

12/9/2013 - Cumbria County Council statement on new Government consultation on siting a Geological Disposal Facility

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Cumbria County Council has issued a cross-party response to the announcement from the Department of Energy & Climate Change that it is starting a new 12-week consultation on the best way to engage communities in the process of managing the storage of high-level radioactive waste.

Details of the Government's new proposals can be found [here](#)

Cumbria County Council will be responding fully to the new proposals in due course, and a copy of the council's original response when DECC first made a call for evidence from May – June 2013 can be accessed via the link at the bottom of this release.

Cllr Stewart Young, Leader of Cumbria County Council and Leader of the Labour Group, gave his initial thoughts on the new proposals:

"The county council expressed its concerns about the previous process when Cabinet decided in January 2013 not to proceed to the next stage. Those concerns included uncertainty on the right for communities to bring the process to a halt if they are not happy, a complete lack of detail about the timing and quantum of any community benefits package, and the lack of a 'Plan B' for more robust interim surface storage plans for the high-level radioactive waste currently kept at Sellafield if a site for a GDF cannot be found. We will be looking closely at these revised proposals to see whether our concerns have been addressed."

Cllr Jo Stephenson, Deputy Leader of Cumbria County Council and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, said:

"The Government needs to get this right as, according to the timeframe set out in this new consultation, construction of a new Geological Disposal Facility in the UK could begin within as little as nine years. It is crucial that the Government works closely with communities right across the UK in finding the best long-term solution for the waste and the community of Cumbria will be a vital voice in the process as most of the waste is currently stored here."

Cllr James Airey, Leader of the opposition Conservative Group, said:

"The county council agrees that the best long-term storage solution for high-level radioactive waste is to store it safely underground, with the ability to retrieve it if necessary. We have always said that the Government's efforts need to be focused on disposing of the waste underground in the safest place, not the easiest. It is crucial that the Government works with communities in its quest to find a suitable location. Local voices must be heard properly and local authorities will have a key role in ensuring communities can make informed decisions. This isn't just an issue for Cumbria, it is one the whole nation should be engaging in."

