



South Copeland GDF Community Partnership Newsletter



Welcome to the latest newsletter from South Copeland GDF Community Partnership, in an issue which marks almost two years since we formed.

The Partnership’s role includes ensuring people in the Search Area have all the information they need when considering the possibility of hosting a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF), and now that the Community Partnership is fully established, we’ve started to increase engagement with our local community.

At our recent Community Forum, detailed on pages 3-4, members of the public joined us to share their thoughts and concerns on GDF, and it was heartening to see the level of participation and respect shown between participants as they took part in the conversation.

Whether you are in favour of a GDF, against it, undecided or require more information – we’re keen to hear all views and are here to help.



Reflecting on the first Community Forum

On Wednesday 20 September we held our first Community Forum where we discussed local people's views on what a GDF could mean for the area.

The Government's *Implementing Geological Disposal - Working with Communities* Policy (available on our website) suggests that Community Partnerships may wish to consider creating a Community Stakeholder Forum (CSF) to allow as many people as possible to engage in the discussion.

As a Partnership we were keen to do this, so we organised and ran the pilot Community Forum and were grateful to be joined by 27 members of the public who shared their thoughts on geological disposal and found out more about it, by participating in round-table discussions with other members of the community.

Attendees discussed 3 key topics: community impacts – both positive and negative, the Community Partnership's role, and the area of South Copeland – including what people like about it and its challenges.

As a Partnership, we are always very keen to hear from the public, so that we can understand their questions and concerns, and fulfil their expectations of us, and this event is one of a number of recent and ongoing activities helping to shape the work of the Partnership.

The first Community Forum was particularly useful in helping us to develop the scope of the independent community impacts report we are commissioning and is set to be published in Spring 2024 – we hope to share more detail with you on the scope of that soon.

As a Partnership, we are always very keen to hear from the public, so that we can understand their questions and concerns, and fulfil their expectations of us

In this issue, you'll also find the latest community survey results, how the developer Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) will identify a suitable site for a GDF through its six 'siting factors', information on the aerial surveys taking place across our region this autumn/winter, and an international focus on the Cigéo project (the GDF in France).

this will have been reached by the time this newsletter lands on your doorstep.

We've supported a wide variety of projects across this area, many of which would not have come to fruition without it, so it's good to see the positive impact this funding is having. It's the benefit of being a part of the siting process, so we should make the most of it.

Take a look at our website for further details about CIF and how you can put in an application: southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk.

We hope you find this issue informative and send you our very best wishes for the festive season and 2024.

Ged McGrath,
Chair, South Copeland
GDF Community Partnership



Finally, £1million of Community Investment Funding (CIF) was awarded in our first year, and as this newsletter went to print we were approaching the £1million mark for the second year. I'm hopeful that



Community Partnership member, Maggie Cumming, said about the Community Forum: “As a member of the Community Partnership representing Whicham Parish Council I found the first Community Forum to be a positive experience.

“The small group discussions allowed members of the public to express views and concerns in an informal and relaxed setting.

“We were able to explore their understanding of our role in the process and explain how we endeavour to hold NWS to account through members of the partnership who represent the developer.

“Participants were respectful of each other and points raised will help us as representatives of our local communities provide balanced information as we initiate independent studies.”

Maggie Cumming,
Member of the South
Copeland GDF Community
Partnership.



Your feedback on the Community Forum:

“I found it informative [...] I also enjoyed meeting many other people I had not met before and hearing their points of view”

“I liked the open attitude of all present”

“Very interesting approach – need to keep it up on a regular basis”

“I’ve attended most of the Community Partnership meetings in public and this was the ideal opportunity to speak rather than having a 15-minute slot”

“It was a good format. Very constructive, friendly and professionally run”

A full report on the first Community Forum, detailing the discussions that took place, is available to read on our website.

Given the positive feedback on the pilot, we intend to host further Community Forums.

The Community Partnership’s meetings are held in public, and we’ll be out and about at drop-in events in 2024 across the area, so do keep an eye on our website for the latest dates.

We’re also available to attend one of your events – please get in touch if you’d like to invite us to join.



South Copeland community survey: the latest results

Earlier this year in June, research consultant Yonder oversaw a survey of 187 adult residents who were interviewed in person across the wards of Millom and Millom Without – the Search Area for a GDF in South Copeland.

This survey was part of a programme of continued surveys looking at local people’s awareness, understanding and support of a GDF across the Search Area.

Owen Thomas, Senior Director at research consultancy, Yonder, who oversaw the programme of research, shares the detail on the latest survey findings – and our Chair, Ged McGrath offers his reflections.

What did you do?

