

Meeting: Nuleaf Steering Group
Date: 10th September 2025
Item: 8
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 NWS. It covers:

- GDF Community Partnerships;
- Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) Update;
- International News: and
- Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (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 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

2.1 Following the decision by **Lincolnshire County Council's (LCC) Executive Board** to withdraw from the Theddlethorpe Community Partnership (CP), the Partnership has now closed.

David Fannin, Chair of the Community Partnership, commented: *'The GDF Community Partnership has enabled three-way interaction between the GDF developer, community, and local councils. It has listened to people across the Search*

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>

Area, raised many questions and has heard a mix of opinions. We would have welcomed the opportunity to discuss and consider the issues and benefits further but, ultimately, it came down to a choice between ending uncertainty now verses exploring the suitability of the area as the potential location for a GDF and longer-term benefits of investment in the area.'

Nuleaf will continue to support the involvement of Cumberland Council in the two remaining Community Partnerships in west Cumbria; and any other local authority considering engaging in the process.

2.2 UK Energy Minister Michael Shanks MP stated on the 1st September that the Government remained committed to delivering a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)⁴.

This was in response to the publication of a report by the **National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (Nista)**, which concluded that expected costs of between £20Bn and £53Bn would make it 'unaffordable.' The report also noted that the Infrastructure and Projects Authority had dropped its confidence rating in a GDF from amber to red⁵.

Shanks commented *'I know at times these things seem like they move very slowly, but we are making progress on this. When we're successful, this will bring thousands of skilled jobs, investment and economic growth to the local area.'* He added that Nista was part of the process to speed up decision making and he was hoping the GDF would be *'a very good example of that when we get it over the line'*.

2.3 Cllr Andy Pratt has been appointed as the new Chair of the **South Copeland GDF Partnership**. He serves as a Cumberland Councillor for the Millom Without Ward and is also the current Chair of the Mid-Copeland GDF Partnership⁶.

2.4 Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership has published a blog and video from Prof. Lucy Bailey, the Chief of Disposal Safety at NWS focussing on the safety case. It can be viewed here⁷.

3. Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) Update

3.1 Seth Kybird, the newly appointed Interim CEO of Nuclear Waste Services has published an article making the case for geological disposal. It can be read here⁸. Nuleaf's Chair and Executive Director met with Seth in late July to discuss the GDF siting process and the role of local government.

⁴ [Minister backs Cumbria nuclear plan despite cost fears - BBC News](#)

⁵ [Report](#)

⁶ [New Chair appointed to South Copeland GDF Community Partnership - South Copeland GDF Community Partnership](#)

⁷ <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/blog-from-nuclear-waste-services-designing-for-long-term-safety-of-the-most-hazardous-radioactive-waste/>

⁸ [The Future of Radioactive Waste Disposal in the UK: Building Towards Geological Disposal - Nuclear Waste Services](#)

3.2 NWS has published an updated **Inventory for Geological Disposal**⁹. The inventory is based on the 2022 UK Radioactive Waste Inventory but looks in a more strategic way at waste streams that may be destined for a GDF. Overall it identifies 574 Waste Streams currently stored at locations across the UK (see below) and notes that 87% of the total packaged waste volume for a GDF will come from existing sites, with 13% from new nuclear power stations.



4. International news

4.1 Canada's **Nuclear Waste Management Organisation (NWMO)** is seeking public input ahead on the anticipated launch in 2028 of a site selection process for a second radioactive waste repository, with this facility to be used for the disposal of intermediate and non-fuel high level radioactive waste. The repository could also potentially hold spent nuclear fuel from future nuclear reactors.

This new siting process and facility is separate from the Canadian GDF for spent fuel, with that facility being developed in the Township of Ignace/Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation in northern Ontario¹⁰.

⁹ [Latest Inventory for Geological Disposal published - Nuclear Waste Services](#)

¹⁰ [New projects](#)

5. Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) Update

5.1 The UK and Devolved Government's independent adviser, CoRWM, has published a policy paper on **Radioactive waste burning by nuclear transmutation – considering 'waste burner' nuclear reactors for the UK¹¹**.

The paper looks at claims from vendors that waste burner technology could potentially treat this long-lived radioactive waste to shorten the timescale over which it is radioactive and reduce its heat generation. This in turn could reduce the footprint of a GDF.

CoRWM concludes that *'realising any practical benefits could be achieved only with significant capital investment in new waste management and fuel fabrication infrastructure. The UK already has a significant inventory of vitrified high level waste, which would be impossible to burn and which would need to be safely isolated and contained in a GDF for 100,000 years. These factors combined call into question the material and economic benefit of waste burning in the UK context.'*

¹¹ [Radioactive waste burning by nuclear transmutation: CoRWM position paper - GOV.UK](#)