

Press release: Local communities to give views on permanent disposal of radioactive waste

- New consultations on a permanent solution for the disposal of the UK's radioactive waste launched today
- Geological disposal is internationally recognised and secures waste at least 200 metres underground
- Construction of disposal facilities will only take place if local communities give their consent

A safe, responsible, long-term solution for the permanent disposal of radioactive waste is the focus of 2 new consultations launched today by the government.

The UK has long generated radioactive waste most of which is low in radioactivity and is disposed of safely every day – from power stations to use in a range of industrial applications including medicine and defence. Some materials need more specialised disposal facilities and this waste is currently held safely in stores above ground. It is not sustainable to keep storing past and future waste on a temporary basis.

A Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) is internationally recognised as the safest and most secure way to permanently dispose of higher activity radioactive waste. This involves placing this waste at least 200 metres underground in a highly engineered facility made up of multiple layers of materials such as steel, rock and clay to provide protection while some of the waste remains radioactive – ensuring that no harmful quantities of radioactivity ever reach the surface.

The construction of a GDF would also support a new generation of nuclear power stations in the UK, by providing a safe and secure way to dispose of the waste they produce. It will create up to 2,000 well-paid, skilled jobs and bring at least £8 billion to the UK economy over the lifetime of the facility.

Energy Minister Richard Harrington said:

We owe it to future generations to take action now to find a suitable permanent site for the safe disposal of our radioactive waste. And it is right that local communities have a say. Planning consent will only be given to sites which have local support.

Mr Harrington added:

As the government set out in our Industrial Strategy, the nuclear sector has a key role to play in increasing productivity and driving clean growth. Nuclear is a vital part of our energy mix, providing low carbon power now and into the future.

Professor Iain Stewart, Director of the Sustainable Earth Institute, Plymouth University, said:

A geological disposal facility is widely accepted as the only realistic way to dispose of higher activity nuclear waste for the long-term.

Geological disposal facilities are already being developed in Finland, Sweden, France, and Canada.

The first consultation, [Working with communities](#) sets out how the project developer will engage with people in areas that may be interested in hosting a disposal facility to seek their views and the second, on the proposed [National Policy Statement](#), will create a rigorous planning process.

Radioactive Waste Management Ltd (RWM) will deliver geological disposal on behalf of the government.

Ann McCall, Radioactive Waste Management's GDF Siting and Engagement Director, said:

Geological disposal will provide a safe, secure and long-term solution to managing the UK's radioactive waste, and RWM welcomes the public consultations launched today which place communities at the heart of the process.

1. Both consultations will run for 12 weeks. The Working with Communities consultation will apply to England and Northern Ireland. The Welsh Government is conducting its own consultation on Working with Communities in parallel with the UK Government. The Scottish Government has its own policy on the management of radioactive waste.
[Working with communities: implementing geological disposal](#)
2. The National Policy Statement consultation will apply to England only. It will require parliamentary scrutiny by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee and could be subject to a Parliamentary debate and vote.
[National Policy Statement for geological disposal infrastructure](#)
3. Higher activity radioactive waste is produced from the generation of electricity in nuclear power stations, the production and reprocessing of nuclear fuel and the use of radioactive materials in industry, medicine, research and nuclear defence.

Policy paper: Implementing geological disposal: land use planning

Intro

Corporate report: Implementing geological disposal: annual report, April 2016 to March 2017

In its November 2010 response to the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee's report, Radioactive Waste Management: a Further Update (March 2010), the UK Government committed to producing an annual report to Parliament, setting out progress in relation to the management of higher activity radioactive waste.

The seventh annual report sets out progress made in relation to the management of higher activity radioactive waste for the period April 2016 to March 2017.

Open consultation: Working with communities: implementing geological disposal

This consultation seeks views on how communities should be engaged in a siting process for a Geological Disposal Facility for higher activity radioactive waste.

The proposals build on commitments set out in the [2014 White Paper 'Implementing Geological Disposal'](#), in which the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive jointly set out an approach based on working with communities in England and Northern Ireland that are willing to participate in the siting process for a geological disposal facility. They relate to how

communities should be engaged, how early community investment could be provided to communities that participate in the siting process, how a right of withdrawal could operate throughout the siting process, and how a test of public support could be carried out before construction and operation of a geological disposal facility.

The policy proposals being consulted on here apply to England and Northern Ireland only but anyone from across the UK can respond.

The Welsh Government is consulting in parallel on its policy for arrangements for engaging with communities in Wales in relation to the development of a Geological Disposal Facility. Although this is likely to be undertaken in parallel to the BEIS consultation, it will be a distinct process reflecting the unique characteristics of a siting process in Wales, including the different planning and local government systems and the Welsh language.

Open consultation: National Policy Statement for geological disposal infrastructure

The purpose of this consultation is to gather views on whether the draft National Policy Statement (NPS) for Geological Disposal Infrastructure (GDI) provides an appropriate and effective framework for the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State to examine and make decisions on development consent applications for geological disposal infrastructure in England.

National Policy Statements set out the need for particular Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), and are required, under the Planning Act 2008, to undergo a period of public consultation before they are published.

This consultation applies to residents of England and Northern Ireland. If you live in Wales, the Welsh Government will be issuing [a separate consultation](#) on the 8 November. Both consultations are open for responses from outside the areas to which they relate.