

RWM brings together international geology experts to share geological disposal insights

Experts from across the world are today and tomorrow focusing on the vital role of geoscience in developing underground facilities where higher activity radioactive waste can be safely disposed of.

The geoscience event is taking place over two days, with an online audience of over 200 delegates. It has been organised by RWM, in partnership with the Yorkshire Geological Society (YGS) and the British Geological Survey (BGS) to showcase the role of geoscience in geological disposal.

Suitable geology will be one of the key factors in finding a UK site for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) where the country's radioactive waste can be safely disposed of for the long term. A GDF will be designed such that deep rocks will work together with engineered barriers to isolate and contain the waste, protecting people and the environment.

Other countries, such as Sweden, Finland, France, Canada, Switzerland, and Japan, are making great strides in developing their own GDF programmes, and RWM is working with and learning from their experience. The audience will hear presentations by international experts from Germany, and from waste management organisations in Sweden and Switzerland, together with the UK.

Rock samples from Sweden

RWM's Chief Geologist Dr Jonathan Turner and Chief Scientific Advisor Prof Cherry Tweed will outline the approach and progress towards finding a UK site. And the audience will also hear from representatives at the BGS.

RWM's Dr Jonathan Turner, said:

The sharing of international experience and academic research are essential to enable RWM to understand the latest insights, lessons, and developments both here, at home, and around the world.

This makes a valuable contribution to our planning and knowledge as we prepare for the next stages of the UK programme to find both a suitable site, together with a willing community.

Independent UK academic experts will include Prof Jon Gluyas from the University of Durham, Prof Neil Chapman from the University of Sheffield, Prof Penny Harvey from The University of Manchester, Prof Mike Daly from The University of Oxford, Prof Julia West MBE, and YGS President Dr Nick Riley

[Ofsted to carry out survey of effectiveness of Skills Bootcamps](#)

News story

Ofsted has been asked by the government to carry out a thematic survey of how well providers are developing and delivering Skills Bootcamps programmes.



The survey will assess the effectiveness and quality of the education and training students are receiving, identifying strengths and weaknesses, across a sample of providers.

[Skills Bootcamps](#) are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks for adults aged 19 or over who are either in work or recently unemployed. Their aim is to help people develop skills that are in demand in their local area, so they can potentially get a new job or a better position at work. The programmes are being developed in partnership with employers, training providers and local authorities, as part of the government's [Plan for Jobs](#) and Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

Ofsted's survey will use the inspection methodology set out in the [further education and skills handbook](#), focusing on the quality of education and the curriculum. This approach will help us to understand and evaluate education and training provision, looking at developments nationally, and highlighting good practice as well as areas for improvement.

The results of the survey will help build a national picture of how well Skills Bootcamps are working. Our findings will inform the Department for Education, policy makers, providers of Skills Bootcamps, students and employers about the quality and progress of Skills Bootcamps.

Inspectors will carry out survey visits between December 2021 and March 2022,

with the aim of publishing a report in September 2022.

The survey visits to providers are not the same as an inspection. We will only look at the Skills Bootcamp provision and will not make judgements about individual providers.

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[UKHSA publishes new recommendations for COVID-19 infection prevention and control](#)

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has recommended [3 pragmatic changes](#) that hospitals can make to the current management of coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures, with a focus on elective care.

This advice comes as more of the population is vaccinated and therefore protected against COVID-19 and we understand more about how the infection is transmitted and can be contained.

This advice should be used by local acute care providers to allow them to start to make further safe changes to their services, in line with a local assessment of risk.

It is hoped that whilst responding to changing scientific knowledge, these recommendations in starting to reduce enhanced COVID-19 specific IPC measures will also help to ease the pressure created by the pandemic on NHS capacity over the next few months, balancing the different health needs of the population as we learn to live with the virus.

Dr Jenny Harries, UKHSA Chief Executive, said:

We have reviewed the existing COVID-19 IPC evidence-based guidance and made a series of initial pragmatic recommendations on how local providers can start to safely remove some of the interventions that have been in place in elective care specifically for COVID-19.

This is a first step to help the NHS treat more patients more quickly, while ensuring their safety and balancing their different needs for care.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid, said:

As ever more people benefit from the protection of our phenomenal vaccination campaign, we can now safely begin to relieve some of the most stringent infection control measures where they are no longer necessary to benefit patients and ease the burden on hardworking NHS staff.

I thank Dr Jenny Harries and the UKHSA for their recommendations, and look forward to their assessment of what further steps can be taken in other healthcare settings including in primary care.

These initial recommendations include 3 interventions which relate to social distancing and testing in NHS and Social Care elective care services, and cleaning practices:

1. A reduction of physical distancing from 2 metres to 1 metre with appropriate mitigations where patient access can be controlled (for example, not in emergency departments). This is in line with the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) which currently advises 1 metre physical distancing in healthcare facilities.
2. Removing the need for a negative PCR and 3 days self-isolation before selected elective procedures. Selected patients in low risk groups who are fully vaccinated, asymptomatic, with a negative lateral flow test on the day of their procedure will no longer need to have a negative PCR and isolate for 3 days. Patients who are contacts of a confirmed case of SARS-CoV-2 will still need to go through the current PCR pathway.
3. Re-adopting standard rather than enhanced cleaning procedures. Enhanced cleaning can be discontinued in agreed low risk areas such as planned or scheduled elective care and providers can revert to standard cleaning procedures between patients. WHO and other international authorities have stated that there is currently limited evidence on transmission of SARS-CoV-2 via surfaces. [The Independent Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours \(SPI-B\)](#) has advised that hand hygiene is likely to be more effective than enhanced cleaning for reducing transmission via contaminated surfaces, which has benefits for preventing other disease transmission and reduces healthcare burdens.

