

Consultation response from John Dunn,

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General

The previous consultation was acknowledged as a failure in raising public awareness and providing arrangements that people could trust. The current process is already heading the same way.

Public awareness outside of Cumbria of the search for a GDF is lamentably poor. We could be forgiven for thinking there is a deliberate news blackout. Contrast this with the new high-speed train line, which could be considered trivial when compared with the issues around disposal of nuclear waste. This has been all over the news and everyone in the country is aware of it. For this reason I would question whether DECC is putting any real effort into generating any interest in hosting a GDF outside of Cumbria. This seems to be further evidence of Government's pre-disposition towards siting a GDF in Cumbria.

There is very little trust for this process in Cumbria. Removing Cumbria County Council from the decision-making process was to remove the major obstacle to siting a GDF in Cumbria. This along with a disingenuous claim that parish councils are undemocratic killed off the credibility of the consultation and any trust that we may have had in those running it.

Volunteerism should mean that a community can say no and Cumbria has said no to a GDF time after time on various grounds and yet you keep on coming back.

Question 1. Do you agree that a test of public support should be taken before the representative authority loses the right of withdrawal? If so what do you think would be the most appropriate means of testing public support, and when should it take place? If you do not agree with the need for such a test please explain why.

I agree that a test of public support should be taken. For the test to mean anything we must have complete confidence in the process. There must be a high level of engagement, openness and transparency. There should be three referenda; one before entry into the focusing phase, one before intrusive investigations and one before the final decision to construct a repository.

In delaying the definition of a host community the government is given itself best possible chance of manipulating the results of any test of public support

Any repository will have a significant impact and pose a significant threat to the county as a whole and therefore should be at county level. However the county should not have the power to impose a GDF on a small community within that county.

The referenda, should be drawn up and implemented by an independent authority in conjunction with as broad a group as is democratically practical. This should not be left to Government or to District Councils who have clear conflicts of interest.

The right of withdrawal should be legalised and only withdrawn after the final referendum.

Having said all this, I maintain that a test of public support in Cumbria is not necessary. The Cumbrian people have repeatedly opposed the siting of a GDF in Cumbria through protest groups, petitions and the lobbying of councils. The letter from Cumbria County Council to Edward Davey explained in some detail why CCC withdrew from the process earlier this year. The reasons are still valid today. Cumbria should be ruled out.

Question 2. Do you agree with the proposed amendments to decision making within the MRWS siting process? If not how would you modify the proposed phased approach, or, alternatively, what different approach would you propose? Please explain your reasoning.

I disagree strongly with the proposed amendments to decision making within the process.

Contrary to the stated aim, changes to decision-making have the potential to render the process much less transparent than the previous process. For example "local bodies" are allowed to approach government to express an interest but local bodies are not allowed to exclude themselves from the process. There is no mechanism by which communities can indicate that they do not wish to participate.

I strongly disagree with the changes in arrangements that allow District Councils to act as the representative authority. The arrangement that the leader of the representative authority should also chair the steering group and appoint the members simply lays the whole system open to abuse. The arrangements proposed allow those with a vested interest in hosting a GDF to control all aspects of the consultation and effectively ignore any voices they do not wish to hear. Both District Councils in Cumbria have

already shown a propensity for not listening to their communities and allowing them this sort of power would lead to a wholly biased approach.

During the learning phase three parties will make the decisions: the representative authority, Government and the RWMD. There is a clear predisposition to site GDF in Cumbria amongst these three parties. Communities would not get a fair hearing. This is exacerbated by the fact that the representative authority, the government and RWMD are members of the consultative partnership. This would replicate the arrangements enjoyed by the West Cumbria MRWS partnership when three members of Allerdale District Council Executive Committee were members of the partnership. They were effectively advising themselves. The current arrangements are riddled with such conflicts of interest and bias.

The changes in decision-making outlined in the consultation paper show a lack of independent advice and no genuinely independent supervision of any of the processes. Bodies with vested interests such as District Councils should not control key groups that promote discussion and have the responsibility to advise communities of the impact and ramifications of the GDF.

The steering group should be chaired by an independent figure of national standing, possibly a legal professional.

