



To: **Seth Kybird**, Senior Responsible Owner for the **GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY PROGRAMME**

From: **Clive Maxwell**, Interim Permanent Secretary of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ); and **David Peattie**, Group Chief Executive Officer for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA); and **Becky Wood**, Chief Executive Officer of the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA)

11th March 2026

Dear Mr Kybird,

APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY (GDF)

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the the Geological Disposal Facility programme (which is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP)) with effect from 1st October 2025. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from your department and the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA).

As SRO, you are directly accountable to David Peattie, the CEO of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), under the oversight of the Permanent Secretary as Accounting Officer for DESNZ, and the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, and Lord Vallance, Minister of State for Energy, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Programme will be delivered by NWS as the wholly owned subsidiary of the NDA established with the purpose of delivering the NDA's statutory waste management and disposal functions¹ and as the body named in the Policy as responsible for implementing geological disposal².

As SRO you will be accountable as set out above, and also through the corporate governance of NWS and NDA, (including through the NWS and NDA Boards of directors when appropriate).

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of GDF programme and will be held accountable for the delivery of its objectives, policy intent and outcomes. This encompasses securing and protecting its vision, ensuring that it is governed responsibly, reported on honestly, escalated appropriately and for influencing the context, culture, and operating environment of the GDF Programme. You are also responsible for

¹ Energy Act 2004

² Uk policy framework for managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning, May 2024 (the Policy), para 8.71

providing advice to the NDA Accounting Officer and the Minister on the implementation of the Policy regarding geological disposal, including risks to implementation as well as ensuring the ongoing viability of the GDF Programme and recommending its pause or termination if appropriate. Where issues arise which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these to the NWS Board, and if appropriate, the NDA Board, DESNZ Sponsor, Accounting Officer and HMT in a timely manner and in accordance with proper governance.

You remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the project in accordance with the objectives and policy intent as set by Ministers.

In addition to your internal accountabilities, SROs for GMPP projects and programmes are personally accountable to Parliamentary Select Committees. This means that, from the date of this letter, you will be held personally accountable to and could be called by Select Committees to account for and explain the decisions and actions you have taken to deliver the GDF Programme.

It is important to be clear that your accountability relates only to implementation, within the agreed terms in this letter; it will remain for the Minister to account for the relevant policy decisions and development.

More information on this is set out in [Giving Evidence to Select Committees - Guidance for Civil Servants](#), sometimes known as the Osmotherly Rules. Information on the roles and responsibilities of the SRO are detailed in Government Project Delivery's guidance on [the role of the senior responsible owner](#),

You are expected to run your project/programme in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), and the requirements of [other functional standards](#) as required, which is mandated for government departments and arm's length bodies to follow. You should also make yourself familiar with [The Teal Book](#), Government Project Delivery's code of practice for project delivery, and any further guidance and requirements set by Nuclear portfolio.

Time commitment and tenure

This role will require at least 50% of your time to enable effective delivery of the role and execute your responsibilities in full.

You are required to undertake this role from 1st October 2025 and expected to remain in post until 31 March 2027. Progress towards this will be reflected in your personal objectives. Any changes to the agreed time commitment or tenure of the role, as set out above, will require both departmental and National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority consent.

Objectives and performance criteria

The policy intent supported by this GDF Programme is to implement the Ministerial commitment for geological disposal against a timescale which is necessary in order to maintain momentum and ensure its availability for emplacing Intermediate Level Waste - currently planned for c.2050-2060 and c.2075 for emplacing most hazardous radioactive waste. A Geological Disposal Facility is vital to the successful decommissioning of the UK's civil nuclear legacy, defence programme, and our new build nuclear power programme which will support the Government's net zero ambitions.

Any proposed changes to scope which impact on this intent or the realisation of benefits must be authorised in accordance with the GDF programme, NWS, NDA and DESNZ's governance and delegation frameworks and may be subject to further levels of approval.

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

- build trust and work in partnership with one or more communities to gain consent and support to host a GDF;
- facilitate economic benefits and growth, delivering regional jobs and skills and a positive legacy;
- deliver a permanent solution for the safe disposal of the most hazardous radioactive waste through the safe, sustainable, and cost-effective design, construction, operation and closure of a GDF; and
- 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, that would persist for thousands of years if a disposal solution was not developed.

