

# Community Guidance

How we will work  
with communities  
in England



 **Radioactive Waste  
Management**

Working together to protect the future

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# Delivering a safer future

Welcome to our Guidance for communities who would like more information about how to become a potential host community for the UK's future Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). Our dedicated team of community liaison experts has compiled this information on the process set out by government for taking your interest further into becoming a host site.

*RWM is a public sector, not-for-profit organisation established to deliver a safer future through effective radioactive waste management.*

The process set out in this Guidance has been developed over a number of years and puts communities right at the heart of GDF siting. Whether you are making initial enquires, or you are ready to take the next step to declaring your interest and engaging with us, we hope that you will find all the information outlined in this guidance useful. If you have any concerns or queries, our team is on hand to answer your questions.

You may also be interested in the other documents available on our website, which include the outputs from our National Geological Screening exercise, information on how we will evaluate sites and further information about geological disposal and the wastes we will have to manage.

**Bruce McKirdy**  
Managing Director



## About this Guidance

This Guidance applies to England only.

*Geological disposal is the internationally accepted solution for the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste.*

A Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) is a series of vaults and tunnels deep underground. It provides a permanent and safe solution for the disposal of higher activity radioactive waste.

*Implementing Geological Disposal - Working with Communities*<sup>1</sup> sets out the broad policy framework for implementing geological disposal. Government policy is a consent-based approach of working in partnership with communities in an open and transparent way, to find a suitable site for a GDF in a community willing to host it. The process to identify and select a site for a GDF may take up to 20 years. The construction and operation of the facility will take a further 100+ years.

Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) is responsible for implementing a safe, sustainable and publicly acceptable geological disposal programme. This will be undertaken in accordance with relevant Government policies, regulatory and legislative requirements. We will work in partnership with communities and the principal local authorities that represent those communities in order to do this.

The purpose of this Guidance is to provide information, help and advice in support of this policy framework in England. It is for anyone who is interested in learning more about geological disposal and the process for identifying a site for a GDF.

Separate Guidance supports the Welsh Government's Working with Communities policy, where geological disposal is also the preferred solution for the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste.

Anyone may contact RWM to find out more about geological disposal or the process to identify and select a site – including for example, individuals, landowners, local authorities, businesses or community groups. We are here to help, and we invite people to join us in the discussions.

## The Guidance is divided into the following sections:

**Section 1** (pages 6-14) provides an overview of government policy; where the waste has come from; what the UK uses nuclear technology for; how the waste is currently stored; and why we need a safe, long term solution to dispose of the waste. This section also provides information on the help and support available to communities who want to engage with us. Additionally it explains how we will commit to being open and transparent throughout the process.

**Section 2** (pages 15-43) is a guide through the process for identifying a willing host community with a suitable site for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). This process could take up to 20 years and during this time we will be conducting detailed technical work at potential sites to assess their suitability. Funding will be available to interested communities and this section explains what it may be used for.

**Section 3** (pages 44-47) contains our contact details and a useful glossary.

### Further resources

We will make further resources available to communities to use throughout the process. This will include information such as templates, examples of good practice and case studies, together with signposting to other sources of information that communities may find helpful.

Throughout this Guidance there are links to where further support can be found, and we can also be contacted (see page 45) in a number of ways.

## To get in touch

Email: [GDFenquiries@nda.gov.uk](mailto:GDFenquiries@nda.gov.uk)

or write to us at


GDF Enquiries  
Building 587, Curie Avenue,  
Harwell Campus,  
Didcot, OX11 0RH

If you have suggestions as to how this Guidance could be improved, we would welcome hearing about them, so please get in touch.

<sup>1</sup> *Implementing Geological Disposal - Working with Communities.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementing-geological-disposal-working-with-communities-long-term-management-of-higher-activity-radioactive-waste>





Geological disposal is the internationally accepted solution for the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste.



Section 1

# Introduction



## Who is RWM and what is our role?

*Radioactive Waste Management Ltd. (RWM) is a public body and a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). At RWM, we draw on over 30 years' experience in carrying out scientific research and development in geological disposal.*

We work closely with other countries around the world to share knowledge on key issues related to geological disposal. We also provide advice to organisations that produce waste on how to retrieve, prepare and package radioactive waste in ways that will make it suitable for disposal in a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF).

One of our roles is to bring about a permanent, safe solution to manage the UK's higher activity radioactive waste. It is our responsibility to implement geological disposal and provide long-term radioactive waste management solutions. Communities are at the heart of what we do.

### We will:

- be responsible for ensuring that communities receive information about the process to identify and select a site for a GDF;
- provide funding for helping communities engage with the process;
- provide Community Investment Funding for communities in the process;
- be responsible for evaluation and investigation of potential sites;
- be responsible for submitting relevant planning, permitting and licensing applications and consultations associated with these processes;
- be responsible for delivering a GDF, including the design, construction, operation and closure of the facility.

**i** [Find out more about RWM](#)

## What is Government policy?

### Policy background

In 2001, the UK Government and devolved administrations initiated the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely programme<sup>2</sup>, with the aim of finding a practical long-term management solution for the UK's higher activity radioactive waste that:

- achieved long-term protection of people and the environment;
- was open and transparent and inspired public confidence;
- was based on sound science;
- ensured the effective use of public monies.

Between 2003 and 2006, a wide range of options on how to deal with the UK's higher activity radioactive waste were considered by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) an independent advisory committee to the UK Government and devolved administrations, from indefinite storage on or below the surface through to propelling waste into space.

In 2006, CoRWM recommended that geological disposal, coupled with safe and secure interim storage, is the best available approach for the long-term management of the UK's higher activity radioactive waste<sup>3</sup>. CoRWM issued a statement reiterating its commitment to geological disposal in 2013<sup>4</sup> and again in 2018<sup>5</sup>.

### Devolved administrations

In the UK, radioactive waste management is a devolved matter. This means that different government policies may apply in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

Geological disposal is the UK Government and Welsh Government's preferred solution for the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste.

The UK Government's policy covering England is that we must seek to identify sites that are both technically suitable and have a local community that gives explicit support for us to proceed with development for a GDF.

<sup>2</sup> *Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: Proposals for Developing a Policy for Managing Solid Radioactive Waste in the UK, September 2001: <http://bit.ly/15Rum8m>*

<sup>3</sup> *CoRWM recommendation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-our-radioactive-waste-safely-corwm-doc-700>*

<sup>4</sup> *CoRWM statement on geological disposal 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statement-on-geological-disposal>*

<sup>5</sup> *<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/radioactive-waste-support-for-disposal-rather-than-indefinite-storage-corwm-position-paper>*



The process for selecting a site in England is ‘consent-based’. This means that whilst we will lead the process, it requires a community’s consent before we can apply for the licences and permits to construct and operate a GDF.

Welsh Government policy on the arrangements for community engagement in Wales will reflect specific Welsh circumstances whilst being compatible with the key elements of the UK Government’s geological disposal programme. The process described in this Guidance does not therefore apply to communities in Wales. Separate Community Guidance supports the Welsh Government Working with Communities policy for use in Wales.

The Scottish Government has a different policy<sup>6</sup> which is that higher activity radioactive waste should be treated, stored or disposed of in near-surface facilities located as near as possible to the site where the waste is produced. The process described in this Guidance does not therefore apply to communities in Scotland.

The Northern Ireland Executive has responsibility for ensuring that any proposed GDF will not have an adverse impact upon the environment, health or safety of Northern Ireland. Whilst Northern Ireland recognises that it is in its best interests to support any mechanisms that ensure that these wastes are managed in the safest and most secure manner, any future policy decisions in relation to geological disposal in Northern Ireland would be a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive, which is currently suspended. The process described in this Guidance does not therefore apply to communities in Northern Ireland.

### National Policy Statement for Geological Disposal Infrastructure

In England, geological disposal facilities and *deep investigative boreholes*<sup>7</sup> have been classified as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. A National Policy Statement (NPS) for Geological Disposal Infrastructure *A framework document for planning decisions on nationally significant infrastructure* is expected to be designated by the UK Government in 2019. The NPS will provide guidance to the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State on assessing and making a decision on development consent applications for these types of infrastructure in England.

## Roles and responsibilities

The **Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)** is the UK Government department with policy responsibility that includes nuclear decommissioning and managing radioactive waste and materials. Government delivery agencies, commercial operators and regulators implement and deliver their respective missions within this framework.

The **Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)** is a non-departmental public body that was established by the Energy Act 2004. It is responsible for delivering decommissioning and cleaning-up existing, publicly owned civil nuclear sites across the whole of the UK, and making them available for other purposes. It is responsible for implementing Government policy on the long-term management of radioactive waste.

**Radioactive Waste Management (RWM)** a subsidiary of the NDA, has been given the responsibility for implementing geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste. As the delivery body for a GDF, RWM is responsible for safety, security and environmental protection throughout the lifetime of the programme. RWM is responsible for complying with all the regulatory requirements on geological disposal.

**Communities** sit at the heart of the consent-based approach. They will be able to enter into discussions with us at RWM about the siting process, and work in partnership with us to decide if they want to host a GDF.

**Relevant principal local authorities.** This term refers to district councils, county councils and unitary authorities that represent people in all or part of the area under consideration. They will be responsible for some key decisions about the community’s involvement in the process. At least one relevant principal local authority must be on the Community Partnership, which will be the main vehicle for sharing information between RWM and the community.

The **Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM)** provides independent scrutiny and advice to the UK Government and the devolved administrations on the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste.

The **regulators** have an important role to play in ensuring the protection of people and the environment. The Environment Agency (EA) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) will regulate environmental protection and the safety and security of a GDF.

<sup>6</sup> Scotland’s Higher Activity Radioactive Waste Policy 2011  
<https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/01/20114928/0>

<sup>7</sup> Drilled to 150 metres or more, deep boreholes will help us to assess whether the geology is potentially suitable for a GDF. Boreholes will provide us with samples of rock and groundwater, allowing us to understand the physical property of rock as well as how water and other fluids travel through different rock layers.

## Where does the waste come from?

### Nuclear technologies

As a pioneer of nuclear technology, the UK has accumulated higher activity radioactive waste over the past 60 years from a range of activities, including electricity generation, medicine, research and defence related programmes.

Examples include:

- **electricity generation** - approximately 20% (1/5) of electricity in the UK comes from nuclear power stations and most of the radioactive waste that we will have to manage comes from power stations
- **medical uses** - in particular, radioactive materials are used to sterilise equipment, and help diagnose and treat illnesses such as cancer
- **industry** - for example, gamma rays are used to test the quality of welding
- **defence** - including powering submarines and for weapons
- **research and development** - from nuclear fusion technology to developing new radiotherapy treatments
- **consumer products** - such as smoke detectors or food sterilisation equipment.

Most waste is low in radioactivity and can be disposed of safely in facilities on the surface but a long-term solution is still needed for the higher activity waste, some of which will remain hazardous for hundreds of thousands of years. Most of this higher activity radioactive waste is being stored on a temporary basis at nuclear sites across the UK. More of this waste will be produced in the future as existing facilities reach the end of their lifetime and are decommissioned and cleaned up, and through the operation and decommissioning of new nuclear power stations.

