

E-bulletin No.18 – May 2012

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Introduction

Welcome to the latest e-bulletin from the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership.

The Partnership is now considering the results of the public consultation that ran from 21 November 2011 to 23 March 2012. You can read more about what will happen with those views and what will happen next as part of the process for deciding whether West Cumbria should take part in the Government's search for a suitable site for a deep underground repository for higher-activity radioactive waste.



This edition also includes details about the brand protection study and an Ipsos MORI opinion poll commissioned by the Partnership, as well as the dates for future Partnership meetings.

You can access all the associated documents on our [website](#), and you can follow updates on our Facebook page and Twitter account.

1. Major consultation programme results considered

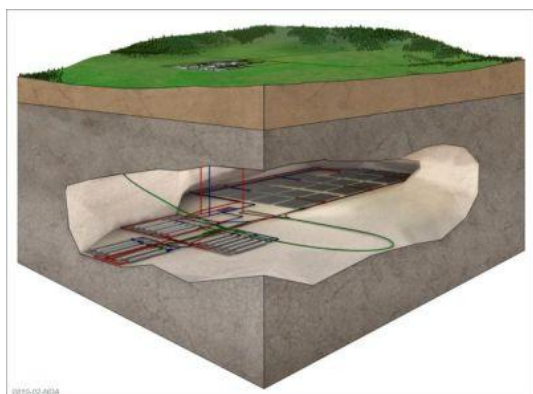
The results of the public consultation, which ran from November until late March, are now being considered by Partnership members.

We set out our initial opinions on a range of issues related to whether the area should take part in the Government's search and asked people to express their views on them. The Partnership has not come to a view about whether the area should take part in the search for a site. Instead we wanted to find out what the public thinks before producing a final report.

Around 2,300 people living in West Cumbria, other parts of the county, and further afield, contributed their views during the consultation. We received around 1,400 submissions in total – some of which came from groups.

Partnership members have taken part in two workshops to go through the views expressed and points made by the public and stakeholders. Responses to the issues raised were also considered at these workshops, and were discussed further at the most recent Partnership meeting on 25 May. These views will be considered carefully in producing a final report to send to Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council.

Our report is likely to be sent to the three councils this summer. The three local authorities will then each make a formal decision about whether to take part in the search for a site later in the year. For an area to formally enter the siting process, both the Borough Council and the County Council would need to be in agreement.



If the area was to participate in the search, the councils could still withdraw from the process at any time until work could begin on constructing the facility – which is likely to be more than 10 years from now.



The consultation involved a greater level of communications and public-engagement work than is typical for consultations because the Partnership wanted to ensure it did as much as possible to raise awareness of the issues and give people the chance to have their say.

The consultation included:

- full page articles on two separate occasions in all paid-for local newspapers;
- a six-page article in Your Cumbria, which is delivered to all homes in the county;
- an [overview](#) of the full consultation document and a newsletter which were sent to homes in West Cumbria as well as places like libraries, council offices and leisure centres;
- our [website](#) with a wide range of information;
- regular updates on Twitter and Facebook;
- advertising on billboards and buses in West Cumbria;
- 12 consultation events across the county;
- a [live online discussion](#);
- an education pack for schools;
- about 50 discussion groups in schools and other groups; and
- a [competition](#) to further encourage young people to find out more.

All of the submissions to the consultation have been published on our website and can be viewed [here](#). A document summarising the views and listing the key issues raised will be published shortly.

2. Opinion poll results published

Ipsos MORI has published the results of a survey of residents of Cumbria.

Ipsos MORI surveyed more than 3,000 people by telephone during March, April and early May. The results of the survey show that 51 per cent of people in the area covered by

Allerdale Borough Council supported taking part in the search for a suitable site for a geological disposal facility, compared with 37 per cent who were opposed. Four per cent were neutral and eight per cent said they did not know.

In the area covered by Copeland Borough Council, 68 per cent of people surveyed said they supported taking part in the search, with 23 per cent opposed, four per cent neutral and five per cent who did not know.

In the rest of the county 50 per cent said they supported Allerdale and/or Copeland taking part in the search for a site, compared with 35 per cent against. Five per cent said they were neutral and ten per cent did not know.

We were particularly concerned to find out whether people in the Allerdale and Copeland areas are in favour or opposed to taking part in the search as this is where a repository could be located.

As well as commissioning one of the country's leading polling companies to conduct the representative survey, the Partnership also commissioned two independent experts on polling to provide additional advice on the survey and the methodology for carrying it out.

The presentation given by Ipsos MORI to the Partnership at its meeting on 25 May can be viewed [here](#). The full report from the survey is due to be published early in June.

