

E-bulletin 5 – August 2010

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".*

This latest update from the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership includes information about the second stage of the Partnership's public and stakeholder engagement programme, a reminder about the study of West Cumbria by the British Geological Survey (BGS), news on Partnership meetings and two frequently asked questions.

Public and stakeholder engagement – second stage (PSE2)

- One of the key roles of the Partnership is to ensure that local people have the information they need to come to their own view on whether or not West Cumbria should fully participate in the Government search for a site for a geological disposal facility. The Partnership is now finalising plans for the second stage of its comprehensive public and stakeholder engagement (PSE) programme.
- A key priority in PSE2 will be to significantly raise awareness of the issues involved in the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) process. The Partnership is planning a high level of activity in order to raise awareness to the sort of levels that will enable the public to come to a reasonably informed view about this process.
- Running from the end of September, PSE2 is an opportunity to get public and stakeholder input to inform the Partnership's judgements on key topics, as well as gather evidence to support the work of the Partnership. We will also be telling people about the results of the BGS study (see below).
- The PSE2 process will help the Partnership to gain a clearer understanding of the issues that stakeholders and the public have and what information they feel they need. There are a number of key issues on which the Partnership will be providing information and seeking input at this stage:
 - The process, including voluntarism, timescales, and how a site selection process would work.
 - The role of the Partnership, public involvement and how a decision will be made.
 - What the Partnership did as a result of public views in PSE1.
 - How a geological disposal facility (GDF) might look above and below ground, its size and what could be in it.
 - Potential impacts including safety, security, and the image of the area.

- Potential benefits including investment that would naturally come with a facility and what additional community benefits the Government might provide in practice.
 - The results of the study by the British Geological Survey (see below).
- The Partnership will make use of a comprehensive range of methods to engage with local communities in PSE2. This will include community events, exhibitions in a variety of different locations, the media and a series of newsletters sent to all households in West Cumbria. There will also be articles in newsletters and publications from the Councils and other organisations.
 - The Partnership is also producing a pack of materials to enable members of the public to find out more and feed their views into the process. This 'discussion pack' includes a 10-minute DVD and a paper booklet with some background information and questions. The pack is designed to help small groups of up to 10 to have a discussion for around two hours, and then give their views on some of the key issues such as potential impacts, community benefits and community involvement in decision making.

The packs will be available from mid October. You can request any number of packs to be sent to you by emailing your name and address to helenf@3kq.co.uk or phoning 0800 048 8912.

- There will be a further round of public and stakeholder engagement around the middle of next year before there is any decision about whether or not West Cumbria should participate in the Government siting process.

The Partnership at the Whitehaven Festival

- Earlier in the summer the Partnership set out its stall at the Whitehaven Festival.
- There was a strong turn out, with a large number of people spending time at the exhibition stand and finding out more about the MRWS process and the potential impacts and benefits of a GDF. The Partnership ran a quiz to win an iPod Touch, with all the answers on the exhibition boards, so everyone got the chance to win a good prize and find out more about one of the most important issues in the area.

British Geological Survey 'desk top' study of West Cumbria

- The British Geological Survey (BGS), the UK independent geological experts, has been commissioned by the Government to carry out a study of the geology of West Cumbria. Its report is due to be published at the next Partnership meeting on 29th September (see below).
1. This work will not provide any indication where a facility might eventually be located. It is to avoid unnecessary work in areas which are clearly unsuitable on geological grounds. The BGS study will therefore simply eliminate from the process any areas that are obviously geologically unsuitable for the underground facility.
 2. The surface facilities could still be located in areas that are geologically unsuitable for the underground facilities.
 3. More rigorous assessment of a wide range of criteria will only be undertaken if West Cumbria then makes a 'decision to participate' further in the Government process.

4. The screening has been led by the BGS Chief Geologist and carried out by a team of experienced BGS geoscientists. No drilling or field-based investigative studies are taking place at this stage.
5. The Partnership has commissioned two independent peer reviews on behalf of the community, to ensure this initial geological work is rigorous and accurate.

For further detail, please see the Q&A section below.

Partnership meetings

- The main issues considered at the Partnership meeting at the Copeland Centre in Whitehaven on 5th August 2010 were: the types of waste that might go into a geological disposal facility, and what would constitute credible support from local communities if there was a decision to participate further in this process.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority delivered presentations on the inventory – the types of waste that might go into a repository – and these were followed by a critique by Pete Roche from the Edinburgh Energy and Environment Consultancy. This included their thoughts on the process for deciding the inventory and altering it in the future, and how the community might influence these decisions.

The Government has said that a decision about whether or not to participate in the search for a site for a repository should be based on 'credible support' from local people. The Partnership discussed how it should define 'credible support'.

The Partnership also looked at how the process to select a site would work if there was a decision to participate, and how local communities would be involved.

The meeting was well attended, with over 50 participants and public observers present. The meeting was covered by ITV Border. Richard Black, a BBC environment correspondent also attended the afternoon session, and conducted interviews for a documentary due to be broadcast on Radio 4 in September on 'nuclear waste disposal'.

A [report of the meeting](#) is now available on the Partnership website (Document 93 in the Document Library).

- 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 three scheduled meetings are:

29th September 2010

Hunday Manor Hotel, near Workington. 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600

This meeting will deal primarily with the publication of the British Geological Survey (BGS) report.

28th October 2010

Greenhill Hotel, Wigton. 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600

10th December 2010

The Copeland Centre, Whitehaven. 0900 arrivals, 0930-1600

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. What will the study by the British Geological Survey involve?

A. Before a community can make a decision about whether or not to participate in the process of finding a site for an underground geological disposal facility, the Government requires the area to be screened to take out areas that are clearly geologically unsuitable. There is obviously no point any community spending too much time considering this issue, if there are no areas where the facility could be built.

Therefore the British Geological Survey (BGS) was asked to look at the information that is already available about the geology of the whole of Allerdale and Copeland, and screen out any areas that clearly have unsuitable geology for a disposal facility.

The Government's MRWS White Paper set out what geological criteria should be used for this screening.

The screening has been led by the BGS Chief Geologist and carried out by a team of experienced geoscientists. It is a 'desk based study' only. This means that it only uses readily available information. It is not 'in depth' and there is no consideration of non-geological factors.

This work will not provide any indication where a facility might eventually be located. It is simply intended to avoid unnecessary work in areas which are clearly unsuitable on geological grounds.

It is also important to be aware that this work will only identify areas which are unsuitable for an underground facility. It does not affect where the surface facility could be located. The surface facility could be a number of miles from the underground facility and could therefore be located in an area that is found to be unsuitable for the underground facility.

More rigorous assessment of a wide range of criteria will only be undertaken if West Cumbria then makes a 'decision to participate' further in the Government siting process.

Q. Will the BGS study show potential sites for a geological disposal facility?

A. This work will not provide any indication where a facility might eventually be located. At this stage the Partnership is only looking at whether we are in principle prepared to consider hosting a geological disposal facility somewhere in West Cumbria.

The study by the British Geological Survey will simply identify how much of the area is unsuitable for hosting an underground facility. Clearly, there is no point any community spending too much time considering this issue if there are no areas where the facility could be built. Since the work of the Partnership is funded by the Government they would also not want us to continue looking at these issues if there is nowhere in the area that would be suitable.

A key role of the Partnership is to represent the views of people living in or near West Cumbria in these discussions with Government. If you want to [get involved](#) then visit the Partnership website for details or call us on 0800 048 8912.

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