

Introduction

The Submarine Dismantling Project (SDP) is the MOD's programme to deliver a safe, secure and environmentally responsible solution for dismantling 27 defuelled submarines. This involves recycling the bulk of the submarine and safely disposing of the remainder. The submarine's Reactor Pressure Vessel (RPV) contains Intermediate Level radioactive Waste (ILW) and must be stored for an interim period until it can be processed and sent to a proposed Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) sometime after 2040.

The MOD's expectation is that the SDP Store will have very little impact - either positive or negative - on the host community. Furthermore, any negotiations associated with the planning process would be the responsibility of the site operator.

However, the SDP recognises that the wider balance of potential 'costs and benefits' is important to stakeholders in responding to the Public Consultation so this additional Topic Summary has been published. It covers potential employment and planning-related impact mitigation agreements. It also clarifies who would pay for any necessary infrastructure improvements.

Local Employment

A host community might expect to benefit from employment and supply chain opportunities associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the RPV store.

However, since the store is expected to be a simple construction and unmanned in normal use these will be limited, though there will be additional jobs during the construction phase and again during decommissioning.

For a site with a current or potential strategic role in respect of the UK's radioactive waste management programme, the RPV Store might consolidate that position and thus contribute to maintaining local employment but the project's option assessment treats this as a secondary issue.

Planning Process

Planning law¹ makes provision for a legally-binding agreement in association with the granting of planning permission with the developer (in this case the operator of the selected site, not the MOD).

Such agreements must be:

- Relevant to planning.
- Necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms.
- Directly related to the proposed development.
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.
- Reasonable in all other respects.

These apply where there is evidence of impact that needs to be mitigated. This may include the improvement of local infrastructure (see below).

Planning gains achieved under these arrangements are not generally seen as 'community benefits'. They are more accurately mitigation measures and would be negotiated by the site operator with local authorities during the planning process.

There is no current provision within the planning process to additionally compensate a community for undertaking a role on behalf of the wider UK public.

Infrastructure Requirements

The RPV and container together will weigh approximately 90 tonnes for the reactor types from the earlier submarines and 135 tonnes for the later, larger, reactor type but loads of comparable size or weight are regularly moved on British roads.

A standard long wheelbase heavy transport vehicle is assumed and main road or motorway lane closures are not expected.

¹ In England, Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In Scotland, the equivalent is Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.



The details of local access routes are covered in the individual site chapters of the Consultation Document and site factsheets. They will be confirmed for the selected site in consultation with local authorities and any potential local disruption to traffic assessed.

The possibility that some local infrastructure improvements may be required has not yet been ruled out. Any such improvements would be agreed with local authorities during the planning process and funded by the MOD, probably through its contract with the site operator.

There is very little likelihood of infrastructure damage due to RPV transport but if there were any, the project would in principle expect to cover the cost of repairs.



Example of vehicle suitable for RPV transport

Future Benefits Frameworks

Planning-linked community funds have been established in relation to the Low level Waste repository near Drigg and at Dounreay but these are within the planning framework and the intention is to dispose of waste permanently. There is no equivalent for an interim ILW store such as the RPV store.

The MOD is aware that local authorities are developing proposals for a wider national voluntary framework in relation to the management and disposal of nuclear legacy wastes. However, the SDP team will work on the basis of current Government and MOD policy.

The Energy Act 2004 requires the NDA to consider the socio-economic impacts of its activities on local communities and gives it a function of giving 'encouragement and other support to activities that benefit the social or economic life of communities' living near its sites. This is only applicable to NDA sites.

Equity Frameworks

Community Equity Frameworks are generally understood to be negotiated agreements that may include offsetting imports of radioactive wastes with exports. Any significant net increase in stored wastes is thereby mitigated to some extent - a process sometimes referred to as 'radiological offset'.

Radiological offset has no basis in policy or regulation and has only been applied in specific local contexts.

Given that the risks associated with RPV storage activities are so low, even if the principle were to be applied the SDP view is that it would not have any implications for the project.

Option Assessments

The SDP project team has considered whether potential community benefits should be taken into account explicitly within its comparison of shortlisted sites and if so, how that might be done.

Public confidence and the perspectives of local authorities and other stakeholders are important factors in choosing a site and are included in the assessment. These are likely to be impacted by peoples' views in respect of benefits.

The basis for assessment will be the feedback provided via the project's engagement programme generally and this public consultation. This information will be summarised in the project's Post-Consultation Report before any decision is made.

The project team concluded, however, that it should not include the relative cost of potential benefits at the candidate sites in its assessments, except for the cost of essential infrastructure improvements. It would be unfair to make judgements at this point.

More Information

Further information and all the SDP consultation documents are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/submarine-dismantling-project-interim-storage-of-intermediate-level-radioactive-waste>

