



South Copeland GDF Community Partnership Newsletter



Hello and welcome to the latest newsletter from the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership.

Over the last year, notable progress has been made on the journey towards understanding whether South Copeland is a suitable location to build a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) and whether it is right for local people. This has been made possible through the collaboration and engagement of residents with the Community Partnership.

Our recently published Annual Report, available to view on our website, takes a closer look at our activities in 2023, and the Community Partnership's commitment to engagement, participation, and addressing community needs going forward.

A number of new members have joined the Community Partnership so that we now have a team of locally informed and connected members who are embracing the role and helping to provide the information required for local people. Earlier this year, Kate Willshaw, representing



In 2023, we attended 63 engagement events, talking to 906 people.

Friends of the Lake District, and John Sutton, representing Sustainable Duddon, joined the Partnership, giving a voice to the environment and community groups, and we have recently welcomed Bill Amos from the business sector (see page 8).

As a Partnership, our main goal is to ensure that our community understand the GDF project and its potential impacts. In 2023, we attended 63 engagement events talking to 906 people, including Community Partnership meetings in public, drop-in sessions, larger scale showcase events, and joining community meetings, shows and openings.

At the *Film Talks: Exploring GDF* events in November, independent academics, the Environment Agency, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), Nuclear Waste Services (NWS), and the Committee on Radioactive

Waste Management (CoRWM) joined the Community Partnership to discuss short films on GDF and answer questions from the public. And in late January – early February this year we were joined by Fiona McEvoy, Head of Site Characterisation and Research & Development at NWS, at public talks on what is known about the geology in Copeland so far and what future studies will look like to ensure the long-term safety of a GDF, our communities and the environment. We will share information from the geology events as soon as it is made accessible.

In the first year of the Partnership (2022), we were able to allocate £1 million of Community Investment Funding (CIF), a fund that NWS has made available to communities simply for engaging in the conversation about GDF. I am delighted that, following on from this, the second year’s funding was also fully

allocated in 2023, bringing the total spent locally to £2 million since the Partnership launched (see page 9). This money is making a real difference to local people, fuelling projects that provide economic opportunities, enhance the natural and built environment, and improve community wellbeing, leaving a lasting legacy for the community, regardless of the GDF outcome. Applications are now open for 2024.

Also within this issue, the Leader of Cumberland Council, Mark Fryer, offers his view on geological disposal and the siting process (page 7), and we take a look at the multi-barrier approach of a GDF (page 6).

I hope you find this issue interesting and informative, and as ever, please do get in touch if you have questions, an information request, or wish to share your views.

Ged McGrath
Chair, South Copeland
GDF Community Partnership



“This money is making a real difference to local people, fuelling projects that provide economic opportunities, enhance the natural and built environment, and improve community wellbeing, leaving a lasting legacy for the community.”

Ged McGrath



The latest results from the South Copeland GDF Community Survey

Between 1 and 20 November 2023, research consultant Yonder conducted the latest residents survey of 203 adult residents who were interviewed in person across the wards of Millom and Millom Without. An overview of the outcomes of this survey are presented by Yonder below.

Summary

The results of the latest survey demonstrated that residents remained engaged with the subject matter. 77% of respondents stated that they were able to recall seeing or reading or hearing something about radioactive waste or geological disposal over the past year. Three-in-five (60%) attributed their awareness to a leaflet or newsletter in the post.

Half (53%) were aware of the UK's current storage method for its higher activity radioactive waste (in that they believed it was stored at interim surface or ground-level storage facilities at sites across the UK).

A similar proportion (50%) were able to identify the accurate description of a GDF. One-in-ten (10%) thought there were deep

underground facilities that were currently used in the UK for the permanent disposal of nuclear waste, whilst only 4% thought that there were near-to-surface sites where the UK currently buries low-level radioactive waste. 29% said they had heard of the term 'GDF' but knew nothing of it, whilst only 8% had never heard of the term.

A majority (84%) claimed to be aware that a Search Area had been identified within South Copeland for further investigation of its suitability for a GDF.

When considering the construction of a hypothetical GDF in the South Copeland Search Area, 15% opposed it and half (50%) were supportive. 35% were neutral towards a proposed GDF within the South Copeland Search Area.

When asked about what kind of information they would like to receive regarding the subject matter, respondents most often requested information relating to safety (16%), the potential location of the site (15%) and general information about the approach (14%). One-in-three (32%) said that they did not want to receive any further information.

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

"The latest results provide another snapshot in time of local people's views on geological disposal, and guide our role in seeking and providing the information that our community require about a GDF and the siting process.

"We are currently surveying members of the public three times per year, to ensure that we have a clear picture of the local people's views and information needs, and this helps to inform the Partnership's communications and engagement approaches going forward.

