

West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership

Report from the West Cumbria Neighbourhood Forums



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Note:

This report is a summary of discussions at the Neighbourhood Forums. It is compiled by independent facilitators 3KQ, operating on behalf of the Partnership (see below). Note that it is meant as a summary from all of the meetings, rather than a definitive record of detailed discussions at each one. It is intended to give a broad flavour of the range of issues raised and views expressed by members of the public attending the Forums. Information on how to access the detailed minutes of each Forum is provided in Section 2 of the report.

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Chamber of Commerce (Cumbria)
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Eden District Council
GMB Union
Lake District National Park Authority
National Farmers Union
Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum
Prospect Union
South Lakes District Council
West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group
West Cumbria Strategic Partnership Forum

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) is the name of the Government process to find a site for the geological disposal of the country's higher activity radioactive waste. Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council have begun the early stage of a conversation with the Government about possibly hosting a geological disposal facility (GDF).

The West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership (referred to as the Partnership) is an advisory body that has been set up by the Councils. Its purpose is to *'make recommendations to the Councils on whether they should participate or not in the Geological Disposal Facility siting process, without commitment to eventually host a facility'*.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement (PSE)

The Partnership is committed to reaching out to the people of West Cumbria to give them the opportunity to understand what is being discussed and express their views. The first round of PSE activity (PSE1) took place between November 2009 and March 2010.

In this first round of engagement, the Partnership aimed to: reach out to households, individuals, communities and organisations to inform people about what is happening; seek views on the issues and the Partnership's purpose/operation; and receive input on how stakeholders and the public would like to be engaged in the future.

Presentations at Neighbourhood Forums

As part of PSE1, the Partnership gave a presentation at each of the West Cumbria Neighbourhood Forums. The purpose of the presentation was to build understanding of the MRWS process and the work of the Partnership, to allow people to ask questions, and to identify any issues not yet being addressed.

The issues raised at the Forums are detailed in Section 2 of this report. In summary, the key issues raised by Forum attendees included:

- The extent to which local community views will be taken into account.
- The geological assessment process and how this links to previous work carried out by Nirex in the 1990s.
- The importance of community benefits, including what these might be.
- The need for improved transport infrastructure in West Cumbria.
- How the impact of the nuclear industry on tourism and industry can be mitigated.
- The design of a GDF including questions about the inventory and the need for retrievability to be built into the design.
- The importance of engaging with younger people.

Findings from the Public and Stakeholder Engagement

A report detailing the full findings of PSE1 is in the process of being produced, and will reflect the vast amount of material generated from all the strands of engagement and the Partnership's responses to the issues raised. This report will be made available on the Partnership's website following the next Partnership meeting on 13th May.

For further information on the MRWS process, the work of the Partnership and the findings of PSE1, please visit the Partnership website www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk, or contact us via the Partnership's free phone no. 0800 048 8912.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership

Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) is the name of the Government's process to find a site for the geological disposal of the country's higher activity radioactive waste.

The Government has invited communities across the country to talk to them without commitment about potentially hosting a geological disposal facility (GDF). These conversations are based on the principle of voluntarism, which means any community can withdraw at any time up to a point agreed with the Government.

Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council decided to start the conversation with the Government as, wherever a repository is built, it will affect Cumbria because around 70% of the country's radioactive waste is already stored at Sellafield. Regardless of wherever a site is ultimately chosen in the country, Cumbria will therefore be affected because of the transport of the waste.

The West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership (hereafter referred to as the Partnership) is an advisory body that has been set up by the Councils (see above for the full membership list). Its purpose is to *'make recommendations to the Councils on whether they should participate or not in the Geological Disposal Facility siting process, without commitment to eventually host a facility'*.

The key work areas and criteria that the Partnership is addressing are:

1. Safety, Security and Environment
2. Geology
3. Community Benefits
4. Design and Engineering
5. Siting Process
6. Public and Stakeholder views (cross cutting all of the other 5 areas)

The Partnership meets 6 weekly in public to: build understanding of the issues; cross examine arguments; commission independent research; judge whether the above criteria can be met; and consider public and stakeholder views and protect West Cumbrian interests. The whole process, including all public and stakeholder engagement, is being paid for by central Government rather than the local Councils.

