

# Nuclear waste agency should go—professor

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MANAGERS OF a Government agency accused of wasting time and money in its bid to bury nuclear waste underground at Sellafield were yesterday told "to go" by a former top adviser.

Nirex, the national nuclear waste agency, was last week informed by Environment Secretary John Gummer that it had failed in its appeal against Cumbria County Council's planning refusal for the pilot scheme.

Yesterday, experts criticised Nirex for the way it handled the issue, adding that those responsible should be replaced.

Sir John Knill, former chairman of the Government's Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, said on radio, "It has acted in a secretive manner. Material which is of importance has been held back."

He said, "The management, the board of Nirex, has got to be looked at and probably to a large extent replaced."

His comments were backed by Professor David Smythe of Glasgow University's geophysics department. He said, "Nirex's integrity has been questioned by the result of this

inquiry. My view is that Nirex should be wound up and replaced by some kind of successor body."

After spending 15 years and an estimated £200 million of public money on research the question of what to do with Britain's nuclear waste remains unanswered.

Nirex had wanted to set up a laboratory which would have allowed it to explore whether a long-term depository on the site would have been safe.

It is expected Nirex will now investigate other sites in the south-east of England.