

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.14 – October 2011

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Introduction

Welcome to the latest e-bulletin from the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership.



In the last few months we have been working on a consultation document setting out our initial opinions on the key issues.

Once this document has been agreed, there is to be a major consultation to allow people to find out more about the issues, ask questions and give their views before a final report is sent to Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council in the first half of 2012.

The councils will then have to decide whether the areas covered by Allerdale and Copeland Borough Councils should take part in the search for somewhere to put a repository for higher activity radioactive waste, without making any commitment to have it here.

1. Latest Partnership meeting (September 2011)

The main objective of the meeting on 20th September 2011 was to consider the Partnership's draft consultation document for the third round of public and stakeholder engagement (PSE3).

Most of the document was agreed at the Partnership meeting subject to a number of amendments. However, it was felt that the chapter on the siting process required further discussions between the three local authorities and the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC), particularly on the issue of how voluntarism would work if a decision is made to enter the siting process.

It was agreed that the Partnership's Technical Review Group should reconvene to go through the siting process chapter to resolve outstanding issues. The siting chapter will now be reviewed by the full Partnership at the meeting on 3rd November 2011.



In addition, a draft submission to the DECC consultation on its national framework for site assessment was circulated to Partnership members for comment prior to submission at the end of September. You can read the final submission [here](#).

ITV Border news attended the meeting and broadcast a piece about the MRWS process in Cumbria that evening.

2. PSE3 preparation activity

The Partnership is preparing material and events for the consultation that will start shortly after its consultation document has been agreed.

In addition to the consultation document itself, the Partnership is producing an eight page document that will give an overview of the Partnership's initial opinions. This will be sent to all households in West Cumbria, as well as places like libraries and doctors' surgeries. It will also be included with the copies of the full consultation document and a DVD.

Sections of the consultation document are being developed into materials which are suitable for schools and youth groups to use in classes, off-curriculum sessions and informal get-togethers. Connexions is supporting the Partnership by helping to deliver these sessions.



A series of dates and venues have been booked for community drop-in events during the consultation period. Please keep an eye on the Partnership's [events page](#) and future e-bulletins for further details. Full details of the consultation will be made available shortly after the consultation document has been agreed.

3. Partnership visit to French research facility

Members of the Partnership have visited an underground research facility managed by the French nuclear waste management agency, ANDRA. The group descended 1,600 feet into the Meuse/Haute-Marne underground research laboratory near Bure, in the Lorraine region of North East France.



The laboratory has been built to test the suitability of the area for a possible geological disposal facility for higher activity radioactive waste.

The visit was an opportunity for Partnership members to see what lessons can be learnt in an area where investigations are being carried out to see if it would make a suitable site for a repository. It was equally valuable to see what construction

looks like above ground while these detailed investigations are taking place.

The team also met with local people and talked to them about the role they feel the community have been able to play in shaping the work that is being done there.

The French are about five to ten years ahead of the UK in terms of developing plans for geological disposal. The visit provided a real insight into what it could be like in West Cumbria over the next decade or so, if a decision is made to take part in the search for somewhere to put a repository.

A report on the visit to France will be presented to the full Partnership and will be available on the [website](#) shortly.

4. Future Partnership meetings

Members of the public are welcome to attend [Partnership meetings](#) as observers and are also given an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions.

We would be grateful if anyone who is planning to attend could contact catherine.little@copeland.gov.uk to let her know so that we can ensure that enough seating is made available. The next scheduled meetings are:

- 3rd November 2011, Market Hall, Egremont, 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600
- 8th December 2011, The Copeland Centre, 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600

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 the Government.

You can find more information on our [website](#).

The most important time to get involved and give us your views will be during the consultation period but you can contact us by using:

E-mail: contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk

Freephone: 0800 048 8912

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, a LinkedIn group and a Twitter profile. You can find these at: <http://on.fb.me/fbZzir>, www.linkedin.com/groups/West-Cumbria-Managing-Radioactive-Waste-3958824?home=&qid=3958824&trk=anet_uq_hm or by following [@westcumbriamrws](https://twitter.com/westcumbriamrws) on Twitter.

6. Frequently asked questions

- In each of these e-bulletins we include two 'Frequently asked questions'. You can find more of these [Q&As on our website](#).

Q. What might a repository look like?

A. A repository would be located between 200 and 1000 metres underground. By comparison, the Eiffel tower is 300 metres high.

The underground facilities could be somewhere between 6 km² and 25 km² (3.5 and 15 square miles) in size, depending on the type of rock, and how much and what kind of waste would be placed into them. This would be between approximately one and four times the size of the Sellafield site.

The amount of rock that would need to be excavated to create the facility is similar to what was removed during the building of the Channel Tunnel.

There would also be surface facilities with buildings such as administration offices, workshops and possibly a waste packaging facility for waste created by any new nuclear reactors. It is estimated these facilities would be about 1 km².

The underground facilities would be accessed through sloping tunnels and vertical shafts. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, which is responsible for implementing geological disposal, says surface facilities could either be above the underground facilities or up to 10 km apart, possibly further.

Q. What's happening next?

A. We have already carried out [two of three stages](#) of communications and engagement with people in West Cumbria to inform everyone about the work of the Partnership, raise awareness of the issues involved and gauge their views.

As more information has become available, our public and stakeholder engagement

(PSE) programme has provided people with a range of opportunities to form their own views on the issues that we are looking at, and to contribute to the discussions.

Activities that have taken place so far include Community Drop-In Events across the county, the distribution of a discussion pack and DVD, newsletters delivered to all households in West Cumbria and information through various media outlets and in places like local libraries.

The consultation which is due to start in the next month or two will be the most important point for everyone to get involved. The Partnership will be providing a wide range of opportunities for people to find out more about the issues involved and give their views. Full details will be available on the Partnership's website.

Once all this work has been completed, and people have had their say, the Partnership will send a report to each of the local authorities setting out its opinions on the issues involved in taking part in the search for a site. This is likely to happen around spring 2012.

The councils will then make a formal decision about whether or not to enter the siting process.

A decision to participate would not be a decision to host a facility. At this stage we are simply looking to make a decision about whether we are prepared to consider hosting a geological disposal facility somewhere in West Cumbria. This is an important decision.

If West Cumbria does participate in the siting process, a new partnership would be established. Ongoing partnership discussions and engagement with local people would be coupled with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority looking at a wide range of criteria, including detailed safety, social, environmental and geological assessments to begin to narrow the focus to potentially suitable sites.

The councils would be able to withdraw from the process right up to the point when work could start on building a facility, probably more than a decade from now.

Please pass this e-bulletin on. Thank you.

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