If the process goes ahead it is estimated to take 2-3 decades. At the moment the process is past the first stage of responding to the Government's invitation. The next stage is for the British Geological Survey (BGS) to conduct an initial desktop study to screen out the areas of West Cumbria that are unsuitable on geological grounds.

1.2 Public and Stakeholder Engagement Round 1

The Partnership has placed Public and Stakeholder Engagement (PSE) at the heart of its Work Programme. Even at this early stage it has undertaken an unprecedented range and scale of engagement because it recognises the importance of engaging widely on an issue of such sensitivity. This is particularly pertinent given the history of radioactive waste management in West Cumbria.

Three rounds of PSE are planned before a decision to participate further or withdraw is made. This first round of Public and Stakeholder Engagement (PSE1) ran for a period of five months from November 2009 to March 2010. The broad aims of PSE1 were to inform people about what is happening, seek views on the issues and the Partnership's purpose and operation, and receive feedback on how stakeholders and the public would like to be engaged in the future.

The following strands of engagement were undertaken in PSE1:

- a. A bespoke website, free phone number and central email address.
- b. Work with the media including radio and newspaper coverage.
- c. An information leaflet to all households in West Cumbria.
- d. Additional work with specific groups e.g. schools and interest groups.
- e. A presentation to each Neighbourhood Forum in Allerdale and Copeland.
- f. A written survey of the Cumbria-wide Citizens' Panel and a telephone awareness tracking survey.
- g. Two workshops for stakeholder organisations and a group of residents from the Residents' Panel.

Each strand reaches out in a different way to households, individuals, communities and organisations, so helping the Partnership to reach more people and understand the widest range of views.

1.3 Neighbourhood Forums

As part of PSE1, the Partnership attended 16 of the 22 planned West Cumbria Neighbourhood Forum meetings, to present on the MRWS process. All 10 Copeland Forums and 6 out of 12 in Allerdale were attended, with the remaining 6 Allerdale Forums suspended due to the flooding in November. To address the suspension of these 6 Forums, the people on the distribution lists were sent another copy of the leaflet, a DVD version of the Partnership's presentation, and an invitation to attend a special meeting on 9th March in Bothel. The attendance at each meeting was between 20 and 70 people with approximately 525 people attending the 17 meetings in total.

Each Forum meeting had two Partnership members manning a basic information display from 6 p.m., presenting a standard presentation to the Forum and answering questions. Most meetings had a representative from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) present, with additional representatives from the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) and the Environment Agency at some.

Printed information, including leaflets and copies of the White Paper, was made available for people to read and take away. Forum attendees were also given the opportunity to sign up to the Partnership database to receive regular updates.

A summary of the issues raised at all of the Forums is provided below in Section 2. Full minutes or notes of the questions and comments raised at each Neighbourhood Forum can be found on the Partnership website (via the Getting Involved page).

1.4 PSE1 Report

The final report summarising the outputs from all of the strands of PSE1 is currently being produced (the report will be available in the Document Library on the Partnership website following the next Partnership meeting on 13th May). The report will seek to capture the essence of the issues raised in all of the strands of engagement undertaken and, most importantly, will demonstrate how the issues are being responded to by the Partnership.

1.5 Neighbourhood Forum Presentation Slides

A copy of the presentation slides is provided below.

A full copy of the presentation with commentary is available on the Partnership website at <http://westcumbriamrws.org.uk/#/docs-presentations/4538485331>.

West Cumbria MRWS Partnership
[Managing Radioactive Waste Safely]

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What is "MRWS"?

- Government initiative to find final home for higher level radioactive waste
- Gov't invited communities to talk to them, *without commitment*, about hosting a "Geological Disposal Facility"
- Based on voluntarism: Can withdraw at any time

✗ MRWS is not: new nuclear power stations, or Very Low Level Waste to landfill sites



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Aim of this talk

- Update you on:
 1. What councils and others are doing
 2. Being in Partnership
 3. What we're looking at
 4. What's happening next
- Answer questions (where possible)
- Seek your broad reaction

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What are councils doing?

