

MUNCASTER PARISH COUNCIL

Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: Consultation on the site selection process for a Geological Disposal Facility reply 13th November 2013.

Question 1: i) Do you agree that the test of public support should be taken before the representative authority loses the Right of Withdrawal? If so, what do you think would be the most appropriate means of testing public support and when should it take place? If you do not agree with the need for such a test please explain why.

Answer 1

Muncaster Parish Council (MPC) is of the opinion that a test of public support is required. The most appropriate means would be a referendum

Question 2 : Do you agree with the proposed amendments to decision making within the MRWS siting process. If not how would you modify the proposed phased approach, or, alternatively, what different approach would you propose? Please explain your reasoning

Answer 2.

The important question as to whether the representative authority needs to consult local people and stakeholders before giving its consent. This goes to the heart of volunteerism and MPC would wish to see an explicit requirement for prior consultation. Respondents need to know what they are letting themselves in for at the start.

The greatest mistake would be to sideline potential host community representatives especially given that one of the three main functions of the steering group is to review continuously the viability and acceptability of the locality as the potential host site.

Question 3 : Do you agree with this approach to revising roles in the siting process set out in the White Paper? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?

Answer 3

MPC does not agree with the proposed approach.

The arguments set out for the role of local government simply do not bear scrutiny. Trying to simplify the process by suggesting that in two tier areas the district authority alone should be the Responsible Authority makes little sense. MPC would argue that there is no doubt that the community affected would be best represented by its parish council or by a group of parish councillors if the proposed site crossed parish boundaries. Trust in the process will never be forthcoming if the first tier of local government closest to the proposed GDF site is dismissed as being of little consequence and incapable of playing a decision making role.

Question 4: Do you agree with this proposed approach to assessing geological suitability as part of the MRWS siting process? If not what alternative approach would you propose and why?

Answer 4.

MPC believes that the question of the geology of the area where interest is shown must be dealt with in far greater detail than is proposed.

MPC agrees with the following quotation drawn from the LDNPA's earlier reply: *"the question of identifying areas of National Parks for consideration is very contentious and is likely to be contrary to National Park purposes as outlined in legislation. It may be beneficial to future processes to exclude areas which are subject to National Park designation"*.

In our view the position should be put beyond doubt by excluding National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty from the area of search from the outset.

Question 5: Do you agree with this proposed approach to planning for the geological disposal facility? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?

Answer 5

MPC agree with the proposal for a National Policy Statement but only if an Appraisal of Sustainability were to deal with alternatives to the government's policy of a GDF and not simply the implications of different approaches to the siting of a GDF.

Question 6: Do you agree with this clarification of the inventory for geological disposal - and how this will be communicated with the volunteer host community? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?

Answer 6.

MPC agrees that it will be helpful if local people know at the outset what type of waste and materials may be disposed of within a geological disposal facility GDF and that it will not expand but may, given the decisions of government and scientific advancement, reduce. There remains much uncertainty as to volume and government should spell out in clear terms what it expects to be the case over a number of years.

Question 7: Do you endorse the proposed approach to community benefits associated with a GDF? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?

Answer 7.

The requirement for community benefits goes much wider than the affected community. MPC considers that a negative effect from the existence of a GDF will be felt countywide and therefore any benefits should be administered by a three tier partnership.

Question 8: Do you agree with the proposed approach to addressing potential socio-economic and environmental effects that might come from hosting a GDF? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?

Answer 8

MPC welcomes the proposal to undertake much more work at an earlier stage. however, the information needs to be better balanced and should show both sides of the outcome; ie benefits against negatives.

It should be for the wider population to consider when a referendum is arranged giving the decision making body a mandate to move forward or abandon the idea of becoming involved.

Question 9: Do you have any other comments?

Answer 9.

MPC considers that unless communities can be satisfied that the geology is likely to be suitable they are unlikely to be willing to address the many other complex issues associated with a GDF project. We are aware of major faults in the underlying geology on which we rely on for our drinking water.