

Mark Higson
DECC
3 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

26th May 2011

Dear Mark,

Community Benefits and the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership

You will be aware that the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership has been considering in some detail the issue of community benefits, alongside the other criteria in its Work Programme. As well as understanding issues related to safety, geology, impacts, repository design etc, we as community representatives were keen to understand more about the sections of the White Paper that refer to long term community benefit packages.

The White Paper does not set out many details of what a community benefits package might mean in practice. We are therefore keen to understand DECC's intentions correctly, and avoid any subsequent misunderstandings should the process in West Cumbria continue into Stage 4 of the MRWS process. This of course has not yet been decided.

To this end, the Partnership has drafted a set of 'Principles' that set out the desired direction of any future discussions related to community benefits from its perspective. The Principles do not attempt to replace the need for a formal and legally binding agreement but do aim to flush out any differences of view or interpretation between DECC and the community representatives that may exist before a Decision about Participation is taken. This is important because when the community representatives on the Partnership draw their conclusions about the merits of continuing in the process or not, they will need to be reassured that they fully understand DECC's views on the issue.

We enclose a set of the "Principles for Community Benefits". We request that DECC formally consider the Principles and let us know if the Minister is minded to agree them as a basis for negotiations if Stage 4 were to happen. We ask that any differences of view or clarifications in response to the Principles be put in writing by way of a letter to the Partnership. The Partnership expects DECC is in touch with relevant Government departments that will play a role. As such we would appreciate your response setting out the degree to which other parts of Government are supportive of the principles set out, and if you see any particular sensitivities we should be aware of, for example from the Treasury or Cabinet Office.

In order for our agreed work programme to be finalised without any undue delays, we would appreciate your response by 24th June.

Yours truly,
Elaine Woodburn, Chair of the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership