

E-bulletin No.16 – January 2012

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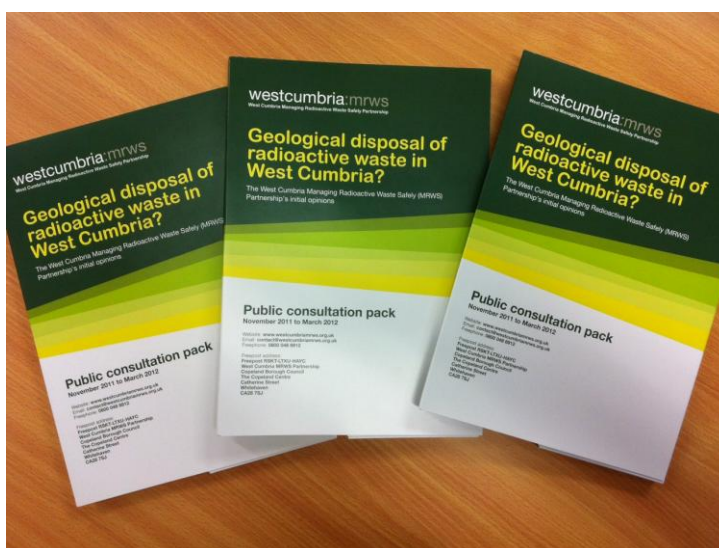
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Introduction

Happy New Year and welcome to the latest e-bulletin from the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership.

As you will be aware we are carrying out a major consultation with people in West Cumbria, the rest of the county and beyond, which will run until March 23rd 2012.

The aim is to give people the chance to find out more about the issues, ask questions and give their views before a final report is sent to Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council in the first half of 2012.



The Councils will then make a formal decision about whether the areas covered by Allerdale and Copeland Borough Councils should take part in the Government's search for somewhere to put a repository for higher-activity radioactive waste, without making any commitment to have it here.

1. Community Events



In the coming weeks there will be a number of opportunities to find out more about the issues and speak to Partnership members and technical experts at a series of community events.

You will also be able to pick up a copy of the consultation document and our DVD at these meetings.

The community events are taking place on the following dates:

Wednesday 18 January	Millom	Network Centre
Thursday 19 January	Whitehaven	Civic Hall
Friday 20 January	Gosforth	Village Hall
Monday 23 January	Kendal	Town Hall
Tuesday 24 January	Workington	Carnegie Arts Centre
Wednesday 25 January	Keswick	St Herbert's Centre
Wednesday 1 February	Penrith	Methodist Church
Thursday 2 February	Carlisle	The Courts (County Offices)
Tuesday 7 February	Barrow	Dock Museum
Wednesday 8 February	Wigton	Market Hall
Thursday 9 February	Egremont	Market hall
Friday 10 February	Cockermouth	Kirkgate Centre

All the events will run from 1pm – 7pm, with discussion sessions at 2pm, 4pm and 6pm.

2. Log on for our online event

There will also be an opportunity to log on and put your questions to Partnership members and technical experts during a special online programme on 6th March at 6pm to 8pm.

The programme is being organised by the Partnership to give those who cannot attend one of the community events the chance to hear from some of those involved and ask questions about the issues involved.

To watch the programme and submit your questions you will just need to log on to the Partnership's website at www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk. As well as those around Cumbria who want to find out more about this process it will also enable people outside the county to get involved.

The programme will also be available to watch again after it has been broadcast live.

3. Competition for young people

Young people are being challenged to write or film a news report on the issues relating to West Cumbria's potential involvement in the Government's search for a suitable site for an underground repository for higher-activity radioactive waste.

The competition is open to young people aged 18 or younger on the closing date of March 12th. The aim is to encourage young people to find out more about the issues involved and think about what a repository might mean for them, their family, friends and the area in general.

To take part in the competition, entrants need to either produce an article up to 500 words long or a film or audio podcast of up to four minutes long. The entries need to be balanced reports of the kind found in newspapers, or on TV or the radio, and not arguments either for or against taking part in the search for a repository.



The competition will be judged by two journalists – Jonathan Lee, the Editor and publishing director of the North West Evening Mail, and Samantha Parker, a reporter for ITV Border – as well as Reverend Lindsay Gray of Churches Together in Cumbria who is a Partnership member.

The winner will receive £500 and there will be three runners-up prizes of £150. Entries can be by an individual or a group, including a school class. If winning entries are submitted on behalf of a class or a group the prize will be given to the school or organisation concerned.

Entries must be submitted with a completed entry form, which is available from the Partnership's website www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk, and can either be emailed to contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk (as long as the file size is below 5mb) or posted to Freepost RSKT-LTXU-HAYC, West Cumbria MRWS Partnership, Copeland Borough Council, The Copeland Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven, CA28 7SJ.

All secondary schools in Cumbria have also been sent a copy of material produced to help encourage discussion of some of the main issues – geology, safety, impacts and benefits. The information will also be useful for other organisations working with young people who would like to organise a discussion about these issues.

Connexions, the youth advisory organisation, is available to help facilitate these sessions. The schools and youth groups will be able to feed back views from these sessions to the consultation process.

4. How to find out more

There are a number of ways that people can find out more information and let us know their views.

The consultation document details the issues we have been looking at over the last two years and gives our initial opinions of them. We would like people to read this document and return the response form that comes with it to tell us their views on the issues. You can also [respond online](#).



The full consultation pack also comes with a DVD and an overview leaflet which provide some background information and an overview of our initial opinions. However, you will find much more detail in the full consultation document.