Question 3. Do you agree with this approach to revising roles in the siting process set out in the White Paper if not what alternative approach would you propose and why?

I support the principle of a national public awareness and engagement programme.

I have to say that the number of shortcomings in the consultation process seems to indicate that the consultation has already failed to raise public awareness outside cumbria.. Examples include the lack of public awareness outside Cumbria, lamentably poor news coverage nationally, and stupid "mistakes" such as publicizing the wrong email address for consultation responses. The latter simply should not happen when a government department seem to have an unlimited budget to push this forward.

As stated earlier the proposals will allow for a body, most likely a Borough or District Council to express an interest. This body will then be responsible for the steering project and finally, as a representative authority, it will decide upon the right for withdrawal. This arrangement is clearly flawed and open to abuse and should never have been proposed in the first place.

There are far too many instances of conflict of interest. The whole process is biased and appears to be designed to allow any body volunteering as a DMB to then take complete control of the process. This includes controlling the steering group, controlling the consultative partnership by appointing the membership and sitting on the partnership and unduly influencing the peer review group. In short, the proposed arrangements clear the decks for the DMB to force through a GDF by completely sidelining any opposition. How can you realistically expect anyone to trust you or your proposed new arrangements?

This process will have no credibility and is completely without integrity. The only way forward is to scrap all these arrangements, introduce some

proper independent oversight and lose the deliberate and manipulative conflicts of interest.

DECCs rationale for allowing District Councils to register as a DMB is just plain wrong. Contrary to the inflammatory statement in the consultation document, parish councils are democratically elected. A few councillors are co-opted but robust arrangements are in place to remove under-performing councillors. Contrast this with District Councils. For example, there are 56 members of Allerdale District council but it is the Executive Committee of just seven members that makes the decisions on a GDF. A simple majority carries the vote. Any voter unlucky enough to be represented by one of the other 49 members is unable to influence the decision. The council executive is selected, not elected. Voters have no say in determining who has the huge power to make decisions on matters as important as a GDF.

I agree that Parish councils do not have full time staff and sufficient resources to deal with a project the size of a GDF. This does not make them incompetent. District Councils have more staff and resource. This does not make them competent.

Without a doubt the best-resourced body to deal with a GDF is the County Council and you have excluded them. The obvious reason for their exclusion is their opposition to a GDF. Again, how can you expect us to trust this process.

Question 4. Do you agree with this proposed approach to assessing geological suitability as part of the MRWS siting process? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why.

I have no specialist geological or geotechnical knowledge. However I have arrived at the conclusion that I do not agree with this proposed approach to assessing geological suitability.

The lack of consensus between experts has characterised this whole process from the outset. The MRWS consultant geologist pronounced that there was little chance of finding suitable geology in Cumbria that was safe enough to host a GDF. Independent geologists are adamant that there is no suitable geology in Cumbria. The NIREX inspectors advised looking elsewhere for a GDF and yet government continues, determined to find a location in Cumbria for a GDF. Further evidence of Government pre-disposition to a GDF in Cumbria

DECC and the politicians in favour of the GDF in Cumbria consistently claim that safety is their primary consideration when searching for a GDF site. However they continue to ignore this obvious lack of consensus and forge ahead claiming that engineered solutions are appropriate and that there may be a site suitable for a GDF. On examining research into GDF it is by no means proven that this is the most suitable way of dealing with radioactive waste. The encapsulation approach, ie the engineered solution, favoured by Alan Smith, the leader of Allerdale council and a few scientists is coming under severe criticism from the scientific community. It seems to me that the only sensible way forward is to leave Cumbria alone until there is some consensus between the experts.

Government consultant geologists have failed to produce a convincing body of evidence demonstrating the suitability of the geology in Cumbria to safely contain a GDF. In contrast independent geologists have produced a large and apparently convincing body of evidence demonstrating the

unsuitability of the geology in Cumbria for a GDF. Government consultants and geologists have consistently refused to openly debate this with experts such as Prof Smyth and Prof Haszeldine. This speaks volumes about the lack of confidence that the government retained geologists have in their own findings.

