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## Plans for UK's 'legacy' of nuclear waste unveiled

Consultation document outlines how geological storage sites could be selected for £4bn radioactive clean-up

BusinessGreen  
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The UK's long term solution for dealing with nuclear waste has been unveiled by the government. Photograph: Odd Andersen/AFP/Getty Images

The UK's long term solution for dealing with nuclear waste became a little clearer yesterday as the government published a consultation on how to select potential storage sites and provided an update on its disposal programme.

The government said the UK has built up a "substantial legacy" of radioactive waste from both civil and defence-related nuclear programmes and faces a £4bn bill in decommissioning and clean-up costs. Some of the waste is already in storage, but most will only become waste over the coming decades as existing nuclear facilities are decommissioned.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) thinks geological storage is the best option and is keen for local areas to volunteer sites to help meet its goal of putting the first waste into a disposal facility by the end of 2029.

Its consultation document suggests that desk-based studies could be used to identify possible sites put forward by local authorities.

It also sets out how these may be assessed against agreed criteria and how local and central government decisions will be made about any sites that might be put forward for more detailed geological assessment.

DECC said it has already received three expressions of interest for two areas in west Cumbria and wants more communities to come forward with potential sites for storage.

It has already established a Managing Radioactive Waste Safely programme, focusing on the long term disposal of higher activity radioactive waste in geological formations, in the hope the sector could provide skilled employment for an average of 550 people over a century.

Energy minister Charles Hendry said the plans showed the government's intention to manage the country's long-standing nuclear waste problem.

"The UK has a substantial legacy of radioactive waste from a variety of nuclear programmes," he said. "This government will not simply leave it to future generations to deal with."

Hendry also said he would ask the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to look for ways to accelerate progress on storage to beat the 2040 goal.

European neighbours Germany and Switzerland have curtailed their nuclear policies in the wake of Fukushima, but last week's national policy statements confirmed the UK's intention to plough ahead with its plans for eight new reactors, despite opposition from green groups.

- The original BusinessGreen article stated that Charles Hendry's goal for plans to accelerate progress on storage was 2029. The original goal in the MRWS white paper was 2040; Hendry wants this brought forward to 2029. The article has been amended to reflect this.

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