

ITEM 6: UPDATE ON GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY SITING PROCESS



Report to RWPG, 28th January 2021

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

- GDF Siting Process;
- RWM Update; and
- International 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 Siting Process

2.1 It was announced on the 14th January that a GDF Working Group has been established in Allerdale⁴. The group will initially focus on gathering information about the local area and the views of the local community along with identifying a Search Area for further detailed consideration. As is the position in Copeland, the Lake District National Park will be excluded.

The Working Group⁵ is being Chaired by Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong. Jocelyn has held a variety of other roles, including as a member of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and an independent member of Cumbria Police Authority. The Working Group also involves Cllr. Marion Fitzgerald of Allerdale Borough Council, Andy Ross of GenR8 North Ltd. (the 'Interested Party'), representatives of RWM and an independent facilitator.

Ms Manners-Armstrong stated *'Formation of the group is the just the beginning of a gradual, consent-based process. We have not committed to having a GDF here, and there will be a lot of further work needed to help communities find out everything they need to know ahead of making any decisions. I am passionate about protecting our natural environment, and also about the sustainability of our communities, so I*

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 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rwm-welcomes-launch-of-second-gdf-working-group>

⁵ <https://allerdale.workinginpartnership.org.uk/>

look forward to starting this process, meeting local people and listening to their views.'

Allerdale is the second community to formally enter the GDF siting process, following Copeland's announcement in November 2020. It is understood that RWM is also in discussion with interested parties in other parts of the country.

2.2 Copeland's Working Group has established a website⁶ and publishes a regular newsletter⁷ on the local siting process. The website contains a range of useful information on membership of the Group, community engagement team and interested parties, and also on the defined search area and the initial evaluations that have been undertaken. A 'virtual exhibition' is also available⁸.

2.3 An article on the GDF siting process by Cllr Matthew Riddle, Nuleaf's Chair, was published in the December edition of the Local Government Association's First magazine⁹. The article is intended to raise awareness of the GDF among non-Nuleaf local authorities.

3. RWM Update

3.1 RWM is working with Jacobs on a £5 million research project that will test an innovative engineering system designed to seal deep boreholes. This work is important to the GDF siting process, given that deep boreholes will need to be drilled in potential host communities to test the suitability of the geology.

The research project is beginning on NDA land at Harwell where the approach will be tested on the underlying lower-strength sedimentary clay. Once this is sealed in spring 2021, the project will move on to demonstrate its capabilities in Cornwall's higher-strength rock in late 2021/early 2022. Work to seal a borehole in an evaporite salt rock location will follow. Through this, the effectiveness of the approach in all three most suitable rock types will be assessed. The Environment Agency will review the research project as part of their wider regulation of the siting process.

3.2 Responses have been published to a series of Freedom of Information (FoI) requests covering a number of issues related to the GDF programme and RWM's operations. These can be found here¹⁰.

⁶ <https://copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/>

⁷ <https://copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/newsletter-issue-2/>

⁸ <https://copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/get-involved/>

⁹ <https://www.lgafirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/First-Magazine-December-2020.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/search/all?parent=radioactive-waste-management&organisations%5B%5D=radioactive-waste-management&order=updated-newest>

4. International update

4.1 The Czech cabinet has shortlisted 4 potential sites for a deep geological repository¹¹. These have been identified by a process of technical appraisal rather than community volunteerism, but a process of community engagement is now planned. The aim is for a site to be selected by 2030 and for the repository to be operational by 2065.

4.2 The **European Repository Development Network (ERDO)** was launched on the 7th January 2021¹². Founded by the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway, the network will help countries work together to safely manage long lives radioactive wastes. This may includes establishing shared multinational geological repositories. Other nations including Austria, Slovenia, Italy and Croatia are expected to join ERDO in the near future.

4.3 Italy has published a map of 67 potential sites for a nuclear waste repository¹³. The industry and environment ministries gave decommissioning company SOGIN permission to draft the national map of areas potentially suitable for the waste. All seven regions in which potential sites are located have objected and announced legal action against the move.

4.4 Nuleaf's Director participated in an international conference on the **Aarhus Convention and Nuclear**, held online between the 13th and 15th January. The Convention establishes rights for the public to participate in environmental decision-making and to access information on public decisions on the environment. The conference heard about engagement processes on radioactive waste management from across Europe, including a discussion on the UK situation involving RWM Ltd. and Cumbria Trust. Nuleaf will circulate a link to the presentations from the event when these are made available.

¹¹ <https://world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Czech-Republic-shortlists-geological-repository-si>

¹² <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/European-organisation-launched-for-cooperation-in>

¹³ <https://www.sogin.it/en/closureoftheitaliannuclearcycle/national-repository-and-technology-park/Pagine/default.aspx>