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COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL  
LEADER

18 SEP 2008

PASSED TO: LM FM4DD

~~ACTION~~ / INFO: ALL MEMBERS

 defra

Department for Environment  
Food and Rural Affairs

From the Secretary of State  
The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP

Elaine Woodburn / Liam Murphy  
Copeland Borough Council  
Catherine Street  
Whitehaven  
Cumbria  
CA28 7SJ

Our ref: 95715

11<sup>th</sup> September 2008

De Ms Woodburn and Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter expressing an interest in opening up without commitment discussions with Government on the possibility of hosting a geological disposal facility at some point in the future.

I welcome Copeland's expression of interest and we look forward to entering into discussions with the community. I have asked Defra's Managing Radioactive Waste Safely programme team to begin these discussions and they will be in contact shortly. As I mentioned in my statement to Parliament, discussions will be exploratory and will carry no commitment on your part or by Government that a facility will be hosted in Copeland. Government may also have similar discussions with other parties who make an expression of interest.

Voluntarism and partnership are important in this process and I note the engagement and consultation with local partners the Council has already undertaken. I am pleased that you are committed to wide consultation and also to partnership working with local partners including other democratic bodies. I hope that this will be positive, particularly between Copeland and other authorities.

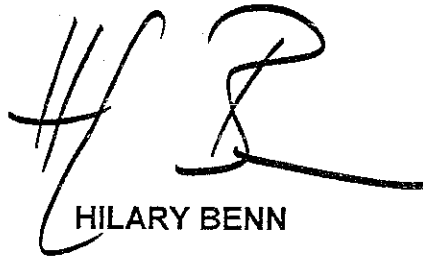
Consultation should apply established local good practice and seek to identify the extent of local support for participation. Government is not expecting, or seeking, a particular threshold of support but is keen to see evidence of appropriate engagement and meaningful feedback dealing with concerns of those potentially affected. As the White



Paper mentions, costs of such engagement will be funded, either partly or wholly, through Government and I expect this to be the subject of early discussion.

We are looking forward to working with you.

*Yc sial*



HILARY BENN