Between 6 and 14 June 2023, Yonder oversaw a survey of 187 adult residents who were interviewed in person across the wards of Millom and Millom Without. Quotas were employed to ensure the resident sample was representative of the relative populations of the two wards. The way the survey was designed means that 187 people’s views were representative of the wider population. Quotas and weights were employed to ensure the random sample was representative in terms of the relative populations of the two wards and the age and sex profiles of the area in question. With a sample of 187 and a 95% confidence interval, a +/-7% margin of error is expected, so this gives a good indication of views across the Search Area which is roughly comparable with similar research conducted in 2022.

The change to the South Copeland Search Area following Local Government Reorganisation meant that residents in Drigg and Carleton and Irton with Santon (who were previously in the Mid Copeland Search Area) were included in the research. The Community Partnership requested for a distinction between the previous and current Search Area to be identified in the results; the two sets of results were largely the same.

How engaged were residents in the subject matter?

Residents remained engaged with the subject matter. Over half (57%) recalled seeing, reading or hearing something about radioactive waste or geological disposal in the past year.

Had residents seen any of the Community Partnership's communications?

42% of residents surveyed attributed their awareness of the subject matter to a leaflet or newsletter in the post. When prompted, two-in-five (39%) claimed that they had seen and read the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership newsletter and 17% claimed to have seen the newsletter but not read it. Of

those that claimed to have seen and read the newsletter, a majority (81%) agreed that it was easy to understand and 69% agreed that it was informative.

What level of understanding did residents have?

Though engaged, respondents' awareness of how radioactive waste was managed was more limited. 37% were aware of the UK's current storage method for its radioactive waste (stored at interim surface or ground-level storage facilities at sites across the UK). One-in-five (20%) believed it was held in vaults deep underground in the UK, and a third (35%) admitted that they did not know.

Some residents' understanding of geological disposal was also limited. One-in-five (19%) were able to identify the accurate description of a GDF. One-in-three (34%) had heard of the term but knew nothing of it. 12% thought they were deep underground facilities that were currently used in the UK for the permanent disposal of radioactive waste, whilst 14% thought that they were near-to-surface sites where the UK currently buries low-level radioactive waste.

What level of support did respondents show towards a GDF in the Search Area?

When considering the construction of a GDF in the South Copeland Search Area, one-in-four (27%) opposed it and 39% were supportive. One-in-three (32%) were neutral towards a proposed GDF within the South Copeland Search Area.

What information did residents want to receive and how did they want to receive it?

Appetite for information about geological disposal and the siting process remained high. Respondents most often requested general information about the approach / geological disposal (34%). One-in-five (22%) wanted information relating to the

location of the Search Area or the potential site, whilst 19% wanted information on safety. Half of those surveyed wanted to receive information via post. 15% wanted information via in-person meetings / events and 14% cited Facebook. Only one-in-five (20%) said that they did not want to receive any information.

What's next?

This research provides updated data into residents' awareness of the South Copeland Community Partnership and their views of geological disposal. However, there are some differences between the results of this survey and the previous survey and it's clear that more regular surveying will provide the community with more information about residents' opinions and information needs. Therefore, we now plan to survey local residents more frequently, with another round of research in November.

Reaction of South Copeland GDF Community Partnership Chair, Ged McGrath:

"This research provides another insight into residents' awareness and understanding of the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership and their views on geological disposal.

"In April 2023 the South Copeland Search Area changed due to Local Government Reorganisation, and interestingly, the results of this survey were largely the same when comparing its data from the former Search Area with the revised Search Area, which incorporates Drigg and Carleton, and Irton and Santon.

"There are, however, some noticeable differences between the results of this survey and the previous survey in 2022, and it's clear that more regular surveying will provide further information about the community's opinions and information needs. We now plan to survey local residents more frequently, with another round of research in November.

This research provides another insight into residents' awareness and understanding of the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership and their views on geological disposal.

"It's important to note that we're in the early stages of engaging with local people on this subject. We're listening to everyone's views and information needs, and we will continue to do so, having many conversations, gaining feedback and providing answers, so that the community can make an informed decision.

"If a suitable site is found in South Copeland – a decision which could take 10-15 years – a Test of Public Support would ensure the local community decides whether or not they want a GDF in the area. That's why it's really important that we, as a Partnership, understand local people's feelings and requirements so that we can best serve you in this process."

Yonder is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Yonder was formerly known as Populus and changed trading names in October 2020. For more information, see www.yonderconsulting.com.

The first Community Partnership-led survey took place in June 2022 and the results of that survey are available on our website News section.



News from the GDF developer

Aerial surveys commence

NWS has begun its aerial surveys in South Copeland once a month during daylight hours, starting in November 2023 and completing in March 2024.

These aerial surveys will provide NWS with information on the presence and numbers of birds and marine wildlife in the area and, together with other environmental surveys, will provide baseline data as part of work to understand if an area is suitable for a GDF.

The data collected during this first phase of survey work will help to inform more extensive environmental impact assessments going forward including a second phase of planned environmental baseline surveys that is likely to commence in April 2024 and run until October 2024 to capture data from the spring and summer season. The surveys are species neutral and will be used to gather data on any and all animals in the area.



Simon Hughes, Director of Siting and Communities at Nuclear Waste Services, said:

“These aerial surveys are an important part of gathering the data we need to understand the environment of an area. The planes will fly at a low altitude, at least 1600ft (500m) height in accordance with recognised best practice, yet be high enough not to disturb the wildlife being observed.

“At this stage we are not looking for any specific species although the data will be used to get a better understanding of protected species using the area.”

The Community Partnership will share the dates of the aerial surveys on our website news section. Visit southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/latest-news/ to find out more.



Allerdale not taken forward in the siting process

NWS has been engaging with the Allerdale community about the potential for hosting a GDF to dispose of the UK’s most radioactive waste.

Following a comprehensive and robust evaluation of information it was concluded only a limited volume of suitable rock was identifiable and the geology in the area was unlikely to support a post closure safety case. NWS has therefore taken the decision not to take Allerdale further in the search for a suitable site to host a GDF.

Initial assessments of existing data and information for the other three communities in the siting process – South Copeland, Mid Copeland and Theddlethorpe – have indicated potentially suitable geology, which is why NWS is continuing in the siting process with those communities.

We wish to thank the Community Partnership and the Chair for their hard work, time, and commitment. They have been instrumental in active local engagement and working with community groups



Corhyn Parr, CEO for NWS, said:

“After careful consideration NWS has reached a decision not to take Allerdale further in our search for a suitable site to host a GDF.

“We need enough suitable geology to accommodate a GDF and to support safety cases to build, operate, and close the facility. Our assessments show evidence of limited volume of suitable rock for a GDF in the Allerdale search area, including the adjacent inshore area.

“We wish to thank the Community Partnership and the Chair for their hard work, time, and commitment. They have been instrumental in active local engagement and working with community groups who we have been able to support through NWS community funds.

“There is a positive legacy to the Allerdale community’s participation in the process, with around £2 million GDF Community Investment Funding supporting over 50 local projects which we will continue to support.

“We’re engaging with three other communities about hosting a GDF, with site evaluation work underway in these areas. The door also remains open for new communities to join the process.”

The search for a suitable site

The six 'siting factors' explained

There are many things NWS, as the developer, must take into account in the search for a suitable site and a willing community to host a GDF.

Following a national consultation exercise in 2018, NWS set out how it will evaluate potential areas and sites to ensure they are suitable for a GDF in their *Site Evaluation* report (available on our website); they developed 26 evaluation considerations that are grouped into six topics.

These six topics are called the 'siting factors', which NWS details as:



Safety and Security. Put simply, if NWS cannot demonstrate that a site will be safe and secure during its construction, and operation, that the geology is suitable and will support the safety case after it's been closed, and that the facility will satisfy the UK's strict safety and security standards, a GDF will not be built.



Community. NWS will be assessing the social and economic impacts and opportunities a GDF can bring and if it can be aligned with the Community's vision for the future of their area.



Environment. The delivery of a GDF will represent one of the largest environmental protection projects in the UK. To successfully deliver a GDF, NWS will need to assess the impact on the natural and historic environment, protected habitats and species.



Engineering feasibility. NWS will assess if it is going to be possible to design, construct and operate a GDF at a given site. The characteristics of the geological environment will significantly influence all of the phases of delivery of a GDF at that location.



Transport. NWS need to demonstrate the ability to transport waste safely and securely, and assess the implications of the investigation, construction, operation and closure of a GDF on local transport networks.



Value for money. NWS will need to assess the financial implications of developing a GDF, including whether the cost at a particular site will represent good value for money for the taxpayer over the long term.

We plan to explore each one of the six siting factors in more detail in future editions of this newsletter.

What about the studies that are ongoing in South Copeland?

NWS has started investigations to begin to understand the suitability of hosting a GDF in South Copeland, and in other Community Partnership Search Areas.

