

A nuclear waste repository in West Cumbria?

It's time to find out what a repository could mean for you...

The Government is looking for a community to volunteer to have an underground repository for higher activity radioactive wastes – a geological disposal facility.

Allerdale, Copeland and Cumbria County Councils decided to take part in early discussions about this because a lot of the waste is already at Sellafield.

Elaine Woodburn, the leader of Copeland Borough Council, says:

“Because of the social, environmental and economic impact, both positive and negative, the waste has on West Cumbria, it's essential we are involved in this process.”

Getting the community involved

The councils set up the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership so that a wide range of community interests could get involved in looking at this issue.

We will advise the councils on whether they should decide to take part in finding a site.

Even if the councils decide to take part, they will still be able to withdraw from the process until work starts on a repository, which would probably be more than 10 years from now.

Tim Knowles, the Chairman of the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership and the Cumbria County Council cabinet member for the environment, says:

“It's vital for everyone to get involved. We want to know if local people want us to carry on these talks.”

Geological survey of West Cumbria

A geological study of West Cumbria shows where it will definitely not be possible to put an underground repository.

See page 2 >

Your questions

- > What is geological disposal?
- > What might a repository look like?
- > How might this affect me?

See page 3 >

How to get involved

You can visit one of our Community Drop-In Events or talk about the issues with a group of friends or colleagues using our Discussion Pack and DVD. See page 4 >

Results of basic geological study

Before an area can make a decision about whether to take part in finding a site for a repository, the Government says a very basic geological study has to be carried out.

The study in West Cumbria was carried out by the British Geological Survey (BGS) – the UK’s geological experts. The BGS was asked to look at the information already available about the geology of Allerdale and Copeland and up to 5 kilometres offshore.

The Government emphasises that this study does not show where a facility would eventually be located. It only rules out areas that absolutely could not host the underground workings of a geological disposal facility for obvious geological reasons. The results can be seen on the map opposite.

The study has been conducted using criteria set out by the Government. These criteria are largely based around two key issues – the need to exclude areas in order to reduce the risk of intrusion into a facility by future generations seeking to extract resources and the need to protect the quality of exploitable groundwater.

It does not mean that other areas are definitely suitable to have a repository. There would have to be more detailed investigations, looking at a wide range of things including geology, to answer that question.

It is also important to be aware that the surface facilities – such as the tunnel entrance and offices – could be a number of kilometres from the repository, so they could be in an area which is unsuitable for the underground facility.

The Government say that, in their view, the BGS report does not present any reason why the communities in West Cumbria should not continue to consider whether or not they wish to take part in the site selection process for a repository.

The survey only rules out areas that are clearly geologically unsuitable

-  Partnership area
-  Allerdale/Copeland boundary
-  Excluded area



westcumbria:mrws at Whitehaven Festival

In the summer we set out our stall at the Whitehaven Festival. We were delighted by the number of people who came to see us to find out more about what is going on.

We also ran a quiz to win an iPod touch, with all the answers on the exhibition boards. So everyone got the chance to win a good prize and to find out more about one of the most important issues in this area.



Your questions answered...

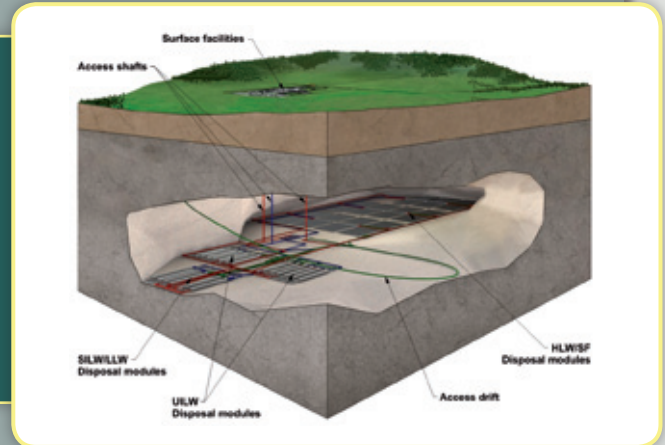
These are some of the questions people have asked so far. There are also more questions that people have asked us on our website www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk

We also have our own questions about what is going on. We'll keep you up to date as we learn more.

> What is a geological disposal facility?

The Government says geological disposal involves putting radioactive waste in an engineered underground facility deep inside a suitable rock formation to ensure no harmful quantities of radioactivity ever reach the surface.

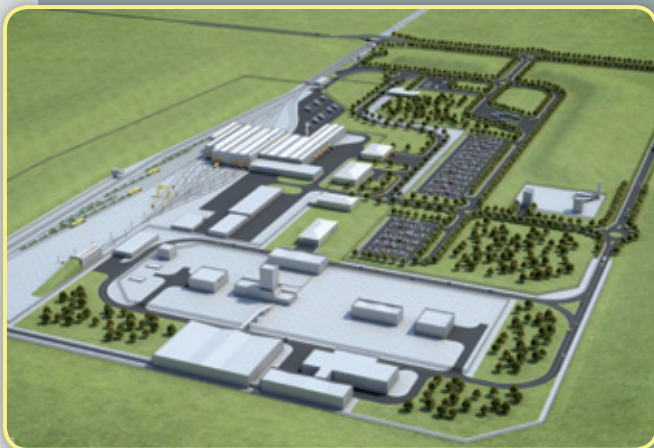
This way of managing higher-activity radioactive waste in the long term is recommended by the independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management and is also preferred internationally.