"It's important that our community have confidence in the information provided to them about the siting process, potential impacts and relevant scientific and technical issues, in order to make an informed decision if or when we reach a stage when a Test of Public Support on GDF is held – and this is our goal as a Community Partnership."

Previous survey results, from June 2023 and June 2022, are available to view on the Community Partnership website News section: southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/latest-news

Who are Yonder?

Yonder is a member of the Market Research Society (MRS) and founding member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. The Market Research Society (MRS) is the UK professional body for research, insight and analytics. As the regulator, it promotes the highest professional standards throughout the sector via the MRS Code of Conduct.

The research programme conducted by Yonder, is not carried out by the Community Partnership, NWS, or members of the community, maintaining its impartiality.

What methodology do they use?

To ensure the representativeness of the surveying, Yonder utilises random probability sampling. Random probability sampling guards against sample bias. In addition, Yonder uses the latest ONS and Census population data to ensure the sample is representative of the local area's population (in terms of geographic balance, age and gender). With this information, quotas are employed to ensure the resident sample is representative of the relative populations of the two Search Area wards. Following fieldwork, Yonder then employs weighting to review the interviewed sample, examine any differences between quotas and the achieved interviews and correct any differences by weighting up under-represented groups and weighting down over-represented groups. This ensures the resident samples which inferences are based are representative in terms of the age and sex profile of the population in question. Utilising this approach permits justifiable inferences to be drawn from the sample to the population, at quantified levels of precision.

Why underground?

You might have heard the term ‘multi-barrier approach’ during discussions about geological disposal. But what is this, exactly?

The GDF developer, NWS, say that a combination of natural and man-made barriers will contain the waste in a GDF, and these work together to help safely isolate the radioactive waste.

Containment means keeping the waste where it is placed. Isolation means putting the waste away from people and the surface environment.

Liam Payne, Research Manager for NWS, said: “A GDF cannot be built and operated unless it can be robustly demonstrated to the regulators [the Environment Agency and Office for Nuclear Regulation] that it will be safe. The multi-barrier approach is key to demonstrating this long-term safety and it will be a key factor in how we characterise a site and then subsequently how we construct and operate the GDF so we know that it will remain safe and not cause harm to people and the environment”.

In a GDF, the waste will be isolated in sealed vaults and tunnels deep underground, between 200m and 1,000m (656ft and 3,280ft) below the surface. The radioactive material is then contained while it decays naturally over time.

What goes into a GDF?

Only solid radioactive waste will go into a GDF. This makes it safer to handle, transport and dispose of. The solid waste is packaged into secure, engineered containers made from a durable material, typically copper, steel or concrete, depending on the type of waste and geology.

The containers are designed to last anywhere between a few hundred years to tens of thousands of years, depending on the nature of the waste inside.

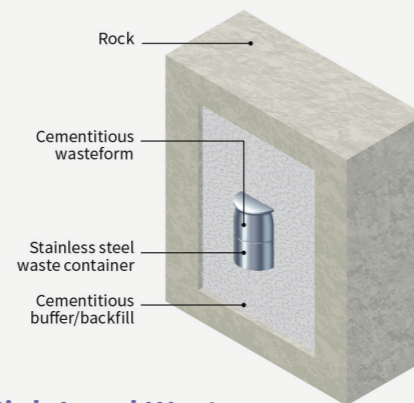
The radioactive waste containers will be placed in a GDF, surrounded by a protective backfill and buffer material.

This backfill of cement or clay prolongs the life of the containers and slows down the release of radioactivity.

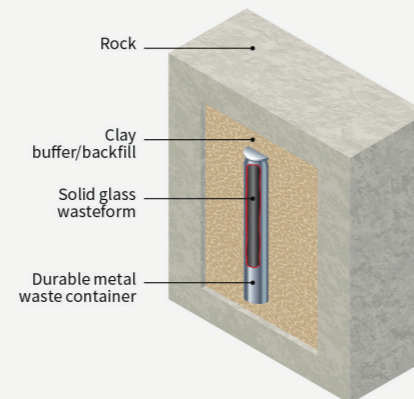
The final barrier is the natural barrier of several hundred metres of stable rock, preventing radioactivity from moving towards the surface when other barriers eventually degrade over the very long timescales.

Once complete, the GDF will provide safety without the need for further action. Together, these barriers are designed to provide multiple levels of protection from the waste for many thousands of years, all whilst the levels of radioactivity in the waste naturally decline.

Intermediate Level Waste



High Level Waste



How much waste goes into a GDF and where is it now?