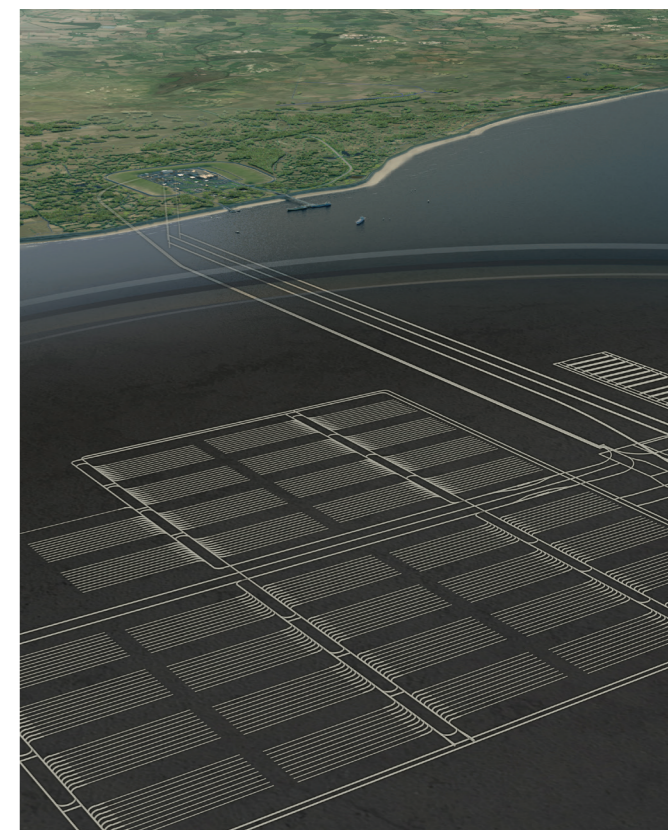
These studies include the Marine Geophysical Survey conducted in summer 2022 off the coast of Copeland to provide data about the geology to potentially host a GDF, and the first aerial surveys starting this autumn which will provide NWS with information on the presence and numbers of birds and marine wildlife in the area.

There are also a series of desk-based studies ongoing, which could take 2-3 years, looking at the feasibility of delivering a surface facility which would be connected to the geology of interest off the coast.

The work includes looking at issues such as labour and skills, local power supply and transport. Another study looks at potential options for underground tunnels linking a surface site to an underground facility.

The range of topics have taken into account community feedback gathered since the formation of the Community Partnership.

Simon Hughes, Nuclear Waste Services' Siting Director, said: "The work we've now started will address the most common topics to have emerged from our discussions with local people. It will begin to give us a much better understanding of the suitability of the area and enable us to consider how different elements of a GDF could potentially be delivered in Copeland."



Why does the UK need a GDF?

The UK has been using nuclear power for more than 60 years; it's part of our everyday lives, with around a fifth of our electricity coming from nuclear.

Nuclear technology creates waste materials that need to be disposed of securely and responsibly, to protect people and the environment.

Currently, higher activity waste is stored above ground – almost 80% is at Sellafield in Cumbria – but this is not seen as a long-term solution: it is expensive as the facilities demand continual maintenance or replacement.

Looking to the future, the government sees new nuclear power as essential to a clean and secure energy mix, which means disposing of nuclear waste for the long term is even more important for the UK moving forward.

Together, we anticipate that the ongoing studies will begin to address many of the questions and concerns raised by members of the public and provide some of the baseline data required as part of the work to understand if South Copeland is a suitable site for a GDF. If South Copeland continues in the siting process, the geology of the area will be further investigated using deep boreholes (i.e. deeper than 150metres) to determine its suitability.

To begin construction of a GDF, there must be a Test of Public Support to determine whether the Potential Host Community is willing to host a GDF.

It's important to recognise that the results of these investigations will take time, but we will keep the community updated with the latest information as and when the findings emerge. This detail is crucial for local people to have when deciding if they want a GDF to be built here through a Test of Public Support.

The Government's policy, *Implementing Geological Disposal – Working with Communities*, is clear that, before NWS seeks regulatory approval or development consent to begin construction of a GDF, there must be a Test of Public Support to determine whether the Potential Host Community is willing to host a GDF. If the result of the Test of Public Support is in support, the developer may then make the statutory regulatory and development consent applications required to build a GDF at the selected site. If the result is against, a GDF will not be built in South Copeland.

What is geological disposal?

Geological disposal is recognised internationally as the best and safest long-term solution for higher-activity waste, with many countries developing their own GDFs.

It involves isolating radioactive waste deep underground, inside a suitable rock volume to ensure that no harmful quantities of radioactivity reach the surface environment.

A GDF will be a highly engineered structure consisting of multiple barriers that will provide protection to people and the environment over hundreds of thousands of years whilst the radioactivity naturally decays. This will be at a depth of between 200 and 1,000 metres.