Your personal objectives and performance criteria which relate to the GDF Programme are:

1. Make a decision on which communities (if any) to progress to deep borehole investigations (the **Decision**) and submit the Decision to appropriate governance (target Q4 25/26, noting this is not timebound by the Policy);
2. Subject to the Decision:
 - Update the GDF Programme Business Case in light of the Decision and secure interim sanction for funding if needed (during 2026/27);
 - Develop a plan for the GDF Programme, in light of the Decision, funding and updated Programme Business Case, including defining the capabilities and organisational readiness to deliver the plan (Q2 & Q3 2026/27); and
 - Implement the plan and develop the capabilities (from Q3 2026/27).

Extent and limit of accountability

Finance and Controls

HM Treasury spending controls will apply on the basis set out within the department's delegated authority letter. Where the Geological Disposal Facility programme exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury, the Treasury Approval Point process will apply, and the details of each approval process must be agreed with your HM Treasury spending team. You should consult departmental finance colleagues on how to go about this.

You should note that where expenditure is considered novel, contentious, repercussive, or likely to result in costs to other parts of the public sector, HM Treasury approval will be required, regardless of whether the programme expenditure exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury. If in doubt about whether approval is required you should, in the first instance, consult departmental finance colleagues before raising with the relevant HM Treasury spending team.

The overall estimated budget, resourcing requirements and tolerances for your project/programme will be agreed as part of the approval process. You will be expected to deliver within these tolerances and report quarterly on these as part of GMPP reporting.

You should operate at all times within the rules set out in [Managing Public Money](#). In addition, you must be mindful of, and act in accordance with, the specific HM Treasury delegated limits and Cabinet Office controls relevant to the GDF Programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

Delegated authority

You are authorised to:

- **approve expenditure in line with the NDA group Delegations and Sanctions Framework - FNM02;**
- **agree project rescheduling within five-year period of agreed milestones, but rescheduling beyond that must be agreed by the NWS Board and obtain endorsements and approvals in line with the relevant governance and delegations; and**
- **where necessary and in a timely manner recommend to the relevant governance body, including as appropriate the NWS Board, the NDA Accounting Officer, NDA Board and DESNZ Sponsor as appropriate the need to either pause or terminate the programme.**

These authority limits are subject to change and other conditions or tolerances may be set as part of the business case approval and ongoing monitoring processes which you should then operate within.

Where issues arise which take you outside of these authority limits which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these issues to the relevant governance body as appropriate, including the NWS Board, Accounting Officer, NDA Board, DESNZ Sponsor and HMT.

Appointments

You should appoint a full time GDF Programme director to support you in the management of this GDF Programme and make other appointments as required for the control and delivery of your programme within your delegated authority.

Governance and assurance

You should pay attention to ensuring effective governance for your GDF Programme, including the establishment of a GDF Programme board with appropriate membership and clear terms of reference.

As primary owner, you must ensure that the GDF Programme secures business case approval from the relevant governance body, with prior endorsements as required. You should also ensure that the GDF Programme remains aligned to the strategic outcomes, costs, timescales, and benefits in line with the approved business case as well as monitoring the context within which the GDF Programme is being delivered to ensure it remains valid.

Where a change impacts the scope, costs, benefits, or planned delivery milestones agreed as part of an agreed business case, you are responsible for following the agreed change request approval process and setting a new, approved, business case baseline.

You should ensure that an Accounting Officer assessment is completed alongside the approval of the Outline Business Case and that this is published on GOV.UK as part of the government's transparency requirements on major projects. You are responsible for bringing to the attention of the Accounting Officer any material changes in the GDF Programme which could require a new Accounting Officer assessment to be completed and published. [Guidance on completing accounting officer assessments](#) for major projects is available from HM Treasury.

Where required, the SRO will ensure NWS assists the accounting officer and relevant governance bodies by providing all necessary and relevant information to enable the Minister to satisfy their duty in s.19(1) of the Environment Act 2021 as it applies to the GDF Programme.

Although you are directly accountable for this GDF Programme, you are also expected to support delivery of the department's overall strategic objectives. This means that you are expected to work collaboratively with other SROs and project directors in adjacent projects and programmes and with the Nuclear portfolio

management office and portfolio director to manage dependencies, resources, schedules, and funding to support delivery of the overall change the department needs to achieve its strategic objectives.

