

Time to Consider: Time to Decide

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Decision Day 11 October

- A critical point or a stage in the process?
- To Proceed
- Not to proceed
- Defer decision

MRWS Process

- CoRWM's View on New Build
- 'The main concern in the present context is that the proposals might be seen as providing a green light for new build. That is far from the case. New build wastes would extend the timescales for implementation, possibly for very long, but essentially unknowable, future periods. Further, the political and ethical issues raised by the creation of more wastes are quite different from those relating to committed – and therefore unavoidable – wastes. Should a new programme be introduced, in CoRWM's view it would require a quite separate process to test and validate proposals for the management of the wastes arising.'

CoRWM's Recommendations

- 1. Within the present state of knowledge, CoRWM considers geological disposal to be the best available approach for the long-term management of all the material categorised as waste in the CoRWM inventory..'
- 2. A robust programme of interim storage must play an integral role in the long-term management strategy.
- 4. There should be a commitment to an intensified programme of research and development into the long-term safety of geological disposal aimed as reducing uncertainties at generic and site-specific levels.
- 5. The commitment to ensuring flexibility in decision making should leave open the possibility that other long-term management options (for example, borehole disposal) could emerge as practical alternatives.
- 6. At the time of inviting host communities to participate in the implementation processs, the inventory of material destined for disposal must be clearly defined.'

Government's claim on Disposal

- 'effective arrangements will exist for the management and disposal of waste produced by new nuclear power stations'

Questions on Geology

- Is the geology in West Cumbria sufficiently investigated to justify proceeding further?
- Is the area identified as potentially suitable too small for comparative site investigations?
- Should there be a national screening programme to identify areas unacceptable on scientific or other grounds?

Questions on Comparative Methods

- Long-term storage will be necessary until the repository is ready. In the event of new build or failure of the repository programme storage facilities will be needed indefinitely
- Is there sufficient knowledge on the implications of long-term storage?
- Is there sufficient information on other possible long-term management strategies?
- Is a lack of information on alternative methods a sufficient reason not to proceed at present?

Question on Comparative Sites

- Only one area, West Cumbria, has so far expressed an interest. In Sweden and Finland alternative sites within geologically promising areas were identified.
- Is the lack of alternative sites a reason to pause before proceeding further?

Questions on Inventory

- Government has seized on concept of co-disposal including new build wastes in one repository. 'The Government considers that it would be technically possible and desirable to dispose of both new and legacy wastes in the same geological disposal facilities'

The Partnership has set out inventory principles and the Government has given a positive response to be developed once a decision to proceed has been made.

- Should a commitment to the principles be agreed before proceeding?
- Should the inventory for the proposed repository be confined to legacy wastes only?
- Should there be a separate process for deciding on the long-term management of new build wastes?
- Is the lack of clarity and uncertainty surrounding the inventory sufficient to justify further consideration and commitment before proceeding to Stage 4?

The question of time

- Two principles,
 - The achievement of a sufficient concurrence of view at various stages to legitimise a decision to proceed with a particular course of action.
 - Provision of adequate time for exploration and resolution of complex technical issues.
 - Has there been sufficient time to resolve issues and achieve consensus?

Objective of Process

- A means to reach a decision on whether to participate further in a process that may lead to geological disposal
- Not a means to secure geological disposal as quickly as possible

A conclusive process?

- At this point process may be regarded as inconclusive because,
- Evidence of doubt, lack of trust in process and uncertainty
- Opposition from parish councils; approval from survey
- Partnership expresses reservations and caution on several issues
- No final recommendation. Instead,

‘We, as the Partnership, feel it is important for the Councils to be able to weigh up our work and opinions across the range of topics and issues...before making a decision’

- Is this an acceptable or conclusive approach?

Decision Making Bodies

- Two of the three councils (including Cumbria CC) must be in favour of proceeding.
- Should it be all three councils at this stage?
- Decision taken by executives.
- Should full council take or recommend the decision for executive to ratify?

Government's role

- Wishes to legitimate new build and is pressing for a GDF as soon as possible.
- Is government exerting undue pressure on West Cumbria?
- There is no plan B.
- If the process fails government should consider reasons for failure.
- The voluntarist process should not be abandoned.

Potential Candidate Site Communities

- Not yet identified.
- Is it acceptable to impose a site on an unwilling community?
- How might that situation be avoided?

Benefits

- Aim is to achieve well-being, to improve on present situation.
'By well-being we mean those aspects of living which contribute to the community's sense of identity, development and positive self-image' (CoRWM)
- Not inducements or bribes but compensation, recognition and enhancement.
- Partnership has set out principles. Government sees these as basis for negotiation. Is this acceptable?

Ethical Questions

Ethics act as a guide to what is acceptable or unacceptable, what we should do, what is right or wrong, good or bad.

In terms of the decision whether to proceed some of the key ethical questions are,

- Is the process fair; representative, consultative, democratic?
- Is it right that West Cumbria is the sole focus of the process at present?
- On the basis of present knowledge is it in the best interests of future generations to proceed towards geological disposal?
- Is it fair to introduce new wastes and accompanying storage and processing facilities to this area?

If there are doubts on any of these issues it may be prudent not to proceed to Stage 4 at this time.