



Regulating Geological Disposal

Joint working between regulators

January 2017

The Office for Nuclear Regulation will jointly regulate with the Environment Agency any future geological disposal facility for radioactive waste in England.

We are working together to make sure that any future facility meets the required high standards for environmental protection, safety, security, waste management and radioactive waste transportation.

Environment Agency

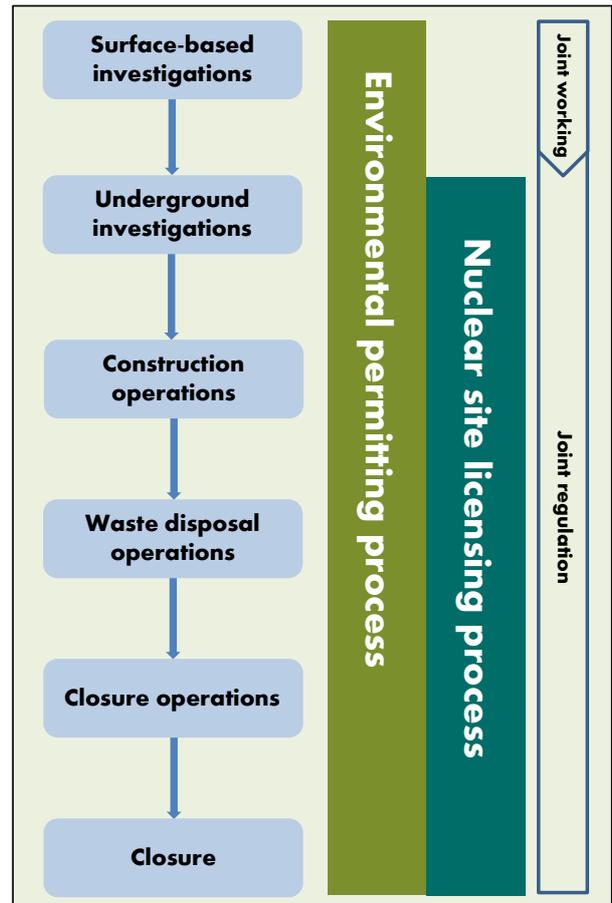
In England, the Environment Agency is responsible for the enforcement of environmental protection legislation in the context of sustainable development. The Environment Agency's remit is wide and activities cover, for example, environmental pollution, waste management, flood risk management, water resources, fisheries and conservation.

The Environment Agency is responsible for regulating disposals of radioactive waste from nuclear licensed sites and other premises using radioactive substances. Disposals of radioactive waste include: discharges into the atmosphere, surface waters and groundwater; disposals by transfer to another site; and, disposal to land including geological disposal.

Office for Nuclear Regulation

The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) is the independent, statutory regulator of nuclear safety, security, and conventional health and safety at nuclear sites, and transport of radioactive materials. The ONR's duty is to ensure that the nuclear industry controls its hazards effectively, has a culture of continuous improvement and maintains high standards.

ONR's Mission: To provide efficient and effective regulation of the nuclear industry, holding it to account on behalf of the public.



Working together

We work together to build a common understanding of the regulatory issues involved in geological disposal. This will help us to have a better understanding of our future roles in regulating the development and operation of any future geological disposal facility for radioactive waste in England.

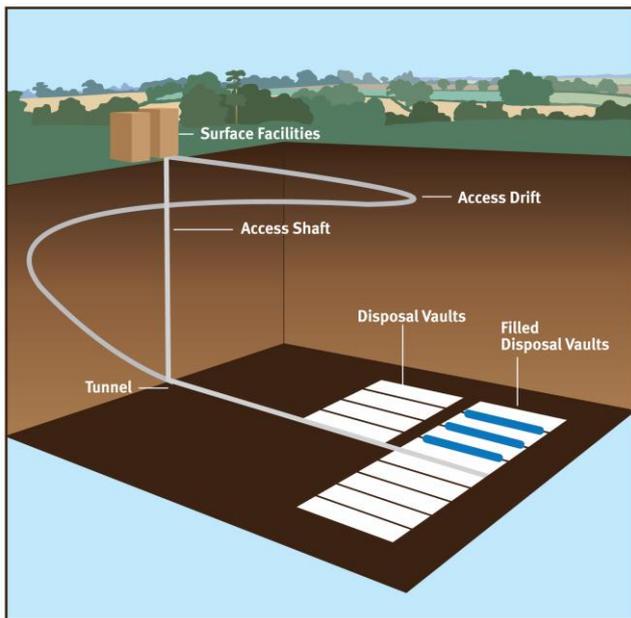
We will work together in providing advice and regulatory comment to Radioactive Waste Management Limited, Government, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, local authorities, communities and others including the public. Working together will help us to build relationships with the people and businesses that have an

interest in the geological disposal of radioactive waste.

Geological disposal

Geological disposal involves disposal of radioactive waste packages in a highly engineered underground facility. The rock structure provides an additional barrier against escape of radioactivity and the depth substantially protects the waste from effects at the surface arising from, for example, climate change.

Geological disposal offers a safe and sustainable solution to long-term radioactive management and



our regulatory role will ensure protection of people and the environment, both now and in the future.

The artist's impression gives a simplified view of a geological disposal facility that includes vaults for waste disposal, access tunnels and a shaft for access from the surface facilities.

Responsibility for implementing geological disposal

The UK Government has overall responsibility for setting the policy for safe and sustainable solutions for managing radioactive wastes in the long term. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is leading the process of implementing geological disposal. Radioactive Waste Management Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary company of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), is responsible for developing a geological disposal facility.

Selection of a site for a geological disposal facility

We will support the site selection process by explaining how our future regulatory roles and processes will help ensure protection of people and the environment now and in the future. We will also provide advice and comment on environmental, safety, security and transport matters within our regulatory remits. As regulators, we do not have a decision-making role in the process for identifying and selecting sites for investigation. We do not regulate the site selection process.

Site for a geological disposal facility

No decisions have been made on selecting a site or the timescale for developing a geological disposal facility.

Joint regulatory scrutiny programme

We have voluntary agreements with Radioactive Waste Management Limited (RWM) to provide regulatory scrutiny and advice during the early stages of implementing geological disposal before the start of formal regulation. We do not currently regulate RWM because the site selection process for a geological disposal facility is outside our regulatory remit. Through our early work with RWM, we are aiming to make sure that any future geological disposal facility in England meets our required high standards for safety and environmental protection. More information about our joint scrutiny of RWM's work on geological disposal is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-scrutiny-of-rwm-s-work-on-geological-disposal>

Further information

Further information on implementing geological disposal can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/geological-disposal-facility-gdf-for-high-activity-radioactive-waste>