- AllerdaleBC, CopelandBC, CumbriaCC have started the conversation with Gov't, partly as 70% of waste is already at Sellafield
- To ensure coordinated input, councils have set up a Partnership of community interests
- Partnership comprises ...

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Who is on the Partnership?



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What are we doing?

- ✗ Aim: To recommend whether or not West Cumbria should make a decision to participate in the Government siting process
- ...what are we NOT doing?
- ✗ Deciding whether there will be a repository in West Cumbria
- ✗ Deciding where a repository - if one is built - will go
- (...these come later if we don't withdraw)

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Key work areas

6 key areas of work: informing our recommendation whether or not West Cumbria should participate in the next stage

1. Safety, security and environment
2. Geology
3. Community Benefits
4. Design and Engineering
5. Process
6. Public and Stakeholder views (cross -cutting)



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How are we doing this?

The Partnership meets 6 -weekly (in public) to:

- ✗ Build understanding of the issues
- ✗ Cross-examine arguments
- ✗ Commission independent research
- ✗ Judge whether the criteria can be met
- ✗ Consider public and stakeholder views
- ✗ Protect West Cumbrian interests

"This has to be done RIGHT, not RUSHED "

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What happens next?



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Getting Involved

- ✗ Leaflet, and info display tonight
- ✗ westcumbriamrws.org.uk
- ✗ Observe Partnership Meetings (every 6 weeks)
- ✗ We'll come to you ... Ask us for specific meeting/presentation
- ✗ Register for updates by giving us your email address today
- ✗ Comment via website
- ✗ We'll be back in 3 -6 months time



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Questions?

Questions for us ... ?

Questions for you ...

1. Your broad reaction?
2. Issues that *the Partnership* should address?

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2. Issues Raised

The sections below summarise the issues raised by members of the public attending all of the Forums, and include examples of specific questions/comments. For details of the discussions at each Forum, please see the relevant minutes and/or notes for the individual Forum on the Partnership website under the Getting Involved page.

Partnership members' responses to the questions at each meeting have been recorded in the majority of the minutes. Due to the re-prioritisation of council resources due to the flooding in November 2009, some of the Allerdale minutes have not been completed in full and summary notes are therefore provided instead. See section 3.1 below for information on where to see the full Partnership response to all of the issues raised during PSE1.

2.1 West Cumbria's involvement in the MRWS process

2.1.a Reasons for West Cumbria being involved

There were several questions and comments regarding the underlying reasons for West Cumbria volunteering to talk to the Government about potentially hosting a GDF, including some scepticism about the real motivations, e.g.:

- 'Why are we so eager to put our hands up?'
- 'What came first, financial incentivised system or West Cumbria volunteering to talk?'
- 'There is a danger that West Cumbria is to be seduced by bribes.'
- 'The impression has been given that it's all for employment, infrastructure and the benefits.'
- 'Is it the best place because of the geology or is it political because less resistance in this area than rest of country?'
- 'With road infrastructure and nuclear facilities, you should lean on Government and say we need better roads. Having said that if they want somewhere to put waste, is that why we're in the top 3 sites? Do they think we won't kick up a stink? Does it give you a stronger hand?'
- 'It seems to me that Copeland already has it because of all the NIMBY's – no one else wants it.'

2.1.b Expressions of interest from other areas of the country

Questions were asked about how many other local authorities have responded to the Government invitation and what the lack of other expressions of interest might mean for West Cumbria e.g.:

- 'Is it significant no other area volunteered?'
- 'Only two Councils have volunteered so I don't think you need to worry; if you really want it here there won't be much competition.'
- 'We've had the nuclear industry for 50 years, it's accepted and it's the largest employer here. In other parts of the country there'll be opposition.'

2.1.c What happens if West Cumbria withdraws

There were some questions and scepticism/concerns about what will happen if West Cumbria withdraws from the process e.g.:

- 'If Cumbria turns it down, and there are no other volunteers, what will happen?'
- 'Will the bribe get bigger?'