Roughly 750,000m³ of packaged waste could be destined for a GDF. The legacy waste in the UK has been building up for more than 70 years; most comes from the nuclear power generation, but it is also a by-product of many medical and industrial processes and research and defence activities that make use of radioactivity and radioactive matter.

While the waste is currently stored safely above ground, with the majority at Sellafield in Cumbria, this is not a sustainable or permanent solution. The stores need to be continually monitored to keep the waste secure and periodically refurbished while the radioactivity naturally decays. For some of the waste this will take many thousands of years, so even if well maintained, eventually, the surface stores will need to be replaced, or the waste moved elsewhere. Surface storage will also be vulnerable over thousands of years to events in the future like climate change and human conflict.

All waste destined for a GDF will be UK-owned. International law states that spent fuel and radioactive waste remain the ultimate responsibility of the country in which it was generated.

For more about the UK inventory visit ukinventory.nda.gov.uk

A view from Cumberland Council – by leader Mark Fryer

Cumberland Council is participating in the GDF siting process as the Relevant Principal Local Authority for both the Mid and South Copeland Community Partnerships: a role established in the Government’s Working With Communities Policy and that gives the Council certain powers and responsibilities.

The primary purpose of the Community Partnerships is to give people credible information about what a GDF is, about why it is considered the right way to manage the UK’s higher activity radioactive waste and about what it might mean if a GDF were in fact constructed here. Cumberland Council fully supports that work and our representatives on the Partnerships are keen to play an active role.

The Council fully appreciates there are differing views about whether it would be a good thing for our area to host a GDF and we remain neutral on the matter. But we do recognise there is a real need for a permanent solution to managing the waste concerned – ongoing surface storage is not a longer-term solution.

Participating in the GDF siting process means the question of whether West Cumbria might or might not be a suitable location for a GDF can be properly resolved once and for all while allowing us all to examine in detail what the implications of siting a GDF here might be and whether it is something that could fit with our own ambitions for this area.

Given that much of the waste intended for a GDF is held at the Sellafield site, Cumberland will be affected by the GDF project regardless of where the facility itself is located so it makes sense for our community to be part of the conversation.

The task of examining the geology off our coastline and assessing whether it might provide a suitable site for a GDF is challenging and could take the developer some years to conclude.

During that process, I hope people will continue to engage positively with the Community Partnerships, take an interest in the site evaluation work as it progresses and help us to ensure any concerns and questions people may have about the project are properly examined and addressed.



Welcoming our new member, Bill Amos

Bill Amos, a Millom resident, has a deep-rooted connection to the town. Born and raised in Millom, Bill treasures the close-knit community that has always been a part of his life. Today, he continues to call Millom home, cherishing the strong bonds he shares with his family, most of whom still reside in the area.

Professionally, Bill is a dynamic entrepreneur, serving as the founder and owner of a digital marketing and tech support company.

Beyond his business pursuits, Bill actively represents the local business community on various panels and organisations, working to improve the town's economic prospects and quality of life. His involvement in community initiatives demonstrates his unwavering commitment to making Millom an even better place to live and work.

Bill has joined the Community Partnership as, in his own words: "It is important that local businesses are represented, as any development in the area will affect future plans for sustainability and growth of all local businesses."

A dedicated Community Partnership

Bill's appointment to the Community Partnership follows Kate Willshaw (Friends of the Lake District) and John

Sutton (Sustainable Duddon), who began volunteering their time last year.

Ged McGrath, the Chair of the Community Partnership, was also re-appointed by the Community Partnership for two years last March, providing continuity until at least 2025.

Ged was initially appointed in March 2022 and was the first community-based Chair to be elected on a Community Partnership.

Engagement Manager and the Community Partnership's NWS representative, Kelly Anderson, said: "Having a local resident as Chair means that there is a real understanding of local needs and issues and Ged's reappointment means continuity for the rest of the members and wider community."

We continue to encourage new members to join the Community Partnership. In particular, we would welcome applications from members of the community representing Agriculture, Tourism, Seldom Heard and Youth. If you are interested in joining, please get in touch.



"It is important that local businesses are represented, as any development in the area will affect future plans for sustainability and growth of all local businesses."

Bill Amos

£2 million Community Investment Funding awarded in South Copeland

The Community Partnership has assisted with the award of a further £1million in Community Investment Funding (CIF) to local projects during its second year.

The funding is provided by the Government as South Copeland takes part in the nationwide search for a suitable site to build a GDF.

