local communities and cantons have been announced.

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<sup>16</sup> [GDF Bibliography Summary 2007 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/gdf_bibliography_summary_2007_to_2021.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [Nuclear Waste Services announces changes to Management Board - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nuclear-waste-services-announces-changes-to-management-board)

<sup>18</sup> [Geological disposal: scrutiny of Nuclear Waste Services' work - annual reports - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/gdf_bibliography_summary_2007_to_2021.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [SKB receives environmental permit for SFR expansion : Waste & Recycling - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/World-nuclear-news-2021-03-10)

The focus of discussions will be on possible payments and compensation for hosting the repository<sup>20</sup>. Swissnuclear, which represents the operators of nuclear plants in the country, has stressed that payments and compensation are voluntary in nature, and are intended to recognise the contribution of the area to the solution of a national task. Discussions are separate from the general approval process and are being led by a former senior diplomat. They cover both the repository site and the location of a used fuel encapsulation plant proposed for the Zwiilag interim storage facility in Wurenlingen.

Separate from these discussions, Nagra is preparing the general license application which it hopes to submit to the Federal Council in 2024. Any approval will be subject to a national referendum, and Nagra has stated that it doesn't expect any waste emplacement to start for another 30 years.

4.3 Staying in Switzerland, a number of Nuleaf members joined an online EURAD seminar on the Swiss proposals for a combined repository in clay rocks, held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. EURAD has committed to making the session available online – we will circulate the link when available.

4.4 A pilot project to develop borehole disposal of radioactive waste is underway in Malaysia and Ghana<sup>21</sup>. Supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and with funding from Canada, the research is focussed on the disposal of disused sealed radioactive sources (DSRS) used in medical, industrial and agricultural facilities.

4.5 Nuleaf's Executive Director has been invited to take part in a EURAD meeting in Nancy, France held on the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The event will look at dialogue and development of mutual understanding around a GDF. It will also involve a visit to Bure, the site of an underground research laboratory which is 500 metres deep and looking at the capacity of local clay rocks to host a GDF. A report on the visit will be made to the next Steering Group meeting.

## 5. CoRWM Update

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

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<sup>20</sup> [Discussions due on proposed Swiss repository site : Waste & Recycling - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/News/Discussions-due-on-proposed-Swiss-repository-site-Waste-Recycling-World-Nuclear-News)

<sup>21</sup> [Borehole disposal projects under way in Malaysia and Ghana : Waste & Recycling - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/News/Borehole-disposal-projects-under-way-in-Malaysia-and-Ghana-Waste-Recycling-World-Nuclear-News)

<sup>22</sup> [CoRWM: 18th annual report, 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/111111/CoRWM-18th-annual-report-2021-to-2022.pdf)