

National Farmers Union

Question	Response
<p>Letter</p>	<p>The NFU represent the business interests of 47,000 farmer and grower members across England & Wales. Given that the NFU are represented on the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership by Robert Morris-Eyton we feel it more appropriate to respond to the consultation providing general comments and observations on the process.</p> <p>The geological disposal of radioactive waste is obviously an issue surrounded by contention. To date however we feel the partnership have gone to great lengths to provide a great deal of information on how such a repository would operate were an appropriate site, within which to locate it, to be found in West Cumbria.</p> <p>At this point the question of whether a suitable site exists within the area of search remains unanswered. The NFU are involved with the Partnership on the assumption that one can be found and if that happens not to be the case that the development will not go ahead. We assume that a substantive amount of additional investigative work will take place within the next steps in this process in relation to identifying such a site.</p> <p>We concur with the view taken by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) which suggests that geological disposal offers the best long term approach in comparison with other ways of managing higher-activity radioactive waste.</p> <p>In terms of waste being moved around the country to any suitable site in West Cumbria we would need to be persuaded that the volume of approximately 30% not currently situated at Sellafield could find its way here safely. It seems that as long as any repository is fit for purpose, 100% of the country's high and medium level radioactive waste could be stored within the area of search without any increased detriment to West Cumbria, given that 70% is already located here.</p> <p>Long term and short term safety will be overseen by government agencies specifically tasked with nuclear safety. The location of radioactive waste will almost certainly give cause for concern to the residents in close proximity to any potential facility. We would look to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to make the safety case to the satisfaction of the regulators and the community.</p> <p>We assume that any agricultural land required for the head workings at any identified suitable site will be purchased at an acceptable rate.</p> <p>The design of any facility will be dependent on the specific location and geology of that site. There are a number of other facilities world-wide being designed and constructed, therefore it seems reasonable to assume that a suitable facility could be designed if an appropriate site is located within West Cumbria.</p> <p>Blighting is obviously an issue which causes great concern. This is likely to occur in the area immediately surrounding and above any repository. It may be considered an unacceptable addition to the existing nuclear industry in West Cumbria give there is also discussion about a potential extension to the existing Sellafield site.</p> <p>We feel it may be possible to mitigate the impact with careful management of the process in terms of Communication and with appropriate</p>

compensation where property values stand to be affected.

In addition there is the risk that the 'Cumbria' or 'Lake District' brand may encounter adverse publicity, and we understand that some initial research has been carried out into the potential impact. Throughout any development of such a facility which might proceed a carefully managed approach will be required to minimise any impact on sectors such as the tourism industry. We saw the devastating impact that visitors' choosing to stay away during the Foot & Mouth epidemic in the early 2000's had on the Lake District economy. Mitigating measures might take the form of a carefully created marketing campaign to push the message that Cumbria has not changed as one of the most visited locations in Britain.

In relation to agriculture particularly we are beginning to see businesses marketing Low Carbon lamb from the Lake District. The Lake District Cheese Company has also achieved a not insignificant market share in recent years. So it's not simply the Lake District as a visitor attraction but the products also associated with the area which must be afforded protection.

We feel strongly that if the Councils make the decision to enter the siting process it remains voluntary. In addition we would expect that adequate representation from the agricultural sector and other ancillary industries as well as the rural community is given on the body taking the process forward.

And finally if the geological disposal of radioactive waste in Cumbria proceeds a suitable and acceptable 'Benefits' package is agreed.