

I am writing to express my very deep concerns that this consultation is happening when the democratic voice of Cumbrians has already been made explicitly clear through the MRWS consultation, that we do not want to be the dumping ground for radioactive waste for the whole country and beyond. This is not based on nimbyism but that as citizens who live here and who are facing this threat, we have taken the time to study the scientific evidence that has been collected by government in the Nirex Review and by geologists who are internationally respected. When government's own Nirex review and the scientists come to the conclusion after painstakingly studying all of the evidence that it is unsafe to site a dump in Cumbria, one would expect government to listen. The fact that politicians don't even have the integrity to take the time to weigh up the evidence presented and take a balanced and responsible view makes me wonder what kind of democracy we really live in. Listening to the House of Lords debate the issue last week as if they had already made up their minds to site the dump in Cumbria and talk about aggressive tactics that would need to be used to force it upon Cumbrians if the consultation failed was a very sad moment for me. I believe in our democracy, and that it should be founded upon the best efforts of informed and thoughtful leaders and citizens. I feel very let down by the lack of honest open debate about this issue. I also feel very concerned, because nuclear energy is not something to be played with lightly. We have seen in Fukushima and in Chernobyl what happens when politicians and nuclear corporations get it wrong. Sellafield has had its own share of scandal too.

What the scientists (government's own appointed scientists for the Nirex Enquiry) say is that if a decision has been made to have an underground radioactive dump (which scientific opinion does not support at the moment as the best option for managing radioactive waste), then first identify an area that is safest according to the geology (the rocks must be stable, which is not the case in any of the area under consideration, which has been categorically ruled out by the scientists); there must be low rainfall, as the water pressure will simply wash the waste back into the environment via the water table (anyone who regularly visits Cumbria knows it is one of the wettest spots in the British Isles). Only once you have identified potential sites that are safest should discussions take place with local residents about building such a site. This was the evidence that decided Cumbria County Council to vote against taking part in further discussions about hosting the dump in Cumbria. We withdrew from the consultation. Any further consultation must take place across the country, looking for those areas that are safest as possible sites, and weighing up these options with other options for managing our growing plutonium and uranium stockpile.

To decide to place a nuclear dump in one of the most dangerous places in the British Isles, simply because you think you might be able to persuade the local population to accept is to abnegate all reasonable responsibility, that we should expect of a mature democracy. It is actually immoral given that we are not just talking about a car park or a windfarm, but about a place to put nuclear waste that has the capacity to destroy our environment and everyone living here.

Another way of thinking about Cumbria is to look to the future. This is a national heritage site, and brings tourists worldwide. Cumbria has the potential to grow the UK economy into

the future, long after we have found safer and cheaper ways of supplying our energy needs than nuclear will ever be able to offer. However, once we have grown a reputation for nuclear leakage, which will, according to the scientific evidence, inevitably follow from the dumping of radioactive waste in a leaky hole, that future is gone with it.

I love Cumbria. My family have lived here since the 1950s and its hills and lakes are a part of me. I know this is a love that is shared by many British people who visit the Lake District regularly. On my walks I come across people from Japan, from the US and many other countries who also feel a bond with the Lake District either through a love of English Literature, or of the landscape. This is a huge national asset that should not be thrown away lightly.

There are moments in history when we are faced with choices that will have consequences far beyond the realization of those who are tasked with making these choices. For Cumbria these choices are simple: on the one hand is the threat that at some unknown time in the future Cumbria will become deserted like Fukushima. It will not be safe to walk on the hills, to drink the water, to be out of doors. The other possible future is simply to safeguard what we have been given to protect, our national heritage, which we can proudly offer to the world, saying come to us and share with us this wonderful heritage.

We are temporarily trapped in a nuclear fix by the short termism of government's energy policies over many years. We are far behind the rest of Europe in the development of wind farms, solar plants, and other energy saving mechanisms. Hopefully this is a temporary energy problem that we will have the foresight to correct. Cumbria could be at the heart of such development, showcasing alternative energy solutions, supporting renewable development, building our economy as a green economy that will appeal internationally if developed effectively and linked to developing the UK and the Lakes as an international tourist destination. Let us not make this temporary energy problem due to a lack of foresight by the politicians who came before us, into a catastrophe on a scale we can hardly imagine for future generations, just as previous generations have left us to struggle with the challenges of global warming. Let us be responsible for ourselves, not dump our problems for someone else to sort out.

Dr Susan Mathieson

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