> What would a facility look like?

The diagrams you can see on this page have been provided by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and help to give some idea what it might look like. Above the ground there would be buildings like workshops and offices.

The NDA says the underground vaults and tunnels would probably be at a depth somewhere between 200 and 1,000 metres and would extend over several square kilometres.



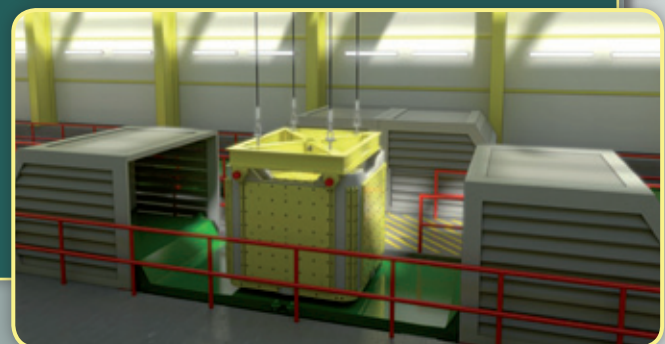
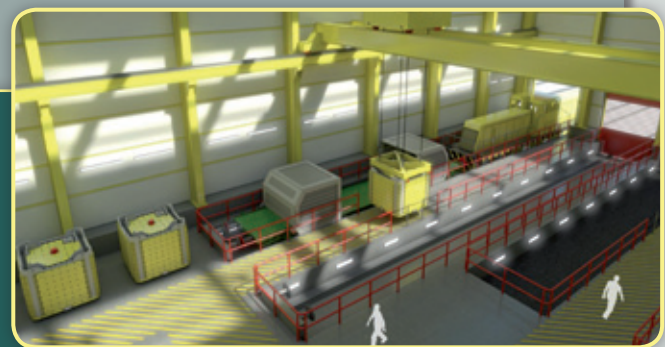
> How might a geological disposal facility affect us?

The positive effects might include jobs and extra investment by the Government in the area.

The negative effects might include concerns about safety and a negative perception of the area.

These are just some of the issues we are looking at on your behalf. We will need to make an initial judgement on the key questions before we decide whether to take part in the process to find a site.

If we do participate further we will obviously ask even more detailed questions. No community would agree to have a repository unless it was confident it would be in the interests of local people.



Your views matter

"This issue is important to all of us. We want to make sure everybody has an opportunity to find out what geological disposal would mean, so they can give members of the Partnership their views."

Councillor Keith Hitchen, Cumbria Association of Local Councils



"Over the next few months the Partnership will be providing a lot of opportunities to find out more, ask questions, and to start to form your own views on this important issue. Your views really do matter."

Mike Davidson,
Allerdale Borough Councillor

“” You say...

> Steven Barnes, Cockermouth says:
*"I think the key issues are **security**, the **environment** and whether it will bring **economic development** and improved infrastructure to the region."*

> Shirley Atkinson, Egremont says:
*"I don't feel that Cumbria would benefit from having a higher level waste repository here unless it was to **benefit the people of Cumbria** by a huge amount."*

? Our poll

We did a poll that shows most people do not yet know enough about this process.

> Only about **1 in 4** people in Cumbria (27%) said they knew the Government was looking for a community to volunteer to host a repository.

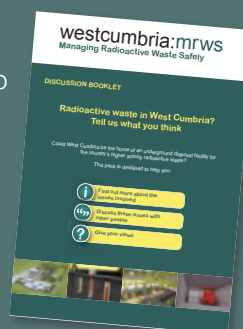
> Only **1 in 5** (20%) knew that talking to the Government does not commit a community to have the facility.

Over the next few months we will be stepping up our efforts to tell people more about the issues. This will include community drop-in events across the area where people will be able to get more information, ask questions and tell us their views. There will also be articles in the media, exhibitions in places like libraries and regular updates on our website.

Why not organise your own discussion group?

We have put together a pack containing background information and a DVD. You can use this to arrange a group within your organisation or with friends to have a chat about some of the key issues and to give us your views. Discussion packs will be available from early November, and you can ask for any number to be sent to you.

To request a pack email your name and address to helenf@3kq.co.uk or phone **0800 048 8912**.



Chances to find out more...



Next Partnership meeting:
Greenhill Hotel, Wigton, 28 October

Community drop-in events:

- > Millom Network Centre, 19 November, 12-8pm
- > Civic Hall, Whitehaven, 23 November, 12-8pm
- > Crosthwaite Church Hall, Keswick, 24 November, 12-8pm
- > Market Hall, Wigton, 25 November, 12-8pm
- > Calderbridge Village Hall, 26 November, 12-8pm
- > St Michael's Church, Workington, 3 December, 12-8pm

Plus four events in Carlisle, Penrith, Kendal and Barrow. Visit the website for more information.

Contact the Partnership

You can find out more by visiting:

www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk

You can also contact us by calling our free helpline on:

0800 048 8912

or by emailing:

contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk