

# South Copeland GDF Community Partnership Communications Plan 2023-24

## Revision record

Rev	Date	Description	Owner	Approver
1	14.07.23	Final Version 1	Lucy Clarke	Communications and Engagement Sub-group (Community Partnership)

## Contents

### 1. Introduction

This document sets out a planned approach for managing a programme of communications activity led by the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership. An Engagement Plan will run adjacent to this document.

This plan specifically relates to local and regional engagement on behalf of the Community Partnership. Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) has a national communication strategy for the GDF programme and leads on handling national and international stakeholders and media.

### 2. Background to the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership

As part of NWS's role to find a host community, the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership was established in December 2021 to explore the potential of the area as a location for a GDF.

The South Copeland Search Area covers the electoral divisions of Millom and Millom Without. No areas which fall within the Lake District National Park or the 2019 Southern Boundary Extension will be considered to host a GDF.

A Community Partnership plays a key role in informing and engaging with the local community, providing factual information, and responding to requests for information.

Its main tasks are:

- To facilitate discussion with the community;
- Identify relevant information that people in the Search Area and Potential Host Community want or need about the process;
- Be the key vehicle for community dialogue with NWS;
- Review and refine the boundaries of the Search Area as NWS's investigations progress;
- Identify priorities for Community Investment Funding;
- Make recommendations to the relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership on whether to invoke the Right of Withdrawal and if and when to launch a Test of Public Support;
- Agree a Programme of Activities to develop the community's understanding of the siting process and the potential implications of hosting a GDF;
- Develop a community vision and consider the part a GDF may play in that vision;
- Monitor public opinion in relation to siting a GDF within the Search Area and the Potential Host Community.

## 2.1. Membership of the Community Partnership and Communications and Engagement Sub-group

This Communications Plan is for use by the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership, which has membership from:

- Ged McGrath, Chair of the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership
- Cumberland Council
- NWS
- Millom Without Parish Council
- Drigg & Carleton Parish Council
- Millom Town Council
- Whicham Parish Council
- Friends of the Lake District
- Sustainable Duddon

Following a workshop in January 2023, a Communications Sub-group was formed from members of the Community Partnership. The group was amended in March 2023 to include Engagement. The first meeting of the Communications and Engagement Sub-group took place in April 2023, and will continue on a monthly basis going forward. The role of the sub-group is to assist in the development and implementation of this Communications Plan, as well as the Engagement Plan.

## 2.2. Policy requirements

The [Implementing Geological Disposal – Working With Communities](#) policy, the government’s policy framework for managing higher activity radioactive waste through implementing geological disposal, states:

*6.51 “The Community Partnership will need to engage with the community over a long period of time. Getting people actively involved on any issue can be challenging and it is possible that vocal minorities can dominate debate. It will therefore be important to open up community participation through a wide number of channels”*

*6.53 “The CP could also consider engagement through social media, dedicated outreach work with particular groups (e.g., engagement with young people through schools and colleges) and using existing networks to reach out to people. It will be important to consider how to address diversity and accessibility issues so that people within the Search Area or Potential Host Community are not excluded from participating”*

## 3. Aims

The goal of this Communications Plan is ensure people in the area receive accurate, balanced and timely information in order to make their own informed decisions about whether or not they support the development of a GDF and that this is a two-way conversation where people can ask questions, raise concerns and receive answers about the GDF project to help them understand how it could affect their community.

## 4. Objectives

1. Deliver increased community awareness and understanding of a Geological Disposal Facility and its potential impacts, the siting process and role of the Community Partnership.
2. Understand and respond to community questions and concerns relating to GDF and the siting process and use this to identify what people want or need to know about a GDF.

## 5. Communications Strategy

### 5.1. Local/Regional approach (is Community Partnership led)

Multi-channel local communications to give Community Partnership area residents and stakeholders multiple opportunities to receive factual, accurate information about GDF in relation to the South Copeland Area specifically. Engagement activities will be central to this and enable two-way communication for the Community Partnership to listen and understand local issues.

### 5.2. National approach (is NWS led)

Support the Community Partnership and its ongoing activities with informed communications, national media coverage and stakeholder comment.

Where necessary, NWS will lead the central messaging on its activities, for example, studies it is undertaking, which will be circulated through Community Partnership channels.

## 6. Key messages & local narrative

Though general awareness and engagement of the subject matter has been shown to be high in the Search Area, detailed understanding of how radioactive waste is managed and what geological disposal is has been shown to be more limited. Therefore, across all communications and engagement channels, there are three interconnected categories of messaging that the Community Partnership will deliver:

1. **What is a GDF?** Explain what a GDF is and the facts of the project.
2. **Is it safe?** Give factual information on the safety implications of a GDF and counter misinformation.
3. **Why here?** Clearly articulate why South Copeland is part of this process and why and how it could impact (as well as benefit from) a GDF.

Resident research has shown that people would like information principally across 5 core areas, and these themes (and their sub-categories) need to be interwoven throughout communications activities:

1. Safety reassurances
2. Environmental protection
3. Transportation of the waste

4. Local economic impact
5. Impact on future generations

Finally, Community Investment Funding (CIF) needs to be adequately communicated so that local projects can benefit from the grant scheme.

The key messages will be reviewed frequently, in line with the latest information from the developer, and local community surveys.

## **7. Presenting a true, local picture**

In order to make an informed decision, the local community must be aware of both the positive and negative implications of a GDF. Whilst we are in the very early stages of the siting process, with the GDF developer only just beginning to undertake its Site Evaluation and Characterisation Studies, and undoubtedly greater information and the results of these studies will become available from NWS over time, the Partnership recognises the need to independently establish the impacts of a GDF in South Copeland. Based on the feedback the Community Partnership have received from the public, an Independent Community Impact Report is being commissioned which we aim to publish in Spring 2024.

In addition to this, the Partnership recognises the need for balanced viewpoints, alternative voices and localised content, and this will be a core ambition within communications activities over the coming year. The Communications and Engagement Sub-group will lead on this workstream and make sure that this is achieved.

## **8. Communications tactics and channels**

The Community Partnership's programme of tactics and channels are categorised into the 5 sections below (8.1-8.5).

- Media relations (8.1)
- Utilising local platforms (8.2)
- Owned channel management (8.3)
- Paid media (8.4)
- Contact Management Centre (8.5)

### **8.1. Media relations**

Local and regional media engagement will take place to ensure that as far as possible the public and stakeholders are able to access accurate information about GDF and the associated process.

Engagement with the media (proactive and reactive) will be a key method of informing local residents and stakeholders.

### 7.1.2. Regional media targets

<b>Local newspapers, regional magazines and websites</b>
<p>North West Evening Mail</p> <p>Westmorland Gazette</p> <p>The Whitehaven News</p> <p>Cumberland &amp; Westmorland Herald</p> <p>Cumbria Crack</p> <p>Cumbria Life</p> <p>Lancashire and Lake District Life</p> <p>In-Cumbria</p> <p>Cumbria Guide</p>
<b>Local radio</b>
<p>BBC Radio Cumbria</p> <p>Greatest Hits Radio (previously CFM)</p> <p>Bay Trust Radio</p> <p>C and FM</p>
<b>Local TV</b>
<p>ITV Granada</p> <p>BBC Look North</p>

## 8.2. Utilising local platforms

The Community Partnership has been granted access to a number of local Facebook groups. These pages are a way of communicating key messages with people in the Search Area, and to listen and respond to local views.

The Community Partnership can also share information with local Parish Councils and other local groups, to include in their own publications and on their online channels. A list of key contacts to share information with will be established by the Communications and Engagement Sub-group.

## 8.3. Owned channel management

The Community Partnership has several communications channels so that local people have the opportunity to receive factual information about GDF, register their issues and ask questions. The Partnerships current owned channels are:

- Website
- Social media
- Mail drops (e.g. newsletters, leaflets)
- E-bulletin
- Engagement events
- Annual Report

These channels could be expanded upon as the Community Partnership moves forward.

#### 8.3.1. Website

The website's prime purpose is to provide a hub for all news and information, relevant to the Community Partnership, and more generic background information about the GDF. The website news and blog function allows the addition of articles on key subjects of interest to the public, and a platform in which to share information through the Partnerships broader communications channels.

Updates to the website will be managed by the Communications Lead in consultation with the Communications and Engagement Sub-group, Community Partnership and public feedback. The website was updated in line with feedback in July 2023 and will be continually reviewed going forward. This includes ensuring that the website's Frequently Asked Questions and Answers are reflective of the questions being posed by the local community.

#### 8.3.2. Social media

Resident research has shown that one-in-three (36%) said they wanted more information via social media, with a specific emphasis on Facebook.

The South Copeland GDF Community Partnership has four social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, with social media posts drafted by the Communications Lead and shared with the Community Partnership in advance of posting.

The current approach to social media comments is to only respond when a specific question is asked. All comments on social media are monitored, and common themes of questioning and misconceptions will be addressed in communications activities going forward. Responses to questions on social media are reviewed and approved by the Communications and Engagement Sub-group Chair, and in their absence the Community Partnership Chair.

A social media protocol is included within the Community Partnership's Communications Protocol and Community Guidelines have also been developed outlining a code of conduct for the public.

#### 8.3.3. Mail drops

Resident research highlighted that two-in-three (67%) wanted to receive more information via postal information (e.g. newsletters and other printed materials sent in the post).

