

West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group

Notes from meeting of the Low Level Waste Repository Sub-committee

14 September 2005

Attendees:

Mr Bill Anderton	British Nuclear Group
Cllr Sue Brown	Cumbria County Council
Cllr David Cook	Drigg and Carleton Parish Council
Cllr Adrian Dalton	Drigg and Carleton Parish Council
Miss Emma Dobinson	British Nuclear Group
Mr David Ferguson	Environment Agency
Mr James Fisher	British Nuclear Group
Mr John Hetherington	Cumbria County Council
Mr Mike Kopp	British Nuclear Group
Mr James Millington	British Nuclear Group
Cllr David Moore	West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group
Cllr Stephen Shepherd	Drigg and Carleton Parish Council
Cllr Kneale Thompson	Drigg and Carleton Parish Council
Mr Dave Weatherburn	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

Observers:

Cllr Alan Bell	Muncaster Parish Council
Ms Zena Bergmann	Copeland Borough Council
Mrs Bernie Coombe	British Nuclear Group
Ms Fee Wilson	UKAEA

Welcome/Introductions

Cllr Sue Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mike Kopp and Bill Anderton from British Nuclear Group to the committee. She also welcomed Dave Ferguson from the Environment Agency who was representing Ian Streatfield.

She noted that apologies had been received from Geoff Grint from the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Bill Paul from British Nuclear Group, Cllr Eileen Eastwood, Seascale Parish Council and Cllr Elaine Woodburn, Copeland Borough Council.

The notes from the last meeting were passed as a true record of discussions and actions.

Feedback from Working Group 1 – Footpaths

Mr John Hetherington presented the findings and recommendations on behalf of the working group to the sub-committee.

Referring to the notes from the meeting of the working group¹ he explained that the group had identified a number of actions in Holmrook Hill and Station Road including cleaning debris, increasing the height of retaining walls, additional lighting needed, repair and replacement of drainage, installation of a footpath and re-modelling of a junction along with general care and maintenance work. These actions have been brought to the attention of Cumbria County Council Highways Agency.

Cllr Dalton observed that if the work needed in the village was not currently a priority to the Council then the criteria against which work was merited needed to be changed. He also commented that the work needed in Holmrook was a direct result of Council neglect.

It was noted by the working group that the main issue in addressing these issues was one of funding. It was the recommendation of the working group that the most probable way of implementing this work was through Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act. It might be possible to tie this work into a condition of a forthcoming planning application for the LLWR site.

Cllr Moore asked for clarification of his understanding that the use of Section 106 could be avoided if a source of private funding was identified. Mr Hetherington confirmed that if there was a willingness from a source to provide funding then Section 106 could be avoided. Cllr Dalton commented that he believed the use of a private funder would not guarantee that the money would be spent in the village. Mr Hetherington confirmed that it would be the responsibility of the area committee to designate money to carry out specific work.

It was noted that the sub-committee would use its influence to promote the visibility of the necessary path and road maintenance work necessary in the village of Drigg and would seek agreement from all stakeholders regarding a suitable way forward and appropriate mechanisms required to fund this work. On going dialogue between interested parties would be required.

Mr Hetherington also took the opportunity to inform the sub-committee that the Cumbria County Council had issued their 'Issues Affecting the Low Level Waste (LLW) Site at Drigg' report. This report focuses on current issues arising at the LLWR with particular reference to the Consultation by the Environment Agency on a future authorisation for the site.

Feedback from Working Group 2 – Visual Screening

Cllr Kneale Thompson presented the findings and recommendations on behalf of the working group to the sub-committee.

¹ Notes from Working Group 1 are attached as Appendix 1.

As outlined in the notes from the working group² Mr Thompson explained that the group had visited the repository and immediate surrounding area to evaluate the current levels of visual screening provided at the facility. There was an acceptance that the planting regime would, in time, provide adequate screening and that this should be allowed to develop and that artificial screening was not an option.

The main area of concern raised by the group was that of the number of ISO containers stacked on the railway sidings at the facility. The representatives of the local community believe that the number of containers on the sidings was excessive, and was significantly greater than what they believed was required as a buffer feed stock to the grouting facility. The group proposed that the long term preference would be to have the buffer stock stored in a low lying central area of site.

Mr James Millington updated the sub-committee on the progress made to date on removing the containers from the sidings³. He also outlined the projected programme for the management of the number of ISO containers stored at the sidings until the end of the financial year. Mr Millington offered to provide future updates if the sub-committee thought it would be beneficial.

Mr Thompson fed back to the sub-committee that residents at Saltcoates could now see lights from the facility. Mr Millington acknowledged that the issue of lighting at the facility may now need to be re-visited now that evenings and mornings were getting darker. He repeated the standing offer to representatives from the Parish Council to arrange a visit to the facility to evaluate issues regarding lighting.

