

Title:	Update on Planning and Economic Vision
Document No:	255
Status:	Adopted
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Notes:	This paper updates and builds on Document 134. The document was discussed at the 21 st February 2012 Partnership meeting. Published on 23 rd February 2012.

1 – Background and Purpose of paper

In early 2011 the Partnership considered two issues as part of its work programme. In January it received a paper which summarised 'the context and role of the planning system' and in particular the role of local and national public bodies in the process to potentially consider an application for planning permission for a **Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)** in West Cumbria. In March the Partnership received a presentation on the economic vision for West Cumbria in an attempt to understand the extent to which a GDF may or may not fit into it. The purpose of this paper is to understand any significant changes and updates related to both subject matters.

2 – Planning

In the January 2011 paper the Partnership was informed that;

- Planning consent for a potential GDF would be sought by NDA after a preferred site is identified (early in Stage 6 of the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Process).
- Government is currently inclined to apply the major infrastructure planning system introduced under the Planning Act 2008 to geological disposal of radioactive waste.
- Government had proposed that the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) originally formed as part of the Major Infrastructure Planning regime will be abolished and a **Major Infrastructure Planning Unit** established within the Planning Inspectorate.
- Decisions on applications for **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)** will be made by Ministers rather than by the Major Infrastructure Planning Unit.
- The development consent process is envisaged to take 12 months resulting in a recommendation to and a decision by the relevant Government Minister.
- In this process local planning authorities will engage in pre-application discussions with the applicant, consider applications against relevant local policies and prepare a response in the form of a **Local Impact Report (LIR)**, vet the applicants **Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC)** and negotiate a planning obligations and community benefits package.
- Should Government choose not to progress with the Major Infrastructure Planning process for development consent, an application for a GDF in West

Cumbria could be processed under the Town and Country Planning Acts. In this respect, depending on the location, such an application would be dealt with by either Cumbria County Council or the Lake District National Park Authority, as minerals and waste planning authorities. Depending on the extent and location of any proposals, it is possible that both authorities would be involved.

- Applications for non- minerals or waste ancillary developments would be determined under the Town and Country Planning Acts by Copeland or Allerdale Borough Councils or the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) depending on location. Applications for mineral or waste ancillary developments would be considered by Cumbria County Council or if inside the National Park, by the LDNPA.
- The County Council is the planning authority for minerals and waste developments outside of the National Park boundary and is responsible for preparing the **Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF)**, the minerals and waste policy documents for the County.
- The LDNPA is the planning authority for minerals and waste developments within the National Park and the authority has its own suite of policy documents. Within the policy documents a **GDF is classed as a major development** and an application would need to satisfy a range of criteria. The Authority would need to be convinced;
 - There are no alternative sites available outside the National Park;
 - There is a proven overriding national need that cannot be met in any other way;
 - The development is designed and carried out to cause least practicable harm;
 - Any detrimental effects on the special qualities of the National Park can be adequately mitigated; and
 - The development has no overall adverse impacts on the local economy.
- All applications either under traditional Town and Country Planning Act procedures or via the Major Infrastructure Planning process will necessitate consideration of a range of **common planning issues** within the following headings;
 - Design and Access
 - Health Impact
 - Traffic Impact
 - Environmental Impact
 - Socio-Economic Impact
 - Assessment of Alternatives
 - Statutory Development Plan policies.

Since last January developments in relation to Planning include;

- Confirmation from Government that under the Localism Act 2011 the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) will be abolished on 31st March 2012

and its functions will transfer to a new national infrastructure directorate that has been created within a restructured Planning Inspectorate.

- From April 2012 the relevant Secretary of State will be the decision maker on all national infrastructure applications for development consent
- DECC have confirmed that the scope of the development consent process has not been extended to include a Geological Disposal Facility and this process would require secondary legislation to be passed
- In terms of planning policy both Copeland and Allerdale Borough Councils have prepared their Core Strategy and Development Management Policies documents for consultation in March 2012 with adoption likely in summer 2013. LDNPA Core Strategy was adopted in Oct 2010.
- CCC are about to start on a review of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy the scope of which is to include radio-active waste policies and are currently in the process of re-submitting the MWDF Site Allocations Policies to the Secretary of State following the successful High Court challenge by Barrow BC to the policies adopted by CCC last year.

3 – Economic Vision for West Cumbria

At its meeting in March 2011 the Partnership received a presentation on the current economic vision for West Cumbria in an attempt to understand the extent to which a GDF may or may not fit into it. The Partnership heard that the current vision is that contained within the published Energy Coast Master-plan. Members of the Partnership made a number of comments regarding the current vision including the perceived over-reliance on the nuclear industry, the need to attract other businesses into the area and the role of other existing business sectors such as agriculture and tourism. The meeting was informed that economic vision was to be refreshed and significant changes would be reported back to the Partnership.

Since March, strategic partners including Britain's Energy Coast, the NDA and the local authorities have engaged with private sector partners in an attempt to develop an 'economic blueprint' for West Cumbria. The latest version of the document builds on existing strategies and plans and provides;

- The Blueprint proposes a joint approach to economic development, as well as highlighting a shortlist of transformational projects
- A strategy for the development of the local economy around;
 - Supporting our most dynamic and growth oriented businesses to diversify, and
 - Channelling investment to ensure a positive legacy for the extensive investment in nuclear new build and decommissioning
- Identifies key sectors and activities in which West Cumbria has competitive advantage and which will yield the greatest economic benefits and offer the greatest diversification potential, including
 - 'Clean-tech', Low Carbon industries
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Nuclear decommissioning

- Nuclear New Build
- Supporting sectors including construction, retailing, business and professional services, the visitor economy and agriculture
- Four investment areas to provide focus for partners combined efforts;
 - Optimising Nuclear Investment
 - Expansion through Diversification through Innovation
 - Supporting Physical Infrastructure
 - Growing the Asset Base
- Each investment area has a range of 'transformational actions' that collectively will deliver the strategy and will form the backbone of a soon to be developed implementation plan, which will contain priority projects and arrangements for delivery

There is still further work required to take forward and finalise the strategy and implementation plan which are both envisaged to be completed and agreed by all partners in April/May.

4 – Conclusions

In terms of planning policy and process little has changed relative to the considerations around MRWS as discussed by the Partnership in January 2011. Progress towards 'refreshing' the economic vision for West Cumbria, through the development of the economic blueprint, has been substantial, but is still incomplete. The current strategy makes no reference to the provision of a Geological Disposal Facility as being part of that strategy.