

## LILLYHALL LANDFILL SITE VLLW PROJECT

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### SUMMARY

To inform Members of the WRG and Energy Solutions intentions to apply to the Environment Agency for authorisation to dispose of radioactive waste at Lillyhall landfill site and recommend an appropriate response

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members consider the report and discuss a policy for Copeland Borough Council in respect of this application and the potential issue of dispersal of nuclear facilities away from the existing sites of Sellafield and the LLWR near Drigg.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report follows the presentation to a previous meeting of the working Working Group and sets out issues the Working group may wish to consider in determining and recommending policy in this area.
- 1.2 Waste Recycling Group (WRG) currently operate the landfill site at Lillyhall, near Workington. The site is permitted to dispose of a wide range of wastes and generally deals with commercial, industrial and household waste.
- 1.3 We have been informed that following the recent change to government policy Waste Recycling Group (WRG) are applying to the Environment Agency for an authorisation to dispose of high volume Very Low Level Waste (VLLW) at its Lillyhall landfill site.
- 1.4 Government policy (March 2007 'Policy for the Long-Term Management of Solid Low Level Waste in the United Kingdom) encourages alternative disposal wastes away from engineered disposal at the LLWR near Drigg.
- 1.5 In order to facilitate this project, WRG are forming a 'joint venture' with Energy Solutions, who have international experience in the disposal of radioactive wastes.

- 1.6 Other permitted wastes currently disposed at the site include certain types of Low Volume Low Level Waste (LVLLW) and Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM). VLLW has been safely disposed of at the site since 1995. However, to the best of our knowledge this has been done without consideration by the local authority on behalf of the local community and without the opportunity to consider the strategic implications.
- 1.7 The site is located outside Copeland in Allerdale Borough Council, however the main movement of materials will be from the Sellafield site to Lillyhall largely affecting North Copeland. It is likely that waste may also be moved from other areas.
- 1.8 WRG currently have no firm date for submitting the application to the Environment Agency, but expect it to be in late December 2009 or early in 2010.
- 1.9 Although currently disposing of VLLW at the Lillyhall landfill site, WRG need to apply for permission to dispose of HVLLW as they currently do not meet the government requirements of waste volumes greater than 50 cubic metres
- 1.10 In addition, it is understood that planning permission is not required so local authorities will not take a decision on the issue but will be a consultee on the Environment Agency application. This despite the proposal having significant strategic implications for West Cumbria's development.

## 2. CONTEXT

Whilst the materials involved are not considered to be hazardous, as we know to our cost in Copeland, public perception of the issues is as important as scientific reality. An illustration of this is the fact that national media coverage had great difficulty in separating recent decisions on the Low Level Waste Repository from the national process related to a geological disposal facility for higher level wastes. Unfortunately coverage confused the two last year.

The impact of such a proposal is of strategic importance to us and can play a significant part in influencing the success of our long term vision in the Energy Coast Master Plan.

There are major concerns that decisions related to the location of radioactive waste will be taken outside of any strategic approach that ensures support for the communities objectives. The public perception (especially that external to the area) that radioactive waste could be disposed in a geographically dispersed way around West Cumbria is of concern. Interest in other potential landfill sites locally may also emerge so it is important that a strategic planning approach is adopted and such applications are not agreed outside that.

The ability of local economic development partners to attract new investment from non nuclear sectors may be severely constrained if it is perceived that radioactive waste is not carefully confined to a small well managed area.

Further, we will be developing planning proposals to ensure all major national developments of this kind make a contribution towards funding local infrastructure plans through planning obligations. In order to do this a planned approach to such development will be essential. There has been no reference or consideration given to the development

now being proposed in the Energy Coast Master Plan. The fact that it does not require planning permission should not be a reason for the proposal slipping through the net as the nuclear industry are committed partners to the plan. It should also be noted that removal of the need to accommodate very low level waste on existing licenced waste sites will result in significant cost saving for the industry as a whole.

Members will be aware that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority are currently consulting on the national Low Level Waste Strategy. Similar issues regarding the geographic implications of site locations and community impacts will arise. The public see little difference between the two classifications of radioactive waste. It would appear to be reasonable to consider the local implications of both together.

Last year the Council agreed a policy position on the end state ( subsequent reuse) of the Sellafield site which, subject to certain conditions, included the potential of using the most contaminated parts for future disposal of lower level radioactive wastes. The relationship between this and the current proposals need clarification and consideration.

There is a strong national imperative supported by local action to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and promote recycling. This works against the current proposals and an understanding is needed as to why very low level waste radioactive seems to stand outside this.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1 The Council should seek a strategic approach to the development and operation of national policy on Low and Very Low Level Wastes in this area particularly in view of the scale of the issue and the critical implications for us in managing economic transition..
- 3.2 The Council and its partners to seek the commitment of the industry operators and the NDA to :
  - a strategic land use planning approach to such decisions with the full involvement of the local Councils, and ;
  - to delay any such decisions until an appropriate process has been completed.

### **4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

It is not anticipated that there will be any direct call on Council budgets, however, significant staff time will be needed to resolve the issues raised.

A strategic approach to such development will improve the mechanisms for delivering the infrastructure required to support the Energy Coast Master Plan proposals.