

Response form

Please use this form to respond to this call for evidence on Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: Review of the Siting Process for a Geological Disposal Facility.

The closing date for the submission of responses is **10 June 2013**.

Responses can be returned by email (preferable) or post.

Email address: radioactivewaste@decc.gsi.gov.uk

Or by post to: The Managing Radioactive Waste Safely team
Department of Energy and Climate Change
Room M07
55 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2EY

Name	REDACTED
Organisation / Company	
Organisation Size (no. of employees)	
Organisation Type	
Job Title	
Department	
Address	REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED
Email	REDACTED REDACTED
Telephone	REDACTED REDACTED
Fax	

Would you like to be kept informed of developments with the MRWS programme?	Yes
Would you like your response to be kept	No

confidential? If yes please give a reason

The Government is interested in your views on the geological disposal facility site selection process outlined in the 2008 Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) White Paper. To assist us you may wish to consider the following issues in your response:

- What aspects of the site selection process in the MRWS White Paper do you think could be improved and how?
- What do you think could be done to attract communities into the MRWS site selection process?
- What information do you think would help communities engage with the MRWS site selection process?

On Issue 1:

The proponents of radioactive waste disposal could mount a more robust argument in its favour. For the community here in West Cumbria the problem of radioactive waste disposal is not an abstract one. Failure to secure the best option, namely deep geological disposal, will have significant safety and socio-economic consequences as the alternative of indefinite surface storage is followed. I do not believe that the local debate recognised this issue.

The proponents also need to counter the argument that the host rock here in West Cumbria is not the best available. While this statement is true, it is not the point. Regulatory criteria have been set for the performance of a geological disposal facility. These criteria are demanding and ensure public and environmental safety in the future. A site for a geological disposal facility needs to meet these criteria, but it does not have to be the best available host rock in the country.

On issue 2:

It has frustrated local supporters of deep geological disposal that more specific proposals about infrastructure development and community benefits were not brought forward. Whilst the motives behind this approach were sound and understandable, in hindsight we can see the drawback of this approach. Other developers of major schemes bring forward specific benefits proposals and this is not unethical. A hypothetical scheme of infrastructure and benefits could be developed without prejudice to the debate.

The West Cumbria MRWS Partnership final report (at para 12.11) states that until sites are narrowed down it is impossible to define what an appropriate package might look like. Such a black and white approach has not helped.

On issue 3:

What was lacking from the debate in West Cumbria was any outline of what would be, for us who live with so much radioactive waste stored at Sellafield, the consequences of not proceeding with deep geological disposal.

Before putting the question about accepting a disposal facility to the community for a decision, there needs to be more specificity about topics such as

- **Site specific R+D**
- **Site specific design and logistics studies**
- **Locality specific packages of infrastructure development**
- **Community specific benefits packages.**

A view is that developing such knowledge and such specific proposals is to prejudge the community decision. Hindsight shows that since 1979 such decisions have failed to be made largely because the debate has been too abstract and detached from the potential host communities.

The option of deep geological disposal has never had a serious alternative, the question always has been about where is the site to be. This is a large and difficult topic for the public to grasp. Abstract arguments about principles are indeed necessary, but are not sufficient. Information about what would result from saying yes or no is needed.