Today the UK is faced with the challenge of cleaning up the legacy of its past nuclear operations and to prepare for a safe and permanent way to dispose of the radioactive waste produced by the current and future use of nuclear technologies.

## What could go into a Geological Disposal Facility?

*The waste that will be disposed of in a Geological Disposal Facility is referred to as the 'inventory for disposal.'*

The types and amounts of waste that make up this inventory are important because:

- the layout and design of any disposal facility will need to be tailored to them
- communities considering hosting a GDF will want to be clear about what wastes are destined for it.

The specific types of higher activity radioactive waste (and nuclear materials that could be declared as waste) which would comprise the inventory for disposal in a GDF are:

- High Level Waste (HLW) arising from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield;
- Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) arising from existing nuclear licensed sites, defence, medical, industrial, research and educational facilities;
- the small proportion of Low Level Waste (LLW) that is not suitable for disposal in the national Low Level Waste Repository;
- spent fuel from existing commercial reactors (yet to be declared waste) and from research reactors that is not reprocessed;
- spent fuel (yet to be declared waste) and ILW from a new build programme up to a defined amount;
- plutonium stocks – plutonium not re-used in new fuel manufacture (yet to be declared waste);
- uranium stocks – including that arising from enrichment and fuel fabrication activities (yet to be declared waste); and
- irradiated fuel and nuclear materials (yet to be declared waste) from the UK defence programme.

It is not expected that the categories of waste and material listed above will change significantly. For communities that are considering hosting a GDF, this description provides the most complete picture of the possible inventory for disposal at this point in time. If, however, the list of waste and materials were to change significantly it would need to be discussed with the Potential Host Community. A process for agreeing any future material changes to the categories of waste to be disposed of in a GDF would need to be agreed before the Test of Public Support.

Volumes of waste are subject to change due to a number of factors including improvements to the estimates of waste that will arise from planned operations and decommissioning programmes.

In order to support the implementation of geological disposal RWM publishes a quantified description of the inventory for disposal. The most recent report was published in 2018<sup>8</sup>, together with the methodologies and assumptions that were used in its development.

**i** [Read about the different types of waste that could go into a GDF](#)

<sup>8</sup> UK Radioactive Waste Inventory <https://ukinventory.nda.gov.uk>

## What is geological disposal?

*A Geological Disposal Facility will be a highly engineered facility to safely manage the disposal of higher activity radioactive waste deep underground.*

The waste will be packaged in secure containers, typically made of metal or concrete and then placed in vaults and tunnels between 200 metres and 1000 metres below the surface in a stable rock formation, with the containers surrounded by a suitable material such as clay or cement. This is called the multi-barrier approach: The natural underground environment which surrounds the GDF acts in combination with the engineered measures to contain the radioactivity deep underground.

There are three major benefits of geological disposal:

- it **isolates** the radioactive waste deep underground
- it **contains** the radioactivity while it decays naturally over time
- it is a **passive** system, which means it requires no ongoing maintenance

Interim stores for packaged higher activity radioactive waste are robust, engineered facilities that prevent hazardous releases to the outside environment. Interim stores are designed to withstand foreseeable incidents such as earthquakes and severe weather, and they perform a security role by being a barrier to intrusion.

Significant investment is made in maintaining and improving interim storage, but all stores have a limited design life. Eventually stores will need to be rebuilt and the waste within them repackaged, given the very long timescales that higher activity radioactive waste needs to be managed. Interim waste storage is not in itself a permanent disposal solution, but it provides a safe and secure environment for waste packages that are awaiting disposal in a GDF.

*A Geological Disposal Facility will be a highly engineered facility to safely manage the disposal of higher activity radioactive waste deep underground.*

## How much land may be required?

*In total, the area required above ground is expected to cover approximately 1 square kilometre with the details of the layout and appearance being dependent on the features of a particular location.*

All the surface facilities may not need to be together in one place. The surface facilities need not be directly above the underground facilities. For example the surface facilities could be based on land and the underground facilities be located in the rock deep under the sea bed.

The underground facilities will be located at a depth of between 200 metres and 1000 metres and could cover an area of up to 20 square kilometres depending on the location, design and type of waste that will be disposed of.

Although Government has a strong preference to manage all the waste in one GDF there could be more than one. If there was more than one, they could be in different parts of England or Wales.

### Where could a Geological Disposal Facility be sited?

There is a large range of potentially suitable geological settings for a GDF. There is no single best or most suitable type of geology for a GDF.

In 2014 Government asked us to bring together the high-level geological information relevant to the long-term safety of a GDF in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is called the GDF National Geological Screening exercise. As part of this exercise, we have considered three broad rock types in which a GDF could possibly be built and which occur beneath the landmass and up to 12 nautical miles (20 kilometres) off the coast in England, Wales and Northern Ireland<sup>9</sup>. These rocks are:

- Higher strength rocks - for example granite
- Lower strength sedimentary rocks - for example mudstone, like clay rock
- Evaporite rocks - for example rock salt

**i** For more information see [GDF National Geological Screening](#).

<sup>9</sup> The Northern Ireland Executive has responsibility for ensuring that any proposed Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) will not have an adverse impact upon the environment, health or safety of Northern Ireland. Whilst Northern Ireland recognises that it is in its best interests to support any mechanisms that ensure that these wastes are managed in the safest and most secure manner, any future policy decisions in relation to geological disposal in Northern Ireland would be a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive, which is currently suspended.



### What help and support will be available to communities?

*There will be a wide range of support available to communities that wish to explore what a GDF might mean for their community.*

We will work with you to identify the resources that might be required, to resolve issues directly, or to help to develop additional skills if needed. We will also ensure there are RWM staff to work with groups like the Working Group, the Community Partnership and Community Investment Panel. These groups will all be explained further in Section 2 of this Guidance.

Whilst RWM will be the first port of call for information on geological disposal, there will be access to relevant independent experts, if required, for technical, social, scientific and policy enquiries. The Community Partnership may also commission reports and research as part of the agreed Programme of Activities. We can also put you in touch with community groups, regulators and companies that are engaged in geological disposal programmes in other parts of the world.

Help, advice and information may also be sought from the independent environmental and nuclear regulators (the Environment Agency and Office for Nuclear Regulation respectively). The regulators will be able to provide information for communities on a range of subjects that may be important to people in relation to environmental protection and nuclear safety and security.

In addition, the Government's independent advisory body, the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) will also be available to provide independent advice.

*There will be a wide range of support available to communities that wish to engage in the siting process for a Geological Disposal Facility.*

#### Access to scientific and technical information

Given the range of advice and information available it may be that the Community Partnership receives conflicting statements from different parties. If that is the case, the Government is making available a mechanism through which the Community Partnership, or us at RWM, can access views on contested and unresolved scientific or technical issues from independent experts identified by the Learned Societies.<sup>10</sup>

It is not envisaged that this mechanism will be used on a regular basis, only where issues have arisen and where one of the parties feels that a further view from a relevant Learned Society member may be helpful in addition to the information already provided.

It is important to note that members of the Learned Societies will not make decisions, provide recommendations or give advice. Rather, they may offer an independent expert view on the subject matter. This can then be used to inform the community and us at RWM.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Welsh Government, the Geological Society of London, the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, the Learned Society of Wales and RWM. The MoU allows for the group to reach out to other Learned Societies which have not signed the MoU, should the question not fall within any of their remits.

It will be the Community Partnership that will decide whether to seek a view via the Learned Societies, although members of the community can request that the Partnership considers doing so. RWM may also decide to seek a view.

The expert view(s) will be returned from the Learned Society expert(s) to the Community Partnership or to RWM. The view will be shared and it will be for the Community Partnership or RWM to decide how to act on the view it has received.


#### Financial support

The cost of running the siting process will be borne by RWM. As well as receiving help and support, individuals participating directly in the Working Group and Community Partnership will have reasonable out-of-pocket expenses paid back to them.

Relevant principal local authorities that participate in the process will receive financial support, so that local taxpayers do not incur any additional financial burden. The mechanism for this will be agreed in advance.

<sup>10</sup> A Learned Society is an independent organisation that exists to promote an academic discipline, profession, or a group of related disciplines.





Relevant principal local authorities that participate in the process will receive financial support, so that they do not incur any additional financial burden.





## How will we be open and transparent with communities?

*Our aim is to establish and maintain a close partnership with each community discussing the potential for hosting a Geological Disposal Facility with us. We understand this will depend on building and maintaining mutual trust, confidence and respect.*

We want to build a close partnership with communities by;

- engaging with communities widely
- listening to the needs and concerns of the community
- responding to questions or community concerns openly and promptly
- sharing knowledge and keeping people up to date on progress
- ensuring people have everything they need to help them to understand the technical, scientific and regulatory requirements for siting a GDF

We will provide information and work with people to allow them to access the information they need. We will also be available to provide opportunities to help develop the knowledge and skills of community members so that they may engage fully in the process.

We invite and welcome community engagement throughout the process but will not presume that this implies support for the development of a GDF. We will be respectful of a wide range of views.

RWM is committed to working in partnership with communities and the principal local authorities that represent those communities in the process. The consent-based process means that a GDF may only be constructed if a suitable site can be identified and the local community consents to hosting a facility. In addition, the community has the right to withdraw (see section 2) from the process at any time, for any reason, up to the point at which a Test of Public Support is undertaken (page 42).

### **Independent evaluation**

We will engage independent evaluators in order to review the effectiveness of the community engagement throughout the process. This will enable learning from experience to help improve future engagement. Findings will be shared with Working Groups, Community Partnerships and sub groups involved in the process.



## The principles we work to

In engaging with communities we will aim to be:

### Transparent:

We will aim to provide people with the information that they want. Information will be clear and accessible and be provided in appropriate formats.

### Constructive:

We are aiming for a two-way dialogue process. We will respect differences of opinion and points of view in order to create mutual trust.

### Inclusive:

We want to encourage and understand a broad community view on the process. Where there are barriers that prevent people from participating, we will take action to overcome them. Where there is a lack of capacity, time or skills for people to become fully engaged, we will work with them to identify what support is needed so that as many people who want to, have a chance to get involved.

### Evidence-based:

We will provide factual information and evidence as we undertake site evaluations. Resources will be available to the community to answer questions they may have. Where necessary, support will be offered to develop skills amongst local people to help them engage with technical information with greater confidence.

### Consistent:

Each community may be different, but our engagement in each one will be consistent with and follow the Government's Working with Communities Policy. Whilst we might respond differently to different community circumstances, a consistent process will be followed with each community.

### Without prejudice:

We acknowledge that just because individuals become involved in the process, it does not necessarily imply their support for geological disposal.

### Timely:

We will make sure that there is sufficient time for considered and informed responses to questions.

## Regulating geological disposal

*As well as working in partnership with communities there are three other main processes involved in developing, constructing and operating a Geological Disposal Facility. These are land-use planning, environmental permitting and nuclear site licensing. During each of these processes there will be engagement between RWM, regulators and communities.*

In England, a GDF and the deep boreholes necessary to investigate potential sites are Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects under the Planning Act 2008. This means that the Planning Inspectorate will examine our proposals and make recommendations to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State makes the final decision on whether to grant a Development Consent Order (DCO). The process places specific requirements on us to consult local authorities and statutory bodies such as the regulators, and to carry out a widely based public consultation before any application is made.

