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Mr David Newall,
Secretary of Court,
R444 Level 4,
Court Office,
Main Building,
Glasgow
G12 8QQ

27th July 2016

Dear Mr Newall,

Re: Emeritus Professor David Smythe

By way of background, Cumbria Trust is a non-governmental organisation which includes amongst its supporters senior local politicians, business leaders, members of both Houses of Parliament, a Nobel co-laureate, academics and lawyers, as well as many members of public. It was established in 2013 in response to the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) process which had been searching for a potential geological disposal site for nuclear waste.

We were very concerned to hear of the University of Glasgow's decision to remove Emeritus Professor David Smythe's access to the online academic database. Without David's extensive research, and that of Professor Stuart Haszeldine, the process would have been entirely one-sided. Several million pounds was made available for brochures, full page newspaper advertising and public meetings, all to convince the Cumbrian public that the process should proceed. Until David became involved, the public were simply in no position to question those put forward as experts.

David made all of his work available online, his public meetings were open to all, and open to challenge. He provided a much needed balance to a rather slick PR operation. So the news that the University of Glasgow have in effect silenced him is very disturbing. There are very few members of the scientific community who give their time freely and do so much work purely out of principle. If the university disagree with views which he has put forward then it should openly challenge them, rather than seek to stifle them.

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Cumbria Trust and its predecessor organisations have always worked on the principle that open debate is fundamental to good decision-making. When we have held public meetings, we have invited those who hold the opposite view, including the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, to share the stage and debate with us. This may not always be comfortable or predictable, but it does allow the public to hear both sides and to make up their own mind.

David's work was so thorough that it resulted in the geologist employed by the MRWS process, Dr Jeremy Dearlove, admitting publicly that the project had so little chance of success in Cumbria that no commercial operation would continue with it. This revelation was of such importance that it influenced the decision by Cumbria County Council to halt the process.

Cumbria Trust depends upon the work of experts such as Emeritus Professor David Smythe, and we ask that you reconsider your decision to remove his access to the academic database.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Betsworth (Chairman)
Cumbria Trust