

**Response to DECC Consultation on: *Review of the Siting Process for a Geological Disposal Facility* -- Professor John Glasson, Oxford Brookes University**

<p>1. Do you agree that a test of public support should be taken before the representative authority loses the Right of Withdrawal? If so, what do you think would be the most appropriate means of testing public support, and when should it take place? If you do not agree with the need for such a test, please explain why.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal for a test of community support has already let this genie out of the bottle, and it would be difficult to backtrack now.</li> <li>• However it probably is a good idea for such a significant and contentious project, although such an approach would be unusual in the PINs NSIPS regime</li> <li>• Re: methods of demonstrating support, there needs to be a method which is seen as fair and not open to manipulation. As such, extensive stratified opinion polling may be more acceptable than methods such as referenda and citizen panels. There is also an evolving array of deliberative methods which could be explored; might also be scope for use of digital democracy approaches.</li> <li>• If not a standard approach across candidate sites, it may be difficult to compare the relative positions of different authorities using different approaches -- assuming more than one offer!</li> <li>• As indicated in Fig 4 of the consultation document , test of public support should take place in the later stages of the 'focusing phase', unless the community wishes to bring it forward ( if they regard the key uncertainties having been acceptably reduced).</li> </ul>
<p>2. Do you agree with the proposed amendments to decision making within the MRWS siting process? If not, how would you modify the proposed phased approach, or, alternatively, what different approach would you propose? Please explain your reasoning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Danger of potential sites moving through this more flexible process at different rates -- making comparative inter-site assessment difficult.</li> <li>• In spirit of localism , support decision making power (to support DCO) being at District level, but Counties (where relevant) have role in (currently loosely discussed) Consultative Partnership. However, it is not clear at this stage who chooses the membership of the Consultative Partnership.</li> <li>• The power/veto (?) relationship between the Steering Group and the Consultative Partnership needs to be clarified</li> <li>• And, of course, under NSIP process, final say will be with the SoS DECC</li> <li>• Focusing phase does seem potentially overlong at up to 15 years. Maintaining local commitment (and consistency) throughout such a long period may be a real challenge.</li> <li>• Like the idea of 'engagement funding'; can be seen as a more flexible form of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA), now being employed for some major projects?</li> <li>• Production of the two independent reports on (geology, and socio-economic) also a good idea. Who commissions the reports? Again— issue of consistency across potential candidate sites?</li> <li>• Strongly support the GDF being an NSIP, with an NPS. Re the NSIP DCO process, there are a range of very useful pre- application and post-application and examination steps and mechanisms (eg: Local Impact Reports (LIR) from LAs; Statements of Community Consultation (SoCC) from LAs, Statements of Common Ground (SoCG)). How will these be incorporated? They do put much onus on LAs, which will need funding support.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Do you agree with this approach to revising roles in the siting process set out in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree that lack of clarity, visibility and intensity of involvement of key agencies (UK Government, NDA and LAs) was a problem in the most recent approach. As such it is good to see more proactive roles for all of them.</li> </ul>

the White Paper? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As noted in 2 above, there may be scope for conflict and confusion between the Steering Group and the Consultative Partnership, unless roles are very clearly defined.</li> <li>• Indeed the whole institutional environment is in danger of looking over-complex; needs careful and clear presentation</li> <li>• Re Independent Peer Review—suggest use CoRWM</li> <li>• Re NSIP DCO process—see 2 above</li> </ul>
4. Do you agree with this proposed approach to assessing geological suitability as part of the MRWS siting process? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like the phased approach, from launch (13 regions) guide, through BGS work in learning phase to detailed studies in focusing stage.</li> <li>• But would initial launch guide be sufficient to influence LAs on whether to be at least initially involved or not? And –would this constitute an appropriate consideration of alternatives under assessment SEA regulations?</li> <li>• Some concern about BGS cautious position on unsuitability screening.</li> <li>• Independent expert/peer review emphasized; again issues of consistency of approach across candidate sites?</li> </ul>
5. Do you agree with this proposed approach to planning for a GDF? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes—believe that a 2008 Planning Act (as amended) NSIP/NPS approach is most appropriate for such a nationally significant project.</li> <li>• And—as noted in 2 above there are many features of that approach which should be useful.</li> <li>• This consultation paper unfortunately does not elaborate much on the NSIPs approach, making it difficult for comment if respondents are not already up to speed on it.</li> <li>• Will require careful design to marry the advantages of the NSIP/NPS approach and the evolving GDF process.</li> <li>• Seems to be suggesting carrying out the NSIP approach twice—once for intrusive investigations, and then again for main application--correct? Could use the first round as strategic assessment of alternative sites, and thereby meeting requirements of SEA Directive, followed by site specific second round to which EIA Directive would apply?</li> <li>• Re NPS—yes, agree would be useful, and can help to clear ground on strategic issues and key criteria.</li> </ul>
6. Do you agree with this clarification of the inventory for geological disposal – and how this will be communicated with the volunteer host community? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scoping of the inventory still comes through as a flexible package.</li> <li>• Although HPC (and potentially SZC) new power stations both be EPRs, there are likely to be other new build reactor types. Might these have other waste characteristics, affecting disposal?</li> <li>• Case for using the flexibility of the 'Rochdale Envelope' approach, as being used to characterise the flexible scope of some other NSIPs (especially Offshore Wind Farms), and presenting worst case scenarios for examination?</li> </ul>
7. Do you endorse the proposed approach on community benefits associated with a GDF? If not, what alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly agree with importance of clarification of approach to community benefits, in response to the 4 bullet points in 4.6 of the consultation document.</li> <li>• Community Benefits are over and above the direct (and indirect) benefits noted in 4.4 and 4.5. They are for 'providing a service for the</li> </ul>

<p>approach would you propose and why?</p>	<p>nation' and also for offsetting broader impacts of community disturbance not easily mitigated in other ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re 4.15 and the community fund during the focusing period, and potential clawback: there seems to be an assumption that the community cannot spend during this period—or risk going into debt if they do spend and then do not proceed?</li> <li>• It would be worth providing a two-stage approach to community benefits with some smaller contribution (towards specified projects/local initiatives) during the focusing period, as there will be increased community concern and disturbance over 7-15 years, but with main funding kicking in after agreement to proceed. This may already be implied but should be clarified more.</li> <li>• How and when will size of community fund be determined? As noted in 4.12, it needs to be early in the process. As for wind farms—might size of fund be related to the quantities involved? For example, Scottish wind farms pay £5000 per Mw pa. Could GDF payments be related to quantities of waste disposed at site—or better to have an agreed amount up front? Will it be all available at the start of construction, or incrementally over time?</li> <li>• Important that any community fund is well managed on a partnership basis. See examples from N. Sea oil and gas related funds (Shetlands, Norway etc).</li> </ul>
<p>8. Do you agree with the proposed approach to addressing potential socio-economic and environmental effects that might come from hosting a GDF? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes—important to set out the range of environmental and sustainability issues earlier in the process, as noted by Cumbria MRWS Partnership.</li> <li>• Current NSIP Planning Act approach involves the production of an Environmental Report in the pre-application stage of the process. This helps to highlight key issues, informs various rounds of consultation, and provides a key building block for later EIA and HRA work/documents. This approach could be very helpful.</li> </ul>
<p>9. Do you have any other comments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re Raising awareness, like the early setting out, broadly, of the nature of the 'offer' to any community re hosting a GDF, although think 'proposal' might be a less loaded term than 'offer'</li> </ul>

JG  
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