At the point when we want to drill deep boreholes, as well as applying for a DCO, we will also need to apply for environmental permits. RWM will need to hold a separate environmental permit before starting any deep boreholes for each geographical area under consideration. The Environmental Permitting Regulations require the regulators to consult on environmental permit applications (where appropriate).

When a preferred site for a GDF has been identified, before starting excavations associated with underground investigation work, RWM will need to apply for a DCO for a GDF and a revised environmental permit. We will also need to apply to the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) for a nuclear site licence. Under a nuclear site licence, the ONR will make sure that, from the start of constructing a GDF, RWM addresses conventional safety and any implications for nuclear safety and security.

Land use planning, environmental permitting and nuclear site licensing will include further opportunities for public engagement and consultation where appropriate. The Environment Agency and the ONR will provide information and comment to the Planning Inspectorate relating to their own areas of responsibility. Communities and local authorities will be able to play a full part in these processes, whether they have previously supported the development of a GDF or not.

Joint regulation of a GDF by the ONR and the Environment Agency will ensure that their separate regulatory requirements are met in a way that provides the required high standard of protection of people and the environment. Joint regulation will continue while the GDF is being constructed, while it is operating and during closure.

## Section 2

# Finding a suitable site and a willing community



# Working with communities

## Safety, security and the protection of people and the environment will underpin everything we do.

*In this section, we go into more detail about how we will work with communities, to identify a suitable site for a GDF. It covers:*

### **Initial Discussions and forming a Working Group –**

discussions on a proposed location for a GDF can be initiated by anyone or any group of people with an interest in the siting process and who wish to propose an area for consideration. Interested Parties will contact us for Initial Discussions. Once there has been an initial exchange of information and it is agreed that the proposal merits further consideration, RWM and the Interested Party must jointly inform all relevant principal local authorities and open up discussions more widely in the community. Relevant principal local authorities will be all the district, county or unitary authorities that represent people in all or part of the area under consideration. A Working Group will be formed of the Interested Party, RWM, an independent chair and facilitator. The Working Group will identify the geographical area within which we will seek potentially suitable sites for a GDF, known as the Search Area. All relevant principal local authorities must be invited to join the Working Group, but it can still proceed in their absence.

**Engagement Funding** - Engagement Funding will be provided throughout the siting process. It is intended to support the activities of the Working Group and the Community Partnership.

**Community Partnership** - the Working Group will start to gather information about the people and organisations in the area who are likely to be affected or have an interest in a GDF with a view to identifying members for a Community Partnership. This Community Partnership will include community members, organisations, RWM and at least one relevant principal local authority. It will provide a vehicle for sharing information with the community and for finding answers to the questions the community may have about geological disposal, the siting process and how they, as a community, could benefit. If it is to be successful, it will be important for a Community Partnership to reflect, both in its composition and views, the community it is representing and be respectful of a wide range of opinions. In order for the Community Partnership to form and operate, at least one relevant principal local authority must agree to participate.

**Community Partnership Agreement** - an agreement will be signed by the prospective members of the Community Partnership that will set out the principles of how the members of the Community Partnership will work together, how they will make any decisions deemed necessary and their respective roles and responsibilities, including working cooperatively to move forward in the siting process and engage with people in the area.



# Finding a suitable site and a willing community

## Timeline for the siting process



**Community Investment Funding** - the Government will make available Community Investment Funding of up to £1 million annually for each community that forms a Community Partnership. This investment will rise to £2.5 million annually per community for those communities that progress to the point of deep borehole investigation (which will be needed to assess the potential suitability of a site). The Community Investment Funding can be used to fund projects, schemes or initiatives that provide economic development opportunities, enhance the natural and built environment, or improve community well-being.

**Right of Withdrawal** - A community can withdraw from the siting process at any time up until it has taken a Test of Public Support. The decision on whether to withdraw the community will be taken by the relevant principal local authority, or authorities where there is more than one, on the Community Partnership. Where there is more than one relevant principal local authority on the Community Partnership, all must agree; no single relevant principal local authority will be able to unilaterally invoke the Right of Withdrawal. RWM can also withdraw at any time, for example if we determine that the siting process is unlikely to be successful in a particular community.

**Test of Public Support** - before a decision is made to seek development consent from the Secretary of State, or regulatory approvals for a GDF from the Environment Agency, and from the Office for Nuclear Regulation, there must be a Test of Public Support by the community to demonstrate it is willing to host a GDF. Relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership will have the final say on when to undertake this Test of Public Support in order to seek the community's views on hosting a GDF. All relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership must agree to holding the Test of Public Support, for it to go ahead.

# Engagement funding

*Funding will be provided by us to support the activities of the Working Group and the Community Partnership throughout the process. This is known as 'Engagement Funding'.*

These activities could include, but are not limited to:

- financial support for relevant principal local authorities to participate in the Working Group and Community Partnership
- covering reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for individuals in the Working Group and Community Partnership
- support with identifying and appointing an independent chair and independent facilitators
- secretariat and logistical costs of running the Working Group and the Community Partnership, such as hiring meeting venues
- identifying stakeholders in the community who may have an interest in the siting of a GDF
- support with identifying and appointing members of a Community Partnership
- managing a Community Stakeholder Forum and any sub groups including the Community Investment Panel
- communications activity, such as websites, information leaflets, flyers, social media and information events
- management and administrative costs and advice to support the distribution of Community Investment Funding
- relevant activities through which communities learn about geological disposal
- appropriate site visits, for example to existing nuclear sites
- advice from independent experts, for example around appropriate planning, legal or technical advice
- meetings with regulators
- commissioning reports on issues that are not already covered by the RWM technical programme
- Community Visioning workshops and events
- capacity building (strengthening skills, knowledge and confidence) of individuals and groups within the community to engage effectively with the process - for example, skills to apply for Community Investment Funding, to understand relevant legislation or to learn about nuclear technologies or geological issues
- costs linked to managing the community's Right of Withdrawal and Test of Public Support

# Finding a suitable site and a willing community

Engagement Funding will be made available according to the following principles:

1. Requests for Engagement Funding must be made through the work programme of a Working Group or Community Partnership agreed with RWM.
2. All Engagement Funding expenditure must be authorised in advance by RWM.
3. All Engagement Funding expenditure must be aimed at addressing questions that a community wants answered in order to progress the process of identifying a potential site for the geological disposal of radioactive waste.
4. Engagement Funding must be spent in accordance with Government policy, public procurement rules and HM Treasury's Managing Public Money guidelines.
5. The availability of Engagement Funding in any one community will be balanced against the needs of the wider GDF process, and the funding made available from Government to the GDF programme.

## Financial support for relevant principal local authorities

Relevant principal local authorities will receive financial support to cover the cost of their participation in the process so that local taxpayers do not incur any financial burden. The mechanism for this will be agreed in advance. This funding will not require the local authority to commit to support a GDF - they will remain free to take their own decisions about the suitability of a GDF for their local area.

## Expenses for individuals

Engagement Funding will be available to cover reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for individuals taking part directly in the work of the Working Group and Community Partnership (such as travel costs for attending meetings). RWM will provide clear advice and guidance on activities where expenses can be covered and how costs will be reimbursed.

Anyone participating in the process, including the receiving of expenses, will not necessarily be assumed supportive of a GDF. People will remain free to take their own decisions about the suitability of a GDF for their local area.

## Using local services

There will be flexibility to use local or current providers of services where possible. We will work with all those who are interested to ensure that the services needed are of a high quality, provide value for money and fulfil the relevant procurement requirements.

## How will we evaluate potential areas and sites?

*To enable us to work with communities to identify and evaluate potential areas and sites within Search Areas, we use our document: 'Site Evaluation – How we will Evaluate Sites.'*

The aim of the Site Evaluation document is to enable and support:

- a consistent and transparent approach to the evaluation of potential areas and sites;
- an appropriate level of evaluation for each potential area and site against the existing and applicable Requirements;
- RWM's future applications for permissions, including land use planning consents, environmental permits and a nuclear site licence.

The Site Evaluation document itself does not establish any requirements to be applied by RWM during the siting process, and nor does it remove, enhance, alter or create any of the existing Requirements. It simply aims to draw together the Requirements which RWM will necessarily be required to comply with in any event during the siting process, whether as part of its engagement and dialogue with communities or its applications to secure the necessary consents for the construction and operation of a GDF.

Six Siting Factors are proposed for use in our evaluations, covering Safety, Community, Environment, Engineering Feasibility, Transport and Cost. Each of these Factors has a number of Evaluation Considerations associated with them. For example Safety is underpinned by the following Evaluation Considerations: Design Safety, Construction Safety, Operational Safety and Post Closure Safety.

We will initially carry out high level evaluations of areas and/or sites suggested by Interested Parties, taking into account their preferences. Further into the process, new information will be collected about the potential site and the community, increasing in detail and complexity as we carry out activities such as geophysical surveys, drilling investigative boreholes and analysing samples of rock and groundwater.

Our evaluations will be discussed and shared with the Interested Party, Working Group or Community Partnerships.

You can find out more about our proposals for site evaluations here [www.gov.uk/rwm](http://www.gov.uk/rwm)

# Initial discussions

*Anyone can contact us to find out more about the process for identifying and selecting a site for a Geological Disposal Facility and what it might mean for their area. At this point, people may just be interested to hear about the process. Or an Interested Party may wish to propose an area for consideration. It does not commit anyone to hosting a GDF in an area.*

An Interested Party who wishes to talk to us could be an individual, a landowner, local authority, business or a community group who may wish to propose an area for consideration. It may be a plot of land or a local authority could ask us to consider the whole of their area. You do not need to own land or form a group in order to open a discussion with us and you do not need to have a specific site in mind.

It is possible that an area of land for the surface facilities may be suggested, with a view to the facility extending under the seabed. Government owned land may also be put forward.

Where a third party puts forward a potential site that it does not own, we will consider at what point it would be appropriate to include the landowner (s) in the discussions.

There is currently no cut-off date for us to receive initial enquiries but we will keep this under review.

We invite Interested Parties to engage with us, to find out more about geological disposal and possibly explore what hosting a GDF might mean for their area and their community. Initiating or holding discussions with RWM will not necessarily be taken as support for a GDF. At this point discussions may remain confidential (subject to disclosure requirements contained in information law legislation, including the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Data Protection Act 2018), though they should be made public at the earliest opportunity if the Interested Party and RWM decide to move forward.





## Finding a suitable site and a willing community

We will provide as much information as possible and aim to answer any questions. These could be about:

- what geological disposal involves
- safety
- geology
- the environment
- what support is available
- what waste could go in a GDF
- the role of the regulators
- funding available for communities
- construction, operation and closure of a GDF
- the siting process itself

There may be a number of Interested Parties within an area. As the discussions will be informal, the parties may not be known to each other. We may encourage the parties to combine together, but the decision to do so will rest with each Interested Party.

