# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Geological disposal of radioactive waste: working with potential host communities** |
| **DATE**  | **16 January 2019** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths A.M., Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs** |

Today I am publishing *Geological disposal of radioactive waste: working with potential host communities*. This policy outlines the engagement process for communities in Wales who wish to enter into discussions on potentially hosting a geological disposal facility (GDF). Today’s publication marks the final stage of a comprehensive and lengthy policy development process, including a consultation which closed in April 2018.

The Welsh Government has adopted a policy of supporting geological disposal for the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste (HAW) since 2015. A GDF provides a permanent solution to the long-term management of HAW, rather than leaving the responsibility to future generations. Geological disposal has been adopted around the world as the best and safest option for the long-term management of HAW and aligns with the advice of the independent expert Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM).

However this, of course, does not necessarily mean a GDF will be built in Wales. The Welsh Government has not identified any potential sites or communities to host a GDF in Wales nor will it do so. Our policy is very clear, a GDF can only be sited in Wales if a community is willing to host it.

The programme to deliver a single GDF for the HAW from Wales, England and Northern Ireland is funded by the UK Government and will be delivered by Radioactive Waste Management Ltd (RWM), a subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Here is an outline of the steps included in the policy, before a GDF could be considered a possibility in Wales:

* Interested parties must seek discussions with RWM about hosting a GDF.
* If the interested party wanted to pursue their interest then they would need to enter into formal discussions and a Community Partnership would be formed to represent the wider community.
* These discussions could last for up to twenty years, during which time the Community Partnership could withdraw from the process at any time.
* Before a final decision about siting a GDF is taken, a test of public support in a potential host community would be required.
* A GDF in Wales would require planning permission, a safety and security permit from the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the relevant environmental permits from Natural Resources Wales.

Communities engaged in discussions about potentially hosting a GDF will be eligible for Community Investment Funding of up to £1m a year, increasing to a maximum of £2.5m a year if deep boreholes are drilled. The GDF will be a multi-billion-pound infrastructure investment and will provide skilled jobs and benefits to the community that hosts it for more than 100 years.

Alongside the policy paper, I am also publishing today the responses to our consultation on this policy along with the WG response to the key issues raised. In light of the responses to the consultation, the finalised policy includes a strengthened role for Local Authorities (LAs), which requires their involvement in discussions in order for any community council areas within their boundaries to be considered as potential locations for a GDF.

The UK Government published their equivalent policy for England on 19 December 2018. It is consistent with the Welsh Government’s policy on key issues such as the Right to Withdrawal and the Test of Public Support but differs in that our policy reflects the needs and interests of communities in Wales (e.g. in relation to the language, the way local authorities are structured and the Welsh planning system).

From today a range of bilingual documents will be available on the RWM website for stakeholders and members of the public. This will include information on geological disposal, guidance on how RWM will work with communities and details on the factors it will take into account in evaluating prospective sites for a GDF.

**Key Documents**

[The Welsh Government Geological Disposal: Working with Communities policy](https://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/chemicalsradioactivity/radioactivity/radioactivewastemanagement)

[The Welsh Government response to the consultation and the responses received to the consultation](https://beta.gov.wales/geological-disposal-radioactive-waste)

[The Welsh Government Policy on the Management and Disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Waste (May 2015) and the Geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste: Community engagement and siting processes (December 2015)](https://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/chemicalsradioactivity/radioactivity/radioactivewastemanagement/)

[UK Government Policy](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/geological-disposal-facility-gdf-for-high-activity-radioactive-waste)

[RWM Website](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/radioactive-waste-management)