You can find more information on why we chose to use an opinion survey rather than a referendum in the [frequently asked questions](#) section at the bottom of this e-bulletin

3. Brand protection study published

Last year we commissioned a report to look at a strategy for how the area could mitigate against negative perceptions that could arise if West Cumbria takes part in the search for somewhere to put a geological disposal facility.

The report makes a number of recommendations including a multi-tiered and multi-staged communications programme. The Partnership is now considering the report as part of its on-going work.

For more details you can read the report [here](#).

4. Cockermouth student scoops journalism prize

As part of our efforts to engage young people throughout Cumbria with the issues surrounding the area potentially taking part in the Government's search, we ran a competition for people aged 18 and under during the consultation.

The competition challenged young people to produce a balanced news report on the issues. We received almost 40 entries to the competition from individuals and schools from different parts of Cumbria.

The competition's judges, which included ITV Border reporter Samantha Parker, and Editor and Publisher of the North West Evening Mail, Jonathan Lee, as well as Partnership member Lindsay Gray, chose an entry written by 16-year-old Eleanor Blackley of Great Broughton. Eleanor won £500.

You can read Eleanor's article on our [website](#).

There were also three runners-up prizes of £150 which will go to Stainburn School, in Workington, which submitted a radio podcast piece; John Ruskin School, in Coniston, which submitted a video report; and Lauren Shaw, 16, of Cockermouth, who also submitted a video report.

Samantha Parker said: "The standard of the entries exceeded my expectations. Clearly a lot of work had gone into every entry and it was hard to pick a winner - it was that close.

"This is a tricky subject to make simple and understandable. I felt this was where Eleanor excelled. She had clearly done her research and looked at all the reasons for and against the underground store. Using the diagrams available meant she was able to illustrate the points that she was making. I hope her essay is included in future literature on the repository - it is the perfect overview. Well done to Eleanor, the runner ups and to everyone else who entered."

5. Forthcoming meetings

Members of the public are welcome to attend [Partnership meetings](#) as observers and are also given an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions.

The next two meeting we have scheduled are:

25 June – Braithwaite Memorial Hall, near Keswick, 9.30am to 4pm

19 July – Egremont Market Hall, Egremont, 9.30am to 4pm



Agendas will be [published](#) closer to the meetings. Anyone who would like to attend should contact Cath Little by emailing catherine.little@copeland.gov.uk or by phoning the Partnership's free-phone number 0800 048 8912, so that we can ensure that enough seating is made available.

6. Frequently asked questions

In each of these e-bulletins we include one or two 'Frequently asked questions'. You can find more of these [Q&As on our website](#).

Q. Why not have a referendum?

A. There has been a mix of views expressed about the relative pros and cons of using opinion surveys and referendums.

We have discussed this issue at length and we have concluded that, at this stage in the process, an opinion survey rather than a referendum should be used to gauge whether or not net support for a decision to enter the siting process exists. This is because:

- It avoids the claimed negative features of referendums such as low or unrepresentative turnout, manipulation of views by organised interests, over-simplification of the issues, and the risk of other issues influencing people's responses.
- We found during our second round of public and stakeholder engagement that there is a mix of opinion on using referendums. Although some

participants asked that referendums be used as a method of gauging support, on considering the practical implications they concluded that referendums would have to be carried out at the right point in the process, when more detail is available, for example, on impacts, benefits and siting.

- In the limited number of countries where referendums have been used in a volunteer process (Hungary and South Korea), this has only been done at the stage when potential sites and well defined potential host communities have been identified, which is later in the process than we currently are at.

The potential use of referendums and other methods to inform decision making in later stages of the siting process can be kept open for review if a decision to enter the siting process is taken.

We want to make sure that the opinion survey we undertake is independent and statistically representative, and that a legitimate approach is taken. We are therefore using a reputable polling company and have also hired two expert reviewers to check the methodology and survey, as well as the polling company's work.

Q. Who will regulate the safety of any geological disposal facility?

A. The following answer has been provided by the Environment Agency and the Office for Nuclear Regulation:

The Environment Agency and the Office for Nuclear Regulation will regulate any geological disposal facility in England and Wales. We are working together to make sure that the design and operation of any facility meets our high standards for environmental protection, safety, security, waste management and radioactive waste transportation.

Before developing, operating or closing any geological disposal facility, the developer needs to apply for permits and licences. Before issuing a permit or licence, we need to be satisfied that the developer's safety cases are consistent with our regulatory requirements. These requirements take account of international standards and guidance, our knowledge and experience, and, in some cases, responses to public consultations.

We review our requirements periodically to ensure they remain consistent with current knowledge and understanding. For further information, see our joint website: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/geological-disposal>.

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