### Next steps

If it is concluded that there is potential for siting a GDF in the area under consideration, and the Interested Party wishes to progress further, then a Working Group can be formed.

All the relevant principal local authorities<sup>11</sup> will need to be informed before making a public announcement (page 24) about the proposals and starting a dialogue with people in the area.

All relevant principal local authorities must be invited to join a Working Group (see next section) which will be formed to begin the conversation with people in the area.

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<sup>11</sup> Relevant principal local authorities will be all the district, county or unitary authorities that represent people in all or part of the area under consideration.



# Working group

*A Working Group will be established to engage with people in the area, identify a Search Area, and form a Community Partnership. Establishing a Working Group does not commit anyone involved to hosting a GDF.*

The purpose of the Working Group is to:

- help people in the local area to understand the process;
- begin to understand the area and any issues or questions the community may have;
- help people understand the opportunities that a GDF may present for a community;
- pave the way for a Community Partnership to address in more detail questions that the community may have.

The Working Group will comprise at least:

- The Interested Party/ies
- RWM
- Independent chair
- Independent facilitator

All relevant principal local authorities must be invited to join the Working Group. The relevant principal local authorities are those district, county or unitary authorities that represent people in all or part of the area under consideration.

This early part of the process is about fact finding, gathering information about the community and providing information to the community about geological disposal. Government's view is that at this point, it is important to ensure a community has the ability to have fact-finding and exploratory discussions with RWM without having to wait for a relevant principal local authority to join the Working Group. Therefore, relevant principal local authority membership on the Working Group is not a requirement, although it would be preferable to have at least one relevant principal local authority as a member, given their invaluable knowledge and experience of the local area and people.

The Working Group may also want to consider whether it would be beneficial to invite representation from a Local Enterprise Partnership and parish and town councils. Given the potentially large number of parish councils in any given area, it may not be feasible for them all to join. It may instead be possible for them to collectively agree to send a representative to join the Working Group.

**i** See table for a more detailed look at who could make up the Working Group:





### A more detailed look at who could make up the Working Group

Member	Role
Independent chair	The Chair will ensure that meetings and discussions are run appropriately. Someone to fulfil this role could be procured, from an approved list of contractors, on behalf of the Interested Party, or there may be existing community organisational structures in the local area that could be used.
Independent facilitator	The independent facilitator will aim to ensure that discussions progress in a constructive and informative manner. The facilitator can assist in asking relevant questions and directing conversations to cover the points of interest from the Interested Parties and other members of the community.
Interested Party	This is the group, organisation, or individual(s) who first started discussions with us at RWM.
RWM	We are the delivery body who are engaging with the community, providing information to the community and promoting the benefits of a GDF.
Relevant principal local authorities (optional)	Relevant principal local authorities are the district, county and unitary authorities that represent the people in all or part of the area under consideration. It may be that the local authority is the Interested Party. If not, they must be informed of discussions and invited to join the Working Group.

There may be other Working Groups that have been formed in nearby areas. It is possible that we could bring them together into one group. We would consult with each Working Group should this be the case.

#### Forming the Working Group

RWM, Interested Party/ies and any participating relevant principal local authorities can select the independent chair and facilitator in a number of ways, including, for example:

- through consultation with the Centre for Public Appointments
- through RWM's usual procurement arrangements
- via a tender process with the *Crown Commercial Services Framework*

Whichever method is selected, we will help to make the process of setting up the Working Group as smooth and efficient as possible.

Further information is available on the support that will be available to the Working Group including a template Terms of Reference.

## Communications plan

*A key task for the Working Group will be to make public its proposals to start a dialogue to identify a potential site for a GDF. As well as making the people in the area aware of its engagement in the process, the Working Group will need to ensure that neighbouring principal local authorities are informed.*

The Working Group should prepare and implement an integrated communications plan. This does not mean that any organisations on the Working Group cannot develop their own communications, but there should be co-ordination between them. Communications could include printed materials (newspaper announcements, adverts); digital media (such as Facebook, LinkedIn); meetings (in person or via the internet) or targeted letters and emails.

Materials should be made available to as many different sections of the community as possible and be sensitive to relevant cultural issues (such as if translation services may be required).



### Role of relevant principal local authorities

All relevant principal local authorities must be invited to join the Working Group and the Community Partnership when it is formed. Whilst it is Government's preference, there is no obligation for them to join the Working Group. However, in order to form a Community Partnership, at least one relevant principal local authority must join.

The Government has decided that relevant principal local authorities will take two key decisions in the process to identify a potentially suitable site. This is because they play a crucial role in respect of planning, infrastructure development and service provision, this will also ensure democratic accountability. As such, they will have the final say on:

- whether to seek to withdraw the community from the siting process (through invoking the Right of Withdrawal);
- if or when to seek the community's views on whether it wishes to host a GDF (by proceeding to a Test of Public Support)

Where there is more than one relevant principal local authority on the Community Partnership all must agree to invoke the Right of Withdrawal; no single local authority can invoke the Right of Withdrawal on its own. They must all agree to move to the Test of Public Support, or it cannot take place.

Relevant principal local authorities will receive financial support to participate in the process, so that local taxpayers do not incur any additional financial burden.

### Keeping relevant principal local authorities informed

The Working Group and any future Community Partnership will need to keep relevant principal local authorities in the Search Area, and eventual Potential Host Community, informed. Government's preference is for relevant principal local authorities to join the Working Group. However if no relevant principal local authorities join, they must be kept regularly informed by the Working Group. Similarly, if only one relevant principal local authority joins the Community Partnership, then the Partnership must keep the other relevant principal local authorities informed.

### Keeping neighbouring principal local authorities informed

The Working Group and any future Community Partnership should let neighbouring principal local authorities (ie those that border the authorities in the Search Area) know about the GDF process and the Search Area that is being considered.

Members of the Working Group and any future Community Partnership, or the other principal local authorities within the Search Area, may already be in regular contact with the neighbouring principal local authorities and may choose to communicate via these established ways of working. Alternatively they may choose to contact the other principal local authorities directly.

To help ensure there is openness and transparency, the Working Group should confirm the Search Area with the neighbouring principal local authorities.

It is recommended that the Working Group recognises the neighbouring principal local authorities as stakeholders and that both they and any future Community Partnership ensures that they are kept updated regarding the process.



As well as making the people in the area aware of its engagement in the GDF siting process the Working Group will need to ensure that neighbouring principal local authorities are informed.

### Working Group: key responsibilities

*The Working Group will have three key responsibilities:*

1. Identify a Search Area
2. Identify prospective members of a Community Partnership
3. Engage with relevant principal local authorities within the Search Area (if they have not joined the Working Group)

The Working Group will begin to engage people as part of its work; it will also start to understand the local area and any issues or questions that the community might have.

We will take a closer look at these responsibilities over the next few pages.

*The Working Group will begin to engage people as part of its work; it will also start to understand the local area and any issues or questions that the community might have.*

Working Group: key responsibilities

1.

### Identifying a Search Area

*The Working Group will be responsible for identifying a Search Area. The Search Area is the geographical area within which we will seek to identify potentially suitable sites to host a Geological Disposal Facility.*

The Search Area will be derived from the area first put forward for consideration by the Interested Party and will be defined using district or unitary council electoral ward boundaries, depending on the administrative arrangements in place for the particular area. The Search Area will, therefore, encompass all the electoral wards within which RWM will be able to consider potential sites. For areas which include potential for development under the sea bed, the Search Area will comprise only that area on land.

The Search Area therefore determines:

- the community that will be engaged directly in the process
- the area in which we can consider potential sites

Defining a Search Area will enable a transparent approach to:

- community engagement in the process (for instance members of the Community Partnership will be drawn from the Search Area)
- distribution of Community Investment Funding (ie projects, schemes and initiatives within the Search Area that may be eligible for Community Investment Funding)

It is likely that the Search Area will be refined over time. This will be managed by the Community Partnership (see page 30). As investigations progress, the Community Partnership may identify areas that they want to rule out of consideration or bring in additional areas that they did not at first consider to be part of the Search Area. Any future changes to electoral ward boundaries will also be reflected in the Search Area. The Search Area will be refined until the Potential Host Community (see page 39) is identified.

If Interested Parties have come forward from different locations there may be a number of Search Areas that RWM is working in. Depending on their location, it may be appropriate to consider combining them. Such a decision will be taken in consultation with the Working Groups that are involved.



# Finding a suitable site and a willing community

## Identifying people and organisations

***The Working Group will begin to identify people and organisations that are or could be in the Search Area, and could have an interest in or be affected by a GDF.***

This will help to ensure that engagement activities with the community are planned with their interests in mind and are inclusive. It will also help with planning ongoing communications activities and with identifying potential members of the Community Partnership (see page 30).

## Understanding the community's issues and questions

***It is very important that the thoughts and views of the community are understood and considered throughout the process.***

As part of its work to map people and organisations and to begin to understand the local area, the Working Group will begin to seek input from those in the area. The purpose is to start to explore what is important to people in their community and to understand any concerns or questions they may have about the process for identifying potential locations for a GDF.

This could identify, for example, features that are important to the community, such as local parks, pathways, meeting points etc that need to be taken into account as part of our evaluations.

A range of methods could be used to seek views, for example citizen's juries or community engagement specialists.

This early work is not intended to provide answers to every question that the community may have. It is intended to enable sufficient understanding of people's interests in order to pave the way for the Community Partnership, which will consider and address questions and concerns that the community may have in greater detail.

## Gathering information to understand the Search Area

***As it begins to identify the Search Area, the Working Group will start to understand the geographic, social, economic, environmental, cultural and administrative structures. At this point in the process, the group will use readily available information, for example information that is already published.***

The type of information could include, for example:

- social and economic profiles and forecasts
- information on the transport network including the availability and accessibility of local transport infrastructure
- local authority boundaries and structures in the Search Area
- information on environmental and landscape designated areas
- additional information about the geology of the area and land use
- levels of employment by sector and trends in employment levels
- skills/educational levels in the community population
- locations and types of community facilities, recreational areas/areas of open space, public rights of way and access land
- health and wellbeing data
- understanding the existing Community Vision, for example by considering:
  - Parish/neighbourhood plans
  - Local authority economic strategies or policies
  - Local Enterprise Partnership business plans
  - Regional development strategies and plans

Working Group: key responsibilities

2.

## Identifying prospective members of a Community Partnership

*A key task of the Working Group will be to identify people from the Search Area to become prospective members of a Community Partnership (see page 30).*

When considering whether to host a Geological Disposal Facility there will be lots of information to share with the community over a long period of time.

A Community Partnership provides the vehicle for sharing that information and finding answers to questions from the community. The Community Partnership enables individuals within a community, coming together as a team, to identify and consider the issues of interest to the community. There will be substantial support available to help the Community Partnership along this journey.

### Who can be a member of the Community Partnership?

As a minimum the Community Partnership will comprise:

- members of the community
- at least one relevant principal local authority
- RWM

Additionally, it could have an:

- independent chair and/or
- independent facilitator

As a guide, there could be around 12 members. The Working Group will need to consider what could adequately reflect the make-up of the community or the community's interests and what is a manageable number.

