

Detailed guide: Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) – about us

[Radioactive Waste Management \(RWM\)](#) is a public organisation established by government and responsible for planning and delivering geological disposal in the UK.

We collaborate with scientists around the world on multi-million pound research programmes, sharing the latest scientific advances and best practice. We also work with the producers of radioactive waste to find ways to package it that are suitable for disposal in a [Geological Disposal Facility \(GDF\)](#).

Our vision is to create a safer future by managing radioactive waste effectively, to protect people and the environment.

30 years of scientific research and development

The RWM team includes scientists and engineers with over 30 years' experience in carrying out research and development to support geological disposal, supported by community engagement specialists.

Our organisation is a subsidiary of the [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority \(NDA\)](#), a public sector organisation tasked by the UK government with the safe and efficient clean-up of Britain's civil nuclear legacy.

Independent scrutiny

Our work is regulated by the [Office for Nuclear Regulation \(ONR\)](#) and the following agencies:

- [the Environment Agency \(EA\)](#) in England
- [Natural Resources Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland Environment Agency](#)

It is also scrutinised by an independent body set up by the government, the [Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, \(CoRWM\)](#).

If you would like to receive email notification of updates to these pages, please [sign up to our e-bulletin service](#)

[Go to geological disposal homepage](#)

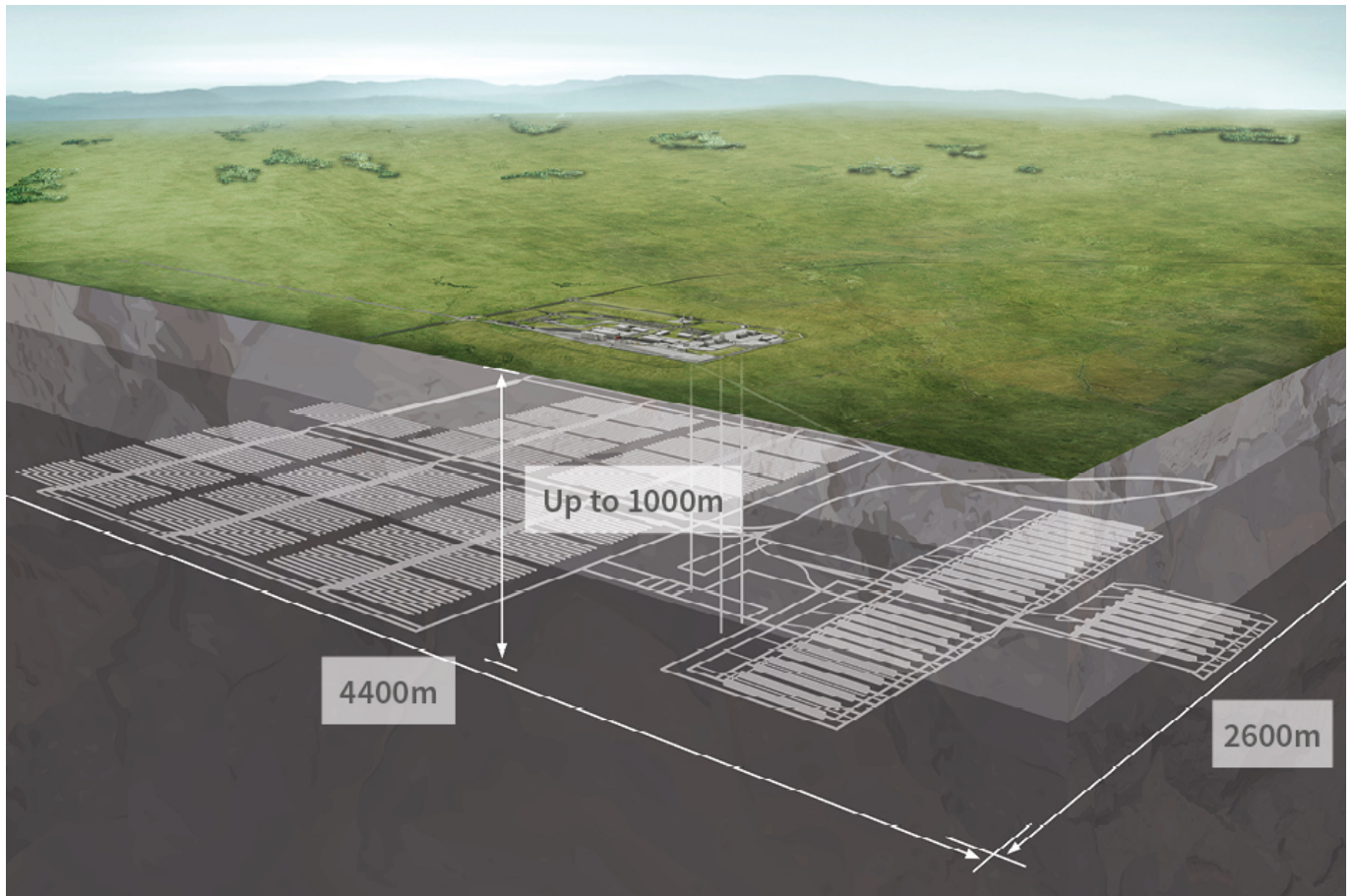
To better understand our mission and what we do, watch our company video below.

