

## Consultation: Review of the Siting Process for a Geological Disposal Facility September 2013

### **A response from the Sellafield Workers' Campaign.**

The Sellafield Workers' Campaign (SWC) is a 'grassroots' organisation of Trade Union elected representatives employed on the Sellafield site principally from three unions – GMB, Unite and Prospect.

SWC's core aim is to achieve the ongoing development of the nuclear industry to reap the rightful community investments and benefits associated with such. To this end we published a Blueprint that outlines our aims and objectives. Primarily we seek to enable this through a package of

- promoting new nuclear build as a source of low carbon base load energy;
- to support the re-use of plutonium;
- finding a long term solution for the UK's higher level wastes.

Our interest in finding a solution, possibly in west Cumbria, must be seen as part of the package and not a stand alone ambition. We have no ambition to see west Cumbria solely becoming a receptacle for the UK's nuclear waste.

Our response to an issue of great national importance is based on considerable experience and vested interest. Without a final solution, our members will for generations be subjected to needless and indefinite packaging and re-packaging of nuclear waste. Furthermore this state of perpetual packaging and storage is not cost free and will be yet another burden for the shoulders of future generations.

We represent over 10,000 members who are residents of Cumbria, many of whom reside in the Boroughs of Copeland and Allerdale. As such we believe that the SWC is a legitimate representative of the communities of west Cumbria.

We actively campaigned for a yes vote to move to Stage 4 of the MRWS process, not for a yes to a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) at any price. The geology must be suitable, and the risks to both the people and environment of any community involved must be at an absolute minimum. We believe that the principles of volunteerism and partnership are the correct basis for locating the home of a GDF. However, we also believe that should a community not come forward to volunteer in the near future then Government should seriously consider other ways of implementing a final solution for the waste.

We have been the custodians for much of the waste for over three decades. The drift and delay has gone on for long enough. The time has come to make real progress towards implementing a GDF to house the UK's higher active wastes.

SWC welcomes the opportunity to make a contribution to the consultation because it has the potential to further the package of interests laid out in our Blueprint. We do so on the following

basis:

1. We agree that a process containing fewer stages requiring fewer decisions is the right way forward. We say that from our experience of the last process.
2. We agree with the backbone of the proposal - volunteerism first; learning about the geology and benefits next; and then focusing on the potential for implementation.
3. We think that the introduction of 'learning' and focussing' phases makes good sense. Once again speaking from experience, we believe that understanding more about the geology and the benefits of hosting a GDF at an earlier stage will be beneficial for any interested community. In the last process these subjects were placed too far down the line. More about the socio-economic benefits must be known sooner otherwise they run the risk of being seen as 'jam tomorrow'. The benefits must be such that help provide for a sustainable future for that community.
4. We agree with the involvement of authoritative geologists and regulators at an early stage. During the previous process the omission of this element allowed individuals to put forward their speculations and opinions as facts without challenge. This had the effect of distorting the information available and flawing the process. This must not happen again!
5. The Right of Withdrawal throughout the siting process is an imperative for any new proposal.
6. It should be the democratically elected representatives of a community that decides if that community should enter into a siting process and the people of that community who decide whether it is to host a GDF or not. SWC therefore welcomes the proposal of local decision making i.e. at District or Borough level. We speak from painful experience of having been deprived of that right by others with interests from areas far removed from Copeland and Allerdale.
7. SWC is pleased that consideration has been given to an inventory of wastes that are to be consigned to a GDF. This is an issue that we raised in our submission to the Call for Evidence. We welcome the intention to have at an early stage, a clearly defined single Baseline Inventory that provides as big a picture as possible of what is to be placed in the GDF. We remain of the opinion that any local community involved should be entitled to, as a fundamental right, a full understanding of the inventory of what is to be placed in the GDF and what material should be recycled, conditioned or even retrievable for possible future use, before any decision to host the GDF is made. As a fundamental principle the geographical size of any potential GDF should be kept to a minimum.