

# Geological disposal programme now under way

This week, around 150 delegates gathered in central London for the first annual conference focused on the vitally important Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) programme for higher-activity radioactive waste.

RWM Chief Executive Karen Wheeler outlined the enormous progress of the last 12 months towards finding a willing community and suitable site for a deep GDF where radioactive waste can be safely disposed of, with groups in three different parts of the country now engaged in discussions.

A GDF will be one of the biggest infrastructure and environmental protection programmes in the UK and provide a major investment for the host local community and its economy, as well as being a vital project for the country.

We are now making real progress and having conversations with a number of communities about the potential for them to host a GDF. We've been holding wide-ranging discussions and public events in Cumbria and Lincolnshire over the last 12 months, as local people begin to explore what hosting a GDF could mean for their communities, and now we wanted to have those discussion at a national event too.

The delegates represented a broad range of national and international stakeholders from government, parliament, the public sector, industry, supply chain, major projects, regulators, academia, unions, NGOs, skills and learned societies.

Delegates came from across the UK and overseas

In a series of panel sessions and presentations from guest and RWM speakers, details were shared about the planned programme of activities for the next 20-30 years, including geophysical investigations to understand a site's potential suitability ahead of a construction phase.

Speakers also outlined how a GDF could generate a significant economic stimulus and create social value, bringing thousands of jobs and supply chain opportunities, while attracting further inward investment.

The search for a willing host community is a nationwide process based on community consent and includes detailed investigations to ensure there is a suitable site for a GDF.

It was just over a year ago that the first GDF Working Group was formed in

Copeland, Cumbria, to open discussions locally and find out more about geological disposal. A second GDF Working Group was established in neighbouring Allerdale earlier in the year, and in October, Theddlethorpe Working Group was launched in Lincolnshire.

The Cumbrian groups are now in the process of moving discussions further along after identifying search areas and beginning steps to form longer-term Community Partnerships that will unlock funding for local initiatives and enable RWM to start early on-the-ground investigations into possible sites.

RWM's [latest video about progress on geological disposal](#) was also shared at the conference.

[Learn more about geological disposal and the GDF programme.](#)