

A brand management plan for Cumbria and the Lake District during a possible siting process for a geological disposal facility

[This plan is a working document and may be updated over time]

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Introduction

This plan considers what measures should be taken by the Decision Making Bodies (DMBs) and any future Community Siting Partnerships (CSPs) to limit and mitigate any negative impacts on the combined Cumbria and Lake District brands¹ if there is a decision that the Allerdale and/or Copeland areas should take part in the search for somewhere to put a repository for higher activity radioactive waste.

The plan does not assume that there will be a Decision to Participate (DtP) but its purpose is to ensure that if a DtP is taken appropriate measures can immediately be put into place.

The West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership's Final report said: *'Our opinion is that, although they are hard to quantify, we acknowledge there are potential risks to some parts of the economy in the county if the process moves forward, in particular the visitor, land-based, and food and drink sectors. We advise that a coordinated strategy and action plan is prepared to support those aspects of Cumbria's visitor and land-based economic activity. The strategy would encompass three main elements:*

- 1: Ensuring Cumbria-wide communication through a coordinated action plan between existing agencies, that 'protects' the visitor and land-based aspects of Cumbria's economic activity.*
- 2: Creating a phased communication programme that appreciates that there are a number of key milestones in a project of this nature.*
- 3: Using a broad range of communication channels to get closer to key audiences.*

'Such a strategy should be initiated by the DMBs (Decision Making Bodies) and existing agencies and taken forward forthwith, in order to be in a position to progress to implementation at the time that a decision about participation is taken, should such a decision to participate be forthcoming'.

This brand management plan considers the activity that will be needed to limit and, where necessary, mitigate any negative effects on the brand as a result of taking part in the search for somewhere to locate a repository. The implications of building and hosting a repository would be considered as part of the search process.

This brand management plan builds on the Brand Protection Strategy produced by Sedley Place and The Communications Group plc for the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership in 2012.

The plan has been produced by the Brand Management Sub-group which includes representatives of the three DMBs, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria Tourism and the Lake District National Park.

The DMBs and any future partnerships (CSPs) will be responsible for delivering this plan, with advice from the Brand Management Sub-group. Roles and responsibilities for managing this work beyond a decision to participate would need to be agreed by the DMBs and any CSPs, once these were established.

¹ The Cumbria and Lake District brands include the Lake District, Cumbria and Western Lake District and coast

1. The Cumbria and Lake District brands

The Brand Protection Strategy said 'Our analysis revealed that Cumbria has a distinctive and valuable brand, which resonates with a broad set of target audiences: Tourists, the Business Community, Residents, Workers and Students.

'Given the nature of some of Cumbria's brand 'tangibles' and 'intangibles' (such as 'the Great Outdoors', food and drink, 'green'/fresh/clean, safety and security, peacefulness and tranquillity, quality of life and place) there is a potential risk to the Cumbria brand if the target market believes the brand has become tainted or contaminated.

'If a decision to proceed with a GDF is taken then the communication landscape changes instantly and a strategy needs to be put in place to respond to this'.

The report makes it clear that Cumbria and the Lake District are strong brands. For example the report quotes Mintel: Domestic Tourism Leisure Intelligence - December 2009 as saying *'Out of all of the research conducted by Mintel on the brands in the UK, the Lakes overall is the best-regarded destination and has beaten Devon, Cornwall and London to name a few. The results show the Lake District is near faultless in its image.'*

Similarly research carried out by Strategic Marketing for Cumbria Tourism in 2009, entitled 'Awareness and Perceptions Quantitative Research, showed that: *'The Lake District has a uniformly positive image in the eyes of both visitors and those who have not been there.'*

It is important to be clear that the brand is not just the Lake District but includes other parts of Cumbria, particularly rural areas.

In addition, although tourism is the largest sector that benefits from the brand, the Brand Protection Strategy showed that there are other sectors such as food and drink and land based businesses that benefit from the brand. It is also important in attracting businesses, people and students to move to the area. The brand also has an important role to play in helping achieve the aspiration to increase exports from the county.

2. The potential risks to the brand

The risks to the brand in Stage 4 (when there would be desk-based studies) are related to a possible negative effect on perceptions, largely as a result of media and social media coverage about the fact that the area is being considered as the location for a repository site.