[Road to Delivery](#)

Detailed guide: Why underground?

There is international consensus that the safest permanent solution to manage higher activity radioactive waste is geological disposal, which involves putting the waste in a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) beneath several hundred metres of solid rock.

This is already the chosen approach in countries including [Canada](#), [Finland](#), France, [Sweden](#) and Switzerland. Some of these countries are well on the way to developing their own GDFs.



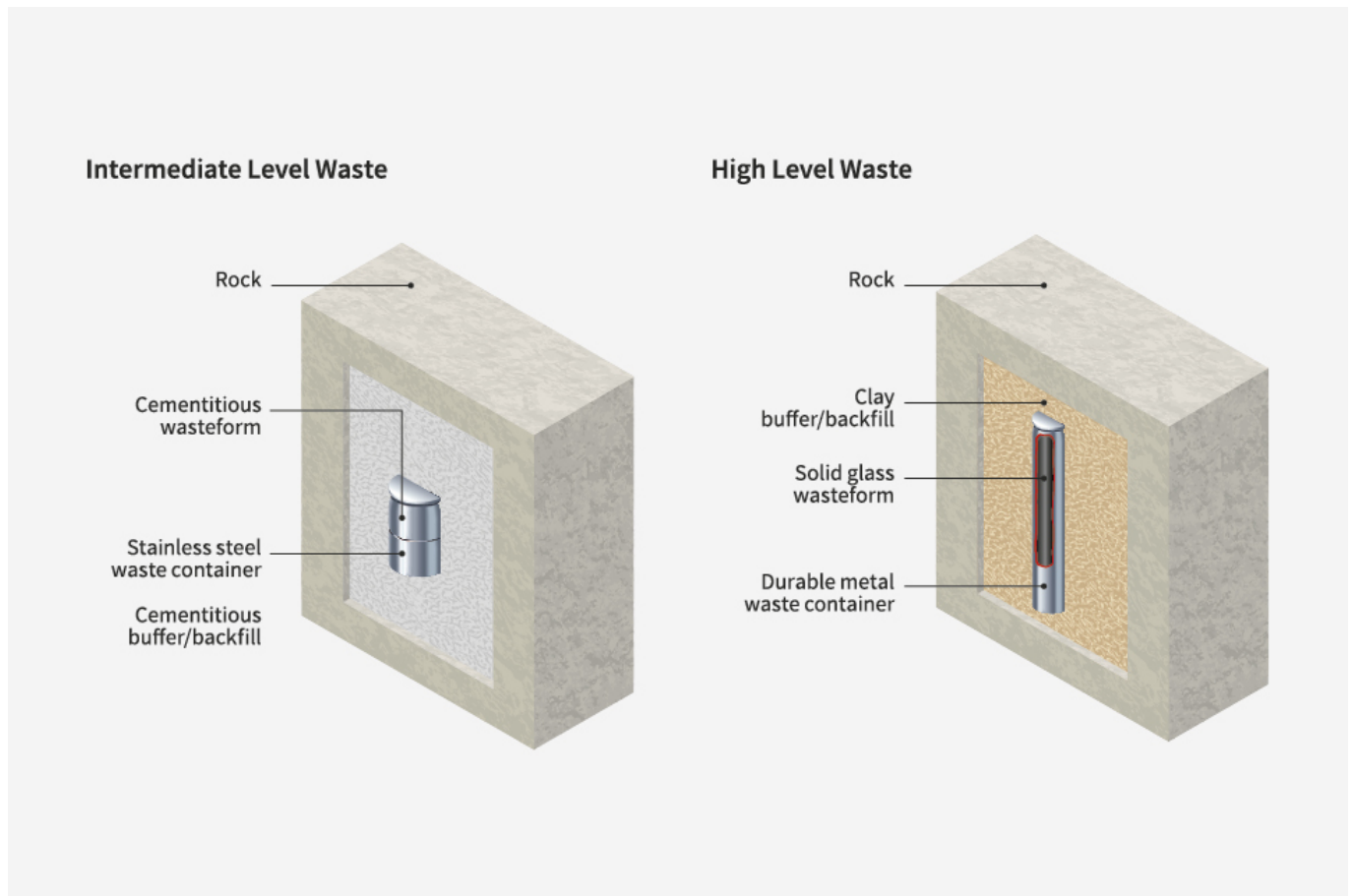
A Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)