Grants can be used to fund projects, schemes or initiatives:



Providing economic opportunities



Enhancing the natural or built environment



Improving community wellbeing

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

South Copeland investment in numbers:

23 successful grant applications in **2023**

12 grants below **£10,000**

6 grants between **£10,001 & £50,000**

5 grants above **£50,000**

Some highlights



Cumbria Community Foundation
- £60,000 CIF towards the Winter
Warmth Fund

Cumbria Community Foundation Winter Warmth Fund £60,000

“This funding from South Copeland GDF Community Partnership to the Winter Warmth Fund will make a great difference to the vulnerable older people in South Copeland. Each year, the Winter Warmth Fund plays a vital role in helping to support older people in Cumbria to stay warm during the winter. Many of these vulnerable people choose between eating and heating and this funding has come at a crucial time when people are really starting to struggle to find the funds to keep warm. This funding will literally save lives.”



Muncaster Castle parkrun -
£4,000 CIF received

Muncaster Castle Parkrun £4,000

“Muncaster parkrun is already reaping dividends from the very generous support funding provided by the Community Investment Fund to get it up and running. It is fabulous to see so many locals young and old engaging with this new event and improving their fitness levels whether running or walking. The parkrun community from far and wide is also flocking to support it and we are amazed to see how many people are travelling to experience a parkrun in such a beautiful setting. It is wonderful to us to see the local community coming together in such a positive way in Muncaster’s gardens on Saturday mornings.”



Friends of Eskdale School

£31,849

“This project has realised one of the long term aims of the school; to install a biodome in order to provide an inspiring, exciting, multi-purpose and tranquil working space. FOES was delighted to make this project happen as it will support the development of our children, and hence our community, for many years to come in a wide variety of subjects, such as art, science, maths, economics and English. It is such an amazing resource for the children that will also foster closer relationships between the school and its local community. We are really grateful to the South Copeland GDF Community Investment Funding for providing us with support for this amazing project.”



Millom STEM Club

£2,000

“The funding will change a neglected wild area into a valuable environmental education resource, giving access to a wild wood and pond for use by all local primary school children. The purpose of the project is to encourage youngsters to learn about the natural flora and fauna and appreciate the diversity and value of nature. We are very grateful for the funding and the positive impact this project will have for young people in South Copeland.”

Millom Town Council

£42,488

“Millom Town Council received a grant enabling them to resurface the MUGA (Multi-Use-Games Area) in the Millom Park. All games lines were re-painted and the fencing renewed. This has proved to be an asset to the town and is used regularly by adults, teenagers and younger children. Park Play holds a session in this area free to all children on Saturday mornings.”

Millom STEM Club - £2,000 CIF received towards Haverigg Environmental Science Project

Millom and District Flower Group £5,000

“Our Club, which has a flower arranging demonstration every month, also has a strong social aspect. Before the pandemic, we had a membership of over 70 and were self-supporting, but when Covid hit we were forced to close for 2 years. We were unsure if the membership would return, and demonstrator costs had increased considerably. In November, we celebrated our 55th anniversary and the grant we received has allowed us to move forward on a strong financial footing for many more years to come. We can confidently book demonstrators and arrange events for our increasing membership allowing them to enjoy fun and friendship through flowers.”



Millom Baptist Church received £40,000 to make a series of improvements including replacing the wooden flooring in the community hall

Millom Baptist Church £40,000

“Funding for our new floor has enabled us to replace the old damaged and unsafe wooden floor in our church hall with a well insulated new sprung dance floor, better toilet facilities and improved storage. The dancing school who use our building for their classes are already benefiting from the new surface, the toddler group are making excellent use of the extra space to play, and it is easier to heat the building and so our Warm Space and weekly coffee morning are warmer and more comfortable. It also looks fantastic, welcoming and cosy! We are delighted to have already received some room bookings for meetings and training events as well as our regular weekly events, and are so pleased to be able to offer use of this building as an asset to the local community.”

Find out more

Funding applications are now open for 2024. To find out more about CIF and apply, please visit the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership website or contact our Grants Manager, Helen Conway:

Helen.Conway@nuclearwasteservices.uk
who can support your application and help ensure that it is successful.

Bootle and District First Responders £8,982

“Funding has allowed us to replace our ageing defibrillators and other equipment that is essential for us to provide emergency support to our local community. Our defibrillators are expensive pieces of equipment and without CIF support it would have been impossible to re-equip the entire team. Being in remote, rural, west Cumbria, it might take some time for an ambulance to attend a medical emergency such as a cardiac arrest or heart attack, which is when local resident First Responders can be alerted by the 999 call handler and be on scene in minutes. Trained by the North West Ambulance Service and carrying essential equipment we are able to provide immediate life-saving support prior to the ambulance or medi-helicopter arriving. Having our new kit secures our future for the coming years for which we are extremely grateful.”



Annual Report 2023

We have recently published our Annual Report online. Please visit **southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk** to read.





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:

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