

Dear Sir/Madam

I consider that the revised process for siting an underground nuclear waste repository is deeply flawed.

I have spoken to my parish councillors who said that they expect to be sidelined if this process is adopted and that they have little confidence that Allerdale district council will represent or take any significant account of their views. I have spoken to my county councillor who told me that Cumbria county council will also be sidelined if this process is adopted. Lastly, I have spoken to my district councillor who said that non-executive councillors were excluded from the decision to volunteer in the previous incarnation of the process and that she expects to be excluded once again if the council has another opportunity to volunteer under a revised process.

I understand that the government is seeking evidence rather than opinion for this review but, reading through the proposals, I can find no evidence to support the assertion that this process will be more democratic than the previous version. Indeed, given this litany of exclusion, the revised process is clearly far less democratic in that it allows a small clique to push through their views whilst disregarding the views of many people who live in the area. I and, I am sure, many others feel disenfranchised.

Restricting decision-making to a district council whilst stating that this project represents national infrastructure seems a contradiction. Such a repository will clearly have an impact well outside the boundaries of the host district yet the wider community (though the county council or the national park authority) is sidelined despite the fact that the LDNPA is the planning authority for an area which has been discussed as a possible site.

A decision to exclude all those groups who opposed a repository whilst empowering only those groups which were in favour seems at best dubious and at worst crude gerrymandering to increase the likelihood of a satisfactory response.

The proposed process should have the criteria for deciding safe and acceptable geology published before any invitation to volunteer. Any reputable process would preclude the opportunity to adjust the criteria to fit particular sites. All the information that I have seen or heard (from either side of the argument) regarding the geology in Cumbria suggests that it is unsuitable and none of the pro-lobby has said otherwise despite the opportunity so to do.

I consider that the process should exclude areas of national or international importance (such as the Lake District National Park). Such areas of wild land are of major importance in our country as there are so few of them; they should be treasured rather than treated as convenient industrial sites. Finally, a process which tempts public bodies in impoverished areas to accept monetary sweeteners which will make it much more difficult to back out at a later stage (because the money must be returned) is a crude ploy more suited to a pay-day lender than a government.

Yours faithfully
Keith McMillan

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