How does geological disposal work?

Geological disposal is possible thanks to world-class engineering, science and technology. This involves:

- isolating the radioactive waste in sealed vaults and tunnels deep underground, between 200 m and 1000 m below the surface
- containing the radioactivity while it decays naturally over time
- preventing radioactivity from ever reaching the surface in levels that could cause harm

Solid radioactive waste is packaged in secure engineered containers, typically made of metal or concrete, and then placed in a stable rock formation hundreds of metres below the surface, with the containers surrounded by clay or cement. This is called the multi-barrier approach.



The multi-barrier concept

In addition, a GDF:

- requires no ongoing maintenance
- is less vulnerable than surface storage to human activities such as terrorism or war
- is less vulnerable than surface storage to natural processes such as climate change

Watch our video that shows how a GDF will be implemented.

[Welcome to the future of geological disposal](#)

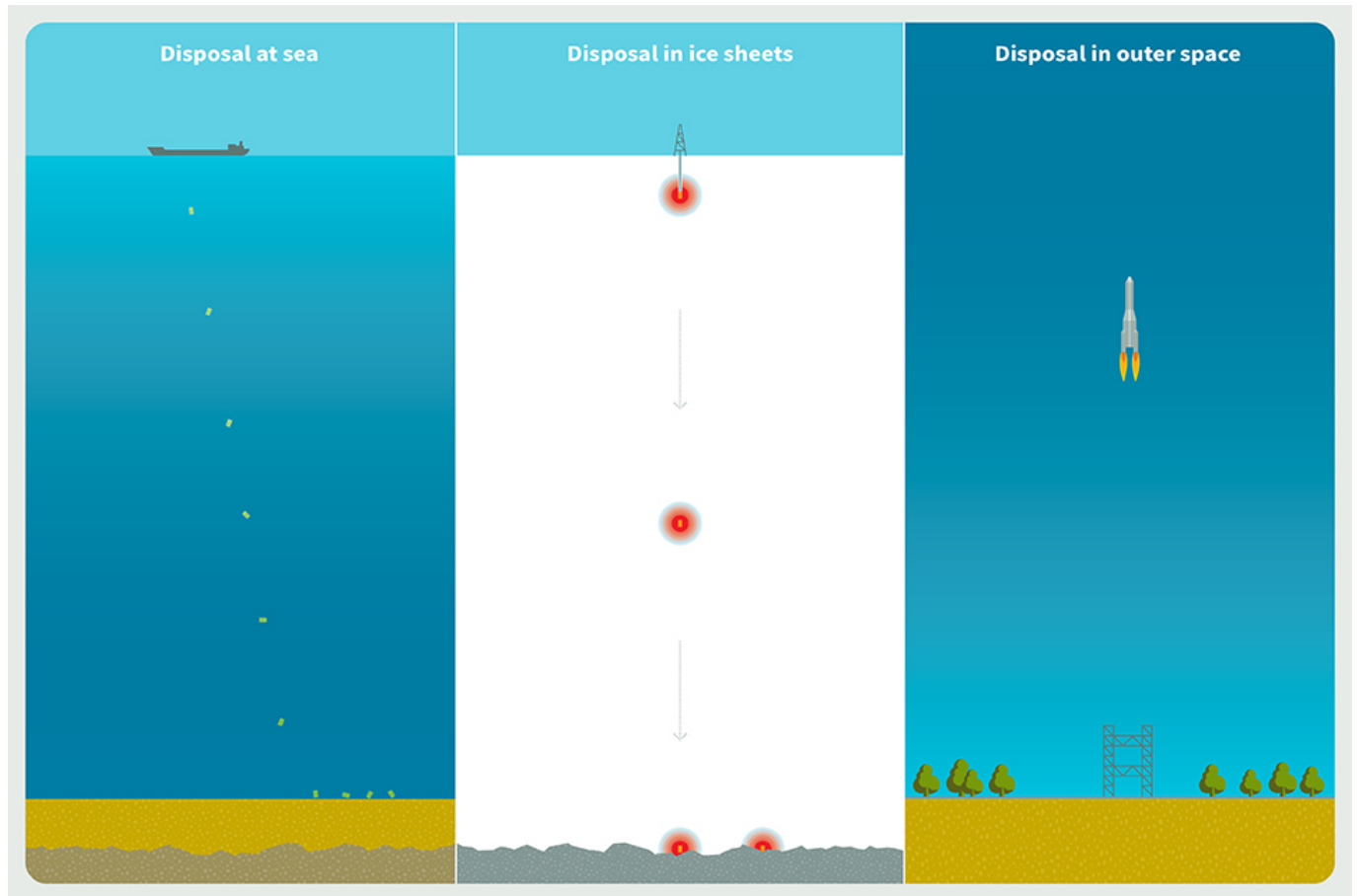
After the waste has been placed into a GDF, deep underground and away from people and the environment, it will eventually be permanently sealed to provide safety without the need for further action.

