

E-bulletin No.17 – March 2012

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Introduction

Welcome to the latest e-bulletin from the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership.

There is still time to let us know your views on whether West Cumbria should take part in the Government's search for a suitable site for an underground repository for higher-activity radioactive waste.



We have produced a consultation document stating our initial views on a range of issues relating to the area potentially taking part in the search for a site – such as geology, safety, impacts and benefits. The consultation aims to give people living in Cumbria, and beyond, the chance to express their views on our initial opinions.

The consultation runs until March 23rd and you can get hold of a copy of the consultation document by calling our Freephone number 0800 0488912; by emailing

contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk; or by writing to Freepost RSKT-LTXU-HAYC, West Cumbria MRWS Partnership, Copeland Borough Council, The Copeland Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven, CA28 7SJ.

You can respond to the consultation online by following this [link](#).

You can also respond in writing by using the response form that comes in the consultation pack. This form is also available as a download from our website. You can find it by following this [link](#).

1. Hundreds attend community events

Hundreds of people have attended our community events which were held at various locations throughout Cumbria.

The 12 events saw more than 800 people drop-in to speak to Partnership members and experts from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the Department for Energy and Climate Change, the regulators (the Environment Agency and the Office for Nuclear Regulation) and an independent geologist. They also took part in discussion sessions where various issues related to the area potentially taking part in the Government's search were considered.



School groups also attended the events in Carlisle, Kendal, Whitehaven, Wigton and Workington.

2. Work continuing to raise public awareness

We are continuing our work to raise public awareness of the process. We want as many people in the area as possible to know about the potential issues related to taking part in the Government's search for a suitable site and to respond to our consultation.



Our latest newsletter is being distributed in the final week of February to all homes in West Cumbria. Copies will also be available from public buildings such as libraries and leisure centres. The newsletter can also be viewed [online](#).

We have also placed an article in Cumbria County Council's Your Cumbria publication, which was sent to all homes in the county early in February.

An article will also be appearing in the next edition of Copeland Matters and our advertising campaign, which has seen posters on billboards, phone boxes and on buses in West Cumbria, is continuing.

3. Log-on to our live debate

Join us for a live discussion which will be broadcast into your home through the Internet.

We are holding a live Webcast event on 6th March between 6pm and 8pm to give you a chance to ask questions to a panel of Partnership members and experts, including representatives from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates, and an independent geologist.

To watch the debate, and to ask questions, just log on to our [website](#). You can also put your question by Tweeting @WestCumbriaMRWS or by going on to the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership Facebook page.

4. Opinion poll set to start in March

A representative opinion poll is set to begin in March to find out what people think about the area potentially taking part in the Government's search.

The poll, which will be conducted by Ipsos MORI, will begin on 8th March. More than 3,000 people will be surveyed over the telephone.

Two independent experts on polling have also being commissioned to give their views on the survey and the method of carrying it out.

One of our key criteria for assessing whether there is credible support for taking part in the search for a site is whether there are more people who are for than against in the Allerdale and Copeland areas, where a repository could be located. People in other parts of Cumbria will also be surveyed for the poll and these views will be taken into account when we consider whether or not there is 'broad support' for our initial opinions as set out in the consultation document.*

Some people have suggested that there should be a referendum before a decision is made. However, we have concluded that a referendum would not be appropriate at this point. This is partly because it is not yet known where a repository might be sited and therefore there is only general information available on key issues such as safety, geology and the impact of constructing these facilities.

For more information on how we plan to assess public and stakeholder views see page 107 of the consultation document.

5. Chance for young people to win £500

Our competition which gives young people a chance to win £500 is still open.

The aim is to encourage young people to think about what an underground repository for higher-activity radioactive waste in West Cumbria might mean for them, their family, friends and the area in general.

To take part, young people aged 18 or under on the competition's closing date of March 12th 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, on TV, or the radio rather than arguments either for or against the area taking part in the Government's search for a suitable site for a repository.

The competition will be judged by two local 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, a Partnership member.

The competition winners 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@westcumbria.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.

6. Latest Partnership meeting

The Partnership met at Salterbeck on Tuesday 21st February. Partnership members heard a presentation on the brand protection study (see below for further detail).

The regulators (the Environment Agency and the Office for Nuclear Regulation) presented their views on the generic safety case for a geological disposal facility produced by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Members also heard about updates to planning legislation, economic development plans and the Localism Act and how they may impact on the Partnership's work and the MRWS process.



The way in which the Final Report will be produced was also agreed.

7. Protecting the Cumbria brand

A study has recommended ways to mitigate against any negative perceptions of Cumbria that could arise if the west of the county takes part in the Government's search for a suitable site for an underground repository for higher-activity radioactive waste.

Cumbria and the Lake District has a strong brand which benefits its tourism and food industries, as well as other sectors that trade off the area's reputation.

The West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership commissioned two consultancies – Sedley Place and The Communication Group – to look at what could be done to offset any risk of negative perceptions of the area if West Cumbria does take part in the search for a repository site.



Outlining their findings at the Partnership's meeting in Salterbeck on Tuesday 21st February, the consultants said that in order to maintain Cumbria's strong reputation they recommended putting in place a phased communications campaign to emphasise the area's strong points, including the use of a variety of different communications methods.

If the search progresses, the consultants also suggest setting up a new umbrella organisation which could become a mouthpiece for promoting the county and provide coordination of the brand.

The Partnership now has to decide whether it agrees with these recommendations and what its response might be.

The full report will appear in the [Documents section](#) of the Partnership's website at the end of the month.

8. 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 meetings are:

- 22nd May 2012, The Copeland Centre Whitehaven, 9.30am to 4pm
- 25th June 2012, Braithwaite Memorial Hall near Keswick, 9.30am to 4pm

9. 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. What will happen next?

A. Once the Partnership has looked at all the results of the consultation we will finalise our report to the three Councils giving our opinions on the issues that would be involved in taking part in the search for somewhere to put a repository. This will probably be in the summer of 2012.

Later in the year Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council will make a formal decision about whether to take part in this process. Each council will consider the report from the Partnership and take a decision in their Full Council, Executive, or Cabinet.

Both the Borough Council and the County Council would need to be in agreement for an area to formally enter the siting process.

A decision to participate would not be a decision to host a facility. At this stage we are looking to make a decision in principle about whether we are prepared to consider hosting a geological disposal facility somewhere in West Cumbria.

If West Cumbria does make a decision to participate, a new community partnership would be established to build on the work done by the current Partnership. Ongoing partnership discussions would be coupled with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority looking at a wide range of criteria, including detailed safety, social, environmental and geological assessments to begin to narrow the focus to potentially suitable sites.

The Councils that have decided to take part in the search for a site would make the formal decisions about things like which areas to put forward for assessments and investigations, and ultimately which sites, if any, should be put forward for a repository, based on advice from the new partnership. The Councils would be able to withdraw from the process right up to the point when work on building a facility could start, probably well over a decade from now.

Q. Why are there so many questions that remain unanswered?

A. As we are not yet at the stage of identifying potential sites, there are a number of questions we cannot know the answers to.

For example, there is not enough information to know if there is anywhere in West Cumbria with suitable geology and we do not yet have detailed designs for a repository because they would depend on the geology of a site.

If West Cumbria does enter the siting process more information would become available and would need to be scrutinised very carefully.

The key questions we need to consider now are 'Do we know enough?' and 'Is what we know acceptable to us at this stage to justify taking part in the search for a site?'

Please pass this e-bulletin on. Thank you.

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