

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".

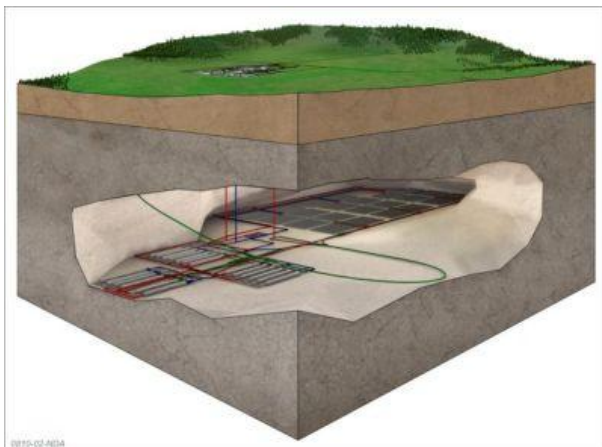
E-bulletin No.10 – April 2011

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. Spotlight on safety

The Partnership's most recent meeting, at The Wave in Maryport on 14th April, focused on the work that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has been doing on the safety of a repository.



Earlier this year the NDA published its [generic Disposal System Safety Case \(DSSC\)](http://www.nda.gov.uk/aboutus/geological-disposal/rwmd-work/dssc/) which covers a wide range of safety issues involved in developing a repository (www.nda.gov.uk/aboutus/geological-disposal/rwmd-work/dssc/).

Before the Partnership gives its advice on whether West Cumbria should take part in the search for somewhere to put a repository, it needs to decide whether it believes the NDA has the capability and processes in place to make a repository safe.

Partnership members therefore wanted to assess what the DSSC, and the way the NDA had produced it, showed about the organisation's capability and processes.



Lucy Bailey (left) from the NDA talked about how the NDA goes about developing a safety case – which looks at potential hazards and how they could be addressed.

She explained that the DSSC at this stage is generic – it doesn't yet look at the safety issues at a potential site as there is not yet a volunteer community.

The DSSC therefore provides a snapshot of the NDA's understanding and provides a basis for further work and discussion with stakeholders. Ms Bailey set out how the DSSC will develop as work on identifying and developing a site continues.

She said the NDA also commissioned an independent peer review of the DSSC and the organisation's Nuclear Safety & Environment Committee examined the reports.



Pete Wilkinson (above left) and Pete Roche from Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates (NWAA) also discussed their Issues Register, which identifies 101 safety issues they believe need to be addressed in developing a repository.

They emphasised the importance of clear and accessible information on safety. In particular, they wanted greater clarity about how issues were being addressed by the NDA including by which individuals, their qualifications and the timescales.

There were questions from Partnership members and the public about how the process could be made clearer so that it was easier to see if issues were being satisfactorily addressed. There were also questions about making the information available in an up to date way, rather than it just being updated periodically.

The NDA was asked to look at these questions and come back to the Partnership with a response.

A full report of the latest Partnership meeting has now been published on the website at www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk/documents.asp (Document 165). The documents section also includes a copy of [the NWAA's Issues Register](#).

2. Repository impacts on the area

The latest Partnership meeting also heard the results of a study of public perceptions about the impacts of a potential repository in West Cumbria.



GVA Ltd was commissioned by the Partnership to report on how people thought a repository might affect the area, including economic, environmental and social factors. They talked to 740 people including residents, businesses and visitors.

Rob Hickey from GVA said most people they talked to thought a repository would bring more jobs to the area. Most also thought a repository would be good for businesses and there is an expectation it would lead to

investment in transport.

About half of the people thought it would have no impact on the environment but 40% thought it would have some impact.

GVA found that people in rural areas were more likely to have concerns about the possible impacts of a repository.

Rob Hickey said young people were more likely to be positive, largely because of expectations about jobs. However, older people had more concerns, in particular about the impact a large construction project like this would have.

GVA found that most visitors thought a repository would have no impact on tourism but about 40% did think it would have some impact. The tourism businesses they had talked to generally felt a repository would have some negative impact on tourism.

Partnership members expressed concern about the impact media reporting of the debate about a repository could have. Some people suggested that if there was a decision to take part in the search for a site there would need to be some mitigation to ensure the tourism and food and drink sectors are not adversely affected while discussions were going on i.e. before a site could be constructed.

The full report of the impacts research is available in the [documents section of the website](#) (Document 168).

3. Public and Stakeholder views

The draft report on the second round of the Partnership's Public & Stakeholder Engagement programme (PSE2) was also discussed at the last meeting.

Three rounds of engagement have been built into the Partnership's work programme to inform, seek input from and give feedback to the public and stakeholder organisations. PSE2 took place between November 2010 and February 2011 and included community events, discussion pack sessions, newsletters sent to all households in West Cumbria, articles in the media and a workshop for stakeholders.

Rhuari Bennett from the Partnership's independent facilitators 3KQ set out the work that that was carried out during PSE2 and the main results. The report on PSE2 will now be finalised, including setting out how the Partnership will respond to the key issues raised by the public and stakeholders.

The PSE2 report will be finalised at the next meeting and made available in the documents section of the website in early June at www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk/documents.asp.