- 'Would a new Quango be established to decide on planning issues involved? So they can overrule a decision?'
- 'You've read and you'll know section 6.5 of the White Paper; it says if an agreement can't be reached Government will do whatever they think is necessary.'
- 'So if nobody wants it [*the waste*] and we can't find anywhere to put it, what happens to it? Would it be left there [*stored above ground*] and be dangerous for us?'

2.1.d Government commitment to sustain the process and not speed it up

Questions and comments included:

- 'What have we in place to ensure continuity, bearing in mind the long term process and changes in politics?'
- 'This is a Government invitation, are the Tories in favour?'
- 'Does the Government have a timescale for this project and would they try to put pressure on the Partnership to speed things along?'
- 'The feeling is that Central Government isn't telling us everything. We need to interrogate government. There is no denying that they need to find a site and quickly. I feel it is unlikely to be 20-25 years time and that Government will be fast tracking this. We need to delay this and get some real answers.'

2.2 The Partnership – Structure/Operation and Criteria

2.2.a Structure and Operation

Questions were asked around issues such as:

- Who is funding the process.
- Frequency and location of Partnership meetings.
- How people can get involved/who else is being talked to.
- Size/membership of the Partnership and the criteria for membership.
- The balance between involvement of people in West Cumbria, the whole of Cumbria and nationally.
- Whether the Partnership is dealing with the Government or nuclear waste generators.

2.2.b Criteria

There were several questions about the criteria that are being used by the Partnership and how these criteria will be used to inform the decision over whether or not to participate in the siting process for a GDF. These included issues such as:

- How the criteria will be used in decision making e.g. unanimity, how many criteria will have to be met etc.
- The need for clarity and clear communication on the criteria, including requests for clear information from the Partnership on the extent to which each of the criteria are met.
- Specific questions/comment included:
 - 'What thinking went into the criteria being used at this stage?'
 - 'How do we know that all criteria are being satisfied?'
 - 'We want a list of criteria specific questions which will want answers so that the public can tick off.'
 - 'Did the presentation state that the Partnership could withdraw if criteria were not met?'

2.3 Decision Making

2.3.a Partnership decisions

Questions were asked about how the Partnership will make their decisions and what will happen if Partnership members don't agree.

2.3.b How local/host communities will be involved in decision making

The definition and role of potential host communities in the site selection process were raised as issues e.g.:

- 'I understand that Government will want to be satisfied that the decision to participate has local support from the community through a Siting Partnership. How can a decision to participate be made when the potential sites have not been identified? Once identified, what is the mechanism to engage with them?'
- 'Who will make a decision on behalf of the community?'
- 'The BGS survey narrows down the possibilities but how will the parishes be involved?'
- 'How far down does the democracy go? Does it go to the borough, towns, parishes, street level, each household?'

2.3.c Who has the final say

The issue of who will really have the final say in decision making was raised, including concerns that it will ultimately be somebody outside the area. There were also concerns about whether the Government will honour the right of withdrawal from the process. It was apparent that some believe that national Government will override the local decision and force a GDF onto West Cumbria. This was linked to the lack of other local authorities that have expressed interest in the MRWS process so far. (See also section 2.8 below on Public and Stakeholder Views.)

2.4 Safety, Security, Environment and Planning

2.4.a Safety and Security

Concerns were raised about safety standards, the potential impact on community safety, transportation of waste and security issues related to terrorism e.g.:

- 'I would want to be reassured on quality and safety standards before I could support the process even at this stage.'
- '... this is a vast number of employees, massive for the area... How is the local police force going to cope? How are the resources of [*for example*] Egremont going to cope?'
- 'As 70% of the waste is from Sellafield, the site should be near there as I wouldn't like to see the waste being transported round Cumbria.'
- 'Talking about a repository what about security if outside Sellafield site? Home owners' house insurance excludes terrorism and nuclear radiation.'
- 'Would the waste material be of any use to terrorists?'

2.4.b Environment

Questions were asked about the short and long term impacts of the works (e.g. the long term footprint of where the works were), and whether areas inside the National Park are being considered.

