

## **STRATEGIC NUCLEAR AND ENERGY BOARD 290421**

### **The UK Government's approach to identifying a site for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) for higher-activity radioactive waste**

**LEAD OFFICER:** Pat Graham, Chief Executive Officer

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Steve Smith, Nuclear Projects Manager

#### **Summary:**

This report provides Members with an update on the Government's search for a suitable site and a willing community to host a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) for the disposal of the UK's higher activity radioactive waste, as described within the Government's Working with Communities (WwC) policy.

#### **Recommendation:**

That Members of the Board note the current position in relation to the Government's search for a suitable site and willing community to host a GDF and specifically the latest work of the Copeland Working Group.

### **1. Introduction and background**

**1.1** At the February meeting of the Board, Members will recall considering a report which,

- Summarised the background to the decision of the Executive in July to open discussions with Radioactive Waste Management (RWM), with a view to establishing a Working Group in Copeland to explore any potential suitable sites for consideration as a location for a GDF, excluding those areas of the Borough that lie within the Lake District National Park boundary but potentially including the 'in-shore area' of the coast of Copeland. As a reminder to Members, the Council's engagement at the Working Group stage does not presuppose support for a GDF in Copeland. According to the WwC process, any future decision on this matter will be subject to a future Test of Public Support (ToPS), much later in the process.

- Provided an update on the position of the establishment of the Copeland Working Group, following its launch in November, and the work that the Working Group had undertaken.

## **Update on the work of the Copeland Working Group**

**2.1** As a reminder forming a Working Group is the first formal step in the Government's 'Working with Communities' policy with 3 specific aims. The Working Group will.

- Engage with local people to begin to understand their views, based on achieving the twin aims of finding a suitable site and a willing host community;
- Identify and propose a Search Area (or Areas) for further consideration;
- Recruit initial members for a Community Partnership, which could take the process forward beyond the Working Group.

**2.2** Since the launch in November the Working Group has met on several occasions to consider taking forward the above work-streams. Reports of the Working Group discussions are available via the Working Group website [Working Group Copeland \(copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk\)](http://copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk).

Membership of the Working Group has been established and includes representatives from.

- Relevant Principle Local Authorities - Copeland Borough Council
- Radioactive Waste Management
- Interested Parties; David Faulkner, Genr8 North Ltd - Andy Ross, Irton Hall Ltd - Gary Bullivant
- Copeland District Association of Local Councils – Cllr Andy Pratt, Chris Shaw
- Independent Chair – Mark Cullinan
- Independent Facilitator, Nick Gardham

**2.3** Members will be aware that Cumbria County Council has declined an invitation to join the Working Group at this stage. The WG is expected to exist for up to 12 months.

**2.4** Draft Terms of Reference for the Working Group have been established and facilitation, secretarial and communications support functions have been put in place and a work plan for the Working Group has been developed. Three

sub-groups have been established to take forward the three main work-streams and objectives of the Working Group.

**2.5 The Communications and Engagement subgroup** has met on a regular basis to take forward the delivery of a communications and engagement plan to deliver the objective 'to engage with local people to begin to understand their views, based on achieving the twin aims of finding a suitable site and a willing host community'. The plan builds on and takes further the communications work already carried out and encompasses;

- Regular press and media activities
- Creation and updating of the Working Group website, which can be viewed by following the link above,
- Provision of a virtual exhibition which can be found at <https://rwm.virtualconsultation.co.uk/copeland>
- Social media links via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
- A monthly newsletter is also published electronically and made available via the website and to those who have registered on the website to receive updates.
- Individual meetings with stakeholder groups and organisations supplemented by regular email communications and updates to those organisations
- An information leaflet has been produced for hard copy and electronic distribution and will be shared with Board members when available
- A programme of webinars has been launched, the first held in March and the second planned for late May
- A number of focus group sessions have been held and telephone surveys are about to be commenced
- A programme of borough wide exhibitions is planned for once the Covid restrictions are lifted for, commencement over a 3-week period in July
- Monitoring of all media activities and responses is also underway.

As a reminder the communications activity aims to;

- Explain what it is and why a GDF is needed
- Explain why the public's view matters
- Communicate how issues or questions can be raised

- As it identifies a Search Area(s), the Working Group will start work to understand the local area and any issues or questions the community within it may have
- Gather a range of views which can be taken forward to any potential Search Area discussion

**2.6** The second subgroup looking at a **proposed Search Area(s)** has been meeting to consider the range of information requirements to consider the identification of a Search Area. The subgroup is preparing a number of workshops for all WG members to attend over the coming weeks to consider the information, with a view to making a recommendation to a future meeting of the Working Group.

**2.7** The third subgroup looking at matters relating to the potential establishment of a **Community Partnership** has met on a number of occasions and has developed a work plan which encompasses the following key areas;

- What the policy requirements are for the establishment of a Community Partnership (CP)
- What processes the CP needs to employ to appoint Chair and CP members
- The shape of the initial work plan and communications plan for the CP
- What support mechanisms are required to enable the CP to function appropriately
- A draft community partnership agreement between the CP parties
- Defining arrangements for the management of the Community Investment Funding.

These work items will be developed further over coming weeks and the sub groups will be reporting back on a regular basis to the WG on progress and with recommendations as required.

Any further developments on these activities will be verbally updated at the meeting.