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**Comments on whether or not Cumbria County Council should make a ‘without commitment’ expression of interest to site a deep geological disposal facility in Cumbria.**

CORE does not believe it in the interests of the County Council to express a without commitment interest in hosting a deep geological disposal facility in Cumbria. Such a facility, being international by nature with foreign wastes requiring disposal, would be detrimental to West Cumbria and its future diversification and prosperity.

By expressing interest under the DEFRA MRWS programme, the County Council will not only be undoing the valuable work and resources it committed to the NIREX RCF Public Inquiry, but will also be complicit in condemning the future of West Cumbria and the County as a whole to further decades of a dependence on and domination by the nuclear industry.

Given the further significant work required at Sellafield into the next century via the NDA’s decommissioning programme, the advent of nuclear academies and research facilities, and the possibility of new reactors under the Energy Coast Masterplan, the addition of a deep geological disposal facility to such a nuclear portfolio is an unnecessary burden on local communities and a retrograde step for the County. Moreover, such a facility remains untried and untested to any degree of certainty worldwide.

Better therefore that the County Council throws its weight and endeavours behind CORE’s preferred option which advocates the retention and management of the County’s nuclear wastes ‘in-house’ at Sellafield, and the abandonment of any further nuclear waste imports from outside the area. This option has the merit of dealing with the majority of all UK’s nuclear wastes – including the foreign component. It reduces at a stroke the number of cross-country transports of nuclear materials and requires only that the remaining minority of UK nuclear wastes are dealt with at the various sites of origin. Such sites, being licensed nuclear facilities, are therefore self-selecting and the need to employ the contentious programme of volunteerism, as advocated by CoRWM and supported by Government, is dispensed with.

Whether Sellafield wastes (and no other) are disposed of underground or stored above ground at Sellafield is a debate for the future and will depend on the suitability of the local geology either on or off the site. Either way, Cumbria County Council’s full involvement at all levels of planning and execution of this option will be a pre-requisite.

CORE therefore urges the County Council to reject any consideration to expressing a without commitment interest and instead to concentrate its endeavours on the long-term and local management/disposal of Sellafield’s nuclear wastes in the best interests of the County and its inhabitants. Let others within the UK share the responsibility of the burden unwisely and unfairly bequeathed to the nation by the nuclear industry.

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2008**