



Committee on Radioactive Waste Management

Professor Robert Pickard, Chairman

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1 June 2011

CoRWM document: 2932

Dear Professor Smythe,

Thank you for your paper, "Why a deep nuclear waste repository should not be sited in Cumbria: a geological review", which was received by CoRWM on 13 April 2011. We have read the paper with interest and in the recognition that it presents your views not only on the potential unsuitability of the sub-surface geology over the whole region but also on the specific issues, not all of them geological, that you consider to have pertained to the Longlands Farm site and the planning inquiry of 1995-1996.

The role of CoRWM is to scrutinise and advise on Government and NDA preparations and plans for the implementation of safe interim storage and subsequent deep geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste. It is, therefore, not appropriate for us to comment on the specifics of the scientific case you build to support your views and conclusions. However, there are two points in your paper on which we need to comment in the interests of factual accuracy and to ensure that CoRWM's advice is not misconstrued by others or misrepresented to them.

In our letter of 14 February 2011 to the West Cumbria Partnership (CoRWM doc. 2902) we have stated our current position: "*there is presently no credible scientific case to support the contention that **all** of West Cumbria is geologically unsuitable*". We highlight the **all** in this statement to avoid any possible ambiguity. Your paper correctly quotes our position on page 1 but in your concluding remarks (Section 6, page 13) you re-phrase our position by asserting that CoRWM takes the view that "suitable geologies remain to be found within West Cumbria". This is not an accurate representation of our position. Our view is that, at this stage in the MRWS siting process, it is not known whether or not there are suitable geologies in West Cumbria.

The second point concerns the basis for our "*collective understanding of the requirements of the level of detail and quality of geological knowledge that is needed in order to move from the broader considerations of unsuitability, as used in the BGS screening study, to the more specific assessment of potential suitability in MRWS Stage 4*". You state on page 2 that the NDA

document, Geological Disposal: Steps towards implementation, "*is the document on which CoRWM's opinion rests*". This most definitely is **not** the case. Our collective understanding is based on the expertise and experience of CoRWM members in appropriate areas of geoscience, including but not limited to hydrogeology, engineering geology, structural geology and mapping, and geochemistry, as well as members' expertise in and understanding of radioactive waste issues. This collective understanding we refer to is informed both by members' scrutiny and review of an extensive range of published literature, reports, workshop papers and briefing documents relevant to geosphere characterisation, and also by their attendance at national and international meetings on the subject. Our collective understanding, therefore, is independent and based on international experience and practice. It is not reliant at all on the NDA document to which you refer.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Pickard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and 'P'.

Professor Robert Pickard
Chairman

cc. West Cumbria MRWS Partnership, DECC, NDA/RWMD