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**The Managing Radioactive Waste Safely
Team
Department of Energy and Climate Change
55 Whitehall, M07
London
SW1A 2EY**

Re: Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: Call for Evidence on the Siting Process for a Geological Disposal Facility

I am currently REDACTEDREDACTEDREDACTEDREDACTEDREDACTEDREDACTED, a
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REDACTEDREDCTED Originally trained as a physicist, I have REDACTEDREDACTEDREDACT
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In this last organisation I served for almost 20 years, much of this time REDACTEDREDACTEDRED
REDACTED. I was also a REDACTEDREDACTEDREDACTEDREDACTED, since disbanded. In
addition to my direct responsibilities in the REDACTEDREDACTEDREDACTED, I have worked in
many other national disposal programmes, with specific involvement. These include REDACTEDRE
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I provide this brief response in a personal capacity.

- The voluntary process currently being pursued in the UK is the correct state-of-the-art approach to siting and should be continued.
- The UK seems to have learned some lessons from problems in countries like Japan where the volunteering process was too committing at the outset and the tricky issue of withdrawal rights was avoided for too long. The UK staged approach to these issues is more appropriate than the Japanese. Other problems that beset the Japanese siting programme were the passive attitudes at government level and the boundary conditions which forced NUMO into a purely responsive mode of operation. These characteristics appear to also apply to the present UK approach.
- On the other hand, the Canadian approach goes beyond that of the UK in engaging stakeholders at all levels, publishing extensively on all relevant issues, structuring a strongly led team for the initial phases (with a high-profile experienced person, Elizabeth Dowdeswell), and giving that team freedom to implement a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process.
- The negative results in Japan and the positive results in Canada together give some valuable pointers for the UK concerning the human aspects of siting negotiations:

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Technical and Strategic Advice in Radioactive Waste Management

- Confidential initial talks with local community leaders must be possible at the early stages
- If possible, potential volunteers should not be publicised individually as they appear, since snipers (i.e. opposition activists) can more easily pick out one head above the parapet
- The siting team needs to have a rapid and flexible approach to engaging with local communities – before local or external opposition groupings can get firmly established
- The persons acting as direct interfaces to siting communities should be chosen, not on hierarchical principles, but rather for a proven ability to communicate well and to empathise with local representatives.
- At a more technical level, there are also crucial items that can affect success or failure:
 - The siting team **MUST** have technical credibility; this has to be earned by openly and competently addressing all relevant issues and by networking with the national and international scientific and technical communities. The RWMD team has made progress in this respect since the demise of Nirex, but continued efforts are required
 - Openness and flexibility are required also in the technical assessment of disposal options. It should be made clear always that many geological environments will be able to provide safe containment and that there is no “safest” technical solution
 - Hands-on experience in almost all of the technologies required for geological disposal can be obtained through working in underground laboratories (URLs). The UK has always been involved to some extent in foreign URLs. However, a national facility would offer more build-up of technical know-how, and importantly, could act as a valuable tool for communication with the public. No successful national programme has attempted to proceed to repository implementation without having an underground laboratory.

Finally, at the highest strategic level, the UK should try to revive some of the public pride in its nuclear capabilities that used to be visible. The NDA was born with an unfortunate name, reflecting the downbeat attitudes to nuclear at that time. Today, public and governmental opinions are more positive. The UK should strive to become one of the leading nuclear power nations once more. This will require much effort from industry and academia, as well as firm government support. An important component of any nuclear power programme is the existence of a credible waste disposal programme. Rather than presenting the mission of NDA and RWMD only as the cleaning up of legacy wastes that have been neglected for far too long, the waste management mission should be presented as a dynamic, forward-looking effort. The declared aim is to address, in an ethically correct way, the difficult but surmountable challenges facing a nation convinced that nuclear power must play a key role in meeting its future energy needs.

Yours sincerely

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