

Response from REDACTED on the MRWS process

REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED I attended some MRWS meetings and was aware of growing concern about the suitability of the geology in West Cumbria. For many who considered the proposal in depth it seemed that safety was not paramount and the question continually posed about the wisdom of selecting a site based on 'volunteerism' regardless of the suitability of the geology within the area. If the proposal to pursue deep geological disposal continues it is essential that a nationwide geological assessment of suitability is undertaken and only "volunteer" hosts considered from those areas.

Concerns about safety and the impact of deep disposal upon a major source of employment- Tourism and the internationally valued and recognised Lake District Brand- created repercussions in the business community.

There were unrealistic and eventually unsubstantiated projections about the number of jobs that would be generated particularly long term.

Meanwhile virtually no information about the proposal was being circulated to Cumbrian businesses either through Cumbria Tourism or the Chamber of Trade. REDACTED of Cumbria Tourism was questioned about this failure at the Cumbria Tourism AGM. He expressed the opinion that the issue was of little interest to the wider Tourism community in the County.

The impact upon the Cumbrian/Lake District brand and the potential economic consequences were eventually explored in a MRWS commissioned Brand Strategy report.

The report outlined that damage that could occur but the MRWS partnership was unrealistically confident that PR work could be undertaken to mitigate that despite that being at unknown cost and with unpredictable success.

Poor communication was not limited to the economic community. Two years into the consultation period REDACTED REDACTED representative on the MRWS partnership, had failed to communicate widespread economic concerns or the presence of the Brand Strategy report and its findings to the Leader of Cumbria County Council and presumably other Councillors on the Cabinet.

The outcome was that as awareness and concerns grew through public meetings a list of businesses opposed to the siting of a nuclear waste repository in West Cumbria was established and quickly grew to over 600 by the time the County and Borough Councils met to consider proceeding to Stage 4.

In addition to the economic concerns I noted the following:-

1] Throughout the whole process there appeared to be questions from the public arena that were never successfully answered in public meetings or elsewhere.

2] Some related to the geology, others queried the criteria of the 'host community'. There was an absence of clarity about the nature or volume of the waste to be buried.

3] Most disturbing was the absence of any national plan B should the MRWS process fail in West Cumbria. This led to growing concern that high level waste would be buried in the County regardless of its suitability, a concern fed by the apparent pro-nuclear attitude prevailing in the MRWS partnership.