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David Newall, Secretary of Court,  
R444 Level 4, Court Office,  
Main Building,  
Glasgow G12 8QQ  
([David.Newall@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:David.Newall@glasgow.ac.uk))

Dear Mr Newall,

**Emeritus Professor David Smythe**

I am writing to you as the **retired Leader of Cumbria County Council**. The task fell to me and my cross-party cabinet to determine whether the **Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS)** partnership should be allowed to continue its search in Cumbria. There was no shortage of information and no shortage of people willing to share their opinions. Political leaders, including Ministers and Secretaries of State beat a path to our door. We met with our international counterparts, visited existing nuclear waste facilities abroad, and were reassured by the **Nuclear Decommissioning Authority** that Cumbria was a promising location and would benefit greatly should we proceed.

When we examined the MRWS process in greater detail, it clearly was an immensely complex project but it appeared to have the potential to deliver a safe burial site if such a suitable site was to be volunteered. You could imagine that with perhaps a dozen volunteers, MRWS may well have worked perfectly in weeding out the less suitable sites in order to concentrate on the more promising ones. However, in practice just one small area volunteered and that created a difficulty for me and for my colleagues in the Cabinet – *were we being encouraged to continue because Cumbria's geology appeared genuinely promising, or simply because there were no other options? How were we as political leaders, but not expert geologists, supposed to decide? Should we trust the experts put forward by DECC and the NDA to advise impartially?* Of course we were not the only ones to face this dilemma – the general public were in exactly the same position.

When two independent experts, **Emeritus Professor David Smythe and Professor Stuart Haszeldine** decided to speak publicly on this issue, it transformed the process. Now there was a genuine two-sided and robust debate, and while many of us may not have understood every detail of the scientific argument, the very presence of this public debate between experts was quite revolutionary. Their willingness to be questioned and to submit their research to expert, forensic scrutiny changed the process entirely. The tough questions that had to be asked were now being asked, and it was notable how these were largely going unanswered by NDA and other departments of government.

However, I was immensely dismayed, even horrified, to hear that the University of Glasgow has now withdrawn Professor Smythe's access to the academic database. If you or his contemporaries disagree with his position surely a coherent and scientific rebuttal would be the correct response. I do understand that fracking is as contentious as nuclear waste burial, but what the public needs is open and honest debate between experts. **Professor Smythe's contribution to the debate in Cumbria has been quite invaluable, and I am deeply troubled by the idea that next time such a public debate happens, it will be immeasurably weaker by his access to academic information being denied.** These public debates, whether on fracking, disposal of nuclear waste or something else, depend on public trust and scientific integrity. If the public see independent voices being silenced rather than rebutted, that trust will disappear. **I must implore you to reconsider and reverse your decision.**

Yours sincerely,  
**Eddie Martin**