

## **CORWM'S VIEWS ON DRAFT WELSH GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR GDF SITING ARRANGEMENTS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

***Location: Department for Energy & Climate Change, 3 Whitehall Place, SW1A 2AW***

***Attendees: CoRWM Working Group on Welsh Policy Review:*** Lynda Warren (lead), Francis Livens, Helen Peters, Stephen Newson, Paul Davis (by telecon), Mojisola Olutade (secretariat) Hollie Ashworth (secretariat).

***WG:*** Robert Williams, Michelle Grey.

### **MEETING WITH WELSH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

1. A meeting was held on 15 October 2015 between CoRWM's Welsh Policy Review Working Group and Welsh Government officials (WG) to discuss CoRWM's views on the draft policy for community engagement and siting processes, and the consultation.
2. The meeting had been organised to provide an opportunity to discuss CoRWM's views on WG's consultation document on community engagement and implementation processes (Consultation). WG subsequently sought CoRWM's comments on the draft policy document on community engagement and implementation processes (Draft Policy) and on WG's consideration of the main themes raised in responses to the consultation (Responses) and these were also discussed in the meeting.

### **CONSULTATION**

#### ***Compatibility of Welsh and English<sup>1</sup> Policies***

3. CoRWM commented that Welsh GDF policy should not appear as an afterthought to English policy, and emphasised the importance of appreciating the social and political differences between England and Wales. The perception of the Welsh process by the Welsh people is therefore very important; the Welsh are more likely to accept a purely 'Welsh' process than an adjusted 'English' one.
4. It was agreed that while compatibility of the policies was important, implementation of the policy must be suitable to Wales, so will not necessarily be the same as that in England.
5. WG confirmed the WG policy that, in Wales, the siting process could move forward only with a volunteer community, as noted in paragraph 1.2 of Welsh Government Policy on the Management and Disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Waste (WG23160).

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<sup>1</sup> Implementing Geological Disposal (July 2014) contains policy for England and Northern Ireland. References to England and English policy apply to Northern Ireland also.

6. It was agreed that it will be important to make clear that UK government is responsible for ensuring funding of the geological disposal siting programme; ownership of the waste rests with industry and/or the UK government, not the WG. The change in WG policy confirms that the WG is part of a common programme for the management and disposal of higher activity radioactive waste which includes Wales, England and Northern Ireland. WG policy therefore provides for a GDF taking UK waste, to be sited in Wales should a suitable site be found through the volunteer process.
7. CoRWM's concerns over the need for a Welsh siting policy were noted but it was highlighted by WG that developing a process wholly within Wales would require a considerable input of resource and not necessarily produce a better outcome. The most practicable option is to ensure that the work that is being carried out in England meets the needs of Wales.
8. WG was of the view that the Community Representation Working Group's (CRWG's) work on defining the 'community' and the definition of the test of public support are likely to be aspects of the siting process development that could be compatible across England and Wales and noted that most of the output from CRWG has been generic thus far.
9. CoRWM had some reservations as to whether the desired compatibility would be achievable because of the differences between governance and legal structures in England and Wales, including the duties imposed by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and Welsh language provisions. CRWG was established prior to the development of Welsh policy and therefore discussions had progressed for some time without Welsh involvement. CoRWM felt that the work of CRWG would be better informed if the membership was expanded to bring knowledge and experience of recent governance changes in Wales, and what these would mean at the local level, to the deliberations.

### ***Defining 'Community' & Progress of CRWG***

10. Concerns were raised regarding the progress of CRWG. However, it was noted that CoRWM was not fully aware of the work of CRWG as the Committee had not been allowed access to its documentation or meeting notes. WG thought it was very important for CoRWM to effectively scrutinise the work of CRWG and agreed with CoRWM that it would be useful for CoRWM members to have access to CRWG documents and notes made by CoRWM members attending CRWG meetings as observers.
11. CoRWM expressed concerns as to how local authorities might be involved in the siting process, given uncertainties over local government reorganisation in Wales. WG noted

that relevant local authorities should be involved with the siting process from the outset. If there were fewer, larger local authorities it could make it more challenging. However, local authority involvement remained central to the success of the process. WG stated that while local authority involvement would be crucial they would not necessarily be the main driver of the process, not least because of the risk of confusing public perception of the process being voluntary.

12. Positive benefits for the local community were discussed, such as assured improvements to local infrastructure, and an increase in skilled jobs. WG thought it was important to ensure that these benefits were widely understood, whilst also avoiding creating the impression that WG was biased in favour of locating a facility in Wales, as this would go against the voluntary principle. It would be for communities to decide if they wished to seek discussions.

### ***Public Test of Support***

13. It was agreed that the structure for the public test of community support could not be addressed until there is greater understanding of the changing Welsh governance and what the process is likely to be in England.
14. CoRWM suggested that WG considers convening a broad based commission, perhaps under the auspices of the Future Generations Commissioner, to address issues around the public test of community support including determining the definition of community. This is a critical part of the implementation process and needs time and resources to consider it in a Welsh context.

### ***Access to Independent Expert Advice***

15. CoRWM was concerned that provision of expert advice should not be restricted to members of learned societies, because this was too limiting.

### **DRAFT POLICY**

16. Many of the points raised above had been dealt with in more detail in the Draft Policy and CoRWM felt that in many cases no further changes were necessary. WG invited CoRWM to suggest potential improvements to the draft policy document, particularly with respect to paragraphs 2.15, 2.38, 2.39.

**RESPONSES**

17. CoRWM welcomed the opportunity to comment on the draft chapter considering the main themes raised by responses to the consultation. The Working Group had not yet had the opportunity to discuss this paper but individual comments were generally supportive.

**NEXT STEPS**

18. WG requested comments on the Draft Policy and the Consideration of Responses by October 23. It was agreed that these items would be considered in closed session at CoRWM's next meeting on October 21 with a view to submitting comments by the date requested.

19. A draft note of the meeting would also be sent to WG to check for factual accuracy.