2.4.c Planning

Questions were asked about the roles of the Independent Planning Commission and the local Strategic Planning Authority in this process.

2.5 Geology

2.5.a BGS screening study

Several questions were asked about the BGS screening work including:

- The timescales, who is commissioning the work, and who the BGS are effectively working for.
- Whether the BGS will attend future Forums to answer questions.
- Whether local knowledge will also be taken into consideration e.g. the experience of people who have mined the local areas.

2.5.b Previous geological investigations by Nirex

Many people were not clear how the MRWS process is different to the previous Nirex process. Several questions were asked about what happened previously, what has changed since then and whether the information from that time will be re-used, e.g.:

- ‘What happened to Nirex? Who are the new company and do they have access to the Nirex information?’
- ‘Shouldn’t we start by looking at the Nirex findings in view of all of the geological work already done?’

2.5.c Beliefs that West Cumbrian geology is not suitable

It was evident from several meetings that many people already believe that the geology of West Cumbria is not suitable for a GDF. Reasons for this belief include personal experience of the land and that the Nirex study in the 1990’s already showed the geology to be unsuitable e.g.:

- ‘I own farm land which has boreholes and these are checked regularly every six weeks. There isn’t the right geology in West Cumbria, the sandstone hasn’t changed.’
- ‘Rumours are that the areas being considered are Broughton Moor, The Dump [*also known as Derwent Forest*]. Far from certain the geology is right.’
- ‘The geological areas in the county have been looked at before and the slate mines, iron ore mines and lead mines are all too wet. We’ve just seen record rain fall with 12” of rain falling in 24 hours; there is nowhere for the waste to be stored safely underground in this county. However, we could build a repository above ground.’
- ‘After failure of Nirex which proved unsuccessful after much debate what makes them think they can find a place?’
- ‘We went through surveys years ago; I don’t know the exact findings but there were flaws. That was 15 years ago. This area was identified as a potential site; it was not suitable so is this now the political place to put the waste?’
- ‘If it was not right 20 years ago it can’t be right now. The area is not suitable; surveys have already been carried out.’

2.6 Community Benefits and Impacts

2.6.a Views on community benefits

Questions were asked about 'what is in it for Cumbria' including what the community benefits might be. Some saw community benefits as a bribe from the Government, and/or as the reason that West Cumbria has volunteered to talk (see 2.1.1 above).

Others viewed them as a rightful aspect of the Government's MRWS process e.g.:

- 'If Government want areas to come forward they need to include that certain things will be done though a benefits package.'
- 'If a repository did come to this area, you need to make sure the community are rewarded.'
- 'We shouldn't lie down and say give it all to us, we need to make sure we can get improvements. There are some things we need as our right, regardless of nuclear. There is a balance between what is a right and what is an improvement.'
- 'The vast majority of people expect it to come to Cumbria. Not because they want it here but because Sellafield owns West Cumbria because of the amount of jobs and the good pensions and wages it creates. They should have never volunteered and the government would have had to come up with a much better package.'
- 'How/why should residents accept the most noxious substances in the world voluntarily?'

2.6.b Scepticism about the Government's commitment to keep its promises

There was suspicion about whether the Government will follow through on any promises of community benefits, and examples were given about previous expectations not being met, e.g.:

- 'Might as well at this stage get as good a deal as possible. Want quickly, Sweden ahead of us. Need a contract though to make certain things done and cannot be reneged upon.'
- 'The same questions were posed when Thorp was around. We were promised then that there would be infrastructure improvements. We still have the same problems now...'

2.6.c West Cumbria's existing infrastructure

Concerns were expressed about West Cumbria's already stretched infrastructure and transport system, and the need for improvements was highlighted e.g.:

- '... how can we as a community ensure no development takes place until transport is improved?'
- 'There are three potential sites for new build in Cumbria, which will create a problem with the current road infrastructure; we need to improve the road system in West Cumbria. I realise that we are limited by the lakes, but our current system is vulnerable.' [*Specific problems in Santon Bridge, Braystones, Kirksanton and Holmrook were also mentioned.*]
- 'With road infrastructure and nuclear facilities, you should lean on Government and say we need better roads.'
- 'Are Government looking ahead to see how people will be traveling to work in 20-40 years time?'

