

By: Paul Carter, Leader of the Council
Paul Crick, Director of Planning & Environment

To: County Council – 19 July 2012

Subject: Possible Nuclear Waste Facility in Shepway

Classification: Unrestricted

<p>Summary: On Thursday 17 May 2012, Shepway District Council launched a leaflet drop to residents and businesses on Romney Marsh, asking them whether or not Shepway District Council should submit an Expression of Interest to the Government, on the community's behalf, in order to find out more information about a possible Nuclear Research and Disposal Facility (NRDF) on Romney Marsh. This report sets out the reasons why an NRDF anywhere near or around Kent must be resisted in the strongest possible way.</p>
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1. Introduction

This report provides members with information about the current 'soundings' exercise being undertaken by Shepway DC to potentially build/construct a Nuclear Research and Development Facility (NRDF) on Romney Marsh, provides a summary of what is proposed by an NRDF and sets out why Romney Marsh is the wrong location for storing nuclear waste, and a completely unacceptable proposition. The report goes on to conclude that, should Shepway DC decide to take this proposal further, the County Council should consider seeking the views of the whole of the Kent community by way of a public referendum.

2. Financial Implications

None at this stage. It is estimated that a Kent wide referendum will cost in the region of £50,000, should it be decided to pursue this at a future date.

3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

The proposed decision aims to protect the massive steps taken in recent years by KCC and several partner bodies to promote and secure viable economic plans for the East Kent economy, and the much improved perception of Kent and, in particular East Kent, as a place to invest in and do business. This accords with ambitions 1 and 2 – helping the economy to grow and tackling disadvantage and Bold Steps priority 8 in particular – respond to key regeneration challenges working with our partners.

4. The Report

(1) The Government is looking for a way to safely manage the radioactive by-products from the country's nuclear industry. This includes Higher Level Waste, Spent Fuel, Intermediate Level Waste and a small amount of Low Level Waste.

(2) Much of this material is currently stored above ground. The Government and its expert advisers believe that in the long term it would be much safer to store it deep underground, inside a suitable rock formation in a purpose built facility, where it could slowly decay over time and be secure from, for example, the risk of terrorism. When full, the facility could be permanently sealed.

(3) The waste would be stored in secure containers, which themselves would be surrounded by thousands of metres of concrete. This process is known as geological disposal. It is likely that the larger part of the facility would be underground in vaults and tunnels between 200m and 1000m below the surface. The area needed for an NRDF would be in the region of four square kilometres. At ground level there would be research, handling, office, transport and other facilities covering an area of about one square kilometre. If it went ahead, the facility would be expected to become a UK centre of nuclear expertise.

(4) KCC, along with Ashford Borough, Dover District, Canterbury City and Thanet District Councils were invited to a briefing by Shepway District Council on 11 May 2012 on their proposal to seek soundings from residents and businesses of Romney Marsh whether or not they want Shepway DC to submit an Expression of Interest to the Government to host an NRDF. The Leader and Deputy Leader, along with senior officers attended for KCC. The Leader is totally opposed to the "consultation" in line with the views of other districts. We were advised that Shepway DC would not decide to go ahead with the soundings exercise until the evening of Monday 14 May. On Tuesday 15 May, Shepway DC advised KCC that they would be commencing the soundings exercise on Wednesday 16 May by way of a press briefing. The Community of Romney Marsh has been given a deadline of Friday 20 July to make their views known.

(5) The impact of an NRDF in Kent would be immense:-

- Nuclear waste can remain radioactive for up to 2 million years.
- An NRDF facility would be big enough to house Wembley Stadium 20 times over – it should be in a remote area, not in a relatively densely populated area close to London and the Home Counties that will involve transporting of high activity waste through London and the South East.
- KCC already operates a number of projects and programmes which will help to deliver local economic growth on Romney Marsh and East Kent.
 - The Regional Growth Fund £35 million Expansion East Kent programme to encourage new businesses and grow existing companies
 - A national marketing campaign to attract relocating businesses to East Kent
 - The Regional Growth Fund £5 million investment into High Speed Rail to reduce journey times to East Kent and improve connectivity to Manston Airport
 - Cultural regeneration in the area

- The Kent Downs and Marshes Leader programme, which has provided grant support to farm diversification, rural business and tourism development projects
 - The Kent Employment Programme, providing additional support for employers in employing apprentices and recent graduates
 - Rollout of the Make Kent Quicker campaign to provide superfast broadband to 90% of homes by 2015 (and universal access to at least 2mb per second)
 - The emerging development of a county-wide programme to support flexible incubator space for small businesses, which could potentially support proposed developments on the Marsh.
 - Advocating a greater role for Lydd Airport to help meet the demand for aviation capacity in the south east, as outlined in KCC's discussion document, Bold Steps for Aviation.
 - A concerted campaign with local MPs to build Dungeness C and extend the life of industry.
- The area has a history of seismic activity – 5 earthquakes in the last 400 years – and existing fault lines make the area geologically unstable.
 - Located in an area with one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.
 - Proposal would create more rubble and mess than the Channel Tunnel.
 - Job creation would not be until 2025 when construction would begin. Ongoing operation of the site would only employ around 100 people to manage and administer the site – so not a long term economic solution.
 - Blight – the danger of starting this process is that the suggestion of this unviable proposal could lead to a detrimental effect for the growth of Kent's economy, which is bristling with opportunity.

(6) East Sussex County Council have also raised their opposition to the proposal.

(7) An opportunity for new employment in the nuclear sector exists with the potential for the development of Dungeness C as a new nuclear power station. This was proposed by EDF Energy (the current operators of Dungeness B) in an initial list of potential sites published in 2009. However, Dungeness C has not so far been taken forward on the Government's list of preferred sites within the National Policy Statement due to environmental constraints. Nevertheless, evidence of local support for Dungeness C, proximity to electricity demand and the presence of existing local infrastructure may mean that the potential for a new power station could be revisited. Kent County Council has commissioned further work to explore the potential case and a public meeting to discuss the opportunity was held on 21 June.

(8) In addition, it should also be noted that the owners of Lydd Airport have submitted an application for expansion. This application has been through

examination in public and has been called in by the Secretary of State for determination. The outcome of the Secretary of State's decision is awaited and we continue to press for a decision to be made.

5. Conclusions

(1) The perils of Shepway DC taking this proposal any further forward is that this unviable proposal could lead to a detrimental effect for the growth of Kent's economy, particularly in East Kent, which is bristling with opportunity.

(2) An NRDF would be totally counterproductive to the far larger, wider and better alternative economic opportunities in prospect both immediately and in the longer term, and to host such a 'bad neighbour' facility anywhere near or around Kent must therefore be resisted in the strongest possible way.

(3) Shepway DC have only sought soundings from residents and businesses on Romney Marsh. This proposal would have such an impact on Kent as a whole, that residents and businesses across Kent should be given the opportunity to have their say, should this proposal be progressed further.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The County Council totally opposes the establishment of a Nuclear Research and Development Facility in Kent.
2. Should Shepway DC decide to progress this proposal further, the County Council should review whether or not to hold a Kent-wide referendum on this proposition at a future date.

7. Background Documents

Shepway DC consultation leaflet 'Have your say' dated May 2012.

8. Contact details;

Paul Carter
Leader of the Council
01622 224310
paul.carter-LEADER@kent.gov.uk

Paul Crick
Director of Planning & Environment
01622 221527
paul.crick@kent.gov.uk

Planning and Environment
Kent County Council
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