

**West Cumbrians to learn more on the Government's search for underground
radioactive waste store**

People living in Copeland and Allerdale will get the chance from this month to find out more about the Government's search for a deep underground facility to dispose of higher activity radioactive waste.

The West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership is sending a leaflet to all homes in the area and holding a series of public meetings. It is the first stage in a comprehensive process that will give everyone the chance to help decide whether or not Copeland and Allerdale Councils and Cumbria County Council should participate in the process of finding a suitable site for the facility.

The West Cumbria MRWS Partnership was set up earlier this year to help the councils make an informed decision and to ensure that people living in the area are involved in the process.

The Government is asking communities across the country to talk to them about potentially hosting a deep underground facility for higher activity radioactive waste.

Around 70% of the country's radioactive waste that is earmarked for disposal in a geological repository is already stored at Sellafield. Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council have therefore started the early stages of this conversation with Government and have made 'expressions of interest' in the formal Government process.

Talking to the Government about having this site does not commit anyone to it. It would be well over a decade before any construction could start, and during agreed times the councils would have the right to withdraw from the process.

The West Cumbria MRWS Partnership will not take any decisions; instead it is an advisory body aiming to 'make recommendations to the councils on whether they should

participate or not in the geological disposal facility siting process, without commitment to eventually host a facility'.

Effectively the partnership is providing information and advice on whether West Cumbria should proceed to the next stage with Government, during which a range of geological and engineering research would be carried out to see if development of a site in West Cumbria would be possible.

Leaflets produced by the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership will be distributed to all households in West Cumbria between 16 and 25 November. The leaflet gives people background information on how the Government's search for a 'Geological Disposal Facility' for higher activity radioactive wastes will work and how the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership is involved.

The partnership will be also be attending each of the Neighbourhood Forums in West Cumbria over the next three months. Members of the partnership will give a presentation about the process and there will also be information on display before each of the meetings, with an opportunity for people to talk informally to the speakers.

The first of these meetings will be at the Bootle and Seascale Neighbourhood Forum at Seascale Methodist Church Hall on Thursday 12th November. The second meeting will be at the Gosforth and Ennerdale Neighbourhood Forum in St Mary's Church in Gosforth on the 16th of November.

The first meetings in Allerdale will be at the Derwent Valley Neighbourhood Forum at the Old Ginhouse in Workington and the Workington Central Neighbourhood Forum at Bridge Street Church in Workington. Both meetings take place on the 17th of November.

The information display starts at 6pm at all the meetings. The meetings themselves start at either 6.30pm or 7pm depending on location. For further details about all the Neighbourhod Forum meetings visit the partnership website - www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk

This is just the start of the process and there will be many other opportunities to find out more about what is happening and to get involved.

The partnership will be organising additional open meetings in the coming months. People can find more information on the website and register to receive e-newsletters providing regular updates.

It is possible to contact the partnership by calling a free helpline on 0800 048 8912 or by emailing contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk

Members of the public can also attend the partnership meetings as observers. These take place every six weeks and there is always an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the meetings.

In addition to Copeland, Allerdale and Cumbria County Council, there are a range of other organisations making up the partnership, including Barrow Borough Council, Eden District Council, South Lakeland District Council, the Lake District National Park Authority, the Cumbria Association of Local Councils, NuLeAF (the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum), local trade unions, the National Farmers' Union (NFU), Chamber of Commerce, the West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group, and the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership.

A number of other organisations attend as 'observing members' including Government departments, the Isle of Man Government, CoRWM (Committee on Radioactive Waste Management), the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and the safety and environment regulators.

Ends

Notes to editors

For media enquiries please contact the Partnership's Communications Adviser Paul Gardner at Osprey Communications on 01524-782086 or 07766-906561 or Ian Curwen at Copeland Borough Council on 01946-598504.

Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council have now signed a memorandum of understanding laying out the principles of their involvement in the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership. A copy is attached here.

A copy of the leaflet being distributed to households is also attached.

To find out more about the partnership visit www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk. A public advice helpline on the partnership is also available on 0800 048 8912