When considering membership of the Community Partnership, thought will need to be given to the different aspects of the community. It could consider, for example, the proportion of people on the partnership with protected characteristics (eg age, disability, race). It could consider other factors such as geographic spread of potential members, economic factors such as key employment sectors or landowners. The process for selecting partnership members should be transparent.

Where the Interested Party is not a relevant principal local authority, the Community Partnership may include the original Interested Party if they wish to be a member.

It would be appropriate to invite representation from organisations that have responsibility for managing or regulating large areas of land should the Search Area include land for which they are responsible.

The Community Partnership should seek to include representation from parish and town councils. Given the potentially large number of parish councils in any given area, it may not be feasible for them all to be members. It may instead be possible for them to collectively agree to put forward a representative to join the Community Partnership. It may also be appropriate to invite representation from combined authority areas (where relevant) and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The Community Partnership may also draw members from community or voluntary organisations, business or local service providers, residents and local neighbourhood partnerships.

Community groups and organisations identified by the Working Group could also be asked to nominate people for the Community Partnership. Anyone from within the Search Area can volunteer to be on the Community Partnership. Members representing organisations will be responsible for sharing all information discussed and developed through the Community Partnership with the rest of their organisations.

RWM will be a member of the Community Partnership.

A Community Partnership may decide that it would be appropriate to have an independent chair and an independent facilitator.

### Community Partnership – summary of roles

Member	Role
Community Members	Organisations and individuals to reflect the make-up of the community.
Relevant Principal Local Authorities	Relevant principal local authorities are the district, county and unitary authorities that represent all or part of the area under consideration. At this point they will be the principal local authorities that represent people in the Search Area (and Potential Host Community when it is identified). In order for the Community Partnership to form and continue to operate at least one relevant principal local authority must join. Relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership will take two key types of decisions. They will have the final say on whether to seek to withdraw the community from the siting process and if or when to seek the community's views on whether it wishes to host a GDF.
RWM	A key member of the partnership as the delivery body of a GDF. We will provide information as required by the Community Partnership and provide updates on investigations into the feasibility of the area to host the facility. We will explain the concept of a GDF and its benefits. We will be responsible for all technical decisions.
Chair	At the beginning this could be the same chair as was used during Working Group discussions, or a new chair could be appointed. They will ensure that the work of the Community Partnership is fair, unbiased and reflects the needs of the community.



# Finding a suitable site and a willing community

## How will Community Partnership members be appointed?

*The Working Group will need to identify the types of skills, knowledge and experience that the Community Partnership is likely to need as it begins its work.*

It may be that all or just some of the members of the Working Group become members of the Community Partnership. RWM will be a member of the Partnership and it will be for the Interested Party/ies to decide if they wish to continue. Once formed it will be for the Partnership members to agree if they wish to retain the role of the independent chair and facilitator.

The Working Group may invite particular organisations to join, as well as inviting applications through an open process and anyone from the Search Area can apply. This should be conducted in an open and transparent manner in a process to be set out by the Working Group.

The Working Group could propose how it would aim to reflect the community in the membership of the Community Partnership. For example, the proportion of places taken by a particular sector (public, private, voluntary, residents) or by a particular demographic or interest group (for example: young, elderly, environmental etc) or those with protected characteristics (eg disability, race or religion). This could then be reflected in the identification and selection of Community Partnership members. The Group could also consider what is good practice in this regard.

Seeking to ensure that the Community Partnership reflects the diversity of the community will enable a broad range of issues to be heard and knowledge to be gathered. It is likely to be beneficial for gathering a broad skills base and network, which will enable the work of the Community Partnership to be delivered.

Prospective members of the Community Partnership will be identified by a selection panel of Working Group members. The selection panel must include the independent chair, RWM and any relevant principal local authority on the Working Group. The process for selecting members must be open and transparent. Prospective members will be appointed onto the Community Partnership upon signing the Community Partnership Agreement.

We can provide support to help with the selection process if required.

## Relevant principal local authorities

Representatives from all relevant principal local authorities (i.e. district, county and unitary authorities) must be invited to be members of the Community Partnership.

*A Community Partnership can only be formed and continue to operate if at least one relevant principal local authority representing residents in the Search Area agrees to participate.*

There must be at least one relevant principal local authority representing each district or unitary authority electoral ward in the Search Area. In an area with two tiers of local government (i.e. district and county), in order to maintain flexibility, it is not a requirement that both join. It may be, where two tiers of local government exist, that one of the relevant principal local authorities is content for a Community Partnership to continue its work without it being a member.

All of the Search Area must be represented by a relevant principal local authority on the Community Partnership. If a relevant principal local authority decides to leave the Community Partnership, with the result that part of the Search Area (or, once identified, the Potential Host Community) is no longer represented by any of the relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership, then it will no longer form part of the Search Area (or Potential Host Community).

Where a relevant principal local authority decides not to be a member, the Community Partnership would need to keep that authority informed of its work.

Any relevant principal local authority that does not initially join the Community Partnership may decide to join at any point in the future.

Relevant principal local authorities' participation in a Community Partnership will not necessarily be taken as support for a GDF in their area.

Working Group: key responsibilities

3.

## Engaging with relevant principal local authorities

*The Working Group will need to keep relevant principal local authorities within the Search Area informed if they have not joined the Working Group.*

# The community partnership

*The Community Partnership will be considered to be in place when the prospective members have signed the Community Partnership Agreement.*

At this point the Working Group will cease and the Community Partnership will take over as the vehicle for community engagement.

Throughout the process there will be a lot of information to share with the community over a long period of time. Questions and issues are likely to be raised by members of the community in considering whether to host a Geological Disposal Facility.

## **What is the role of the Community Partnership?**

The prospective Partnership members will develop a Community Partnership Agreement setting out the principles of how the members of the Community Partnership will work together, their roles and responsibilities and how decisions could be taken (see page 31) including establishing relevant sub groups (page 32).

The role of the Community Partnership includes:

- facilitate discussion with the community;
- identify relevant information that people in the Search Area and Potential Host Community want or need about the process;
- be the key vehicle for community dialogue with RWM;
- review and refine the boundaries of the Search Area as RWM's investigations progress;
- identify priorities for Community Investment Funding;
- make recommendations to the relevant principal local authority/ies on the Community Partnership on whether to invoke the Right of Withdrawal and if and when to launch a Test of Public Support

## **What are the key responsibilities of a Community Partnership?**

The Community Partnership's key responsibilities, to be undertaken over a number of years, are listed below. We take a closer look at these on the following pages.

- **Agree a Programme of Activities** (see page 32). This is a set of activities that will be undertaken to answer the questions a community may have.
- **Share information, listen to and address community questions**
  - Develop a programme of regular dialogue with the community to share information, seek views and get answers to the questions raised
  - Establish a Community Stakeholder Forum, as necessary (page 33)
  - Keep the relevant principal local authorities (that do not join the Community Partnership) in the Search Area and neighbouring principal local authorities informed
  - Seek an independent expert view on contested and unresolved technical or scientific issues if required (page 11)
  - Monitor public opinion in relation to siting a GDF within the Search Area and that of the Potential Host Community
  - Discuss information from evaluations of a Search Area and consider the impact of the results on the community

# Finding a suitable site and a willing community

- **Community Investment Funding**
  - Establish a Community Investment Panel (page 34)
  - Consider developing local criteria for Community Investment Funding
  - Decide the priorities for Community Investment Funding
- **Community Right of Withdrawal and the Test of Public Support**
  - Make recommendations to the relevant principal local authority/ies on the Community Partnership on whether to invoke the Right of Withdrawal and if and when to hold a Test of Public Support
  - Agree the preferred mechanisms for the community's Right of Withdrawal from the process and the Test of Public Support

Community Partnership members will be offered support to engage with the process. This could include, for example, technical briefings on the science behind geological disposal.

As the public body tasked by Government with delivering geological disposal in partnership with a consenting community, we at RWM will be a member of the Community Partnership, and part of our role will be to help the community access information from a range of resources. For example, from our own technical and scientific teams, or from independent parties who can help to answer questions and address concerns.

As the process progresses, the Community Partnership should aim for its membership to continue to be reflective of the community. The Partnership is likely to evolve and develop over the duration of the process. For example, the Partnership might want to rule out areas and consider new areas that it hadn't previously considered. Partnership members may step down periodically and be replaced by other members of the community within the Search Area.

As new members join the Community Partnership, the decision making processes in the Community Partnership Agreement should be reviewed and updated where appropriate.

The Community Partnership will remain in place whilst that community is involved in the process, up to and including the Test of Public Support, or until the community or RWM withdraw from the siting process.

## After a Test of Public Support

If there is a Test of Public Support (page 42) in favour of hosting a GDF, the Partnership may transition into a different form of liaison group. This would provide an ongoing interface between us at RWM and the community. The liaison group is likely to change again during the construction, operation and closure phases of the facility over the next 100+ years.

## Developing a Community Partnership Agreement

*A Community Partnership Agreement will set out the principles of how the members of the Community Partnership will work together and their roles and responsibilities. The Agreement will be signed by the individual Partnership members.*

Once the Community Partnership Agreement is signed, Community Investment Funding of up to £1 million per community per year will be available for projects, schemes and initiatives in the Search Area. (page 34).

The Agreement could be in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding and should include:

- Terms of Reference for the Community Partnership and sub groups (page 32)
- the process by which decisions could be taken by the Community Partnership, for example potential voting mechanisms. Most of the decisions can be taken by the Community Partnership or its sub-groups but the relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership will take two key decisions. They will have the final say on:
  - whether to seek to withdraw the community from the process (through invoking the Right of Withdrawal);
  - if or when to seek the community's views on whether it wishes to host a Geological Disposal Facility (i.e. proceed to a Test of Public Support)
- the process for resolving disputes
- an outline Programme of Activities (page 32) and how progress in completing the activities will be monitored
- methods for reporting the work / outputs of any sub groups to the community
- a proposed mechanism for the distribution of Community Investment Funding, which will be available to fund projects, schemes and initiatives within the Search Area
- proposed mechanisms for conducting the community's Right of Withdrawal (page 40) and the Test of Public Support (page 42) and the procedure for exercising these.

Although the Community Partnership Agreement does not need to be a legal agreement, we recognise that the Community Partnership members may want to seek independent legal advice on the proposed provisions of any Agreement.

It is envisaged that, initially, the Community Partnership Agreement will cover the period immediately following the establishment of the Partnership. As the process progresses, the Agreement is likely to evolve and will be subject to regular review, for example to reflect any change in membership or the Community Partnership's activities.

**i** *A template Community Partnership Agreement and Terms of Reference are available.*



### Establishing sub groups

*It is likely that the Community Partnership will need to manage a wide range of activities and engage on a wide range of issues in relation to a potential GDF.*

It may need to develop skills and capacity to address particular issues or activities captured in the Programme of Activities. One way to achieve this could be to set up sub groups of the main Community Partnership.

A member of the Community Partnership could be identified to set up or chair each sub group. Additional members of the sub group could be appointed from outside the Community Partnership, either by an open process or co-opted if appropriate (i.e. brought into the Partnership for a specific task or period of time). This may be for a limited period or because they have a particular skill, for example.