2.6.d Potential impacts on tourism and industry

Concerns were raised about the potential impact of a facility on the reputation of West Cumbria, especially for industry, potential incoming businesses and tourism. This was also related to the impact on a wider area than just a site itself e.g.:

- 'There should be benefits for other parts of Cumbria [*than Sellafield area*] e.g. Allonby, Silloth, where tourism has been affected. Copeland get all the jobs, but West Cumbria gets little other benefits.'
- 'It is significant that no other area in the UK has volunteered. The Lake District will be labeled the 'Nuc. District'. We have to consider what this will do to businesses and tourists.'
- 'Concerned that Cumbria is becoming the nuclear dump of Britain and think that industry is discouraged from coming to the area.'
- 'We have a Nuclear Industry and are very isolated and therefore no other industry will come to this area.'
- 'If Copeland says yes and Allerdale says no, because we [*Allerdale*] are in such close proximity we'll be branded with the same stick. For example Harrington is only a few metres away from the boundary with Copeland and we'll be branded/ stigmatised anyway. If Copeland go ahead how are we going to be compensated for that?'
- 'In this area, Lakeland, an area of Outstanding Beauty, it's not acceptable.'

2.6.e Legacy for future generations

Concerns were expressed about the legacy that will be left for future generations and the ethical acceptability of this (see also section 2.8.c below).

2.6.f Employment opportunities

Questions and comments were asked about the levels and kinds of employment that might be created during the construction and operation of a facility, including the request for a stipulation that jobs should go to local people e.g.:

- 'Should the process go ahead, what sort of employment levels will there be for construction [*pre and post*]?'
- 'Will they be local or not?'
- 'It [*in the past*] hasn't created jobs for the locals, just those from outside the area.'
- 'I haven't got a problem with it [*a GDF*] to be honest. Sellafield do a good job. West Cumbrians know what they're doing and we've all pulled together to make it work. I do think Sellafield has been managed really really well. I'd hate to see what West Cumbria would be like without Sellafield. I would like to see one stipulation to be that a lot/the majority of jobs go to local people?'

2.6.g The potential to capitalise on nuclear expertise in West Cumbria

- 'The Government in England has been slow; we used to be the core of nuclear innovation, but now we need to catch up. We've got the skills and ability here and the Government have now seen that it's the right way to go.'
- 'Wouldn't it be nice to say that Allerdale and Copeland are the centre of excellence for managing nuclear waste.'

2.7 Design and Engineering, including Retrieval and the Inventory

General questions were asked about topics such as design concepts, the size of a facility, volume of waste, methods for storage, what kind of waste needs to be cooled, the timescale of operation and comparisons against current storage methods. There were also requests to see designs for a potential facility.

2.7.a What other countries are doing

Several people asked how other countries are dealing with their higher activity radioactive waste, and what we are doing to learn from other countries, particularly Sweden and France. These included:

- 'The current Government have debated nuclear power for 10 years while the French get 80% of their power from nuclear – can't we learn from them?'
- 'Are you learning from the Swedish repository? They have been housing radioactive waste for a while now, they have the experience.'
- 'Is there not a worldwide consensus on what type of rock is best?'

2.7.b Existing waste – current situation and potential options

Questions and comments included:

- 'Can the waste at Sellafield be exported?'
- 'There are bigger countries than England that could store the waste better.'
- '70% of the country's waste is already stored at Sellafield – how long can it continue to be stored there until space runs out?'
- 'Is it not the responsibility of the firm that manufactures this higher level waste to store it and where to store it? They're making money out of Japan etc. They're making a hell of a lot of money. They should be paying for it. Surely it should be their responsibility, it's got to go onto them.'
- 'There has been a huge, huge investment in Sellafield over the years, based around short term solutions and moving waste from older to newer plants. If it wasn't safe, people would be shouting it from the rooftops. We're talking about 300, 400, 500 years of storage. So to take the emotion out of it, legacy is there – the atomic bomb programme, our electricity generation – there is a complex mix of whose the higher level activity waste is e.g. Japanese, German, what goes back. This is a much longer term solution and is not about fear – it's about proper long term management.'

