

Theddlethorpe GDF Community Partnership, 19 September 2024

Opening Statement by David Fannin, Chairman

Thank you for coming - before we begin, we have a few housekeeping points:

- Fire exits
- No planned fire drill
- Location of toilets

Welcome and thank you for giving up your time on this rather overcast afternoon for this meeting in public of the Theddlethorpe GDF Community Partnership. There are a few important things to say so forgive me if I refer to my notes, it will help me to be brief and to the point.

As you may know, the community partnership meets every month. On this occasion, in a departure from previous meetings, you are invited to listen to and observe our proceedings but, respectfully, not join the discussion.

We have a lot of business to get through and this is not a public meeting in that sense. We will arrange public meetings in the future, assuming there is an appetite in the community to join in the discussion.

For those of you perhaps not familiar with the workings of a GDF Community Partnership, our role is essentially to listen, learn and inform. In this respect, the purpose of the partnership as a collective entity, as laid out in national policy, is to be the advocate between the local community and the developer.

For the best part of two years, we have, and will continue to:

- Facilitate discussion with the community.
- Be the key vehicle for community dialogue with the GDF developer NWS.
- Monitor public opinion in relation to siting a GDF within the Search Area and the Potential Host Community.

At its simplest, a GDF will only be built if a suitable and safe site is identified, if the potential host community expresses clear support, and all regulatory and environmental requirements are met. In practice there are massive technical siting challenges to be understood, and this is a complex, sensitive and divisive issue for the potential host community.

The Community Partnership aims to help people understand more about the GDF and what it could mean for you. This is not about propaganda or coercion, as some might suggest. It is about facts and opinions and recognising the difference between these. It is about being impartial and listening to people's concerns now and potentially for a very long time to come.

The partnership is a vehicle for sharing information and enabling public discourse on the potential benefits, disbenefits and risks involved in siting and constructing a GDF. It will fulfil this role for as long as the relevant principal local authorities in the Search Area agree to participate (that is Lincolnshire County Council and East Lindsey District Council), and the developer NWS and its expert advisers, and the nuclear regulators are confident the Search Area offers a potentially safe and suitable site for a GDF.

As part of its programme of learning and information sharing, today the partnership has asked for presentations from the Environment Agency and the Office for Nuclear Regulation, who are the main nuclear regulators. We will also have presentations from the developer NWS on the GDF programme of works, on GDF safety and on one of the key areas for impact assessment, which is property values and value protection.

Members of the community partnership may ask questions in the meeting, and we have had questions submitted in advance including, I believe, some submitted right before we got started. I will make my best efforts to ensure there is time at the end of the meeting to answer at least some of these.

At some point, the community partnership may make recommendations to the relevant principle local authorities on whether to invoke the Right of Withdrawal, and if and when to launch a Test of Public Support. It will do this when it is confident there has been full and open discourse and sharing of information. The Community Partnership will continue to engage with local communities to fulfil this purpose, as is set out in national policy.

The Community Partnership is seeking technical and factual information on siting, including safety and security and GDF impacts, so that it can share this and promote public discourse.

To that end I welcome to our meeting Martin Walkinshaw (NWS Chief Operating Officer) and Neil Hyatt (NWS Chief Scientific Officer) as well as representatives from the nuclear regulating bodies.

You may have noticed that the GDF Property Value Protection scheme was recently published. Housing and other impacts have been a feature in media coverage, and in questions from the public and parish councils, and Chris Keenan (NWS Head of Community, Operations and Land) joins us today to tell us a bit more about the scheme. This is sooner than planned and very welcome.

Looking ahead, I look forward to similar presentations of other impact reports, such as construction and environmental impacts, and how this is dealt with in the planning regime, plus jobs, training and apprenticeships and significant additional investment should Theddlethorpe get to that stage. It is better to explore these issues now than to make decisions in an information vacuum, and I will be working with partnership colleagues to agree our future programme of meetings including topics and timing of presentations.

More information, including information on nuclear waste packaging, transport and GDF safety will be available at the 'Discover' public exhibition being held in October and there will be opportunities to 'meet the experts' through a programme of upcoming public meetings.

I hope, indeed anticipate, that these will be shared through further partnership 'meetings in public.' We welcome suggestions on topics for presentation and discussion from the public and the parish and town councils so that NWS can prioritise this.

Please keep the questions coming, not just because information is important but also because we will be stepping up the focus and energy that is required and expected from the developer and the local planning authority regarding clarity and duty of candour.

We will get on with the meeting now. Final request from me.

1. Please be respectful to others and allow the partnership to conduct its business uninterrupted.
2. If you are invited to ask a question, please indicate, and state if you are asking a question as an individual or as a representative of an organisation.
3. Please switch personal devices off or keep them on silent during the meeting.

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4. This meeting is not being recorded and we have not sought consent for recording. Please refrain from using recording devices during the meeting.