

**PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE 4/10/9001
PROPOSED WASTE MANAGEMENT CENTRE FOR LOW AND VERY LOW
LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE AT FORMER KEEKLE HEAD OPEN CAST SITE
NEAR PICA**

The Council has been consulted by Cumbria County Council on this County Matter application for the creation of a waste management centre for the disposal of low and very low level radioactive waste at the former opencast site at Keekle Head near Pica. The categories of waste that are to be deposited are classed as low risk and consist of material resulting from the demolition as part of the decommissioning of nuclear facilities such as concrete, bricks and excavation material. It is proposed that the site could accommodate approximately 1 million cubic metres of waste which would be buried over an operational period of 50 years.

This proposal is intended to help to reduce the volume of low level waste material that is sent to the repository near Drigg which is designed to accommodate higher activity waste and only has a limited remaining capacity. National strategy aims to preserve the site near Drigg for the UK's future needs.

The proposed development would involve 5 main elements:-

1. Restoration of the site following coal extraction
2. Construction of a purpose built disposal area
3. Construction of other new features including new buildings and site roads
4. The deposition of imported waste
5. Long term monitoring and maintenance

It is proposed to create a purpose built disposal area. The base of the disposal area and the cover material will be highly engineered in a number of layers to contain the waste material and prevent water penetration. Two new buildings are also proposed. A waste reception building is to be built near to the site entrance and will be used to check and record all incoming waste and also provide office and visitor facilities. A weather proof enclosure is to be sited in the waste placement area which will be used to shelter all waste from wind and rain. This building would be mounted on two parallel steel rails and its position would change over time as the active disposal area progresses up the site. A weighbridge, gate house and a number of water treatment lagoons are also to be constructed.

Access is to be achieved from the C4006 Pica to Dean Cross Road using the existing site entrance. It is anticipated that restrictions would be put in place to ensure that heavy goods vehicles do not pass through the neighbouring villages of Pica and Gilgarran.

The planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement and also a Planning Statement. The Environmental Statement sets out that the proposed restoration would include the reinstatement of the natural valley of the River Keele which was originally diverted to allow coal extraction. The restoration scheme includes land restoration, the planting of trees and woodland to act as a screen, the reinstatement of a small scale field pattern the creation of wetlands and ponds and also other measures to improve wildlife habitats.

A copy of the Environment Statement Non Technical Summary is attached to this report for information purposes.

The site would be regulated by both the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive-Nuclear Installations Inspectorate under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 and the nuclear site licence regime.

This proposal is of a significant scale and the nature and type of development raises a number of issues in terms of safety, health, transport, landscape and visual effects, ecology, noise, geology, drainage, archaeology and socio-economic impacts which require careful consideration. At the Planning Panel on 03 February 2010 Members resolved to defer the application so that a joint site visit could be carried out with the County Council to aid their assessment of the proposal. A date for the site visit has yet to be confirmed by the County Council.

Recommendation:

That the report is noted and the individual members of the Nuclear Working Group are invited to attend the joint site visit with the County Council before the Council formulates its detailed comments on this application.