A Community Partnership newsletter is set to be delivered to households in the Search Area three times per year. This will feature a mix of latest news, progress updates, and events, introductions to members of the Community Partnership, CIF projects/awards, key aspects of the GDF story, and address questions and concerns.

The newsletter will be supplemented with additional mail drops, such as brochures and leaflets. These will be distributed as and when needed to deliver particular information, such as community events.

Content of the newsletters and additional mail drops will be developed by the Communications Lead in consultation with the Communications and Engagement Sub-group. The review process will include both the Sub-group and full Community Partnership.

#### 8.3.4.E-bulletin

The e-bulletin provides concise and timely updates to subscribers on a similar mix of information as the newsletter, but on a more frequent basis. E-bulletins will be sent as and when required, highlighting the key topics for local people to be aware of at that time. The e-bulletin will be drafted by the Communications Lead, with a foreword and approval provided by the Chair of the Community Partnership. Additional review and approval will be provided by the Chair of Communications and Engagement Sub-group.

#### 8.3.5.Engagement events

Public engagement around the Search Area will commence in June 2023 with a mixture of walk-in larger scale events supplemented by smaller pop-up events and attendance at shows, events and meetings.

The goal of the community engagement events is to allow those in the Search Area to access information and understand more about the Community Partnership and Geological Disposal, including what a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) is, why it is required, what it means for the local community, in addition to Community Investment Funding (CIF). The events will open a conversation with local people to introduce or expand upon the subject and are an opportunity to start to understand any issues or questions people may want to raise. Further detail and the specifics on this can be found in the Engagement Plan.

Event collateral has and will continue to be developed in consultation with the Community Partnership. This is to help communicate factual information and the GDF and associated topics in clear, accessible language.

#### 8.3.6.Annual Report

The Partnership will develop its first annual report for 2023 which will feature interviews with some of the members, look back at the year and reflect on the progress that the Community Partnership has made working with the community. Content will be developed by the Communications Lead in consultation with the Communications and Engagement Sub-group and the Community Partnership. The report will be published in January 2024.

## 8.4. Paid media



Paid media can support publicising the activities of the Community Partnership, inform the local population of key facts about GDF, and to notify them of engagement activities in their area. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), to drive people to the Community Partnership website, is also available.

Paid media channels include tools such as mail drops and exhibitions (as detailed above), as well as online and offline advertising.

Digital advertising could include geo-targeted social media advertisements to ensure relevant content reaches people within the geographic area. Offline advertising could include local newspapers, community newsletters, bus advertising and local radio.

The Communications Lead will consult both the Communications and Engagement Sub-group and Community Partnership on its advertising strategies.

### 8.5. NWS' Contact Management Team

In order to establish a two-way dialogue between the Community Partnership and local people, NWS will manage a centrally coordinated Contact Management Centre to handle incoming enquiries.

The Contact Management Team will provide a full range of communication channels (telephone, email, social media) required by the Community Partnership while adhering to strict requirements on issues such as personal data handling and storage and communications preferences. It will also handle initial media enquiries and forward them on to the appropriate member of the Communications Team (Community Partnership and/or NWS). It will work closely with other Community Partnership partners' Contact Centres (e.g. local Council) as required on reporting, handling of queries and consistency of messaging.

The Contact Management Centre team has received training from NWS, so they understand the key issues and messages around the GDF programme nationally and, critically, additional training on the issues and messages which are specific to Cumbria.

A report on the enquiries received and responses provided will be shared with the Community Partnership monthly.

## 9. Key activities

Q1 (Apr-Jun)	Q2 (Jul-Sep)	Q3 (Oct-Dec)	Q4 (Jan-March)
Communications Plan finalised New Search Area comms	Develop arrangements for Annual Community Partnership Report	Newsletter mail drop CIF comms Refresh website	Newsletter mail drop Publish Community Impacts Report

Newsletter mail drop	Newsletter mail drop	Engagement comms	Publish Annual Community Partnership Report
Conduct Public Opinion Survey	Review newsletter		Marine Geophysical Survey comms
Refresh website	Publish Opinion Survey results		Engagement comms
CIF comms	Property Value Scheme comms		
Engagement comms	Engagement comms		
NWS study comms	NWS study comms		

## 10. Monitoring and reporting

The Communications and Engagement Sub-group are central to all planning and monitoring, developing actions and providing local intel, with the Chair and Communications Lead taking a managing role.

The Sub-group and wider Community Partnership are kept frequently updated on the latest communications data by their Communications Lead. This includes website and social media analytics, the latest media coverage from PressData (relating to the Partnership and also general nuclear industry news), and a monthly report on the Contact Centre and social media enquiries and responses.

The Communications Lead will provide the Partnership with a weekly communications update outlining key information to be aware of, communications planning and approvals, and media coverage.

Furthermore, the Communications Lead will attend the Community Partnership meetings in person quarterly to provide a comprehensive update and answer questions, and virtually to all other meetings.