

FILE DETAILS

Audio Length: 10 minutes

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Number of Facilitators: One

Number of Interviewees: Four

Difficult Accent(s): Yes No

Other Comments:

START OF TRANSCRIPT

Nick Gardham: Brilliant. Welcome back, everyone. Hopefully, you've made it back. I didn't - I had two attempts at getting back into the space. Thank you, everyone, for participating in that conversation. Hopefully, you found it useful and informative.

I'm just going to draw on some of the speakers, just two or three of you, anyone who wishes to comment, any reflections that you've got, based on that conversation so far. [Cherry], your hand's gone straight up, so I'll go straight to you.

Cherry [Tweed]: My first thought was just how quickly the time went. I think that was really good, in terms of actually, people had got lots of questions to ask.

I think another reflection on how quickly the time went was obviously, we're only really just scratching the surface of a lot of questions, and I hope that this can be the start of many more - I would nearly say similar, I'm going to say similar events, because I'm really hoping that before long, they won't be on Teams, but they can actually be proper face-to-face meetings.

Nick Gardham: Yeah, absolutely. I agree. Some nods from other presenters there, as well.

Any further reflections from anyone else, who just wants to share?

Not a problem. What I will do then, is I'm conscious of time, so I'm going to move us over now, to speaking to the regulators. I've got a question that came in quite late on, which I'm going to ask. I just want to make sure I phrase it correctly.

[Unclear] words are denoted in square brackets and time stamps may be used to indicate their location within the audio.

Who are the regulators? Well, we've touched on that already. How will we ensure they're independent during the process? So, [Candi] I think, is that one for you?

Candida Lean: Yes, I'm happy to start off with that one. I'm sure Peter can add to it afterwards.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm a nuclear waste assessor with the Environment Agency. We have responsibility for implementing and enforcing environmental protection legislation in England. As part of that, we regulate disposals of radioactive waste from both nuclear licensed sites and other premises that use radioactive substances, for example, hospitals, other industrial users, or research users, et cetera.

The Environment Agency is an independent regulator. We're a non-departmental public body, and we operate independent of the government. We're governed by a Board with independent Chairs and independent non-executive directors. This Board provides the important separation between government and our day-to-day regulatory activities.

We earlier mentioned about our role in regulation, and assessment criteria. Our role is to ensure that NEF provides appropriate protection of people and the environment, both during the development process and the operation of the GF and at all times, following closure. We use a staged regulation process to make sure that no activities during the development and operational stage could potentially cause issues for post-closure environmental impacts.

We scrutinise any proposals and we'll publish our assessments to get into public domain. If our assessments conclude that the proposals don't meet our regulatory requirements, then we won't issue environmental permits for the geological disposal facility.

We have guidance on our expectations for environmental safety that published on the website, and I'm sure, if people are interested, we can provide links to more information about our regulatory requirements and criteria.

Nick Gardham: Thank you, Candi. Peter, do you have anything to add to that, from the ONR's perspective?

Peter Howden: Nothing in particular. ONR's position parallels EA's. Effectively, we're the regulator of [safety] and security on nuclear licensed sites and also the transport of radioactive materials to and from sites.

We're independent, as well, from the nuclear industry and government, which allows us to make impartial decisions. Our purpose, as an independent, is defined in law, and, like EA, we have an independent Board, et cetera, to keep us independent from government.

In relation to a GDF, we will ultimately assess RWM's application for a nuclear site licence and we'll judge that against the ONR standards and expectations for high standards for nuclear facilities, as we discussed earlier. Their standards apply to all nuclear facilities. there's nothing particularly unique in a GDF in how it will be regulated and assessed against.

That - we'll issue a nuclear site licence before GDF construction starts, and that licence will allow ONR to regulate the GDF during construction and then during operations, pretty much to exactly the same standards as for any nuclear facility, including Sellafield, and so on. That means there'll be nuclear inspectors doing site inspections on the GDF, ensuring it meets all the requirements of the nuclear site licence.

RWM will also need permission from ONR to carry out operations, such as managing radioactive waste packages, and so on.

As Candi said, all this information is available online. ONR's standards, the safety assessment principles, technical assessment guides, good practice guides, et cetera, are available on ONR's websites. These are the standards that collectively RWM will need to meet, in order to get a nuclear site licence for the GDF.

Nick Gardham: Thank you, Peter. Thank you.

We're going to move into some polling questions, but before we do, I'm going to just, Councillor Moore, just from a working

perspective, have you got any reflections on today's session? I mean, how, from your perspective?

David Moore:

No, I think the key one you picked up earlier was getting back to face-to-face and being able to meet people and answer their questions, back into some form of normal environment.

I think throughout this, we've allowed people to be able to answer those questions, and it's unbelievable what the width and depth of the questions that people want answered, and they vary greatly, from impacts on house price to what do we absolutely know about the geology aquifers?

I think one of the interesting things, working in Copeland, that we have a really knowledgeable community. Having been through this process three times, sometimes you feel that we've got people coming on brand new to this. It's the first time they've ever heard of it, but out there in the community, we've also got people with 30-odd years' experience, have been involved in processes.

So, I think our engagement is such a difficult one to pitch. You have to start at the beginning, for some people, right at the beginning. Other people are well established into the process.

I think, as we get out, face-to-face, and we get our exhibitions going, and we start to meet those people face-to-face, that'll be when the real, true engagement can start, and we can see what the concerns and the questions are that want answered. I think we've touched on that.

I think people get a lot of reassurance, having heard the role of the regulator, which is totally independent from this process. We have a working group established of community representatives, and RWM, and we will have specialists come to us, but we know outside of that, are not involved in that at all, but are there to give us advice, are the two regulators, which are totally independent.

I think there's a lot of confidence in a process where you know you've got external agencies that can come in and they're not part of the process, but can come and advise that community.

I think it's good to hear about the geology. There'll be lots of questions for the geologists, because what I have found out there, there are a lot of people out there that believe they've got a lot of geological knowledge. Some of it's from back as far as Nirex, and to the MRWS process. What we're going to have to get from the British Geological Survey in that, if they're going to have to play their role in coming and explaining those geologies.

We've spent a lot of time talking about hard rock, over the previous processes. Borrowdale volcanics, the slates, but we've got a lot of that new geology coming into play in the search this time. I think there's got to be that availability for people to understand the salts, the sands, all those different things. I think a massive amount of work to do, but I think this is the only way we can get the process started. Once we get into them exhibitions, I'm sure we're going to need all our experts coming round some of the village halls with us.

Nick Gardham: Excellent. Thank you, Councillor, and a good plug for these face-to-face events in July, which we hope people will be coming to.

I'm going to move on to the polling questions now. Hopefully, they'll be appearing on your screens. They're not appearing on mine, but they will be, hopefully. The first one is, of course, how much better informed about the geology of Copeland do you feel after this session? That is the first one.

The second one, which will appear, shortly afterwards, hopefully, is, how likely is it that you'll recommend to other attending the next little GDF webinar - and I'm going to make a point at that one, just to say that subsequent webinars we've got pencilled in are based on the back of conversations we're having with people.

What are the emerging and pressing issues? We've got pencilled in ones around the role of community partnership...

[Music]

END OF TRANSCRIPT