Each sub group should have a Terms of Reference to guide its activities and ensure its work is transparent to the community. The work or outputs of these groups should be shared with the wider community through the Community Partnership's established reporting methods (which will be set out in the Community Partnership Agreement).

One sub group that will be required is a Community Investment Panel to decide on the allocation of the Community Investment Funding (page 34).

If the Community Partnership establishes a Community Stakeholder Forum, it may be helpful to have a sub group to manage this.

*If the Community Partnership establishes a Community Stakeholder Forum, it may be helpful to have a sub group to manage this.*

### Developing a Programme of Activities

*A Programme of Activities is the work that will be carried out by the Community Partnership in order to learn more about a GDF and what this may mean for a community.*

Activities could include:

- sharing and discussing the programme of RWM technical work, for example environment and traffic surveys and non-intrusive investigations of the geology such as airborne **geophysical surveys**
- responding to any questions, issues or concerns that communities might have about the process
- capacity building (strengthening skills, knowledge and confidence) of individuals and groups within the community, for example the skills to apply for Community Investment Funding
- commissioning reports on topics that might be of interest to the Community Partnership
- managing and co-ordinating communications between the Community Partnership and the community
- considering how a GDF could play a part in a Community Vision (see page 37)

Monitoring against indicators detailed in the Programme of Activities will be undertaken by RWM to evaluate the ongoing engagement with the community. This could include for example, reviewing to what extent applications for Community Investment Funding are being received and attendance at Community Partnership meetings. Monitoring indicators will be discussed with the Community Partnership.

### Establishing a Stakeholder Forum

*In order to engage with the community, the Community Partnership could set up a Community Stakeholder Forum. This could engage with the community in the Search Area as well as neighbouring local authority areas. The Forum would be open to anyone, aiming to ensure that people who want to know more about the work of the Community Partnership have an opportunity to do so.*

The Forum could also exist online, be a series of regular meetings, including for example holding open public meetings or could be in another form of outreach into the community. It should aim to reflect a diversity of interests and ways in which community members can interact with the process. It would give members of the community the opportunity to raise questions and issues that they want addressed, which could then be fed into the Programme of Activities. For example, topics for discussion may include business, tourism, education and skills, if these topics are relevant for the Search Area. It could also inform the workings of the Community Partnership. The issues raised by the community and the activities of the Community Stakeholder Forum should be made public.

It will be important to open up community participation through a wide number of channels. The Community Partnership could consider engagement through social media, dedicated outreach work with particular groups (for example engagement with young people through schools and colleges) and using existing networks to reach out to people.

The Forum could be a useful source of knowledge to help with planning activities. These activities could range from surveys, door-to-door interviews, workshops and a series of local events, with an option to join in with activities online.

It will also be important to consider how to address diversity and accessibility issues to promote inclusion of people within the Search Area or Potential Host Community.



## Establishing a Community Investment Panel

### Community Investment Funding

The Community Investment Funding recognises the long-term nature of the Geological Disposal Facility project, and that the benefits associated with jobs, infrastructure and major investment may not materialise until the project has been in operation for several years.

The funding will be available to applicants, in the form of grants, in a Search Area when a Community Partnership Agreement has been signed. A community will initially have access of up to £1 million per year rising to up to £2.5 million per year for communities that progress to technical investigations requiring deep boreholes.

The cost of administering the Community Investment Funding will be met by RWM and be in addition to the £1 million or £2.5 million available as Community Investment Funding.

One sub group of the Community Partnership that will be required is a Community Investment Panel to help allocate this funding. The Panel will be made up of members of the Community Partnership, including ourselves, and appropriate co-opted members if required.

The role of the Community Investment Panel will be to:

- review recommendations for funding for appropriate projects within the Search Area
- approve the allocation of funding for project applications which meet criteria set out in the Working with Communities policy and any additional criteria agreed by the Community Partnership. (see page 30)

RWM and the Community Partnership will support community groups and businesses to come forward with good quality applications for Community Investment Funding through a Funding Administrator.

Community Investment Funding is in addition to:

- Engagement Funding (page 18) that will be used to facilitate participation of communities in the process
- any funding agreements to mitigate impacts of development as part of a Development Consent Order; and
- Significant Additional Investment and jobs that a major infrastructure project of this kind will bring to a host community.

### What can Community Investment Funding be used for?

As laid out in the policy 'Implementing Geological Disposal - Working with Communities', Community Investment Funding can be used to fund projects, schemes or initiatives that:

- **improve community well-being**, for example improvements to community facilities, enhancement of the quality of life or health and well-being of the community;
- **enhance the natural and built environment** including cultural and natural heritage, especially where economic benefits, for example, through tourism can be demonstrated; or
- **provide economic development opportunities**, for example employment opportunities, job creation, skills development, education or training, promotion of local enterprise, long-term economic development or economic diversification.

The Community Partnership may wish to develop supplementary or local criteria against which the Community Investment Panel will review applications for funding. It should consider any local economic visions, socio-economic strategies or plans in order to develop such criteria. It may also wish to consider funding applications that could help the community derive greater benefit from potentially hosting a Geological Disposal Facility. It may also create different requirements for different sized grants and/or capital and revenue projects.

The local funding criteria for community investment may evolve as communities move through the process, for example if the Community Partnership changes the Search Area.

Funding must be spent in accordance with HM Treasury's Managing Public Money guidelines; State aid; the requirements of the NDA's Socio-Economic Policy and best practice in delivering value for money. Full guidance, advice and training will be offered on these issues for those who may need it.

Whilst there is a specific annual amount of funding available, we acknowledge that some projects may require funding for more than one year. We also recognise that there will be external factors that might impact on planned activities and change the annual budget of projects. The mechanism for funding multi-year projects will be agreed by the Community Partnership in conjunction with the Funding Administrator. Support will be available for those who might make applications for multi-year funding in order that they can make best use of the funding available and understand the associated risks.

At RWM, our role on the Community Investment Panel will be to ensure funding is allocated to projects consistent with the requirements of policy, State aid and are value for money – i.e. the outputs and outcomes from projects justify the level of grant support requested. RWM will also be responsible for the contractual relationship with the Funding Administrator.



# Finding a suitable site and a willing community

## Administering the Community Investment Funding

The Community Partnership will agree the priorities for Community Investment Funding and delegate its responsibility for the allocation of funding to the Community Investment Panel.

Community Investment Funding must be administered by a body with the appropriate legal status, skills and resources. It is not envisaged that the Community Partnership will be a legal entity in its own right so it would not be able to manage the Community Investment Funding.

This work could be delivered, for example, by a suitable, national or locally based company, a charity or a local authority, that could provide the relevant services. A tender list for this commission could be drawn up with the assistance of the Community Partnership, or there may be a suitable procurement framework that could be used.

In order to determine whether a body might be suitable to administer the funding, the type of information we could seek to generate is:

- identification of funding administration bodies (for example charitable companies, community interest companies, limited companies etc.)
- examples of funding under local administration
- examples of funding application and assessment processes used by funding administration bodies
- annual turnover of funding administration bodies
- number of employees of funding administration bodies
- availability of annual reports and audits of funding administration bodies.

This analysis can be presented for the Community Partnership to determine whether any of the bodies identified have the potential to meet the needs of the Community Partnership, including ourselves at RWM.

RWM will contract a Funding Administrator on behalf of the Community Partnership.

Organisations proposing schemes, projects and initiatives from within the Search Area will apply for Community Investment Funding to the Funding Administrator. The Administrator will assess proposals against the priorities laid out by the Community Partnership and make recommendations to the Community Investment Panel who will review and allocate funding. Payments to applicants will be made by the Funding Administrator, in accordance with the relevant funding agreement.

## Applying for funding

Once the Community Partnership has established its funding criteria, it will publish detailed, locally specific guidance for applicants and any other relevant material to enable organisations to apply for funding. The Community Partnership will be provided with the necessary support to do this.

Examples of the type of guidance that applicants can expect, or can ask for, include:

- explanation of the types of funds available and criteria for assessment of applications
- completing enquiry and application forms
- requirements for supporting documentation
- monitoring requirements
- publicity requirements
- reporting and recording of outputs and outcomes
- possible sources of additional funding.

## Co-funding for schemes, projects and initiatives

There is no requirement that matched funding (ie additional funding to go alongside the funding from Community Investment Funding) will be needed in order to access Community Investment Funding. Any grant received from the Community Investment Funding could be used to lever in other funds from other sources.

*The local funding criteria for community investment may evolve as communities move through the process, for example if the Community Partnership changes the Search Area.*

## How long is Community Investment Funding available for?

Community Investment Funding and the Engagement Funding to administer it will be available for as long as the Community Partnership is part of the siting process.

If either the community withdraws from the process, or RWM withdraws from a community, the Community Investment Funding will stop in that community. Any commitment already made up to that point, will be honoured for the remainder of the financial year.

## Monitoring and reporting

The Community Partnership will need to operate in a way that instils confidence in the community. To do this it may find it useful to adopt some of the principles set out in the Charity Governance Code<sup>12</sup> and seven 'Nolan Principles'<sup>13</sup> of public life. The Funding Administrator selected may already be required to comply with these principles, depending on their legal status.

There will need to be appropriate oversight and accounting for the Community Investment Funding, in line with all applicable legal and Government requirements and guidelines for managing public money.

Each project that receives investment will be required to report their outputs, outcomes and progress to the Community Investment Panel via their Funding Administrator as part of a funding agreement. These reports can then be used by the Community Partnership to publish an end of year report on the activity that has been supported. In addition we will report on Community Investment Funding each year to Government through our parent body, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

It will be RWM's role to ensure Community Investment Funding operates in accordance with the Government Functional Standard for General Grants<sup>14</sup>.

## Annual audit

The Funding Administrator for the Community Investment Funding will be subject to an annual external and independent audit. This is to demonstrate how the money has been spent and the financial controls they have used to manage the money effectively. We will work with the Funding Administrator to ensure that all relevant legal and Government requirements for managing public money are reflected in its approach to administration of the Community Investment Funding.

Either the Funding Administrator can engage the external independent auditor, or third party support will be available to do it on the administrator's behalf. It is expected that the administrator will report on the spending and outcomes of the Community Investment Funding as part of its own statutory annual reporting.

## Evaluation of Community Investment Funding

As RWM is accountable for the efficient use of public money, we may periodically commission an evaluation of the spending and outcomes from Community Investment Funding. It may be used to demonstrate the funding's value for money and delivery against the Community Partnership Agreement. It may also provide helpful information for the Community Partnership as a whole about the performance and impact of Community Investment Funding.

The evaluation could for example take place:

- annually in communities where the process is underway
- when a Community Partnership progresses to Site Characterisation (page 38). This evaluation could include any requirement to refocus the aims of the funding and any capacity required to deliver the significant increase in funding
- as a community withdraws from the process or if we withdraw from the community. This evaluation could focus on the impact and effectiveness of the Community Investment Funding.

All evaluation reports will be published to ensure transparency and accountability of the Community Partnership and the Community Investment Panel. Support will be available from RWM to help with this.

