

West Cumbria Strategic Forum

Eighth meeting - Tuesday 26th June 2012, 10:30am to 12:30pm

1 Victoria Street Conference Centre

Chair: Charles Hendry, Minister of State, DECC

Attendees

Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)

Department for Business Innovation and Skill North West (BIS-NW)

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

Department of Transport (DfT)

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

National Health Service North West (NHS-NW)

Job Centre Plus North West (JCP-NW)

Jamie Reed, MP for Copeland

Sir Tony Cunningham, MP for Workington

Copeland Borough Council (CBC)

Allerdale Borough Council (ABC)

Britain's Energy Coast (BEC)

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Sellafield Limited (SL)

Nuclear Management Partners (NMP)

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)

Professor John Fyfe, Independent Advisor (IA)

Introduction

1. This is the eighth meeting of the Ministerial West Cumbria Strategic Forum (WCSF). The Forum presents the opportunity to discuss progress towards a sustainable economy in west Cumbria and how Government can assist west Cumbria in achieving the long-term vision for development.

Working together in partnership

2. The Forum received a presentation from Professor John Fyfe on the importance of working in partnership, and the benefits for Government, west Cumbria and the UK as a whole in terms of business growth objectives, jobs, wealth creation, nuclear opportunities, diversification, innovation, skills, and investment. West Cumbria will be able to capitalise on its specialised nuclear expertise in new build as well as decommissioning, but will also build on local strengths to diversify and grow into other areas of business, such as renewable energy and advanced manufacturing.

West Cumbria will play a key role in delivering the nation's future energy needs at the same time as helping to deliver the Government's low carbon agenda.

West Cumbria achievements and the Economic Blueprint

3. BEC presented the West Cumbria update report to Government, including key development projects that have progressed in the area. BEC identified the challenges and opportunities for socio-economic development in west Cumbria. BEC aim to create an environment for innovation and to capitalise on investment; focus on strengths to give competitive advantage; build on expertise and diversify business, to realise the potential of Britain's Energy Coast.
4. BEC's West Cumbria Economic Blueprint which was launched in June 2012 sets out a strategy for sustainable economic development in west Cumbria over the next 15 years. This document will be followed by an implementation plan for how the vision will be delivered. Since the launch there has been a positive response from business in the private sector to support delivery of the objectives of the Blueprint.

Action 1: BIS-NW to work with partners in Cumbria for on business opportunities as a priority, to capture business for UK in decommissioning and clean-up.

Action 2: BEC to consider other partners we should invite to the Ministerial Forum.

Memorandum of Agreement

5. Government officials and partners in Cumbria have been working to update the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) established in 2004. The principles of the agreement were reaffirmed by Ministers through cabinet correspondence in 2011. The update focuses on how we work together in partnership to deliver the principles of the MoA. The MoA is close to being finalised.

Action 3: DECC to lead on finalising the MoA for signing by the end of July 2012.

Opportunities and challenges

West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely consultation update

6. CBC gave an update on the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership's (consisting of 17 organisations) consultation on whether the area should take the next step and participate in the Government's siting process for a geological disposal facility. Through responses to this consultation, a public opinion survey and associated community events, the West Cumbria Partnership is obtaining the views of the local communities.
7. The public opinion survey indicated that a high proportion of those sampled knew of the MRWS process and consultation, which reflects the extent that the partnership has gone to in order to reach the local population. The Forum acknowledges the commitment of our Cumbrian partners in taking forward consideration of the MRWS process in west Cumbria.

8. The WC MRWS Partnership have requested that various aspects are put onto a statutory footing, to give more reassurance of Government's commitment to the process.

Action 4: DECC Minister of State Charles Hendry will be writing to the Partnership to confirm the Government's position on this issue in the next few weeks.

9. The Boundary Commission for England is the independent public body that reviews all Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England. They are currently conducting the 2013 Review and have been consulting on proposals and this could have impacts on the Parliamentary constituencies in west Cumbria.

Procurement and new business opportunities

10. BEC tabled a paper on procurement and new business opportunities, and how small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can be supported in business. Government has a target to push 25% of public spending through SMEs.

Action 6: BIS-NW to liaise with UKTI (UK Trade & Industry), the LEP, and BEC to take forward and support SMEs in west Cumbria.

Mineral rights

11. The issue of mineral rights was raised as a potential barrier to business and development (including housing). The issue is not new, and is not specific to west Cumbria. However, as a result of the legislative requirement that all ownership interests relating to both land and sub soils must be registered by September 2013, the issue of mineral rights has been brought into focus.

Action 7: DECC/DCLG/BIS to establish a cross-Government group to ascertain the nature and range of the issue, the scale of the problem, and possible options going forwards.

Action 8: CBC/ABC/NDA/LEP to provide information to support the evidence base on the issue.

Redevelopment of the West Cumberland Hospital update

12. NHS-NW provided an update on progress with the West Cumberland Hospital. The full business case (FBC) for the £90m West Cumberland Hospital build was approved by the Strategic Health Authority in March 2012. Department of Health (DH) has now completed its review and has been approved by Ministers. The case is now with Treasury for their appraisal and approval. Subject to all approvals having been secured further demolition and preparation works will commence as soon in July as possible and the main building works on the new facilities will commence in September.

Highways Agency pinch points fund

13. DfT gave an update on the proposal put forwards to the Highways Agency Pinch Point Programme for road improvements on the A595. The programme is a national Highways Agency (HA) fund intended to deliver small scale improvements to the strategic road network that will help to stimulate growth in the local economy and relieve congestion and/or improve safety. Where possible Government officials will continue to support the bid, and will provide updates as it progresses.

Action 9: DfT to advise CBC and CCC if further information is required to support the bid.

Any other business

Issues discussed:

- *BEC's property portfolio*

Action 10: The local stewardship meeting and the Cumbria Sites Panel to take forwards discussion on HCA liabilities.

- *THORP, MOX2, new nuclear build*

DECC provided a brief update on these topics

- *Super-fast broadband*

There is a real need for super-fast broadband across Cumbria to support business and growth. The LEP have the potential to invest £14million alongside private investment. However, state aid rules may be prohibitive.

Action 11: DCLG to provide an update on Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and State Aid rules.

- *Next steps*

It was agreed that the minutes should be published on the web site and to maintain the momentum that quarterly update reports be prepared and that the forum to have its next meeting in around six months time.

Action: DECC to publish minutes of the meeting on website

Action: DECC/BEC to provide quarterly update reports for Ministers

Action: DECC to arrange the next Ministerial Forum in six months.