The safest solution

[Safety](#) is our absolute priority. When constructing a Geological Disposal Facility we are working to keep the risk arising from the GDF directly above ground to a lower than one in a million chance of people developing health

problems at any time in the future. (Source: [Environment Agency's Guidance on Requirements for Authorisation of Geological Disposal, 2009](#))

Alternatives to geological disposal have been carefully considered and we continue to keep options under review. At present, they are all either not technically achievable (for example: converting the waste to non-radioactive material), not environmentally safe (for example: disposal at sea or in ice sheets), or too dangerous to implement (for example: firing the waste into space on rockets).



Unsuitable waste disposal methods

Next steps

We are looking for a suitable site to implement geological disposal safely, with a [willing community](#) who will work in partnership with us, as part of an agreed vision for the future.

Planning for geological disposal will take between 15 to 20 years. Independent regulators will ensure that all processes have been followed to their satisfaction. Only then can construction start.

If you would like to receive email notification of updates to these pages, please [sign up to our e-bulletin service](#)

[Go to geological disposal homepage](#)

Got a question?

If you have any questions our scientists and engineers are on hand to answer any technical queries you may have. Please email us at gdfenquiries@nda.gov.uk

To understand in more detail what will go into a GDF, what it will look like and what the multi-barrier approach is, please read more in the downloadable science files below.

The science files



[What will go into a GDF?](#)

PDF, 978KB, 6 pages

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Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.



[The multi-barrier approach](#)

PDF, 10.6MB, 7 pages

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[What will a GDF look like?](#)

PDF, 1.75MB, 6 pages

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[Detailed guide: Communities and GDF](#)

Your voice matters

This year, we'll be starting a process to find a site for a safe [Geological Disposal Facility \(GDF\)](#) for radioactive waste in the UK. Communities will be right at the heart of the siting process for a GDF and a facility will be built where both a suitable site AND a willing community are selected.