You should ensure that appropriate and proportionate assurance is in place and agree on the level and frequency of assurance reviews through the maintenance of an integrated assurance and approvals plan. You should develop this plan and its maintenance in collaboration with the Departmental Assurance Coordinator and NISTA.

Geological Disposal Facility programme status, reporting and transparency requirements

The GDF Programme status at the date of your appointment is reflected in the most recent quarterly return on the GDF Programme to the NISTA and is the agreed position as you assume formal ownership of the programme.

You are responsible for ensuring the honest and timely reporting on the position of the GDF Programme to the NISTA while it remains on the GMPP and for providing reports and information to the Nuclear portfolio management office as required. Reporting should include carbon measurement, and other sustainable development goals demonstrating evidence that the project contributes to an overarching environmental strategy and is aligned with defined Net Zero pathways. Information on the GDF Programme will be published annually by the NISTA.

As the SRO for a project/programme that is within scope of the Clean Energy Superpower Mission (CESM), you are additionally required to report, via relevant net zero portfolio / sector Boards and the Net Zero Directors governance forum, into the CESM governance structure as part of the Accelerating to Net Zero pillar of the Mission.

As part of the government's commitment to transparency on major projects, you are responsible for publishing on GOV.UK:

- A summary business case or the Full Business Case and deposit a copy in the House of Commons Library within 4 months of HM Treasury's formal approval of the Full Business Case;
- A summary of the Accounting Officer assessment completed in line with the approval of the Outline Business Case and summaries of any subsequent assessments should they be required;
- A close out report after the project has completed.

Guidance on the [publication of business cases](#) and on the completion of [accounting officer assessments](#) is available from HM Treasury.

Evaluation

Evaluation of major projects is a requirement. Given the scale and complexity of major projects, it is essential that they are evaluated properly to learn lessons and help ensure accountability. As an SRO of a GMPP project, you are responsible for ensuring that your project/programme has proportionate and suitably resourced evaluation in place. Evaluation planning should begin from the very start of the policy development and the initiation of the programme or project. Progress with the development and implementation of evaluation plans will be monitored through the major project assurance process.

You are also responsible for registering all planned, live and completed evaluations on the Government Evaluation Registry. [Guidance on using the evaluation registry](#) is available on GOV.UK.

Development and support

As SRO of a GMPP project, you are required to complete the Major Projects Leadership Academy, and you have agreed to enrol on a cohort. The Project Delivery Centre of Excellence on behalf of the Head of Profession in DESNZ can provide further information on the application process.

To widen experience and understanding of the role, SROs are also expected to become accredited assurance reviewers and to lead or participate in such reviews for other government departments, the wider public sector, and other areas of the DESNZ as appropriate. Becoming an assurance reviewer and completing a review will form part of your time at the Major Projects Leadership Academy. To maintain your accreditation, you will be required to participate in a review at least once every 12 months.

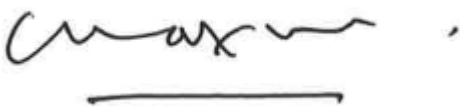
The department will assist you in securing the necessary resources to support the programme, and will set clear guidance, requirements and standards, which align to the [Government Functional Standard on Project Delivery](#), to enable good governance and effective delivery. You will be part of the department's cohort of major project leaders who will be expected to support each other, share good practice and lessons learned and to collectively develop solutions. You should liaise with the department's Head of Profession for project delivery to discuss the maintenance and development of your delivery and leadership skills.

The National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority and Government Project Delivery will be available to you for support, advice, and assurance throughout the programme's time on the GMPP. Government Project Delivery's suite of standards, guidance, tools, templates and services can be accessed from projectdelivery.gov.uk and we encourage you and your team to register for accounts.

Following approval of the business case and entry onto the Nuclear Power, Infrastructure, and Decommissioning Portfolio, the DESNZ will provide ongoing oversight and support and will take steps to help resolve and escalate risks, issues or constraints that are acting as a blocker to successful delivery.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in your role as SRO.

Yours sincerely,



CLIVE MAXWELL

Interim Permanent Secretary, Department for
Energy Security and Net Zero



BECKY WOOD

Chief Executive Officer, National Infrastructure
and Service Transformation Authority

CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

I confirm that I accept the appointment of Senior Responsible Owner for the **project**, including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S/Kybird'.

SETH KYBIRD
