

Case Study 7

Caithness and North Sutherland Community Fund

Revised December 2022

1: Outcome

The provision of a Community Fund has been agreed by Dounreay Site Restoration Limited in conjunction with the siting of a LLW disposal facility adjacent to the site of Dounreay. The fund is for community-based organisations and charities which benefit the local people in the Caithness and North Sutherland travel to work area.

2: Benefit to the Community

The provision of a Community Fund. An initial payment of £1M was made in 2011 at the beginning of construction, plus an additional payment of £300,000 per year between 2014 and 2023. The objective of the Community Fund is to resource activities that are in accordance with the NDA's Socio-Economic Policy.

Arrangements for the management of the fund are similar to those for the Copeland Community Fund, details of which can be found in [Case Study 2](#). However, the Dounreay fund is smaller than the Copeland fund. This is because the latter is associated with a national facility and the former with a facility that will only take local wastes.

3: Background

The Dounreay site was constructed to develop and research the fast reactor system of electricity production. Work first started on the site in 1954 and in a working life spanning some 40 years a total of 180 facilities were constructed on the site, of which around 50 have had some presence of radioactive materials and which will require appropriate decommissioning and disposal. Decommissioning began in the late 1990s and the aim is to complete the decommissioning of the facilities that contain the highest hazards by 31 March 2025.

Plans to move Low Level Waste (LLW) from the decommissioning site to the Low-Level Waste Repository near Drigg in Cumbria had to be abandoned in 2005, when the then Scottish Environment Minister refused approval. With the current disposal facility full, an alternate solution had to be sought. The development of the strategy on the long-term management of the existing and future waste arisings had already been subject to a Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) study (no longer available online); published in March 2005. This study concluded that the BPEO for managing the Dounreay LLW arising from site restoration was disposal in shallow sub-surface facilities at Dounreay in the form of six sub-surface vaults.

4: Process

The planning application received a number of letters of representation from local residents, their concerns included those relating to the environmental impact of the facility and perceived health implications. The Dounreay Stakeholder Group also made representation and whilst neither supporting nor opposing the application requested that the Highland Council consider carefully the implications of the proposal on the community. It proposed that if granted, the permission should be conditional upon only accepting waste from Dounreay and HMS Vulcan and should include agreement for provision of a community benefits package to provide long-term benefit.

In November, 2008, Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) wrote to the Chief Executive Officer of The Highland Council agreeing to make funding available for this purpose.

5: Legislative Basis

The community fund was established under Section 75 of the Planning Act (Scotland) 2006. This is broadly equivalent to S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

6: Next Steps

More information on the operation of the fund is available on the Fund website¹.

Information sources:

1. www.dounreay.com
2. Report to Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Planning Applications Review Committee (The Highland Council) (no longer available online)
3. Letter dated 28 November, 2008 from Dounreay Site Restoration Limited to Chief Executive Officer of The Highland Council.
4. 'Use of Planning Obligations', Nuleaf, May 09 ([Briefing Paper 6](#))

¹ [Caithness & North Sutherland Fund - Live – Work – Invest \(cnsf.org.uk\)](http://cnsf.org.uk)