2.7.c Retrieval including why a GDF over above ground storage

There were requests for an explanation as to why underground disposal has been chosen as the preferred solution for dealing with higher activity radioactive waste and why it is considered preferable to maintaining the current above-ground storage arrangements, e.g.:

- 'Why do we need a repository?'
- 'Isn't there a policy to keep high level waste above ground?'
- 'Is it safer where it is or underground?'
- 'Why deep disposal and not be easily retrievable?'
- 'Does it have to be stored underground, could it not be stored in a mountain?'
- 'What are the risks in doing nothing?'

Some expressed their preference that waste should continue to be stored above ground e.g.:

- 'A repository should therefore be built above ground, the site at Sellafield has enough room above ground.'
- 'We must be able to gain access to high level waste.'

Ensuring that the waste is monitored and retrievable was a key issue for some people, e.g.:

- 'If a repository would it be monitored and retrievable?'
- 'Any decisions made now, we have to take into account the long term effects as it will remain toxic for 1000's years, if anything goes wrong can the waste be removed?'
- 'How will future generations even know that this stuff is dangerous? How will records be kept?'
- 'The main essential is that it must be retrievable; this is the most important thing to put on the conditions.'
- 'How can a design now be made flexible so that better future solutions can be used? How can retrievability be designed in?'

2.7.d Inventory

There were several questions about what would be included in the inventory, e.g.:

- Existing waste that is not currently in Cumbria?
- Waste from other countries (including how much waste from overseas is already at Sellafield)?
- Waste from nuclear weapons?
- New build and future waste (including how this process links to the nuclear new build process)? e.g.:
 - 'What point of separating responsibility for legacy from generating?'
 - 'If new build goes ahead aren't we locked into taking that waste as well?'
 - 'If we have a problem we don't need to add to it.'
 - 'Will the new waste storage facility delay the nuclear new build process?'

Other issues raised about the inventory included questions about the amount of waste (existing and future), and what level of control the community/West Cumbria would have over the waste that would be taken.

2.8 Public and Stakeholder views

2.8.a Whether people's views will really be taken into account

Scepticism and concerns about the extent to which people's views will really be listened to was expressed at many of the Forums. Some felt that the decision had already been made and the engagement of the public was 'just another exercise'. The belief that this will turn out to be a Government decision rather than a local decision was also apparent. The need for the Partnership and the local authorities to earn the trust and respect of the public and stakeholders through an open, transparent and truly consultative approach was apparent.

Questions and comments included:

- 'Is this already a done deal?'
- 'How much are we going to be listened to? It's all right asking questions but what difference does it make?'
- 'What's the difference my opinion could make? What mechanism will be used before moving forward?'
- 'It's not often that people's views are listened to, it's usually the powers that be who make decisions.'
- 'After the consultations, will the Partnership stick to the decision made by the public?'
- 'When you get to the consultation stage what will happen if all the communities say no?'
- 'Can we trust the politicians [*with taking a decision to participate*]?'

- 'We've had waste stored at Sellafield for 7 [sic] years, but we're not involved in the negotiations. We have voices but it's down to the Councils and community leaders to represent us.'
- 'Problem from the past - mistrust via Nirex.'
- 'Despite what we choose Government will say have to build - all future waste will have access to this system.'
- 'The Government is going to look at all the waste that is already here. Copeland must be the most nuclear friendly place in the country, they like to have the income and the Government knows this.'
- 'The Americans are the gatekeepers for nuclear material. They're the ones who dictate. Sellafield were told to build it into e.g. ceramics so terrorists can't grab it. So who has the final say really? We might say no, the Government might say no, but Americans are the gatekeepers. So if they say that the threat of terrorism is so much that we need to bury this material so terrorists can't get at it are the Americans going to have the final say?'

