

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director – Place

Report to:	Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	22 February 2022
Subject:	Theddlethorpe Geological Disposal Facility Working Group - Update

Summary:

This paper describes the steps that have been taken by Radioactive Waste Management with regards to exploring the feasibility of locating a geological disposal facility on the site of the former Theddlethorpe Gas Terminal.

It shows that two district level electoral divisions - Withern and Theddlethorpe, and Mablethorpe- have been chosen as the detailed search area for the programme.

It also shows that Radioactive Waste Management have adopted the communication strategies which were recommended by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), and finally it shows that Radioactive Waste Management's name has changed to Nuclear Waste Services.

Finally, the report briefly notes two other potential uses for the site - a blue hydrogen generation facility and a carbon capture and storage scheme.

Actions Required:

Members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider and note the contents of this report.

1. Background

At its meeting in November 2021 the Executive of the council agreed to three recommendations in a paper concerning a geological disposal facility. These were that the Executive: -

(1) approves acceptance by the Council of the invitation from Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) to join a Working Group to explore the potential for a geological disposal facility in eastern Lincolnshire;

(2) approves the Council taking up membership of any subsequent Community Partnership that may be formed; and

(3) identifies a Councillor to represent the Council on the Working Group and, if it is formed, the Community Partnership. Councillor Martin Hill OBE was identified as the councillor to represent LCC.

The Environment and Economy scrutiny committee is asked to remember two critical points regarding Geological Disposal Facilities (GDF):

- Firstly - joining the working group does not mean that LCC supports the concept of a geological disposal facility
- Secondly – the working group is not where any decision about locating a geological disposal facility would be taken. It is the local community, through a Public Test of Support, who would determine whether a geological disposal facility should be located in the area.

The Environment and Economy scrutiny committee recommended that LCC asks RWM for the local Parish to join the working group, and it also recommended that LCC asks for transparent communication between the working group and the local community. It was agreed that the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee should receive updates on the work of the working group, this report is the first of those. It considers five issues: Search area, Website, Community briefings, Councillor briefings, Community fund, and RWM name change.

Search area

Members will remember that one of the main priorities for the working group is to identify a search area for detailed assessment into the feasibility of a location for a geological disposal facility.

The working group has now been formed by RWM, it has an independent chairman and secretariat, and it comprises representatives of the county, district, and parish council. Cllr Martin Hill OBE represents LCC on the working group. Following the county council's recommendation that we ask RWM to include the parish council on the working group Theddlethorpe Parish Council is a formal member of the working group and is represented by its chairman.

RWM have now concluded their detailed assessment and recommended to the working group that the search area should be defined as the two district level wards of Withern and Theddlethorpe, and Mablethorpe. A detailed programme concerning the work that needs to be done in undertaking the search will be shared with the working group in the coming weeks.

Website, community briefings, and councillor briefings

The Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee recommended to the Executive, who supported the recommendation, that there should be clear and transparent communication between the working group and the community.

RWM have now created a website which provides the community with information about the geological disposal facility and the work of the working group. It can be found at <https://theddlethorpe.workinginpartnership.org.uk/> RWM have confirmed that the website will be updated regularly, and it is hoped that an economic impact assessment of a geological disposal facility will be added soon.

RWM have now held ten community engagement events in villages in or around the search area, with others planned for spring 2022. A virtual exhibition has been established. The most common questions that have been raised during the consultations relate to requests for more information, affect on house prices, geology and presence of hydrocarbons, concern about the quiet/rural/beach/tourist area which is proposed for the GDF location, impact on local tourist economy, and what the Test of Public Support will look like.

In order to extend the flow of information further, the Chairman of the working group has proposed that a monthly meeting of elected Councillors is held.

Community investment funding

Members will remember from previous papers that when the working group concludes its work, and a community partnership is formed then a community investment fund will be opened. The community investment fund will provide grant funding of up to £1m per annum in the first instance, rising to £2.5m per annum when borehole drilling starts.

Officers from LCC have met with the RWM team who will administer the grant programme and have started to describe the environmental, educational, and community issues affecting the area. If the community fund is ringfenced to the search area only then it may prove difficult to use the fund to tackle some of these issues.

RWM name change

Although this report uses the name "Radioactive Waste Management" throughout, RWM have recently changed their trading name to Nuclear Waste Services in order to align with other departments in their division of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Whilst there is no change to the team, which is working in Theddlethorpe or to their objectives, from now on reports will refer to Nuclear Waste Services rather than RWM.

Other interests in the former Theddlethorpe Gas Terminal

Theddlethorpe Gas Terminal is owned by National Grid. In addition to the geological disposal facility there are two other parties who have made their interest in the site

public: Neptune Energy have a scheme called Project DelpHYnus which proposes a combined carbon capture and blue hydrogen generation facility c, and Harbour Energy have a scheme called V Net Zero which will use the facility and undersea strata to capture and store carbon.

Harbour Energy have had regular contact with LCC because they are decommissioning the current gas terminal site and are liaising with us as waste and minerals planning authority. Harbour Energy have also shared their proposal for the site with LCC and other organisations including East Lindsey District Council. LCC officers made contact with Neptune Energy and now have a high-level understanding of their plans.

3. Conclusion

In summary, Nuclear Waste Services continue to progress with the working group. A search area has now been identified, and the clear and transparent communication that LCC sought is being implemented.

4. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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