## Property compensation

*The Government recognises that communities may be concerned about effects geological disposal infrastructure may have on property values in the local area. Most major infrastructure projects involve making provision for providing compensation for local residents and property owners who experience an impact on the value of their property as a result of construction of the new infrastructure.*

We will undertake work with Community Partnerships in the siting process to assess whether there is likely to be any impact on local property prices and consider whether a property support scheme would be appropriate. Once this assessment work is complete, a decision will be taken and an appropriate approach will be adopted for each community.

<sup>12</sup> Charity Governance Code: <https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en>

<sup>13</sup> Nolan Principles: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

<sup>14</sup> Government Functional Standard for General Grants: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/grants-standards>



## A Community Vision

*Deciding on a suitable site for a Geological Disposal Facility will take a number of years. This means that there is a real opportunity for a community to think about how a GDF could benefit that community over the long term.*

The process of building a Community Vision will help the community to identify and articulate what is important. Communities could build a vision that complements relevant existing local and regional policies, strategies and plans.

Establishing this vision will be important as it could contribute to the Programme of Activities and help influence the priorities for Community Investment Funding.

A GDF is expected to bring substantial benefits to a community. These benefits could come from a number of sources:

- there is likely to be significant investment in local infrastructure such as road, rail, power and broadband networks to enable the construction and operation of a GDF and a GDF may open up opportunities for new housing development and community services
- a GDF is likely to generate hundreds of well paid jobs each year for over 100 years in construction, engineering, safety and project management; there is an opportunity for the jobs and skills to be undertaken and developed by people in the community

- constructing and operating a GDF will require a major, high value supply chain which could be located in the region surrounding a GDF, generating further indirect jobs
- successful operation of a GDF could require a number of associated high value facilities such as Research & Development, training and visitor centres, which could be located in and around the community and bring additional high value jobs
- the Government has committed to providing Significant Additional Investment to the community that hosts a GDF, which will complement the Community Vision

In the case of a GDF, the timeframe and levels of medium and long-term investment should encourage the community to think about significant improvements that they might want to see in their area.

The Government has committed to providing Significant Additional Investment (page 43) to the community that hosts a GDF, to help to maximise the economic benefits. The Community Vision could anticipate this investment as it will be significant – comparable to other international GDF projects – and could contribute to intergenerational benefits for the community. This investment will be in addition to any agreements to mitigate impacts as a result of development, the Engagement Funding provided to facilitate community engagement and the Community Investment Funding.



# Site characterisation

*Site Characterisation is when the geology of an area is investigated using deep boreholes (i.e. deeper than 150 metres) so that we can determine its suitability to host a Geological Disposal Facility.*

It will be for central Government to make the decision as to which site or sites proceed to Site Characterisation for deep borehole investigation. This decision will be based upon our recommendation, taking into account the factors used in our evaluations. Sites may be compared if there are several potential sites. We will share our recommendation(s) and the reason for it with the community via the Community Partnership.

Site Characterisation is a process that may take 10 – 15 years. This is because detailed information about a potential site's suitability to host a GDF will need to be obtained and the safety assessed. This will include analysis of data from the drilling and testing of deep boreholes. During Site Characterisation we will be gathering the necessary information for the purpose of applying for the various permissions needed for a GDF.

The enhanced understanding of an area delivered through the Programme of Activities and site evaluation activities will allow us to develop site-specific designs and safety assessments for the surface and underground structures of a GDF.



# Finding a suitable site and a willing community

## Identifying a Potential Host Community

*The term 'Potential Host Community' defines the geographical area within which a proposed Geological Disposal Facility could eventually be sited. The Potential Host Community will be agreed by the Community Partnership based on information gathered over time from within the Search Area as part of the Site Characterisation process.*

The purpose of identifying the Potential Host Community is to make clear who could participate in a final Test of Public Support to confirm whether or not the community gives its consent that a GDF could be built at a specific site, subject to planning and other permitting consents.

The Potential Host Community will be defined by district or unitary electoral wards in which the following would be located:

- proposed surface and underground elements of a GDF
- any associated development (as defined in the Planning Act 2008 in respect of relevant development in England) and any land required to mitigate impacts
- transport links/routes from the proposed GDF site to the nearest port, railhead or primary road network (i.e. out to where minor roads meet the nearest 'A' roads)
- direct physical impacts associated with underground investigations, construction and operation of a GDF (identified through environmental assessment work carried out to support our engagement with communities and our development consent applications).

The Potential Host Community will likely be made up of several wards. The wards could be contained within one district, county or unitary authority, or could cross local authority boundaries. The Potential Host Community will reflect any future changes to electoral ward boundaries that might occur.

If the Potential Host Community boundary is near other principal local authority boundaries, the Community Partnership will need to consider engaging with people within the neighbouring authorities. They would not, however, have a say in the Test of Public Support.

Once the Potential Host Community has been identified, applications for Community Investment Funding could be prioritised for distribution within the Potential Host Community, if it is deemed appropriate by the Community Partnership.

The Potential Host Community will be eligible for Significant Additional Investment if it is selected to host a GDF (see page 43). This is additional to any funding for planning obligations associated with mitigating impacts as a result of development, the Community Investment Funding and Engagement Funding provided during the siting process. As such, we anticipate that the community may want to further develop its Community Vision.

## The end of Site Characterisation

*We will aim to identify a specific site (or sites) to locate the surface and underground elements of a Geological Disposal Facility. This will enable us to develop location-specific designs and safety assessments for both the surface and underground structures.*

Our evaluations will be recorded in a report, which will have been informed through discussions with the Community Partnership.

Before regulatory approval and development consents for the construction and operation of a GDF are formally applied for by RWM, the Potential Host Community must formally demonstrate its willingness to host a GDF. This will be achieved if the Potential Host Community delivers a Test of Public Support in favour of hosting a GDF. (page 42).

### **If more than one site is involved**

The aim of Site Characterisation is to be able to confidently assess the suitability of a site (or sites) for the construction of a GDF.

Although the Government has expressed in policy its strong preference to construct and operate a single GDF it has not ruled out having more than one, if necessary.

If more than one site is involved, each Potential Host Community will run a Test of Public Support. If each returns a result in favour of hosting a GDF then a comparison based on our evaluation may be made between the sites. This could be used to inform our identification of a preferred site.

# Right of withdrawal

*A community can withdraw from the siting process right up to the point at which a Test of Public Support is taken, for any reason. This is known as the community's Right of Withdrawal.*

If a community withdraws from the process then any activity undertaken by us will end in the relevant area, including the availability of Community Investment Funding. Any Community Investment Funding already made or committed will be honoured within that financial year.

The Community Partnership may have concerns about continuing in the process or, through its monitoring of public opinion, it may judge that there is no realistic prospect of building support for a Geological Disposal Facility within the community.

Where there are concerns, the Community Partnership, including us at RWM, will make every effort to address these, before considering withdrawing from the process. Independent mediation will be available if necessary, to help ensure issues are fully understood and addressed as helpfully as possible.

The decision on whether to withdraw the community from the process will be taken by the relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership. Where there is more than one relevant principal local authority on the Community Partnership, all must agree; no single principal local authority will be able to unilaterally invoke the Right of Withdrawal.

Separately, if a relevant principal local authority decides to leave the Community Partnership with the result that the people in part of the Search Area (or once identified, the Potential Host Community), are no longer represented by any of the relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership, then this area will no longer form part of the Search Area (or Potential Host Community), but the process could continue in the remaining Search Area or Potential Host Community. A relevant principal local authority that is not a member of the Community Partnership will be unable to have a formal role in the Right of Withdrawal.

The relevant principal local authority/ies may decide to seek the views of the community on whether to withdraw from the process or they can take the decision themselves. The Government considers it would be good practice for the relevant principal local authorities to consult the community or other Community Partnership members on the question of whether to exercise the Right of Withdrawal.

Although the relevant principal local authority/ies will have the final say on whether to exercise a Right of Withdrawal, they should involve other members of the Community Partnership in discussions on whether they intend to seek to withdraw the community from the process. Equally the other members of the Community Partnership should be able to make recommendations to the relevant principal local authority/ies on the Community Partnership on invoking the Right of Withdrawal.



## Finding a suitable site and a willing community



If the relevant principal local authorities agree that the decision to withdraw the community from the process should involve residents in the Search Area (or the Potential Host Community if it has been identified by the time withdrawal is being considered), then the method for seeking the community's views on possible withdrawal will be decided by the Community Partnership as a whole. The Community Partnership's view on what mechanism could be used for this should be set out in the Community Partnership Agreement, which can be updated as views on this develop over time.

Although we, as RWM, will be a member of the Community Partnership, we will not take decisions on whether the community exercises its Right of Withdrawal.

There are three main mechanisms that are currently used for decisions of this type:

1. Local Referendum
2. Formal Consultation
3. Statistically representative polling.

The Community Partnership Agreement may indicate the preferred mechanism. New mechanisms may emerge in the future and preferences on how to exercise the community Right of Withdrawal may evolve over time.

At RWM, we also have the ability to withdraw from the process in a particular community. RWM will be transparent in its reasons to withdraw from a community.

For example, we could withdraw from the process:

- if technical information demonstrates that there is no longer potential for finding a suitable site for a GDF within a Search Area or the Potential Host Community
- if we consider that there are alternative sites/areas that, either individually or in combination with other potential sites/areas, could provide a greater level of confidence for successfully delivering a GDF
- if it became clear that a community was no longer positively engaged with the process or it was evident that it would be difficult to achieve a Test of Public Support in favour of hosting a GDF from a community.

If we decide to withdraw then the process and any activity by us will end in the relevant area, including the availability of Community Investment Funding. Any Community Investment Funding already made or committed will be honoured within that financial year.

How RWM will work in partnership with communities

## Test of public support

# 6.

## Test of Public Support

*Before we are in a position to make a recommendation to central Government regarding the suitability of a specific site or sites, there must be a Test of Public Support taken by people who live in the Potential Host Community. This is to ensure that the relevant community has clearly demonstrated that it has given its consent to hosting a GDF prior to central Government making its final decision on whether the development could go ahead.*

There will only be one opportunity for a Test of Public Support in any Potential Host Community. If the Potential Host Community indicates that it is not willing to host a GDF the process will come to an end in that community.

The relevant principal local authority/ies on the Community Partnership will take the decision on whether to hold a Test of Public Support, and if so, when. If there is more than one relevant principal local authority on the Partnership, then all must agree to holding the Test.

A relevant principal local authority that is not a member of the Community Partnership will be unable to have a formal role in the Test of Public Support.

Although the relevant principal local authorities will have the final say, they should involve other members of the Community Partnership in discussions on an appropriate time to launch a Test of Public Support. Equally, the other members of the Community Partnership should be able to make recommendations to the relevant principal local authority/ies on the Partnership on the timing of the Test of Public Support.

The Community Partnership, as a whole, will decide on the method to be used for the final Test of Public Support. The Partnership's view on what mechanisms could be used for this should be set out in the Community Partnership Agreement. The Agreement can be updated as views on this develop over time.

A Test of Public Support would only be undertaken after extensive community engagement which means the community has had time to ask questions, raise concerns and learn about a GDF.