Staff working in areas where COVID-19 control measures have been relaxed should be fully vaccinated asymptomatic and not a contact of a positive case. Staff will be required to continue to comply with the current guidance on asymptomatic testing. Rigorous adherence to routine IPC precautions by all staff remains critical for patient safety and must continue to be implemented.

Local providers are best placed to decide where risk-assessment precludes these changes in terms of patient groups and facilities, which will be based upon factors such as the configuration of wards and departments, local capacity and the ability to ventilate spaces, along with other considerations.

These practical changes to current ways of working have been recommended based on existing evidence reviews and broad consensus from the IPC

community.

These steps on elective care are the first step and further changes looking at other services and environments, including dentistry and ambulance trusts, will be planned in future steps. We will be working with stakeholders to assess where access can be improved in these settings.

The framework and recommendations cover social distancing, testing and cleaning focussing on elective care. There are no recommendations for PPE and providers should continue to follow UK IPC Guidance.

Could you be a volunteer flood warden?

The Environment Agency and the Kent Resilience Forum are looking for people to become volunteer flood wardens in Kent.

Kent has experienced repeated flood incidents both historically and recently. Around 71,000 properties in the county are at risk of flooding. Flood wardens can help people prepare for flood events in those areas identified as most at risk.

As a flood warden you would have a key role in helping to develop a [Community Flood Plan*](#) for your area. You would play a crucial part in putting that plan into action in the event of flooding.

During and after a flood, when emergency services and local authorities are helping those most in need, flood wardens become a vital link between those responding and their community.

Jenny Newham, Environment Agency Flood Resilience Advisor, said:

You can help your local community prepare for flooding by volunteering as a flood warden. We will provide you with training, a comprehensive handbook and resources to carry out the role.

You'll also have great support from colleagues when you join our volunteer team of flood wardens.

Carl Lewis, volunteer flood warden, Tonbridge, said:

You can see the difference we make to people, knowing they can rely on you when they're in distress, knowing you're there to help.

Steve Sculley, Senior Emergency Planner, Kent Resilience Forum, said:

Flooding in Kent is the major risk that we plan for. Its effects can devastate lives and communities.

If you feel you can help as a flood warden, please sign up for one of our free virtual training sessions that take 2 hours to complete.

Free virtual training sessions on Wednesday 6 October and Tuesday 9 November, 7pm to 9pm.

Training is free of charge and will be delivered on Zoom. It is accessible on smartphone, tablet or computer. Full guidance will be provided.

Notes to editors

Around 71,000 properties in Kent are at risk of flooding. Flood wardens are needed across Kent – particularly in Maidstone, Tonbridge and Folkestone. Flood wardens are also needed in:

- Canterbury
- Dartford
- Deal
- Dymchurch
- East Malling and Larkfield
- Faversham
- Gravesend
- Herne Bay
- Hythe
- Medway Towns
- Minster-on-sea
- Paddock Wood
- Sheerness
- Sittingbourne
- St Mary in the Marsh
- Whitstable

Flood wardens are involved in writing a community plan. They help to implement it during a flood. It can help to save lives and minimise the damage and distress that flooding can cause.

A community flood plan sets out:

- the locations at risk of flooding in the community
- actions to be taken before, during and after a flood
- contact details of volunteers/flood wardens and the cascade of information during a flood
- what the local triggers are that will activate the plan
- important telephone numbers
- available resources
- arrangements with the authorities
- vulnerable residents/properties

Flood warden recruitment

Last winter the Environment Agency and Kent Resilience Forum were able to train more than 200 wardens for the county. However, there is always a need for more people to volunteer and train as flood wardens, and to help make our communities more resilient to flood events.

Be prepared for flooding

Members of the public can [check their flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date](#) and follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

[Insolvency Service and R3 support Inclusion Week 2021](#)

News story

In support of Inclusion Week 2021, the Insolvency Service and R3 are meeting as part of the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group.



[R3](#) and the Insolvency Service are proud to be part of the [Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group](#) for the insolvency profession which is meeting this week.

Inclusion Week 2021 is a great reminder of how important it is that the insolvency and restructuring profession be open and reflective of the wider community.

The Steering Group will be considering the outcome of the recent survey of R3 members, which provides a valuable baseline to understand the make-up of the profession.

Initial analysis shows that: only 30% of partners are female; less than 10% of the profession comes from black or other minority ethnic groups; and of

those in the profession working part-time, almost 70% are female.

While there's still more to consider, these findings give the Steering Group some helpful indicators of the areas to look at more closely as part of its objective to identify the barriers to progress within the profession.

Caroline Sumner, R3 Chief Executive Officer, said:

One of the key aspects of Inclusion Week is about bringing people together to share best practice and R3 has a key role to play here as the trade body for the profession.

In the coming weeks we'll be launching a new online resource for R3 members which will provide key examples of best practice guidance to help them to make a positive difference to diversity and inclusion within their own firms.

Angela Crossley, Director, Strategy, Policy and Analysis for the Insolvency Service said:

During Inclusion Week, the Steering Group will be taking the opportunity to continue our productive and insightful conversations into how we can improve inclusion, while breaking down barriers for those who want to join the insolvency profession.

As founding members of the group with R3, we are proud to be a part of this exciting project, developing new initiatives to ensure that everyone who enters the insolvency profession has a thoroughly rewarding experience, whatever their background.

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