

[managing radioactive waste safely]

Charles Hendry MP
Department of Energy and Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

Dear Charles

24th January 2012

West Cumbria MRWS Partnership – Engagement Package for 2012/13

I trust you are well.

I write regarding DECC's financial support of the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) process in West Cumbria.

As you know, this is a critical time for the MRWS process. The Partnership is half way through its final high profile public consultation and, later this year, we will submit our final report to the councils in advance of a Decision about Participation.

We have today, in parallel with this letter to you, submitted full details of the proposed Engagement Package for 2012-13 to your officials. However, before I come to that, I must first highlight an outstanding concern over the underfunding of the Engagement Package for the current financial year. The Partnership initially requested £1.43m. Only £1.1m was provided, subject to a 6-month review. As foreseen, the review has highlighted a funding shortfall of £125K. Clearly, rapid approval of this funding is necessary, as Copeland Borough Council - the Accountable Body in the process – cannot spend at risk. It goes without saying that neither the Partnership nor DECC would benefit from this year's Engagement Package running out right in the middle of a public consultation, but that is where we are heading and I therefore hope you will be able to support the speedy resolution of this year's underfund.

Turning to the Engagement Package for 2012-13. We have provided details to your officials, but I would like to take the opportunity of raising a few points here, to share our perspective.

We do not consider this to be a negotiation. The timescales and activities have already been compressed in light of the economic climate. There is no extra 'contingency' added in beyond those explicitly stated in the narrative provided. This is *already* removed.

Funding approval is required for the complete set of activities to secure a Decision about Participation. The difficulties experienced this year in securing funding, despite the 6-month review undertaken, mean it is difficult for us to accept less than the full funding required up to a Decision about Participation. Whilst we have set out the figures on a quarterly basis, please do not infer that funding could be approved on a quarterly basis.

If it would be helpful, I would be willing to meet you to discuss the financial situation overall, as well as our on-going concerns about funding and the implications of problems or delays. Otherwise I hope for a speedy resolution to the Engagement Package for 2012-13, in parallel with the funding shortfall for the current year. I emphasise again that the councils cannot spend at risk, which may incur delays if funding is not forthcoming.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Knowles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and 'K'.

Cllr Tim Knowles
Chair of the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership