

Our Aim is "to make recommendations to Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council on whether they should participate or not in the Geological Disposal Facility siting process, without commitment to eventually host a facility".

E-bulletin No.8 – February 2011

Here's the latest news from the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership. In this issue, you will find updates on the following:

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1. Partnership meetings

- The latest Partnership meeting was held at the Hundith Hill Hotel, near Cockermouth, on 19th January 2011. There were a number of important presentations during the latest meeting.

The first looked at the context and role of the planning system and its likely role in any development of a Geological Disposal Facility. This is because the Partnership has declared that it would have to be 'satisfied that suitable regulatory and planning processes are in place or being developed to protect residents, workforce and the environment.

There was also a presentation and discussion focusing on how regulators may relate to the community in future, including any future Community Siting Partnership.

The focus of this discussion was to look more closely at what mechanisms regulators use to provide information to the community and what mechanisms are in place to allow the community to influence regulatory decisions.

Former member of CoRWM Professor Andy Blowers then delivered a presentation on the ethics of Managing Radioactive Waste Safely, summarising the work done to date by CoRWM. He discussed issues such as the ethics of making decisions that will affect many generations into the future and the possible implications of waste from new nuclear power stations going into a repository.

There was a very brief update on the second stage of Public and Stakeholder Engagement (PSE2). A detailed analysis of PSE2 will be undertaken after the closing date for community feedback (**11th February 2011**) and the outputs from all of the strands of engagement will be considered at the Partnership meeting on 14th April.

Partnership members were offered the opportunity later in the day to view a screening of *Into Eternity*, a 75 minute film about the geological disposal facility under construction in Finland.

There will also be a public screening of the film at the Theatre by the Lake during the Keswick Film Festival at 3.30pm on Saturday 12th February followed by a discussion on the issues raised by the film. For more information visit www.keswickfilmclub.org/kff/.

A report of the latest Partnership meeting will be available on the website shortly (www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk/documents.asp).

- The Partnership meets every six weeks. Members of the public are welcome to attend as observers and are also given an opportunity to ask questions. We would be grateful if anyone who is planning to attend could contact sharon.walker@copeland.gov.uk to let her know so that we can ensure that enough seating is made available. The next scheduled meetings are:

3rd March 2011, The Copeland Centre, Whitehaven. 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600

14th April 2011, The Wave, Maryport, 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600

2. Residents' panel



- The Partnership recently held its second residents' panel event as part of the second stage of its Public and Stakeholder Engagement programme (PSE2). The purpose of these events is to have a more detailed conversation with people about their views on some of the important issues relating to geological disposal.

At this session, held in early January in Whitehaven, panel members were asked to submit their thoughts on community benefits and how they should be distributed if there was a decision to take part in the siting process – and why. The panel was also asked for views on how the Partnership should communicate difficult issues and different opinions relating to geological disposal.

A number of interesting comments and suggestions were raised which will be used to help shape the Partnership's future work. It was clear that there are a range of views on geological disposal and on how community benefits could be distributed, but all those in attendance recognised the importance of the principle of benefits for a community should it decide to host a facility.

3. Stakeholder organisations workshop

- The Partnership also ran a workshop for local stakeholder organisations in early January as part of PSE2 to help them understand more about the MRWS process and input into some key issues such as:
 - How to use public views to decide whether to proceed.
 - Impacts and community benefits.
 - Community involvement in a potential siting process.

More than 20 representatives of key stakeholder organisations attended the workshop at the Hunday Manor Hotel, near Workington.

Attendees – which included members of parish councils, trade unions, environmental groups and transport organisations – were shown a DVD outlining the process behind the Government's search to find a location for a geological disposal facility for higher activity radioactive waste. They also heard a presentation from the British Geological Survey about the initial geological screening study of West Cumbria that was undertaken.

They then took part in a range of workshop sessions designed to help improve their understanding of these issues and provide them with opportunities to feed back their thoughts and ideas.

The workshop was designed for organisations that are formally constituted and have a role to represent others, have a clear interest in this issue and are based in or near West Cumbria.

4. Latest newsletter

The Partnership's latest newsletter has been distributed to all households in West Cumbria. Copies are also being sent to places like libraries and leisure centres, and you can also find a copy on the website at http://www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk/documents/138-WestCumbriaMRWS_Winternewsletter.pdf.



5. Getting involved



- A key role of the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership is to represent the views of people living in or near West Cumbria in these discussions with Government.

If you would like to order a discussion pack and DVD to talk about some of the issues with a small group please email helenf@3kq.co.uk or phone 0800 048 8912.

The deadline for submitting responses online and for the Partnership receiving any postal responses is 11th February 2011, when the current round of public and stakeholder engagement ends.

Whilst it is important, therefore, to get your responses to the Partnership before then, the information may still be of interest if you are unable to meet this deadline. We are also keen to hear your views throughout the year as the Partnership continues to consider the issues involved.

If you want to [get involved](#) then visit the Partnership website for details. You can send us your views by using email (contact@westcumbriamrws.org), freephone (0800 048 8912) or freepost (Freepost RSKT-LTXU-HAYC, West Cumbria MRWS Partnership, Copeland Borough Council, The Copeland Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven CA28 7SJ).

The West Cumbria MRWS Partnership also has a Facebook Page and a Twitter profile. You can find these at:

<http://on.fb.me/fbZzir> or by following [@westcumbriamrws](#) on Twitter.

6. Frequently asked questions

Q. Why is geological disposal the Government's preferred option?

A. In 2006, given current knowledge, the independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) recommended deep geological disposal as the preferred option for the long term management of higher activity radioactive waste. However, CoRWM said it was important to undertake further research and development to reduce uncertainties about the long-term safety of geological disposal, and that there was flexibility to leave open the possibility of other practical alternatives for the long-term management of the waste.

Geological disposal is also internationally recognised as the preferred approach for the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste. However, part of the role of the Partnership will be to test all the arguments and to come to a view about whether a facility might be an appropriate approach for people living in West Cumbria.

If a decision is made to participate in the next stage of this process the issues would be explored in more detail before any final decision on whether or not to host a facility in the area.

Q. How would a geological disposal facility stop radioactivity returning to the surface?

A. The Government says that the geological disposal facility would be designed to use both natural barriers (the geology) and man-made barriers (the waste container, materials placed around the container etc) to ensure that no harmful quantities of radioactivity ever reach the surface environment. The safety of any facility is a key issue that the Partnership will be looking into as part of this process and will also be assessed by regulators such as the Environment Agency.

Q. Does the risk of earthquakes in West Cumbria mean we should not be considering siting a repository in the area?

A. The Government says a geological disposal facility (GDF) will not be built in any area that is unsuitable and that a GDF will have to meet the demanding safety case requirements of the independent safety and environmental regulators. They say that the vibrations associated with earthquakes experienced in the UK will not significantly affect a repository at depth, but any potential for changes to the rock mass containing a GDF must be thoroughly investigated.

A thorough Seismic Hazard Assessment would be an essential element in the tests that would have to be carried out to identify a possible site for a GDF and is one of the requirements of the regulators' safety assessment principles. However, the Government says this can only be properly undertaken later in the siting process when more in-depth investigations can take place at a particular site.

These more detailed investigations will only be carried out if West Cumbria decides to participate in the search for a site, without making any commitment to have it

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