

[managing radioactive waste safely]

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

Dear Charles

24th February 2012

West Cumbria MRWS Partnership – Engagement Package for 2012/13

I write with reference to the letter to you dated 24th January 2012 from Cllr Tim Knowles on behalf of the MRWS Partnership.

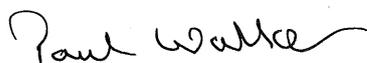
I am disappointed that one month later we have still not had confirmation of the funding shortfall requested. As previously explained, Copeland Borough Council is unable and unwilling to spend at risk. Regrettably, it appears that we have no choice but to require the Partnership to pause its work if we have not received written confirmation by 5pm on Friday 2nd March.

I should explain some of the implications of this that may not be immediately apparent. Pausing the process as of 2nd March will incur delay, frustration for all local partners, and of course extra cost. This assumes the process restarts at a later date, which is not a certainty. Regarding delay, work that is paused will take some time to restart, meaning key meetings will have to be rescheduled into busy diaries at a later date. Contractors to the Partnership will be asked to stop their work. We would have to issue a public statement explaining why the Partnership is pausing the work. This is likely to attract media interest. These are just some of the implications.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, we are increasingly concerned about the lack of confirmation of the Engagement Package for 2012-13. We are making very good progress with the last public consultation during this stage of work. However, it is only one month until contracts that are linked to the funding cycle will come to an end, meaning staff will potentially be made redundant from their MRWS work and leave a hole in the MRWS-related capacity for key partners. This would be an unacceptable situation to be in for us as a community being asked to consider volunteering for a significant national facility. People would reasonably find it hard to be inspired with confidence in Government's commitment to support the process - and any community benefits package promised in the White Paper - given the difficulty in securing what is a relatively small amount of money in the bigger picture.

I regret to write to you in these terms again. I hope we hear from you before 2nd March.

Yours sincerely



Paul Walker, CEO of Copeland BC, Accountable Body