The same risks would continue in Stage 5 (when there would be surface-based investigations) but in addition, it would be necessary to take account of the possible negative impact of surface based investigations, particularly boreholes.

However, this is a unique process and the Brand Protection Strategy emphasises that: *'at this point it is NOT possible to accurately forecast any potential impact on the brand as so much of it depends on factors like the severity of the target audiences' change in perceptions and the scale of negative media activity.'*

There has already been some national media coverage about a possible repository in West Cumbria. As West Cumbria includes part of the Lake District National Park and other rural areas, most of this coverage has to some extent mentioned the Lake District National Park and included images of locations around the Lake District and other rural areas.

For example, coverage during 2012 on BBC Countryfile, Channel 4 News, in the Sunday Times (Headline: Nuclear Dump plan close to Lakes), Daily Mirror (Headline: Nuke 'graveyard' plan: Tons of deadly waste could be dumped below Lake District) and the Sunday Post (Headline: Nuclear Wasteland), with a photo of a well-known tourist spot.

It is likely that there would be additional national media coverage for a decision to take part in the siting process. It is also likely that there will continue to be occasional national media coverage. Some of this will be focused around key milestones in the siting process (see Appendix 2).

There will also be coverage because some groups and individuals will seek to make a negative association between a possible GDF and the brand as part of their campaigns. There has been increasing evidence of this in the run up to a decision about participation.

Inaccurate and misleading reporting of the issues would be likely to have the most damaging effect on the brand. However, even when coverage is accurate and balanced it could create a 'negative' association between nuclear waste and the Cumbria and Lake District brands.

It is not possible to predict in advance what effect media coverage will have on people's perceptions of the Cumbria and Lake District brands and on the businesses that benefit from them, particularly in the visitor, land-based and food and drink sectors. It is possible that it will have very little effect. The Lake District brand in particular is very strong. The area is already home to a well known nuclear industry and the visitor and land based economies have grown in spite of this. The construction of a repository would also not occur for well over a decade and on current plans a repository would not open until 2040.

However, there is a risk that any reporting of the story will affect some people's perceptions of the brand.

The Brand Protection Strategy says: *In brand terms, the key associations (both tangible and intangible) which are most at risk from the target audiences' negative perceptions of nuclear waste and contamination are:*

- *Unspoilt countryside*

- *Food and drink*
- *'Green'/fresh/clean*
- *Safety and security*
- *Peacefulness/tranquillity*
- *Quality of life.*

If the target audiences believe that any of these things have been contaminated or negatively affected then the Cumbria brand will be impacted. Among the potential consequence of any impact is reduced tourist numbers and spend, decreased food and drink sales, decreased house prices, reduced inward migration (e.g. workers and retirees) and reduced student numbers.

3. Limiting and mitigating the risks

This brand management plan has three key strands.

Firstly, the DMBs and any future partnerships are responsible for providing clear and accurate explanations of the siting process and what a GDF is and how it would work. This communications activity aims to ensure that the media are well informed, to limit the scope for inaccurate reporting and to effectively challenge any inaccurate or misleading information. This plan sets out what issues and activity the DMBs and any future partnership may need to consider in order to limit, as far as possible, any negative effect on the brand.

Secondly, ongoing research to assess the effect of taking part in the siting process to provide a strong evidence base for any future funding that may be needed to support the Cumbria and Lake District brands.

Thirdly, a Cumbria and Lake District brand campaign to counterbalance media coverage which could have negative effect on the brands.

Any area which is prepared to consider a repository being sited there is providing a service to the nation. The visitor and land-based economies in the area should not be expected to bear the risk of there being a negative effect on the brand. It is appropriate that this should, as far as possible, be borne by the Government on behalf of the nation.

It is important to be aware that any campaign for this purpose will itself generate some additional media coverage. In particular, some of those who are opposed to taking part in the search for a site will suggest that measures taken to mitigate any possible negative impact are proof that there will be an impact.

4. Communications about the MRWS process in West Cumbria

Communications about the MRWS process in Cumbria are the responsibility of the DMBs, the Bridging Group and any future CSPs. These organisations will need to take account of the effect of their communications activity on the Cumbria and Lake District brands.

