

Case Study 3

Low Level Waste Repository: planning permission for Vault 9

November 2008

1: Outcome

Planning permission has been granted for Vault 9 to operate as a store pending resolution of the Environmental Safety Case for the site (see 'Operation as a Store' below). This extends the life of the LLWR for a further 10 years and provides a route for storage of LLW arisings on a national basis. This planning permission is granted until 31 December 2018, after which no waste may be placed in the vault without further permission being sought and obtained. It is anticipated that an application for disposal will be made in the future subject to the outcome of the Environmental Safety Case.¹

2: National Benefit

Provision of a facility for the continued management of LLW. New initiatives introduced by the NDA and the new site operating company are resulting in more efficient use of the facility. In light of these operational changes, Cumbria CC has accepted the national role of the site.

3: Background

The LLWR was established near the village of Drigg in West Cumbria in 1959 after Millom Rural District Council granted unconditional planning permission in 1957. Since then, it has accepted LLW from nuclear sites around the UK, which is beyond the use for which the site was originally intended (disposal of LLW from Windscale). After a major upgrade of disposal operations in 1995, all LLW is now disposed of in engineered concrete vaults.²

4: Process

A planning application was submitted to Cumbria County Council (CCC) on 3 July, 2007 by LLW Repository Ltd. After extensive consultation with interested parties, including Copeland Borough Council, the regulators, and local interest groups, a report was produced for the Development Control and Regulation Committee recommending it grant planning permission subject to compliance with a series of conditions. The conditions cover a wide range of issues, including temporary permission, waste minimisation, traffic management, safeguarding watercourses

¹ Report by Head of Environment to Cumbria CC Development Control and Regulation Committee [LLWR Report January 2008](#)

² NDA website www.nda.gov.uk and Report by Head of Environment at Cumbria County Council to Development Control and Regulation Committee, 22 January, 2008, Appendix 1.

and drainage, and radiological monitoring (as set out in Appendix 2 of the January 08 report to the Development Control and Regulation Committee).

5: Operation as a store

At the request of Cumbria CC, the application was submitted for the vault to be used as a store rather than for disposal. This reflected the outstanding matters under review about the radiological capacity of the site, the condition of the waste in earlier vaults as a result of less stringent operational practices, and the results of climate change on the long-term integrity of the site. These issues are being addressed in the Environmental Safety Case

6: Next Steps

Construction of Vault 9 started on 22 September, 2008 following approval of details required to be agreed before commencement of development. The Environment Agency requires the full Environmental Safety Case to be submitted to it for approval in May 2011.

Information sources:

1. Report by Head of Environment to Cumbria CC Development Control and Regulation Committee LLWR Report January 2008
2. For further information see NDA Low Level Waste Repository.