

Churches Together in Cumbria

Question	Response
<p>Letter</p> <p>[sent to Rt Hon Ed Davey, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, also copied to West Cumbria MRWS Partnership]</p>	<p>Congratulations on your appointment to this vital ministerial role. As you immerse yourself in your brief, you will no doubt become aware of the current public consultation 'Geological disposal of radioactive waste in West Cumbria'.</p> <p>The Social Responsibility Forum and Environment Group of Churches Together in Cumbria met together on 4 February to discuss the issues around this consultation.</p> <p>We believe that it is the UK Government that should be seen to be taking responsibility for the nature and location of a nuclear repository for the nation because it is the safety of future generations of Britons, and neighbouring countries, which should be the overriding factor.</p> <p>It has long been accepted that parts of the UK other than Cumbria have much more promising geology for the long term storage of nuclear waste. It is the 'voluntarism' issue, fuelled in part by the hope of economic benefits in a time of economic uncertainty, which has focussed the search in Cumbria because in the whole of the UK only these three local authorities (Allerdale District Council, Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council) have shown an interest in volunteering to proceed. This places the decision to expend vast sums on the search for a possibly sub-optimal nuclear repository de facto in the hands of local councillors in Cumbria</p> <p>We believe most strongly it is wrong for West Cumbria to be evaluated in isolation as a possible site. While we accept a decision to investigate further the geology of West Cumbria, this should be part of a wider investigation of other potential sites of appropriate geology in the country, including deep clay formations.</p> <p>We emphasise that any repository must meet certain universal criteria. It should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in geological formations that are seismically stable and have provable water impermeability; • engineered to prevent water penetration and to allow interception, removal, and if necessary treatment of any water that does enter; • deep enough to exclude possible future glacial disturbance and immune from any terrorist action on the surface; • monitored to alert managers to any leakage of radioactive material; • capable of entry to retrieve the stored material should containment fail or a better method of long-term storage or disposal present itself in future. <p>We welcome the assurances given by Government that wherever a repository is built there will be a package of benefits in recognition of the service being rendered by the local community to the nation.</p> <p>We are aware that in West Cumbria other major energy-related developments, including at least one new nuclear power station, are being</p>

considered and it is also the scene of major offshore renewable developments. We urge that these are also backed by measures designed to enhance local communications and provide integrated social and economic benefits to the community as a whole.

In conclusion, we stress that while community acceptance of any possible repository site is of course desirable, the imperative is its environmental suitability for thousands of years to come. A bad site remains a bad site even if it currently has a willing community, while a good site will be safe effectively forever, whoever lives on top of it!

We hope that you will take full responsibility for this vital issue back to where it properly resides, in Central Government, and not leave it unfairly on the shoulders of the local authorities of Cumbria.

We look forward to hearing from you in this regard.