Communities in neighbouring principal local authorities should be informed about, but would not be able to participate in the Test of Public Support.

### **Mechanisms for conducting a Test of Public Support**

There are three main mechanisms that are currently used for decisions of this type: local referendum, formal consultation and statistically representative polling.

New mechanisms may emerge and the Community Partnership's preferences on how to exercise the Test of Public Support may evolve over time.

Whichever mechanism is used, it is important that it follows good practice to help ensure credibility. This applies both to the method used and how the question is posed. Organisations such as the Electoral Commission will have guidance on how to achieve this.

The Community Partnership will communicate the results of the Test and explain what the next steps could be.

# Significant additional investment

*If all of the necessary consents and approvals are granted, we may proceed with construction of a GDF. Significant Additional Investment will become available to the community of the chosen site for a GDF.*

This investment, which will replace the Community Investment Funding, will enhance the significant economic benefits that are inherent in hosting a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and recognise the long-term commitment from the community toward the national interest.

Investment could include improved local education and skills capacity, improved transport infrastructure or improved recreational facilities.

It is additional to the investment and jobs that a major infrastructure project of this kind will bring to an area. It is also additional to any funding for planning obligations associated with mitigating impacts as a result of development, the Community Investment Funding and Engagement Funding provided during the process.

There are also likely to be positive impacts on local service industries that support the facility and its workforce.

RWM will work as part of the Community Partnership to help integrate a GDF with its Community Vision, and what this might mean for the Significant Additional Investment.

This investment will be significant – comparable to other, international GDF projects.



## Section 3

# Finding out more and contacting us



# Contacting us

*You may be an Interested Party or you may be a member of the community who has heard about this project in the news or through friends and family. You may want more information – or you may want to find out how you or your community might be able to get involved. There are lots of ways that you can find out more and we welcome conversations with anyone at any point.*

## Our website

Our website includes a great deal of information on our work and includes links to videos, infographics as well as detailed reports. Our website is:

<https://geologicaldisposal.campaign.gov.uk>

## Email us

If you would like to ask us a specific question, you can email us at [gdfenquiries@nda.gov.uk](mailto:gdfenquiries@nda.gov.uk)

## Telephone us

If you would like to talk to someone, you can also call us on 0300 0660 100 between 9.00am – 4.00pm Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

## Write to us.

If you would like to write to us, you can reach us at:  
GDF Enquiries  
Building 587, Curie Avenue  
Harwell Campus  
Didcot  
OX11 0RH.

## Members of the press

For all media enquiries, please call our media and campaigns team on:  
01925 802830 (office hours)  
07803 495577 (out of hours)

## Our commitment to you

We aim to respond to all contacts within 10 working days.

You may be contacted and asked for your thoughts on the service you receive. We would appreciate your honest feedback as this will be used to help improve the service we provide. We will continually learn and review the service we provide to you. An important part of this is ensuring our staff are fully trained. We will use recordings of telephone calls, emails, social media and letters that we receive, to train our staff and this will be anonymised.

## Making a complaint

If you are unhappy with the service you have received from us, you can make a formal complaint to us. This will be investigated by someone who has not previously dealt with you. To register your complaint with us, please email, telephone or write to us.

## Requests for information

You can request information from us under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

## Your data

When you contact us, we will ask you for some personal information such as your name and contact details, preferred method of contact etc. This allows us to keep a record of your engagement with us and helps us provide you with a more personalised service if you chose to get in touch again. You do not have to give us any information and details of our [Privacy Notice<sup>15</sup>](#) can be found on our website. The Notice explains how we will store and use your personal data and how you can request a copy of any information we hold about you.

If you do not feel that your data is being appropriately managed, you can make a complaint with the Information Commissioner. Further details on how to contact them can be found on their website:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

## To get in touch

Email: [GDFenquiries@nda.gov.uk](mailto:GDFenquiries@nda.gov.uk)

or write to us at  
GDF Enquiries  
Building 587, Curie Avenue,  
Harwell Campus,  
Didcot, OX11 0RH

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/radioactive-waste-management-privacy-notice>

# Glossary

**Borehole:** A borehole is the generalised term for any cylindrical excavation into the ground made by a drilling device for purposes such as site investigation, testing and monitoring.

**Citizens' jury:** a panel of people from the local population, usually selected at random. Jurors are given the chance to cross-examine experts who have been called on to provide different perspectives on the subject, then collectively produce a summary of their conclusions as a short report.

**Combined authority:** a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more local authorities to collaborate and take collective decisions across local authority boundaries.

**Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM):** The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management provides independent scrutiny and advice to the UK Government and devolved administrations on the long-term management of higher activity radioactive wastes. They are an advisory non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

**Community Investment Funding:** The funding that will be available to support projects that could benefit a community, once a Community Partnership is formed and a Community Partnership Agreement is signed.

**Community Investment Panel:** The panel that reviews and decides on applications to fund projects from the Community Investment Funding within the Search Area and the Potential Host Community.

**Community Partnership:** The partnership between the members of the community, at least one relevant principal local authority in the Search Area and RWM, which will provide a vehicle for sharing information with the community and for finding answers to the questions the community may have about geological disposal, the siting process and how they, as a community, could benefit.

**Community Partnership Agreement:** An agreement signed by the members of the Community Partnership, which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the members and the work the Community Partnership will carry out.

**Community Stakeholder Forum:** An open forum that could be set up by the Community Partnership to encourage a wider dialogue with the community.

**Community Visioning:** A community vision is made up of strategic goals/ambitions which have been developed by the community. The vision should seek to bring added value or improvements to the community. It is likely to develop over time and be implemented over a number of years.

**Development Consent Order (DCO):** The form of planning consent in England given by the Secretary of State for specified development that constitutes a nationally significant infrastructure project for the purposes of the Planning Act 2008.

**Electoral ward:** An electoral district at a sub-national level represented by one or more councillors.

**Engagement Funding:** Engagement Funding is intended to cover the costs of the Working Group's and Community Partnership's engagement activities, information gathering, and support services.

**Environment Agency (EA):** The independent environmental regulator for England. The EA is responsible for implementing and enforcing environmental protection legislation in England. Its areas of responsibility include environmental pollution, waste management, flood risk management, water resources, fisheries and conservation.

The EA also regulates disposals of radioactive waste from nuclear licensed sites as well as from other premises that use radioactive substances. Disposals of radioactive waste include radioactive discharges to air and water and disposal of solid waste to land including disposals at landfills, at the Low Level Waste Repository as well as geological disposal.

**Environmental permit:** A legal document issued by the Environment Agency to allow an operator to carry out certain activities, subject to conditions and limits on discharges to the environment.

**Funding Administrator:** The body responsible for administering Community Investment Funding. It could be a charity, a Trust, a public body or a company.

**GDF National Geological Screening (NGS):** An exercise undertaken by RWM that brings together existing high level geological information from across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, relevant to the safety of a GDF.

**Geophysical Survey:** Geophysical surveys are remote sensing techniques used to gather information about materials below the ground's surface without physically penetrating the ground. For example, these types of survey can make use of seismic waves, magnetometers, electrical resistance meters, ground-penetrating radar or electromagnetic conductivity meters.

**Higher activity radioactive waste (HAW):** Higher activity radioactive waste includes the following categories of radioactive waste: high level waste, intermediate level waste, a small fraction of low level waste with a concentration of specific radionuclides sufficient to prevent its disposal as low level waste.

**High level waste (HLW):** Radioactive wastes that generate heat as a result of their radioactivity, so this factor has to be taken into account in the design of storage or disposal facilities.

**Intermediate level waste (ILW):** Radioactive wastes exceeding the upper activity boundaries for low level waste but which do not need heat to be taken into account in the design of storage or disposal facilities.

**Learned Society:** An organisation that exists to promote an academic discipline, profession, or a group of related disciplines.



## Glossary - continued

**Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP):**

Voluntary partnerships between local authorities and businesses which help to determine local priorities and promote economic growth and job creation in the local area.

**Low level waste (LLW):** Radioactive wastes not exceeding specified levels of radioactivity. Overall, the major components of LLW are building rubble, soil and steel items from the dismantling and demolition of nuclear reactors and other nuclear facilities and the clean-up of nuclear sites.

**Mediation:** Mediation is an interactive process where a neutral third party assists disputing parties in resolving conflict through communication and negotiation techniques. All participants in mediation are encouraged to actively participate in the process.

**National Policy Statement (NPS):** A statement designated under the Planning Act 2008 that provides policy guidance to the Planning Inspectorate and Secretary of State on assessing and making decisions on development consent applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects.

**Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP):** A development project of a specified type and scale defined in the Planning Act 2008 and relating to energy, transport, water, waste water and waste generally. Geological disposal infrastructure constitutes a nationally significant infrastructure project in England only.

**Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR):** The Office for Nuclear Regulation independently regulates nuclear safety and security at nuclear licensed sites in the UK. It also regulates the transport of radioactive materials and ensures that safeguards obligations are met.

**Planning Act 2008:** Planning legislation which establishes a streamlined consenting process for nationally significant infrastructure projects. Applications for Development Consent Orders are initially made to and examined by the Planning Inspectorate, after which a recommendation will be made to the Secretary of State for the final decision. This consenting process is separate to conventional planning process under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, under which planning applications for other forms of development are made to the local authority.

**Planning Inspectorate:** The Planning Inspectorate deals with planning appeals, national infrastructure planning applications, examination of local plans and other planning-related and specialist casework in England and Wales. The Planning Inspectorate is an executive agency, sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Welsh Government.

**Potential Host Community:** The Potential Host Community is the community within the district or unitary electoral wards in which the GDF and associated development would be located.

**Radioactive waste:** Any material contaminated by or incorporating radioactivity above certain thresholds defined in legislation, and for which no further use is envisaged.

**Radioactivity:** Atoms undergoing spontaneous random disintegration, usually accompanied by the emission of radiation.

**Relevant principal local authorities:** Relevant principal local authorities are the district councils, county councils or unitary authorities that represent people in all or part of the Search Area or Potential Host Community.

**Reprocessing:** A physical or chemical separation operation, the purpose of which is to extract uranium or plutonium for re-use from spent nuclear fuel.

**Right of Withdrawal:** The ability for a community or RWM to withdraw from the siting process in a particular area.

**Search Area:** The Search Area is the geographical area encompassing all the electoral wards within which we will be able to consider potential sites. For areas which include potential for development under the seabed, the Search Area will comprise only that area on land.

**Spent fuel:** Nuclear fuel removed from a reactor following irradiation that is no longer usable in its present form because of depletion of fissile material, poison build-up or radiation damage.

**Test of Public Support:** A mechanism to establish whether or not residents of the Potential Host Community support the development of a GDF within their community.

**UK Radioactive Waste Inventory:** A compilation of data on UK radioactive waste holdings, produced about every three years by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

**Working Group:** The Working Group is formed in the early part of the process in order to gather information about the community and provide information to the community about geological disposal before a Community Partnership is formed. It comprises the Interested Party, RWM, independent facilitator, independent chair and any relevant principal local authorities that wish to join.



## Getting in touch

To learn more about the UK's mission to deal with radioactive waste

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