



Leader of the Council

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Our Ref: ETM/KCS

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Baroness Verma
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Energy & Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

Dear

We write in reply to your letter of 19th December. We too believe that constructive progress has been made since October 2012, and thank you and your officials for the significant effort that has been committed thus far. We believe that the work carried out since October has highlighted the importance to Government in working with the local democratic Decision Making Bodies as closely and pro-actively as possible.

We are minded of the proximity of 30 January and the decision that the County Council's Cabinet is scheduled to take on that day - whether or not parts of Cumbria ought to be considered in the next stage of the current MRWS process. To this end we believe that it is important that we exhaustively address all of the issues, questions, and concerns to the fullest extent possible, in order that we will be able to assure the communities we represent that the decision we make will be one made on the fullest of facts.

Accepting the progress that has been made, there are still some areas we feel need to be explored further.

On Right of Withdrawal, you have agreed to roll forward the decision-making arrangements originally set out in the Hendry letter of 7 November 2011 and you have also agreed that primary legislation is the preferred mechanism for strengthening the Right of Withdrawal, fulfilling Government's commitment to make the right legally binding. You have committed to bring forward proposals for what would go into new legislation, with input from the Decision Making Bodies, within 18 months of a decision to participate. We recognise the constructive progress that has been made in this important area; we are currently seeking Counsel opinion on the overall integrity of the proposals that you have set out. At this stage, subject to this opinion, we are content that the wording proposed in appendix B would continue to provide the assurance we would need, if we were to proceed to the next stage.



In terms of geology, you have asked the NDA, if we were to proceed to the next stage of the process, to accelerate the geological investigations planned for Stage 4, and have committed to involving the Decision Making Bodies in considering the most suitable way forward on assessing the suitability of the geology. This remains an area of significant concern and interest to our communities. We would wish to ensure that there is full and effective peer review and community engagement in relation to geological investigations proposed for stage 4. We would welcome more detailed proposals about these areas at the earliest opportunity. We also remain minded that there are many other activities proposed for stage 4, which, if we proceed, may still need the originally anticipated timetable to be followed without any change or acceleration.

In relation to Community Benefits, we recognise that you have committed to the principle of establishing a Community Fund, with a commitment to make specific funding proposals covering the nature, scope, scale, timing, and governance of a fund within 18 months of any decision to participate, and to involve the Decision Making Bodies in the development of the proposals. We also understand that you have reinforced Government's commitment to the Community Benefit principles developed through the work of the MRWS Partnership, including longevity and additionality, reflecting the multi-generational significance of MRWS.

In relation to geological suitability and more broadly the future for West Cumbria, you have also committed to a thorough review of the potential alternative radioactive waste storage and disposal solutions, including extended interim storage. This is a commitment that we are pleased to see set out, having raised with Government the need for a 'twin-track' approach. You have confirmed that the review will be wide-ranging, conducted in parallel with the MRWS process, and carried out in partnership with the Decision Making Bodies. We welcome this commitment, although we would like to see at this stage a committed timetable from Government against which the review will be carried out. We also feel strongly that further commitments and investments ought to be made at this stage to ensure that there is the adequate capacity and expertise in the local communities and supply chain, to ensure that Government's ambitions and aspirations for the long-term energy strategy for the country can be realised.

Could we suggest that we make arrangements for further discussions between Officials early in January, in order that these outstanding areas can be explored more fully.

Yours sincerely,



Eddie Martin
Leader
Cumbria County Council

