



# Overview of NWS' Decision-Making Process

Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) needs to identify both a suitable site and a willing community to host a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF).

To reach that point, NWS will have many decisions to make during the siting process for a GDF. NWS has developed a framework to assist its decision-makers in how to structure and frame those decisions, ensuring that they are properly informed and robust; this is our 'Decision-Making Framework'.

The Decision-Making Framework is founded on relevant strategy, policy, published documents and GDF Programme Objectives. Its purpose is to ensure that NWS makes sound and evidence-based decisions and that those decisions are made in a fair, robust, rational and justifiable way, with appropriate governance and recording.

## GDF Programme Objectives

The mission of the programme is to deliver a permanent solution for the disposal of the most hazardous radioactive waste through the design, construction, operation and closure of a GDF, and its objectives are to:

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Build trust and work in partnership with one or more communities to gain consent and support to host a GDF.

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Deliver a permanent solution for the safe disposal of the UK's most hazardous radioactive waste through the safe, sustainable and cost-effective design, construction, operation and closure of a GDF.

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Facilitate economic benefits and growth, delivering regional jobs and skills and a positive legacy.

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Enable the timely retirement of the significant and currently enduring financial liability and risk associated with above-ground storage of the most hazardous radioactive waste, which would persist for thousands of years if a disposal solution was not developed.

### Key policy and documents for the Decision-Making Framework are:

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Site Evaluation: How we will evaluate sites in England

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Managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning: UK policy framework ('the Policy')

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Our GDF Programme Objectives

### NWS uses the Decision-Making Framework process to make key siting decisions, which include, for example:

- Whether or not to form a Working Group or Community Partnership in accordance with the Policy.
- Whether to take a community or communities forward (subject to the approval of the Secretary of State) to deep borehole investigations to supplement our understanding of an area's potential to host a GDF.
- Whether to take a site forward (subject to the approval of the Secretary of State) as the area in which to promote a GDF.
- Whether or not to withdraw from a community and end the siting process in that location.

# Decision-Making: Assessment Perspectives

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The Decision-Making Framework is structured around three perspectives:



## Site Suitability Perspective

A GDF will be located at a suitable site where NWS can demonstrate that it meets the high standards of safety, security and environmental protection required by the UK's independent nuclear and environmental regulators. Technical considerations relating to the potential suitability of a site are presented and analysed through a Site Suitability Perspective.



## Willing Community Perspective

The UK Government's approach is to locate a GDF within a willing community. The Government has put in place a policy framework which requires NWS to work in partnership with communities to build trust and understanding of the development before any commitment to a GDF is required. Community willingness considerations are presented and analysed through a Willing Community Perspective.



## GDF Programme Deliverability Perspective

In its role as GDF Developer, NWS must satisfy the GDF Programme Objectives and other factors relevant to infrastructure development. The Programme Objectives require the safe and cost-effective delivery of a permanent solution for the disposal of the most hazardous radioactive waste, to enable the timely retirement of existing above-ground storage facilities, whilst facilitating economic benefits and a positive legacy. Consideration of the GDF Programme Objectives is presented and analysed through a GDF Programme Deliverability Perspective.

# Decision-Making: Factors

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The three perspectives are each supported by several factors.

<p>The Site Suitability Perspective is structured around the Six Siting Factors set out in Site Evaluation: How we will evaluate sites in England.</p>	<p>The Six Siting Factors are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety and Security</li><li>• Community, e.g., socio-economic matters</li><li>• Environment</li><li>• Engineering Feasibility</li><li>• Transport</li><li>• Value for Money</li></ul>
<p>The Willing Community Perspective reflects the critical role of community willingness outlined in the Policy.</p>	<p>The Factors are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programme of Activities</li><li>• Community vision</li><li>• Public opinion</li></ul>
<p>The Programme Deliverability Perspective means that NWS will undertake an assessment of proposed decisions against factors relating to the overall GDF programme.</p>	<p>The Factors are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programme delivery and Objectives</li><li>• Land access and acquisition</li><li>• Permits, consents and licensing</li><li>• Legal</li><li>• Policy</li><li>• Government and programme stakeholders</li><li>• EHSS&amp;Q, operations and sustainability</li></ul>

# Application of the Decision-Making Framework

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Application of the Decision-Making Framework typically comprises working through a number of major steps, which in summary are as follows:

- Identify the need to take a key siting decision and define the decision to be made. It may be appropriate to also identify any options or alternatives to be considered as part of the decision.
- Identify the decision authority and expected governance pathway.
- Subject matter experts will identify and collate the inputs and evidence required in order to inform the decision and any options identified.
- Inputs will be structured under the three perspectives (Site Suitability, Willing Community, GDF Programme Deliverability). The level of information and detail available will vary during the GDF programme lifespan. Each perspective input will typically present information and analysis, as well as uncertainties, relevant to the decision. This may consist of technical assessments or, at early stages of the GDF programme with limited information being available on certain factors, may be based on professional judgement.
- Written inputs reviewed and discussed with the decision-maker to enable them to reach a decision.

The Decision-Making Framework does not quantitatively rank or score any element of analysis under the three perspectives. It is a qualitative and narrative-reasoned framework of judgement made by NWS.

All communities which NWS is working with are located in England and the Decision-Making Framework is only applicable to decisions made in respect of the siting process for a GDF in England. An equivalent Decision-Making Framework in respect of Wales would be developed in due course if required.