All the organisations involved in this process in Cumbria have a shared interest in ensuring that information about the MRWS process is communicated in a way that limits the risk of inaccurate or misleading reporting.

In addition, the businesses that benefit from the brand also need to have access to clear and accurate information about the process in order to respond to questions from customers.

Providing information to the media

During the pause period communications activity will be based on the work of the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership.

If this process continues, the principle role of the DMBs and a community siting partnership would be to monitor and evaluate the work of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and to communicate and engage with people in the local area and the wider community about this work. It would not be the role of the Decision Making Bodies (DMBs) and Community Siting Partnerships (CSPs) to make the arguments 'for' a repository.

There would also be a need to communicate information about this process to the media outside Cumbria to a greater extent than has been necessary so far because of the likely increase in interest in this issue, particularly at certain key milestones. Any media coverage of this issue could have a negative effect on the brand but inaccurate or misleading coverage could exacerbate this effect.

It will be important for the DMBs and CSPs to continue the approach of the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership in providing clear, quick, accessible and accurate information.

The DMBs and CSPs will need to make it clear that in a number of areas there remain uncertainties. This will mean that short, simple and clear cut responses to what may be simple but misleading and inaccurate claims will not always be possible.

Building and maintaining the trust in community representatives and the process will play an essential part in ensuring that there is not a significant adverse effect on the Cumbria and Lake District brands. Responding to misleading and inaccurate information with overly simplistic responses would itself undermine the credibility of the DMBs and CSPs in the longer term and erode confidence that they will ensure a repository is only built in the area if it will be safe.

Given the history of the nuclear industry in the UK, it is essential that the DMBs and CSPs continue the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership's approach to openness and transparency. It is also important that others involved in this process, particularly DECC and the NDA, adopt the same approach.

Providing information to businesses

The DMBs, Bridging Group and future CSPs will need to work with organisations representing businesses that benefit from the brand to ensure their members have access to the information they need on the process. In particular, these organisations want their members to have clear and accurate information to answer any questions from customers. This will include a toolkit with up to date factual information about a possible repository and the MRWS process in West Cumbria and Q&As.

The funding for this work will continue to be agreed as part of a wider engagement package.

5. Research

As a siting process progressed a CSP would be able to gather more detailed information to monitor whether there is any impact on the area's brand during the process and adapt the brand management strategy accordingly.

This research will need to take account of the following audiences.

- Residents and communities *
- Visitors
- Business
- Buyers
- Opinion formers

* Perceptions of residents about the brand would be included as part of a wider ongoing opinion survey commissioned as part the MRWS process in Cumbria, similar to the surveys carried out by the previous Partnership.

There will be three types of research: media monitoring and evaluation; opinions surveys to measure perceptions; and economic research to assess any evidence of actual impacts on businesses that benefit from the brand. The first stage will be to commission some baseline research and an assessment of what information is already available before a decision about participation. If there is a decision to participate this would then be followed by ongoing research throughout the siting process.

Media monitoring and evaluation

The aim of this research would be to monitor and evaluate media coverage that might have an effect on the brand. This will include monitoring national print, broadcast and online media and international media.

It should include an assessment of how much this coverage could be perceived as having a negative effect on the Cumbria and Lake District brands, taking account of the number of references to and images of elements of the brand.

Perceptions research

Quantitative and qualitative research would be carried out to assess whether there is any impact on perceptions of the Cumbria and Lake District brands. This research should also look at the impact of the Cumbria and Lake District campaign on perceptions. This work would be focused on audiences outside Cumbria.

The objectives of the ongoing research would include:

- Understanding the attitude and perception of key market segments on Cumbria's key brands
- To draw out, without leading, both positive and negative attitudes and perceptions of the key market segments

The activity that will be needed to meet these objectives might include:

- A national opinion survey
- public focus groups
- sector interviews on investment in Cumbria

- interviews with key opinion formers in other countries. This would probably involve in-depth interviews with relevant trade organisations and business groups based on advice from Cumbria-based organisations and research by UKTI, Visit Britain and Visit England on international markets.

It will also be useful to establish (as far as possible in the time available before a Decision about Participation) what relevant information and research is currently available and to conduct some baseline research where there are any gaps (for example see Appendix 3).

Initial baseline research would need to be completed by a Decision about Participation. It is anticipated that research would then be carried out six months after a Decision to Participate with the results available by the end of October to provide time for any budgets to be negotiated for the following year. The research would then be carried out to a similar timetable in subsequent years.

Economic studies

The purpose of the economic studies would be to establish what actual impact, if any, taking part in the search for a repository site was having on businesses that benefit from the brand, particularly the tourism and food and drink sectors. This research will need to take account of the Cumbria and Lake District campaign and in particular whether the campaign has helped to mitigate any effect on the brand from taking part in the search for a site.

The activity that will be needed might include:

- analysis of existing economic data e.g. surveys conducted by business organisations in the county, particularly Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria Tourism and Invest in Cumbria;
- in depth telephone interviews with businesses in the sectors that benefit from the brand, particularly the tourism and food and drink sectors;
- focus groups or similar with businesses to provide information about attitudes/issues/perspectives etc; and
- overall modelling and analysis to provide an assessment of any impact on the sectors concerned.

This work would need to include some means (such as benchmarking with similar locations and markets) to assess whether any changes were the result of discussions about a possible GDF or were due to other factors e.g. general economic conditions, weather, market trends etc.

It will also be useful to establish (as far as possible in the time available before a DaP) what relevant information and research is currently available and to conduct some baseline research where there are any gaps.

Initial baseline research would need to be completed before a DaP. It is anticipated that research would then be carried out six months after a DtP with the results available by the end of October to provide time for any budgets to be negotiated for the following year. The research would then be carried out to a similar timetable in subsequent years.

6. A Cumbria and Lake District campaign

Objectives

The key objective of a Cumbria and Lake District campaign would be to promote positive images of the brand and thereby help to counterbalance coverage that might negatively affect the brand.

This would be a campaign to promote the brand, not to address issues about nuclear waste disposal. The latter will be addressed as part of the communications activity around the MRWS process carried out by the DMBs and any future CSPs.

The campaign would be targeted primarily at the following audiences:

- potential visitors;
- people and businesses who buy from food and land based businesses in the county;
- people and businesses thinking of locating to the county.

The campaign will focus on general messages and images reinforcing the brand and therefore benefitting most of the businesses and organisations that to some extent trade on the brand. In particular, it should emphasise the 'clean and green' elements of the brand.

Agencies that tender for this work will be asked to provide advice on the overall approach to a place marketing campaign of this type and to develop key messages.

Evaluation will be a key element of the campaign to enable activity to be adjusted to ensure it has the biggest possible impact. Companies tendering for this work will be asked to provide proposals for effective ongoing evaluation of the campaign.

Communications channels

The campaign would be expected to use a range of communications channels, potentially including:

- Advertising in national, regional and local publications including supplements
- TV and radio
- Online
- Social media
- Outdoor media e.g. billboards
- Public relations

However, agencies tendering for this work will be required to provide advice on the specific channels which should be used within the budgets available to meet the objectives set out above.

Agencies will be expected to consider innovative marketing methods e.g. involving video, apps and celebrities.

Agencies will also be required to consider how they can leverage additional benefit from existing activity that supports the brand.

A single agency may not be able to provide all the elements of the services required but would need to be able to show how they would involve companies with appropriate skills and experience.

Agencies would be asked to consider whether the campaign should (a) have its own website, possibly a landing page directing visitors to existing websites, or (b) whether to direct people straight to existing websites.

It is anticipated that the largest part of the campaign will be targeted at UK audiences. However, agencies will also be asked to consider cost effective channels of communication with key markets overseas.

Depending on the level of funding available, the campaign could also include major events and other significant projects aimed at reinforcing the clean and green image of the brand.

Campaign activity up to 31 March 2014

It is expected that a budget of £500,000 will be available to devise the campaign and to deliver the first phase of the campaign up to 31st March 2013 i.e. two months.

The campaign would need to be devised ahead of a Decision about Participation but would only be delivered if there is a Decision to Participate.

As it is not currently known whether there will be a decision to take part in the search for a repository site, it will be important to ensure that work is only carried out ahead of a decision about participation that has to be done in order to ensure a campaign can be quickly delivered.