On the other hand there was a sense of reassurance for some residents – one person commented that he had come into the Forum meeting a cynic, but was 'leaving feeling much more positive', and another stated 'It's nice to hear that' in response to the discussion on the commitment to a voluntarism approach.

2.8.b How people want to be engaged

The need for information and engagement with people who do not have access to the internet was highlighted, and there were also suggestions for a referendum to be held. Some concerns were raised about the lack of information to date e.g.:

- 'You say parishes are going to have information. Personally I don't get any information from our parish council. I only got to know about this meeting from a leaflet that came through the school.'
- '... until I came tonight I did not know anything about this.'

2.8.c Engaging with younger people

The need to engage with younger people was raised, particularly with regard to the long term nature of this process and the potential burden on future generations. Questions and comments included:

- 'Is it socially responsible for this generation to commit to look after something for between 500 and 1000 years?'
- 'Are you going into any schools or colleges because in 30 years time they will have to look after it?'
- 'This won't happen for decades and a lot of people who are here now won't be here to see it finished. You should be talking to the next generation.'
- 'We must ensure that we don't accept a repository for pots of money; we need to think about the future of our children.'
- 'This project will take years to build, and the young should be encouraged to take an interest.'
- 'Should be going into schools. It's amazing if you ask them [*children/young people*] the question, they can give you an answer, they can give you a good answer too.'

2.8.d General views on hosting a GDF in West Cumbria

It was clear that there are wide ranging views as to whether West Cumbria should consider hosting a GDF. Views expressed at the Forums included:

- 'If we have a problem we don't need to add to it.'
- 'This area has had to accept Sellafield and now we are going to get more and we will have to make the best of it.'
- 'It's a very serious thing. I definitely say no.'
- 'In this area, Lakeland, an area of Outstanding Beauty, it's not acceptable.'
- 'As 70% of the waste is from Sellafield the site should be near there as I wouldn't like to see the waste being transported round Cumbria.'
- 'I haven't got a problem with it [*a potential GDF*] to be honest.'
- 'I'm all for nuclear, I don't know why they're not building one here already.'

3. Way Forward and Next Steps

3.1 Report of findings from PSE1 and the Partnership's responses

A report detailing the full findings of PSE1 is currently being written, reflecting the vast amount of material generated from all the strands of engagement including the Neighbourhood Forums. Importantly, this report will clearly set out the Partnership's response to the issues raised. The inputs received have been very informing and, whilst the majority are reassuringly similar to issues raised by Partnership members themselves, will lead to changes in the Partnership's operation, its Work Programme and PSE activity over the next 12 – months.

This report will be available to view in the Document Library of the Partnership website together with individual reports from other strands of engagement.

3.2 British Geological Survey screening study

The next stage of the process is for the BGS to conduct an initial desktop study to screen out the areas of West Cumbria that are unsuitable on geological grounds. This is due to commence in the next few months and the findings should be available in the summer. These findings will be discussed in the second round of PSE.

3.3 PSE2 and future engagement with Neighbourhood Forums

Following the BGS survey, it is the intention in PSE2 to go back to everyone on the Neighbourhood Forum distribution lists to provide a further update on the work of the Partnership, including the results of the geological screening process and actions taken as a result of the findings in PSE1.

3.4 Other ways to get involved

There are a number of ways in which you can find out more and get involved to share your views. These include:

- Visit the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership website.
- Submit your comments either via the website, by email or by phone.
- Attend a Partnership meeting (dates and venues are on the website).
- Ask the Partnership to meet with or present to your group/organisation.
- Register for email or postal updates.
- Attend future public meetings to hear the outcome of the initial geological survey work in the coming months.

There will also be ongoing media coverage and, as a result of PSE1, the Partnership is currently exploring additional/broader methods for engaging with the community including road-shows, country fairs etc.

3.5 Thank you

The Partnership thanks everyone who gave their time to attend a meeting, listen, ask questions and give their views. We look forward to being in touch in the future.

If you would like to receive paper copies of any documents please call the Partnership's free phone no. 0800 048 8912 or email us at contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk.