

# **NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2012**

## **UNDERSKIDDAW PARISH COUNCIL**

**Public Consultation on whether to continue the search in West Cumbria for an underground nuclear waste disposal site.**

### **PUBLIC DROP IN SESSION**

Arranged by Underskiddaw Parish Council

**Wednesday 14 March Between 5 and 8 pm**

**at**

**Village Hall Millbeck**

At its meeting on 20 March the Parish Council will be finalising its response to the Public Consultation being conducted for Allerdale & Copeland Councils, and first the Councillors want to hear the views of the residents of the Parish about what this response should be. This Drop In session is for Parishioners to come in at any time between 5 and 8 and give the Councillors their views and ask questions. Please come to make your views known, or if that is not possible please write to or email the Clerk.

#### **Why is it important**

- **West Cumbria** means all of Allerdale and Copeland, not just the west coast. 75% of the area being considered for an underground cavern is in the National Park.
- The Radioactive Waste will remain underground for hundreds of thousands of years whilst it gradually decays.
- The impacts, both good and bad, could be enormous for everyone living in Cumbria but at the moment they are largely speculative.

#### **What exactly are we being consulted about?**

The UK already has a large amount of radioactive nuclear waste, mainly stored above ground at Sellafield. Government Policy is that such waste should be stored underground in a Repository. Currently there is no underground Repository – hence the search for one. It is also Government Policy that people should volunteer to have a Repository, rather than the Government telling them that they must have one. Three years ago the government approached all local authorities in England and Wales asking if they would volunteer to have a Repository, on a without prejudice basis. Two local authorities volunteered : Copeland and Allerdale. Cumbria CC joined in because it is the Minerals and Waste Disposal Authority for the Allerdale and Copeland areas.

Allerdale & Copeland set up the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership (West Cumbria MRWS) to follow up the consequences of having volunteered to have a Repository and to get something organised. The Partnership consists of representatives from all the Councils in Cumbria, the National Park, the National Trust, Chamber of Commerce, Trade Unions, Cumbria Tourism, and Churches Together. It works closely with the Department for Energy and Climate Change, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the Office for Nuclear Regulation, the Environment Agency.

This Partnership has gathered a huge amount of information, held meetings, had presentations from experts etc etc and now there is a formal consultation of the public. The Government has decreed that the search for a Repository must

follow certain stages. First there is the initial gathering of information, although it is acknowledged that at this stage the information is uncertain, incomplete and leaves most questions unanswered. However the stage we are at now is that the public are being asked whether we should go any further in the search. There has to be a decision whether to go to the next stage (known as Stage 4) which would involve : trying to identify suitable sites by looking at available published research, and narrowing them down to a very small number. Stage 5 would be digging boreholes to check the chosen site was actually suitable. Stage 6 would be the actual building, which the government now wants to be completed by 2029.

In order to help the public decide the Consultation document has a series of chapters, looking at Geology, Safety, Environment and Planning, Impacts, Community Benefit Rewards, Design, What would be stored, and How the process would be managed. In each Chapter the Partnership examines the information it has collected, sets criteria which need to be satisfied, and asks itself whether the criteria are satisfied – in every case the criteria are satisfied.

Now it asking the public to read the information it gives us and decide whether we agree with the conclusions it has reached in each chapter. Then it asks a general question about whether overall we agree that the Partnership should recommend to Allerdale and Copeland that they should enter Stage 4. It is Allerdale and Copeland who at every stage take the decision whether to go ahead or not.

Obviously the Consultation is not an easy read, and it is not easy to answer the specific questions asked. The Parish Council will attempt to do so, with your help and advice. The Public need not answer every question : they could choose which to answer, or ignore them all and simply give their overall view – yes or no – we should go forward or not.

**Further Reading.** You can get a copy of the big Consultation Document by phoning 0800 048 8912, or email [contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk](mailto:contact@westcumbriamrws.org.uk). You can also read it on-line by going to the website

[www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk](http://www.westcumbriamrws.org.uk) The Clerk can email you a summary of the Consultation to read on its own or alongside the Main Document and this is also on the Parish website. You can pick up a brief response form and freepost envelope at the meeting. Contact your Councillors who will try to help, or the Clerk will be available except between Saturday 3 March and Monday 12 March. The Above Derwent website has some readable material and useful links, although they have already adopted a policy of opposing going forward further [www.abovederwent.gov.uk](http://www.abovederwent.gov.uk)

**DIARY DATE : Annual Parish Meeting : Friday Evening 18 May**

**UNDERSKIDDAW PARISH COUNCILLORS**

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