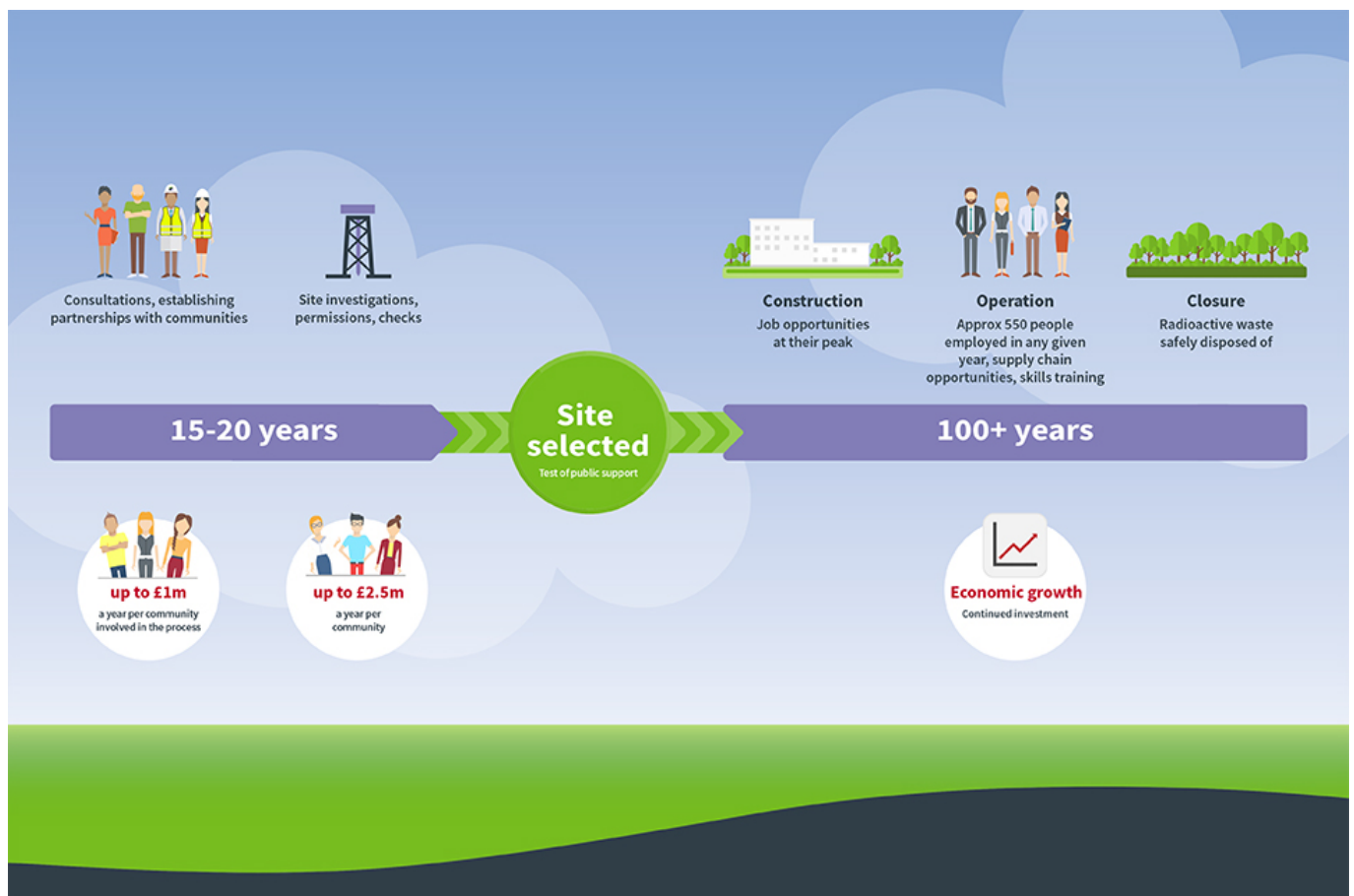
The process of finding a site will take between 15 to 20 years. Then, only

following a positive test of public support and after the relevant permissions from the independent regulators have been obtained, can construction start.

This process is consent-based and communities will be able to work in partnership with us from the beginning, so that people will have the opportunity to create a future that works for them.

As our commitment to interested communities, we will:

- cover the costs for communities engaged in the process
- invest up to £1 million per year in communities who enter the siting process
- also, invest up to £2.5 million per year in communities where deep borehole investigations take place
- support economic growth by employing an average of 550 people in any given year throughout the operational lifetime of the project, with skills training, supply chain opportunities and infrastructure investment
- enable a long-lasting economic and social legacy for future generations



The operational timeline of a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)

The role of government

In 2014 the UK government and Northern Ireland Executive set out a renewed approach to finding a site to host a GDF in their [Implementing Geological Disposal White Paper](#). In it, the UK government committed to help interested

communities understand more about hosting a geological disposal facility and engaging with confidence in the processes involved.

