



KEEKLE HEAD WASTE MANAGEMENT CENTRE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Endecom UK Ltd proposing to develop at Keekle Head?

Endecom UK Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of SITA UK, has agreed purchase arrangements for the derelict opencast coal quarry at Keekle Head, near Whitehaven, with a view to re-using it for the disposal of low and very low level radioactive construction and demolition wastes from Sellafield, and possibly some non-radiological waste. The scheme would include early, high quality restoration of parts of the site including reinstating the River Keekle near its original course and, after the landfilling is complete, final restoration as heath and woodland. The facility would have capacity for around one million cubic metres of waste.

Why is this being proposed and why at this site?

Nuclear decommissioning will generate significant quantities of waste. Most of it will comprise low level waste (LLW) and of that, the majority will be very low level waste (VLLW), also referred to as high volume low activity (HVLA) waste. These wastes will be created as facilities, such as office buildings, are demolished as part of the decommissioning process at the Sellafield site.

The current capacity at the highly-engineered Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) located near Drigg, Cumbria, will not be sufficient to dispose of the predicted volumes of LLW and VLLW, so another site is needed.

Recently published Government policy encourages the disposal of LLW and VLLW to alternative, appropriately engineered and more cost effective facilities, preferably in close proximity to the point of waste arising.

Endecom would be contributing to the UK's national waste policy and the nuclear industry's Integrated Waste Strategy by providing alternative facilities for dealing with LLW and VLLW.

The geological conditions of Keekle Head make it well placed and suitable for development as a landfill disposal facility to take the lowest activity wastes currently disposed of at the LLWR. There are large quantities of spoil from coal mining activities on site, which will be invaluable as foundation and filler material for the waste cells and lining system. The site is already disturbed and awaiting restoration – these proposals provide an alternative reclamation scheme which will ensure a high quality early restoration of most of the site and makes use of the disturbed area to provide a fully screened and well-contained waste management operation.

Any application for the proposed development would be supported by a complete Environmental Impact Assessment which would fully assess any significant environmental impacts which could arise. It is not considered that any significant effects could arise that could not be appropriately mitigated. The site is ideally located such that waste could be managed efficiently and effectively in accordance with the principles of proximity.



Where is Keekle Head?

Keekle Head opencast mine covers about 70 hectares (173 acres) and is located 16 miles from Sellafield and 20 miles from the LLWR near Drigg, one mile from Pica and five miles from Whitehaven.

What is the current state of the site?

Opencast mining on the site was granted planning permission in 1998 and ceased in 2006 and has created a substantial area of despoiled land and an excavation void. It has been neglected for some time.

The original coal site planning application boundary was 101.14 hectares. However, the whole area was never occupied.

If approval is gained, how long will the site operate for?

It is anticipated that the operational life of the site will be around 50 years. However, the development is being designed to ensure that significant restoration takes place at the start of the development programme.

How would the proposed site be monitored and regulated?

The site would be subject to rigorous regulation by the Environment Agency (EA) in accordance with a Radioactive Substances Act 1993 (RSA) authorisation, with additional engineering, operational and monitoring elements adapted from the existing Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) and Environmental Permitting (EP) regulatory regimes.

The Keekle Head Waste Management Centre would be designed, constructed and operated to the highest technical standard and in accordance with regulatory requirements and industry best practice.

Endecom will operate a comprehensive monitoring programme prior to, during and after landfilling operations cease. This programme will be subject to approval by the EA who will also regularly receive and review the results of the monitoring.

The monitoring programme will include both radiological and chemical testing in and around the site of the following:

- Waste materials brought to the site
- Groundwater
- Surface water
- Soils
- Ground gases
- Air quality monitoring (e.g. dust)
- Weather data collection

There is a requirement in the nuclear industry to keep all exposure to radiation as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and so protocols will be put in place to ensure this is the case.

Health physics and other specialised personnel will be employed at the site to carry out the monitoring and waste assessment of the site to ensure the ALARP principle is adhered to.



Who will decide if the proposed site will go ahead?

Cumbria County Council, as the waste planning authority, will consider the proposals in detail once a planning application is submitted. The county council will consult members of the public, local and parish councils, relevant statutory bodies and other stakeholders over a period of several months and will consider any representations received. The planning officers will ultimately make their recommendations to the planning committee at Cumbria County Council who will decide if the proposal should go ahead.

As part of the planning process, Endecom will arrange independent consultation with members of the public, local and parish councils, and other stakeholders before and after submission of a planning application.

The Environment Agency will determine the RSA licence, which is the authorisation to operate.

If approved, when would the proposed site start accepting waste?

If planning approval is given, it is anticipated that the site will be operational by 2012. Before the waste management centre starts operating, significant work will need to be done to reshape the site and to restore the landscape and habitats.

How will Endecom inform and engage with local communities?

Endecom recognises that effective, high quality communications will be crucial at all stages of the process leading up to a planning application and beyond. The company will consult with and listen to the views expressed by stakeholders and the general public.