Action: Emma Dobinson to arrange a visit for representatives to evaluate current lighting levels at the site.

Temporary Higher Stacking

Mr James Millington gave a presentation⁴ to the sub-committee which explained the make up of Vault 8, current stacking arrangements, pinch points at which storage in Vault 8 would not be possible, the timescale for construction of Vault 9 and the contingency options that would enable the Low Level Waste Repository to continue to receive waste during the time when Vault 8 became full and before Vault 9 was ready.

Mr Millington explained that the contingency options to cover the time between Vault 8 being full and Vault 9 being operational available were: accelerating the speed at which Vault 9 can be operational, accelerating the backlog operations to free up space in Vault 8 and avoid the first 'pinch point', temporary storage at the Low Level Waste Repository in space cleared by demolishing PCM buildings, temporary storage on a hard standing area at the LLWR, temporary storage at Sellafield and temporary higher stacking in bay 2 of Vault 8.

Mr Millington informed the sub-committee that a planning application for temporary higher stacking in bay 2 of Vault 8 had now been submitted.

² Notes from Working Group 2 are attached as Appendix 2.

³ A copy of the slide used by Mr Millington to update the sub-committee is attached as Appendix 3.

⁴ A copy of Mr Millington's presentation on Temporary Higher Stacking is attached as Appendix 4.

Cllr Dalton asked how the ISO containers would be brought back down. Mr Millington informed the sub-committee that a fork lift truck would be used to higher stack the containers and to bring them back down.

Mr Ferguson asked Mr Millington to confirm how many backlog containers were left. Mr Millington answered that there were approximately fifty containers to go back to Sellafield and between eighty and one hundred to go through the facility at the Low Level Waste Repository.

Cllr Dalton asked whether British Nuclear Group would consider not installing a second grouting facility. Mr Millington replied that a second grouting facility would be needed. The current plan was to build the second grouting facility once the first was no longer working; however the option of building the second facility sooner and having both facilities operational at the same time was now being considered.

Mr Ferguson asked whether British Nuclear Group would consider painting the ISO containers green so that they could blend into the background. Mr Millington informed the sub-committee that the visual impact of temporary higher stacking was covered in the Environmental Statement which accompanied the planning application. Representatives from the local community felt that the ISO containers would still be visible if painted green because they would be above ground.

Cllr Moore asked who would give an assurance that the temporarily higher stacked ISO containers would be brought back down – even if planning permission for Vault 9 was refused. Mr Weatherburn confirmed that, if the general consensus was that a guarantee was needed, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority would provide it.

Cllr Shepherd stated that the public had already been told that British Nuclear Group would apply for the temporary higher stacking to be made permanent. Mr Weatherburn confirmed that all options were being considered and that people need to fully understand all of the related issues (i.e. impact on final cap). He then reiterated that if, following discussions, the consensus was that people wanted a guarantee that the temporarily higher stacked ISO containers would be brought down then the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority would provide that guarantee.

Presentation on the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's Draft Strategy

Mr Weatherburn gave the sub-committee a presentation on the Low Level Waste aspects of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's draft strategy⁵.

Cllr Moore questioned the price comparison given in the draft strategy which states that the cost of disposing low level waste in America is £20 per cubic metre compared to £1,800 per cubic metre at the Low Level Waste Repository.

Mr Weatherburn said that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority had received feedback on the numbers quoted and that it was likely that these numbers would be revised for the final version of the strategy.

⁵ A copy of the presentation given by Mr Weatherburn is attached as Appendix 5.

Signage

Mr Fisher informed the sub-committee that the Highways Agency had agreed that, once the wording for the two road signs which currently refer to the BNFL Drigg Depot on the A595 and B5344, the signs would be replaced in around one month. To begin discussions Mr Millington proposed that the signs be amended to remove all corporate references and to refer to the LLW Repository. This would be consistent with the terminology now in use internally to British Nuclear Group and with the proposed new signs at the entrance to the site. These words were agreed.

Action: Mr Fisher to feed back the agreed wording (LLW Repository) for the signs to the Highways Agency.

Future Agenda Items

Cllr Brown asked members for suggestions for items to be covered at the next sub committee meeting.

Mr Millington offered a presentation on Bulk Handling and Transport for the next sub committee meeting. Ms Wilson asked if it would be possible to include some break out sessions at the next meeting so that people had time to discuss the information shared and provide feedback. This was agreed.

Cllr Brown thanked everyone for their attendance and for feedback on the effectiveness of the meetings. Suggestions were made to include more break out sessions in future meetings but all members endorsed the continuation of the sub-committee. The next meeting of the West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group, Low Level Waste Sub-Committee will be held on 14 December in Drigg Village Hall between 1400 and 1600.