Building on this commitment, the UK government is now consulting on proposed policy on how communities should be engaged in a siting process for a geological disposal facility for higher activity radioactive waste.

In 2015 the Welsh Government set out its [Policy on the Management and Disposal of Higher Activity Radioactive Waste](#), similar to that adopted in England and Northern Ireland. The Welsh Government is now consulting on the proposed policy on how communities in Wales should be engaged in a siting process for a GDF.

Scottish policy is not for geological disposal. The Scottish Government published its [Implementation Strategy for Scotland's policy on higher activity radioactive waste](#) following consultation in 2016.

Next steps

If you want to learn more about GDF and the role of communities in the siting process, please get in touch by emailing gdfenquiries@nda.gov.uk and one of our team will get back to you.

Following the government's consultations and final policy statements, we will also be publishing 'Guidance to Communities', which will contain helpful and more in-depth information on how to engage in the siting process.

[Go to geological disposal homepage](#)

[Detailed guide: About National Geological Screening \(NGS\)](#)

At [Radioactive Waste Management \(RWM\)](#) we are bringing together existing geological information across the whole of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This will give you a picture of what's under your feet, which is relevant to the long-term safety of a [Geological Disposal Facility \(GDF\)](#).

Our study has applied the [National Geological Screening – Final Guidance](#) which was published in April 2016 following expert independent review and public consultation.

The geological information will be made available for 13 [British Geological Survey regions](#) in an accessible format showing a high-level summary of each region's potential to host a GDF. More detailed knowledge will be needed to identify locations that would definitely be suitable.



The thirteen geological regions

This study will provide useful information for our conversations with any local community that shows an interest in our GDF programme.

If you have any questions, please get in touch by emailing gdfenquiries@nda.gov.uk and one of our team will get back to you.

If you would like to receive email notification of updates to these pages, please [sign up to our e-bulletin service](#)

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Detailed guide: How to contact Radioactive Waste Management (RWM)

Updated: Inserted new links to BEIS and Welsh Government consultations

General enquiries

Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) is a public organisation established by

government and a subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). We are responsible for planning and delivering geological disposal in the UK.

If you are a business or member of the public looking for further information not available on our [website](#), please email us at gdfenquiries@nda.gov.uk or phone:

GDF Enquiries: 0300 0660100

A member of our team will get back to you.

Media enquiries

For media enquiries, call our media and campaign team on:

(+44) 01925 802299 (office hours)

(+44) 07803 495577 (out of hours)

or email gdfenquiries@nda.gov.uk

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RWM uses Flickr to share a selection of images from across the project. Our [image gallery](#) contains a selection of images that are available for press use only.

Before downloading any of the images, please ensure you have read and will comply with Copyright Terms and Conditions.

Images can be downloaded from the RWM Flickr site.

Latest news and updates

For the latest news and significant developments click on the links below.

[Press release](#)

[National Policy Statement for geological disposal infrastructure – Implementing geological disposal – consultation](#)

[Working With Communities consultation](#)

[Welsh Government consultation](#)

[GDF Annual Report](#)

[Implementing geological disposal: land use planning](#)

[Geological Disposal Facility document collection page](#)

Useful links and downloads

For useful GDF-related links and PDF downloads please click through the links below.

All our GDF-related literature is also available in Welsh language or in large print on request.

[GDF safety case](#)

[Making sense of geological disposal](#)

[Go to geological disposal homepage](#)

Staying in touch with RWM

Our website is updated regularly with the latest news, images, videos and progress from across the GDF project.

[More information on geological disposal](#)

Stay in touch with us on social media by following us on Twitter, liking our Facebook page or watching our YouTube videos.

You can also [subscribe to our e-bulletin](#) or [blog](#).

If you need to contact us, you can write to:

GDF Enquiries,

Building 587, Curie Avenue

Harwell, Oxford

Didcot OX11 0RH

Or phone the number below, Monday to Friday, between 8.30am and 4.30pm:

GDF Enquiries 0300 0660100

[How to make an FOI request](#)



Radioactive Waste Management

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