

ITEM 6: UPDATE ON GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY SITING PROCESS

Report to RWPG, 18th July 2023

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

- Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) Update;
- GDF Community Partnerships; and
- International situation.

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. Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) Update

2.1 NWS has published its **Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Report 2023**⁴. It notes progress across the 4 GDF Community Partnerships and highlights:

That the formation of Community Partnerships has so far unlocked more than £3m of Community Investment Funding, supporting around 80 projects from community youth schemes to mental health initiatives.

Site evaluation work is moving forward with studies to assess potential site suitability for hosting a GDF underway. The first marine geophysical survey off the coast of Copeland was successfully carried out in August 2022 with the results expected in late 2023. NWS has also purchased existing geophysical data for other search areas on both East and West Coast locations.

NWS CEO Corhyn Parr said *'We're having important conversations, answering questions, and sharing information, and I'm particularly pleased that funding for*

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 [GDF Report highlights real progress - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gdf-report-highlights-real-progress)

those participating in the process is already making a huge difference to local people. We're now beginning to evaluate sites and their suitability for a GDF and looking forward to assessing the results of a range of studies to help inform decisions in the future.'

3. GDF Community Partnerships

3.1 Philip Matthews has been invited to speak to the **Theddlethorpe GDF Community Partnership** on the 20th July. The Partnership is interested in hearing about Nuleaf's engagement in the development of GDF policy in the UK, and in the international situation. A report on the meeting will be provided to the next Nuleaf Steering Group meeting in September.

It has also been announced that site investigations have begun in Lincolnshire, with these intended to assess a range of factors including community, transportation, environmental impact, geology and cost-effectiveness. The investigations will be carried out through non-intrusive methods and parallel those being undertaken in Cumberland⁵.

3.2 **Allerdale GDF Community Partnership** has launched a newsletter to be delivered to local residents⁶. 'News and Views' provides information on geological disposal and local updates.

Lucas Wirga, a 20-year-old from Workington who is studying at Durham University, has joined the Allerdale Community Partnership. All GDF partnerships have been keen to encourage more engagement of young people in their work.

A free screening of 'The Atom: A love Affair', a documentary film about nuclear power, was held on the 13th July. Community Partnership Chair, Mary Bradley commented *'This is an extremely entertaining and thought-provoking documentary which provides a brief history of our relationship with nuclear power. It contains lessons from the past which are worth reflecting on today, as we consider whether a GDF would be right for Allerdale and whether Allerdale is right for a GDF.'*

3.3 **Mid-Copeland GDF Community Partnership** is working to develop a Youth Strategy. Over 10 weeks the Partnership engaged with the Shackles Off youth project in Seascale, involving 12 to 16-year-olds.

Prior to the first meeting, no members of the youth group had heard about geological disposal, but their knowledge increased over time. The young people have

⁵ [Nuclear storage dump studies to begin in Lincolnshire \(mylocal.co.uk\)](https://mylocal.co.uk)

⁶ [NWS N&V Issue 1 2023.indb \(workinginpartnership.org.uk\)](https://workinginpartnership.org.uk)

proposed a variety of ways in which the Partnership could engage better and presented their thoughts to the Community Partnership.

3.4 **South Copeland GDF Community Partnership** has published an Outline Delivery Plan 2023/24, setting out a range of activities under different workstreams⁷.

The Partnership has also been boosted by two new members who bring expertise on environmental issues: John Sutton of Sustainable Duddon and Kate Willshaw of Friends of the Lake District.

4. International situation

4.1 Nuleaf's Executive Director joined a GMF Europe visit to the Mochovce nuclear site in Slovakia on the 27th and 28th June. The site has two operational nuclear reactors with a further two in construction. It generates about 20% of the country's electricity.

Development of the two new reactors originally began in 1987 but was then paused for many years following the collapse of the communist system in the early 1990s. Construction only restarted in 2008 following the integration of additional safety features and the project has suffered delays along with protests from neighbouring Austria. The two new reactors are expected to open in 2024.

The meeting also included a visit to Slovakia's Low Level Waste Repository, located by the nuclear plant. The country's other nuclear plant has already been closed and is being decommissioned, and a site is being sought for a geological repository.

4.2 The Belgian radioactive waste management agency, Ondraf/Niras, has been given permission to construct and operate a surface disposal facility for low and intermediate level waste at Dessel⁸. The proposals also include a new facility for non-conditioned waste. Construction will start in 2024 and the facility is expected to open before the end of the decade.

⁷ [South Copeland GDF Community Partnership - Newsletter \(workinginpartnership.org.uk\)](https://www.workinginpartnership.org.uk/newsletter)

⁸ [Permits granted for Belgian waste facilities : Waste & Recycling - World Nuclear News \(world-nuclear-news.org\)](https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Permits-granted-for-Belgian-waste-facilities)