

ITEM 7: UPDATE ON GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY SITING PROCESS

Report to RWPG, 7th May 2025

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

- GDF Community Partnerships;
- International news; 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. GDF Community Partnerships

2.1 **Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)** has stated that it will withdraw from the GDF siting process unless it receives significant further information. Council Leader Martin Hill called on Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) to '*comprehensively explain the benefits and costs of the proposal*' for the local area⁴.

The announcements follows the decision by NWS to define their 'Area of Focus' for the GDF headworks around land between Gayton le Marsh and Great Carlton. This represents a move away from previous plans that the headworks would be on the former gasworks site at Theddlethorpe.

Cllr Hill said LCC joined the siting process with '*an open mind, knowing that residents themselves could make the decision as to whether it was right for the area*'. However, moving the potential site had '*changed the very nature of the*

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 [Lincolnshire nuclear waste: council leader prepares to end talks - BBC News](#)

proposal and raised further concerns within the local community. We had planned to put the decision on whether to remain within the partnership to a public vote next year, but it has become increasingly apparent that the community is getting frustrated with the uncertainty and slow pace of this process.'

The County Council's statement follows the decision of **East Lindsey District Council** to withdraw from the Theddlethorpe GDF Community Partnership, something that was formally confirmed at a meeting of the Council's Executive Board on the 4th April⁵.

The involvement of at least one principal local authority is necessary for the process to continue and so Lincolnshire County Council's statement raises the possibility that the siting process will end in the area.

2.2 The Chair of the **South Copeland GDF Partnership**, Ged McGrath, is stepping down after serving a two year term. It has also been announced that Millom Town Council is withdrawing from the Community Partnership. Following these significant changes, consideration is being given to the future shape of the Partnership and how the views of the Town Council can still be considered.

2.3 **Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership** has published a graphic⁶ showing the progress of the Partnership over the past year.

3. International News

3.1 Nuleaf has prepared a case study on the Canadian GDF siting process, following the announcement that the communities of **Ignace** and the **Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nations**, in northern Ontario, have been chosen as the location of the repository. The Case Study can be viewed here⁷.

3.2 Groundwork has begun for the construction of Sweden's final repository for Spent Nuclear Fuel at Forsmark in the Osthhammer municipality⁸. *'It is a historic day for the Swedish nuclear waste programme. We are taking an important step and breaking ground for a final solution for the spent nuclear fuel'* said Stefan Engdahl, CEO of the Swedish waste management organisation SKB.

The construction of the used fuel repository will take ten years before deposition can begin, SKB said, after which the repository will be gradually expanded over a long period of time. Two years of surface work will now begin, including the construction

⁵ [East Lindsey District Council withdraws from nuclear waste talks - BBC News](#)

⁶ <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/snapshot-of-mid-copeland-gdf-community-partnership-progress-over-past-year/>

⁷ <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/policy-communications/case-studies/>

⁸ [Sweden breaks ground for used fuel repository - World Nuclear News](#)

of rock storage and water treatment facilities, a canister bridge over the cooling water canal and forest clearance.

4. Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM)

4.1 CoRWM has published its 2025 progress report on the delivery of an operational GDF⁹. It offers a range of comments on NWS' organisational capability and also on the Community Partnerships, potential sites and on policy and regulation.

The report notes that:

- While NWS is building its organisational capacity, its social science capabilities are taking longer to establish and there is an urgent need to involve communities in co-creating their siting and engagement frameworks.
- That lessons need to be learned from the withdrawal from Allerdale and South Holderness. The Committee recognises that there have been improvements to aspects of the engagement with the Community Partnerships in other areas.
- There are 'very significant' technical and practical challenges in establishing a GDF in the target zones off Cumbria, located more than 15km offshore.
- CoWRM believes that onshore options for locating a GDF could still be identified.
- The Committee will be considering the transport aspects of a GDF further given that they are potentially controversial with members of the public.

⁹ [Delivery of an operational geological disposal facility \(GDF\): progress report 2025 - GOV.UK](#)