



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

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 April 2023
Subject:	Theddlethorpe Geological Disposal Facility Working Group – 6 Monthly Update

Summary:

This report provides an update on developments at the former Theddlethorpe Gas Terminal. Whilst the focus of the report is on the proposed geological disposal facility and on the work of the Community Partnership, the report also recognises that other parties are interested in the site.

The report explains that the Community Partnership has now met four times, has led on public engagement locally and has set strategic priorities for the Community Investment Fund. The report also explains that the opportunities for investment in strategic infrastructure, in employment, and in business supply chain are starting to be better understood and that Lincolnshire County Council is developing a position on each of these.

Actions Required:

It is recommended that the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) Reviews and comments on the progress of the Community Partnership and notes that its public engagement programme will continue throughout the siting process for the geological disposal facility.
- (2) Supports the work being carried out to take advantage of the opportunities for investment in strategic infrastructure and for employment and business supply chains.

1. Background

Lincolnshire County Council's position on geological disposal facility proposal for Theddlethorpe

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 Lincolnshire County Council (LCC).

The 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.

According to the government’s policy on geological disposal facilities a Public Test of Support is currently some years away.

Officers have engaged with Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) as we would with any other potential inward investor, providing local advice and information but recognising that our role must remain neutral. This is similar to the way that we have worked with major businesses like Siemens and Princes when they were considering leaving central Lincoln and Long Sutton respectively and it is also similar to the way that we are working with potential major investors in the Holbeach Food Enterprise Zone.

Theddlethorpe Community Partnership

LCC’s involvement in a working group and subsequent community partnership has been concerned with communication of the facts relating to geological disposal facilities, their impact on the local community, and the investment that they may be able to lever.

The Community Partnership has now been formed, the interim chair is Jon Collins who chaired its predecessor, the working group. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Martin Hill OBE, is also a member of the community partnership. LCC had recommended to NWS that the partnership included parish council representatives, and that has now happened. Other members of the Community Partnership include local business, Wildlife Trust, and GOTEK, the local organisation which has been established to oppose the geological disposal facility.

The Community Partnership has now met four times. The primary focus of meetings so far has been on the establishment of an engagement programme with the local community and on setting high level priorities for the community investment fund.

The Community Partnership has produced a website with significant detail about geological disposal facilities ([Theddlethorpe GDF Community Partnership \(workinginpartnership.org.uk\)](http://Theddlethorpe_GDF_Community_Partnership_workinginpartnership.org.uk)) and which members of the Committee are encouraged to explore. At the time of writing Nuclear Waste Services have held 31 engagement events with the local community which have had 292 attendees; they have produced three newsletters which have been distributed to residents in the search area; and they attend the Mablethorpe Coastal Centre on a regular weekly basis. The newsletter can be accessed via the website which is referred to previously. The website has not been updated as regularly as we would advise – it is essential that Nuclear Waste Services are as transparent as possible – and we continue to press for regular updates to be posted on the site.

Earlier in the process the Theddlethorpe Residents Association produced a questionnaire which was distributed to 576 properties in the village. 291 questionnaires were returned with 247 against the proposed geological disposal facility. 99 responders had attended the early Nuclear Waste Services engagement events and 158 had not.

Nuclear Waste Services tell us that the feedback from more recent community engagement events is far more curious – with a good number of residents wishing to understand about the proposal and its potential impact. One resident has been quoted as saying that the event had “opened my mind, I came in blinkered”.

Community Investment Fund

A Community Investment Fund which will provide an annual grant budget of £1m is now open for community groups, businesses, and schools to apply to. So far, a small number of submissions have been made. It is expected that a subgroup of the Community Partnership will be formed with the expectation of the first decisions on bids to be made in late June 2023.

Economic impact

As mentioned earlier in the report, one of the issues which LCC wishes to understand better -and which we are keen to ensure is communicated to others- relates to the economic impact of any geological disposal facility investment.

Nuclear Waste Services tell us that “A GDF will create at least 4,000 jobs over the next 25 years during the early stages of siting and initial construction. And we would aim to recruit many of the roles – such as construction, engineering, science – from the region local to the site chosen for a GDF.” A generic report on the economic impact of geological disposal facilities was published by Nuclear Waste Services during autumn 2022, and work is currently underway on a more locally contextualised report too. The local report is based on building a detailed understanding of the skills which are

required, the skills and training provision, which is available locally, and some of the other initiatives which are taking place and which would need the same skills. The document, which reaffirms the figure of 4,000 jobs, should prove extremely useful for education and training providers to plan new provision.

LCC has also convened meetings of Nuclear Waste Services, Lincolnshire Chamber, East Lindsey District Council, East Midlands Business, and the Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre to explore how Lincolnshire businesses can be made aware of supply chain opportunities.

Significant Additional Infrastructure

Part of the government's policy for geological disposal facilities makes provision for the area which hosts a facility to receive "Significant additional investment". This is investment in the area which is over and above the investment that is required by the developer.

There is no formal process for pursuing Significant Additional Infrastructure, but officers have started to prepare an initial list of some of the investment that might be sought. Given that Significant Additional Infrastructure will be the responsibility of several government departments, we are likely to need to be opportunistic rather than setting out a clear set of tactics to secure the investment and then following those tactics. Nonetheless, officers will produce some very early business cases for items relating to flood protection, transport improvements, rail, power, and environment, and education.

Other interests in Theddlethorpe Gas Terminal and beyond

As mentioned previously, the former gas terminal site is owned by National Grid and other organisations are also interested in the site.

For example, Harbour Energy is part of a consortium which is pursuing a scheme called V Net Zero ([Homepage - V Net Zero \(vnetzerocluster.co.uk\)](http://vnetzerocluster.co.uk)). Harbour Energy -who were the last commercial operator on the site and still hold the lease on the site- recently attended the Council's Planning and Regulation Committee. Their project is to install a purpose-built onshore pipeline from Immingham, bringing CO₂ from multiple emitters to the Theddlethorpe site. The scheme targets storing 10 million tonnes per year of CO₂ by 2030, supported by an initial investment of £3bn across the capture, transportation, and storage projects, with first CO₂ injection potentially as early as 2027. The initial investment of £3bn is forecast to support or create approximately 6,000 jobs (in northern Lincolnshire and the Humber, not in Theddlethorpe itself).

Finally, and on a separate but related basis, The UK Atomic Energy Authority has now confirmed that West Burton in Nottinghamshire, but just a few miles from Gainsborough, will be the location of their Tokamak fusion facility. Whilst they have not done the same amount of detailed analysis on jobs and business supply chain as Nuclear Waste Services, their investment -which will start in earnest in the early 2030s- will be of a similar scale to a geological disposal facility. The UK Atomic Energy Authority have

started to develop a range of innovation, business, and training initiatives which could also have a significant impact on the Lincolnshire economy. Officers are working with their counterparts at West Lindsey District Council and at Nottinghamshire County Council to pursue this further.

2. Conclusion

The developments at Theddlethorpe Gas Terminal are continuing to progress.

The Community Partnership has now been formed and is starting to meet regularly, developing and implementing a community engagement strategy, shaping up the priorities of the Community Investment Fund, and moving towards the preparation of a community vision. The opportunities associated with the scale of investment for a geological disposal facility are starting to be understood both from an employment and business perspective and from a significant infrastructure perspective.

There remains active interest from other parties in the site, and we continue to engage with those other parties as we would with any other investor.

The separate investment in West Burton, the Tokamak fusion facility, provides similar opportunities for employment and business in the west of the county.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. 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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