From the evidence already presented, I agree with the arguments that a national screening process for sites with suitable geology is possible. The data that exist could be examined and compiled into a national report within a matter of months. I also agree with assertions that the long-term safety of the GDF depends almost entirely on the geology in which it is placed.

I agree with independent geologists and geophysicists that selection of the most suitable geology for geological disposal of nuclear waste must be the number one priority. I believe them when they assert that DECC has chosen in this review to mislead, misrepresent and distort the facts in order to engineer the outcome that it wants.

From the very start of this process of voluntarism it has been stated time and time again that the search for a repository site should begin with a national study to identify the areas with the most promising geology before engaging with communities to find volunteers. Figures have been presented that show such a national survey at a cost of round about £1 million is easily affordable in the context of this project, representing about 1/25000 of the overall cost.

DECC continues to refuse to carry out a national survey of geology. I can only conclude that it is doing this because it does not wish to find more

suitable geology elsewhere. It's denial of the concept of suitable geology is downright disingenuous and further evidence of pre-disposition towards Cumbria as the location for the GDF

Question 5 you agree with this proposed approach to planning for the geological disposal facility?

I disagree with the proposed approach to planning for the geological disposal facility.

As I have stated the representative authority role should not be delegated to a District Council. County Councils must participate rather than consult in the decision to host a GDF.

I strongly disagree that the secretary of state for energy should adjudicate the final decision about planning consent for a GDF. Another blatant conflict of interest created deliberately to smooth the way for the construction of a GDF. Another example of why we can not trust DECC on any matters associated with the GDF.

Question 6. Do you agree with this clarification of the inventory for geological disposal – and how this would be communicated with the volunteer host community? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?

I do not agree with the addition to the inventory for geological disposal. To call it a clarification of the inventory and then slip in that the GDF will also hold waste from new build power stations is underhand.

DECC has completely change the goalposts by including waste from new build power stations in the revised baseline inventory. The extent and nature of the waste completely changes the risks associated with the GDF.

Introducing waste from newbuild programme now requires the host community to make an open-ended commitment. This could produce a GDF like Topsy. It would just grow and grow and grow. This makes it even more important to conduct a real national search and a process with at least some integrity to find suitable geology for a repository.

The government's own committee advised against including newbuild waste and DECC has ignored this recommendation.

In the light of the government's determination to include waste from new build power stations my recommendation would be that this whole process starts with the national geological survey to find a geographical area in the United Kingdom with a sufficiently large footprint of suitable safe geology.

All of the evidence and conclusions resulting from any sort of sensible and unbiased analysis are pointing towards the necessity for a national geological survey.

Question 7. Do you endorse the proposed approach to community benefits associated with the GDF? If not what alternative approach would you propose and why?

I do not agree with the proposed approach to community benefits associated with the GDF.

Proponents of the GDF in Cumbria are putting communities under pressure to accept a GDF to bring them out of economic hardship. Government has consistently refused to make a clear statement of what community benefits will accompany GDF and how they will be administered. Nor will they commit to a timescale. Any community would host the country's nuclear waste in perpetuity. It would make sense then that community benefits continue in perpetuity.

Once again communities do not trust Government to act fairly in awarding and administering community benefits, not least because government has only presented at one side of the case. For example, In attempting to sell a GDF in Cumbria, Government has ignored any adverse effects on Tourism, jobs and businesses and has presented a distorted and biased view of benefits.

Any socio economic information presented to a community should be factual, unbiased and delivered by an independent body.

Question eight. Do you agree with the proposed approach to addressing potential socio economic and environmental effects that might come from hosting a GDF? If not what alternative approach would you propose and why?

I do not agree with the proposed approach to addressing potential socio economic and environmental effects.

There should be a clear separation of the environmental issues from the economic issues.

The previous consultation made the mistake of ignoring their legal responsibilities with regard to protected areas. Government is refusing to exclude protected areas as potential sites for the GDF. This is illegal and illogical as before developing any such site all other possibilities must have been exhausted. From the evidence that already exists, it is clear that there are other, more suitable potential sites in unprotected areas

This brings us back to the need for a geological survey of the UK prior to inviting communities to register an interest. This has been mentioned by almost everyone and has been ignored by DECC time after time after time.