International focus: France

France is among the countries making progress in developing a GDF. The French national radioactive waste management agency, Andra, submitted a construction licence application in January for its Cigéo project (Industrial Centre for Geological Disposal).

This is a GDF for radioactive waste to be built at a site straddling the Meuse and Haute-Marne districts in the north east of the country.

The facility will dispose of higher activity, long-lived waste produced by France's nuclear facilities. Andra has said this "crucial step" follows more than 25 years of research work.

The Cigéo project – which is similar to GDFs under construction or under consideration worldwide – aims to protect people and the environment from the danger posed by radioactive waste by disposing of it deep underground, isolated away from the surface within highly engineered barriers and suitable rock, providing containment.

The French Government and Andra have said that deep disposal meets the "ethical responsibility" of not passing on to future generations the responsibility for waste created now.

The developer added: "We are demonstrating our responsibility to future generations, especially against the background of uncertainty in our society, to make sure that we do not leave them with the burden of the radioactive waste that we have produced."

The French Government and Andra have said that deep disposal meets the "ethical responsibility" of not passing on to future generations the responsibility for waste created now

The French parliament decided on the principle of deep geological disposal more than 10 years ago, believing it to be the safest solution for radioactive waste.

France is not alone in opting for deep geological disposal – this is the favoured option across Europe, internationally and here in the UK. Like NWS, the GDF developer in the UK, French agency Andra, is committed to an active, involved construction process with the community. This approach involves ongoing discussion with the planned GDF’s neighbours, as well as a consultation with the region’s stakeholders, and public debates held to hear concerns and answer questions.

The location for the Cigéo GDF was chosen because of the suitable geology of the area. The host rock is 160 million years old, 145 metres (476ft) thick and between 400 and 600 metres underground.

A spokesperson for Andra said: “The disposal facility’s depth and design, and the type of rock in which it is located, as well as the geological stability, mean that the waste can be isolated from human activity and natural events on the surface (e.g. erosion and glaciation) in the very long term.



“Once closed, the facility will not require any further human intervention: the safety of the site is described as ‘passive.’”

Andra has said Cigéo represents an opportunity for the host region, particularly in terms of employment – even before construction begins, jobs will be created by site preparation and preliminary development.

The GDF’s construction will require up to 2,000 people over five years. The workforce will stabilise at around 600 people during site operation. Cigéo will also generate indirect jobs for more than a century.

Andra is also involved in training young people through partnership agreements with the Universities of Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne, as well as local vocational colleges. The agency also welcomes students for work-study programmes and internships, and supports doctoral theses on subjects related to its activities.

Dr Simon Norris, NWS Principal Research Manager, said: “NWS and Andra have worked together for decades. Such international collaboration ensures effective knowledge exchange, the sharing of ideas and experiences, and is very cost-effective and time-efficient.

“NWS is very interested to further its understanding of the suitability of the rocks present in South Copeland to host the UK’s GDF – this is an essential part of the siting process alongside community willingness to participate.

“Drawing on international experience will be a key input to this process.”

Learn more at bit.ly/CigeoProject

Almost £2M granted to South Copeland projects so far

The South Copeland GDF Community Partnership has been able to assist with the award of almost £2 million in Community Investment Funding (CIF) to local projects since its launch, with grants from £650 to £225,000 assisting projects such as wellbeing and addiction programmes, youth clubs, and community facilities.

The grants are used to fund projects, schemes or initiatives that:

- Provide economic opportunities
- Enhance the natural and built environment, or
- Improve community wellbeing.

Within these themes, the Community Investment Funding Panel are prioritising projects that are sustainable and leave a lasting legacy in the community.

Who can apply?

Groups, public sector organisations and businesses in South Copeland with a project that benefits the local community are encouraged to apply for CIF.

How to apply for funding

More information on CIF and the application process is available on our website.

Our Community Investment Funding Team are on hand to help. We recommend you contact them for a chat about your project before applying, so that you can ensure that your bid is thorough, with all the supporting evidence you need. Email communityinvestment-southcopeland@nuclearwasteservices.uk to find out more.





Get in touch

Do you have a question? Would you like further information? Are you interested in applying for Community Investment Funding?

Get in touch with the NWS Contact Management Team.

Email: gdfinfo-southcopeland@nuclearwasteservices.uk

Community Investment Funding email:
communityinvestment-southcopeland@nuclearwasteservices.uk

Telephone: 0300 369 0000

Write: South Copeland GDF Community Partnership, GDF Enquiries, PO Box 130, Seascale, CA28 0DN

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