As much as possible, the campaign should complement other activity associated with the brand, so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The agency selected for this work will therefore need to take account of marketing activity being carried out by other organisations in the county, particularly the councils, Cumbria Tourism, West Cumbria Tourism, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Britain's Energy Coast and Invest in Cumbria.

Activity should, at least initially, be weighted towards the area or areas that take part in the search for a site. Roughly 25% of the images used in the campaign should therefore be of locations in each of the boroughs that take part in the siting process (this could be Allerdale Borough Council and/or Copeland Borough Council). Location specific copy (as opposed to general messages about Cumbria or the Lake District) would also be roughly weighted in this way, although this will be discussed further with the Brand Management Group as the work progresses, with the agency's advice.

However, during the course of the siting process it will be important to be able to adjust the focus of the campaign on the basis of the evidence from the ongoing research e.g. taking account of specific areas or parts of the brand that are attracting media coverage in relation to the MRWS process and the results of the perceptions and economic research.

The campaign will also need to take account of the relative importance of different sectors in the Cumbrian economy. Much of the copy and images in the campaigns will be generic but sector specific copy and images should be roughly in the following ratios – tourism 4/6; food and drink 1/6; and inward investment 1/6.

In addition, activity should take account of the likely milestones in the MRWS process set out in Appendix 2.

Brand management campaign activity after 2013/14

An ongoing brand management campaign will only be necessary if there is evidence from the research that there is a negative impact on the brand and individual businesses or sectors. This would be assessed on an annual basis during a siting process and the DMBs/CSPs would negotiate a budget with DECC for any ongoing work accordingly. The assessment will need to take account of whether the campaign that has been carried out has had an effect on mitigating any potential impacts on the brand.

If there is a need for a further brand management campaign it is anticipated that it should continue to use a full suite of communication tools to reach a broad and diverse target audience. However, the DMBs/CSPs will also need to adapt future campaigns on the basis of results from the evaluation of campaign activity which has already been conducted.

In addition to a brand management campaign if there is specific evidence of a significant effect on the brand and on particular types of business the DMBs and CSPs should consider whether any other types of support may be appropriate. These may include:

- Direct support for individual businesses to carry out their own marketing
- Compensation for businesses where there is evidence of a reduction in income as a result of taking part in the search for a site.

Appendix

1. Timeline

The following is an initial timeline of expected communications/campaign activity if a decision to participate in Stage 4 is taken.

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug
Cumbria and Lake District campaign										
Opinion research										
Economic studies										
Media monitoring										
MRWS process communications activity										

2. Key milestones

Media coverage and public interest in this process is likely to peak around certain key milestones. The first significant milestone would be a decision about participation.

If there is a DtP, DMBs and a CSP or CSPs will need to focus activity around other key milestones which will include:

- The setting up of community siting partnerships
- The start of desk based studies by the NDA
- Any key decisions made by Government on acceleration or other issues involved in the process
- Discussions about, and announcement of, potential site areas
- Any legislative process around the right of withdrawal
- Results of any studies or investigations
- Debates about local communities that want to withdraw
- Decision about whether to proceed to Stage 5
- Start of borehole investigations
- Boreholes starting in any sensitive areas

The first three of these are likely to occur during 2013/14. The timing of the first two of these will be reasonably predictable. The campaign activity could therefore be split into three parts, with the first two timed to start when a CSP is set up and when desk top studies get underway. The timing of the third part of the activity could then be kept flexible to be started to coincide with any significant media activity that occurs which is not related to any particular milestone.

In addition, campaigns by critics of the process will generate additional interest at other points and a CSP will need to assess and address any negative coverage that is generated by this activity.

3. Previous opinion research on the Cumbria brand

MORI conducted a survey between November and December 2008 for the NWDA. One of the questions asked in the survey was 'How favourable or unfavourable are you towards each of the following counties? 83% of people in the North West and 72% across GB as a whole had a favourable view of the county. Only 3% of people in the North West and 4% of people in GB as a whole had an unfavourable view of the county.

The same survey showed that 29% of businesses in the NW and 21% in GB thought that Cumbria was a good location to do business. 25% of businesses in the NW and GB thought it was a poor place to do business.

82% of businesses in the NW and 81% in GB thought Cumbria was good in terms of providing overall quality of life while on 1% and 3% thought it was poor.