
From:
Sent: 20 May 2013 15:38
To: radioactivewaste (DECC)
Subject: RESPONSE TO THE DECC CONSULTATION ON THE WEST CUMBRIA MRWS PROCESS

Response to the DEEC consultation on the West Cumbria MRWS process

We fully endorse the brave decision of the Cumbria County Council not to proceed to Stage Four of the MRWS process, which was subsequently unanimously supported by the Council's Scrutiny Panel. The main reasons for our opposition to siting an underground nuclear waste repository in West Cumbria are as follows:

1. A complete lack of transparency which characterised the entire process, with most local voters being kept totally in the dark about what was being proposed – supposedly in their name – until the very last moment, when some insightful community organisers alerted them to what was going on.
2. The Government's treating the disposal of nuclear waste as a local rather than national issue. It very much looks to us as if, having made West Cumbria overly reliant on the nuclear industry and having bribed local politicians by unquantified promises of "community benefits", the Government had already decided to treat the area as a nuclear dump – irrespective of safety, environmental, and other, considerations. Consequently, it failed to undertake a truly *independent* survey of the national geology. We are fully aware that large areas of the country (particularly in Eastern England) have been identified as potentially suitable and feel that it would be utter folly to proceed any further without a thorough, *objective*, assessment of the geology of the entire country.
3. Our deep distrust of the Government's, and its agencies', ability to find a 100%-safe (since *nothing* less will do) solution to storing nuclear waste underground. How can we *possibly* trust politicians and those in their pay when Sellafield's waste is stored in unsatisfactory conditions and widely-publicised safety lapses (and probably many more hushed-up ones) have been allowed to occur? (Please see the recent report by the National Audit Office.) Moreover, today's technology will be little more than laughing stock in 50 years' time, yet we are talking about storing nuclear waste underground for *thousands* of years!
4. The extreme environmental sensitivity of most of the area under consideration (the Lake District National Park and the Solway Plain, both of which are protected by legislation).
5. The fact that much of this area had already been found to be geologically unsuitable by Nirex, with safer locations having been identified elsewhere (notably Eastern England; see above).

6. The negative impact of the proposed development on the tourism and tourism-dependent industries in the Lake District National Park and on the Solway Plain and on their image.
7. The Government's failure to provide the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership with a legal framework for withdrawal from the process, expressly requested by the then Cumbria County leader Cllr Eddie Martin.
8. Either unwitting ignorance or witting duplicity of some of the local politicians involved in the process. In explaining her decision to vote "yes" to proceed to Stage Four of the MRWS process, Copeland's Cllr Elaine Woodburn is on record as saying that establishing the area's suitability during Stage Four would be merely "a desk exercise", with its findings being "extrapolated" (she didn't specify how exactly). Yet the glossy folder produced by the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership clearly states (on page 5): "We believe it will only be possible to find out if there is a suitable site for a repository if there are more detailed investigations, *including boreholes* [our emphasis], to test the rocks in the area." In other words, Stage Four would be unlikely to yield any conclusive results, and proceeding to Stage Five would be necessary, at which point so much taxpayers' money would have been spent that withdrawal could well be impossible. The Government has been explicitly asked to enshrine the right of withdrawal in law, yet it has failed to act (see above).
9. A sobering insight into governmental *modus-operandi* gained from the Nirex report and other Nirex-generated information. Nirex:
 - Felt that the process paving the way for finding an underground nuclear waste repository "*couldn't* be high profile" (Why not? Those who have nothing to hide are not afraid of adopting a high profile.)
 - Advocated using two classic PR techniques: the third party (bribe someone credible into being a mouthpiece for an unpopular policy) and divide and rule (butter up supporters, convince the indifferents and "isolate or convince those MPs who are against")
 - Refused to release a list of some 537 areas identified as potential nuclear dump sites in the UK until after the 2005 general election
 - "Sexed up" a report on nuclear dumping, failing to examine concerns that the proposed concrete and steel containers to be used for burying nuclear waste could leak within 500 years
 - Advocated keeping journalists on side and grooming opinion leaders
 - Dismissed concerned communities as "NIMBY areas" and their justifiable anxiety as "the NIMBY syndrome fear"
 - Believed that, if all else failed, an organisation could just change its address, source of funding and name and people would be fooled.

Nothing we have heard or read about the politics behind the West Cumbria MRWS process has convinced us that the tactics used during this process have been any different from those earlier employed by Nirex.
10. Our general mistrust of politicians and their motives, a feeling which, sadly, resonates with many people – certainly all those we know. We positively *long* to live in a democracy where we could actually trust our rulers, but, on current evidence, we can't – tragically. You would thus have to be – and be seen as being – scrupulously transparent and unfailingly open about any further moves relating to siting an underground waste disposal – be that in Cumbria or anywhere else. Given the critical importance of the issue, spouting politically-expedient sound-bites, hiding behind a few organisations branded as "a partnership" and failing to engage with the electorate

at large simply won't do. In short, we believe that, to regain some of our trust, you would need to alter your entire *modus operandi*.

Please add us to your list of any further consultees. Thank you.

Kind regards.

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