4. Latest public opinion survey

A third opinion survey was carried out for the Partnership at the end of PSE2 by polling company Ipsos MORI. Nearly 1,300 Cumbrian residents took part. The key messages are that awareness is increasing, while the degree of support or opposition to a decision to participate in the siting process remains largely unchanged.



In Copeland, awareness that the Partnership is talking to the Government about possibly locating a geological disposal facility somewhere in West Cumbria increased from 70% to 75% compared with the survey in November 2009. Awareness has increased from 61% to 71% in Allerdale, and from 52% to 58% in Cumbria as a whole.

The latest figures also show that more people are getting a better understanding of the issues, with 37% of people in Copeland and 28% of people in Allerdale now saying they think they 'know a fair amount' about the discussions.

Of course, there is still a long way to go. This is a very important issue to everyone living in the area and the Partnership wants as many people as possible to be aware of the issues involved so they can come to an informed opinion and help us decide whether to take part in the search for somewhere to put a repository.

Although awareness is increasing, the public's attitude towards the area continuing with the process and having a closer look at potential sites has hardly changed.

In Allerdale, 52% were in favour of the Partnership recommending that the local councils take the next step in the MRWS process (which would mean starting to identify possible sites for locating a facility) and 25% were opposed. In Copeland, 62% were in favour and 19% were opposed. In Cumbria as a whole, 48% favoured going to the next stage in the process and 28% were opposed.

A copy of the survey report is available in [the documents section of the website](#) (Document 164).

5. Government inventory update

In late March, the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), published the 2010 UK Radioactive Waste Inventory.



Updated every three years, the inventory includes radioactive wastes from 36 sites and is provided by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). It describes the stocks of radioactive waste and radioactive materials held in the UK at 1st April 2010. It also predicts wastes and materials that could arise from the operation and decommissioning of current facilities in the future.

The Inventory contains detailed information provided by organisations managing radioactive wastes at their sites. This comprises the following categories of waste generated in the UK: High Level Waste (HLW); Intermediate Level Waste (ILW); and Low Level Waste (LLW) including the Very Low Level Waste (VLLW) sub-category.

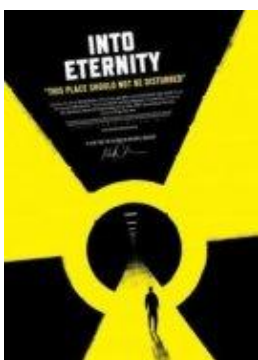
The Inventory also includes data on nuclear materials – spent fuel, plutonium and uranium – that, while not currently classified as wastes, might be designated as wastes in the future if it were decided that they had no further use.

Estimates of how much waste there is – and therefore what would go into a repository – change over time as waste is treated and packaged, regulations are amended, technology and plans change and forecasts are refined. Therefore the Partnership cannot be clear exactly how much waste would go into a repository at this stage.

The Partnership has drafted a set of principles that it would want to agree with the Government on how the community would be consulted about future changes in inventory if (a) it was to take part in the search for a site, and (b) it was ultimately to decide to accept a facility being built in the area. These can be found in [the documents section of the website](#) (Document 97).

Further details about the latest estimates of the inventory are available at <http://www.nda.gov.uk/ukinventory/>.

6. Into Eternity DVD



DVD copies of *Into Eternity*, a documentary film about the geological disposal facility that is being developed in Finland, are now available to rent in the libraries in Whitehaven, Workington, Carlisle, Penrith, Kendal and Barrow.

It is also available to buy and rent on [Amazon](#) and iTunes. The Rosehill Theatre near Whitehaven plans to show it later in the year. The film has also been screened on More4 (renamed as *Nuclear Eternity*) and can be viewed until 25th May at: www.channel4.com/programmes/nuclear-eternity/4od.

7. Future Partnership meetings

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:

24th May 2011, Braithwaite Village Hall, near Keswick, 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600

23rd June 2011, Market Hall, Egremont, 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600

8. 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 the Government.

The most important time to give your views will be when we have produced our draft advice to the councils. We will be providing lots of opportunities at that point for you to find out more and tell us what you think. However, we are 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 e-mail (contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk), 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).

We also have a Facebook Page and a Twitter profile. You can find these at: <http://on.fb.me/fbZzir> or by following [@westcumbriamrws](https://twitter.com/westcumbriamrws) on Twitter.

9. Frequently asked questions

The following Q&As are based on information provided by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

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.

Q. How will recent events in Japan affect plans for a geological disposal facility in Britain and the MRWS process?

A. The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change has asked the Chief Nuclear Inspector Mike Weightman for a full report on events in Japan so that the implications for the UK are clear. This will be prepared in close cooperation internationally with other nuclear regulators. He has asked for an interim report by mid-May 2011 and a final report within six months.

The report will be put in the public domain and will be independent, evidence based, comprehensive, wide in scope and based on the best technical advice available.

There has been no change in the Government's policy that geological disposal remains the preferred approach for long term management of higher activity waste – indeed the Government says it could be argued that it emphasises the importance of making progress on long term solutions for higher activity waste management.

However, safety is and will continue to be the number one priority and the Government say they want to ensure that any lessons learned from Mike Weightman's report are properly considered.

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