You can get a copy of the consultation pack by:

1. Visiting our website www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk
2. Calling our Freephone number 0800 048 8912
3. Emailing contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk
4. Writing to us at:

**Freepost RSKT-LTXU-HAYC
West Cumbria MRWS Partnership
Copeland Borough Council
The Copeland Centre
Catherine Street
Whitehaven
CA28 7SJ**

The eight-page overview leaflet is being posted to all households in West Cumbria. If you haven't received your copy, let us know and we will send one out to you. Copies are also available in places like libraries, council offices and leisure centres across Cumbria.

There is more information about the consultation on our [website](#) and you can also view a copy of the [DVD](#).

We will be putting more articles in local papers across Cumbria and other publications, including Your Cumbria which is sent to all homes in the county. To further raise awareness of the fact that the consultation is taking place and encourage people to take part we are also advertising on billboards, buses and telephone boxes in West Cumbria.

You can find a list of other relevant websites in the [Useful Links](#) section of our website, including a selection of organisations with alternative views about geological

disposal and the MRWS process. A number of these organisations will also be providing their own views on the issues that would be involved in taking part in the search for somewhere to put a repository.

Further details about all the activity during the consultation will be available on our website. We also have a Facebook Page, a LinkedIn group and a Twitter profile. You can find these at: <http://on.fb.me/fbZzir>, www.linkedin.com/groups/West-Cumbria-Managing-Radioactive-Waste-3958824?home=&qid=3958824&trk=anet_uq_hm or by following @westcumbriamrws on Twitter.

5. Listening to your views

The Government says a repository will only be put somewhere where the geology is suitable and there is a community that has volunteered to have it.

We will look at whether a range of people in Cumbria think our initial opinions are reasonable, and amend our final report before sending it to the three Councils in 2012.

As this decision would particularly affect people in Allerdale and Copeland there will be a large, representative opinion poll to see whether people in these areas are in favour of or against entering the siting process, without a commitment to have the facility.

If there is a decision to take part in the search for somewhere to put a repository, the Councils would have the right to withdraw from the process up until the point where any construction starts. The Councils would need to show that there is credible support for a decision to accept a repository.

6. Future Partnership meetings



Members of the public are welcome to attend [Partnership meetings](#) as observers and are also given an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions.

We would be grateful if anyone who is planning to attend could contact catherine.little@copeland.gov.uk to let her know so that we can ensure that enough seating is made available. The next scheduled meeting is:

- 21st February 2012, The Oval Centre, Salterbeck
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7. Frequently asked questions

In each of these e-bulletins we include two or three 'Frequently asked questions'. You can find more of these [Q&As on our website](#).

Q. Why not have a referendum?

A. There has been a mix of views expressed about the relative pros and cons of using opinion surveys and referendums.

We have discussed this issue at length and we have concluded that, at this stage in the process, an opinion survey rather than a referendum should be used to gauge whether or not net support for a decision to enter the siting process exists. This is because:

- It avoids the claimed negative features of referendums such as low or unrepresentative turnout, manipulation of views by organised interests, oversimplification of the issues, and the risk of other issues influencing people's responses.
- We found during our second round of public and stakeholder engagement that there is a mix of opinion on using referendums. Although some participants asked that referendums be used as a method of gauging support, on considering the practical implications they concluded that referendums would have to be carried out at the right point in the process, when more detail is available, for example, on impacts, benefits and siting.
- In the limited number of countries where referendums have been used in a volunteer process (Hungary and South Korea), this has only been done at the stage when potential sites and well defined potential host communities have been identified, which is later in the process than we currently are at.

The potential use of referendums and other methods to inform decision making in later stages of the siting process can be kept open for review if a decision to enter the siting process is taken.

We want to make sure that the opinion survey we undertake is independent and statistically representative, and that a legitimate approach is taken. We are therefore using a reputable polling company and have also hired two expert reviewers to check the methodology and survey, as well as the polling company's work.

Q. Who will take the decision whether or not to participate in the next stage of this process?

A. The formal decision as to whether or not to participate in the next stage of this process will be made by Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council, who are defined as the decision-making bodies in the Government's MRWS White Paper.

The Government has said that any council that wishes to make a formal decision to participate in the next stage of the process will have to be able to show that such a decision is credible given the views of their partner organisations and the local community. Each Council will consider the report from the Partnership before they take a decision.

Q. Will the community where the facility would be sited have a veto?

A. At the point when the Councils will make a decision whether or not to participate in the next stage we would not know where a facility might be sited because that would depend on detailed assessments and investigations.

If the areas covered by Allerdale and/or Copeland Borough Councils do take part in the search for a site, it would still be some years before possible sites are identified.

At certain points during the search for a site the partnership would need to use a method, such as an opinion poll, to find out what the public thinks.

The new partnership's objective should be to achieve consensus across all the potential host communities within an area considered for surface based investigations. An opinion poll may show support for moving forward across the potential host communities as a whole but one or more potential host communities may decide they did not want to go to the next stage. If this was based on reasoned justification and on demonstrable community support and the partnership decided it would be possible to move to the next stage without these potential host communities, the presumption should be that they would be left out of the process.

In the event of the partnership concluding that the omission of a potential host community would create insurmountable problems for the siting process then it could recommend the inclusion of the community concerned if this was supported by a full justification and explanation.

Before the final right of withdrawal comes to an end, we think it would be particularly important to use various methods, including something like a representative opinion poll or a referendum, to gauge whether there is support for a repository being located at the site, from within the potential host communities and among wider local interests.

For more detail on this [see Chapter 10 of the consultation document](#).

Please pass this e-bulletin on. Thank you.

If you wish to unsubscribe to this e-bulletin and other updates please email us.