

## Minutes of The South Copeland GDF Community Partnership

### Drigg Village Hall

Thursday 26 June 2025 at 6pm

#### Present:

Amy Shelton	NWS Principal Community Engagement Manager
Maggie Cumming	Whicham Parish Council
John Sutton	Sustainable Duddon
Chris Gigg	Drigg & Carleton Parish Council
Kate Willshaw	Friends of the Lake District
Andy Pratt	Interim Chair & CALC
Bob Kelly	RPLA Representative
Ben Daniels	Individual
Carl Carrington	Millom without Parish Council

#### Supporting Attendees:

Kelly Anderson	NWS, Community Engagement Manager
Jonathan Cook	Cumberland Council
Jodie Dougherty	NWS, Community Partnership Assistant
Lois Moss	NWS, Strategic Commercial Lead

Meeting Date:		26/06/2025	Time:	18:00 – 19:30
Meeting Type:		In Person		
Location:		Drigg Village Hall		
Additional Material enclosed: Yes				
Agenda				
Item No.	Time	Papers:	Description:	Lead:
1	18:00		Welcome, Introductions & Declarations of Interest	Chair
2			NWS Update	Amy Shelton
3		Paper attached	Process for CP Meetings	Kelly Anderson
4		Paper attached	Chair Recruitment	Amy Shelton
5		Paper attached	CIF Memberships and Priorities	Kelly Anderson
6		Paper attached	Community Impact Report	Amy Shelton
7			AOB / Date of next meeting	Chair
8	19:30		Close	Chair

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed Partnership Members and supporting attendees to the meeting.

There were no apologies.

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

## 2. NWS Update

The Principal Community Engagement Manager gave an update to members on recent activity.

**Areas of Focus** – NWS are continuing to assess feedback received following the AoF launch.

**Safety** – A common questions at AoF events, across all CP areas, was around GDF safety. NWS has put together a video and blog from Lucy Bailey, Chief of Disposal Safety for NWS, which is available on the NWS website. Social media adverts for this content have been running across South and Mid Copeland, and it's being re-shared to Community Partnership social media pages.

**GDF benefits** – Similarly, a common piece of feedback has been wanting to know more about the jobs, skills and investment opportunities a GDF could bring. NWS have developed a video featuring the Principal Community Engagement Manager and Mid Copeland's Community Engagement Manager looking at this, and a blog with NWS' Senior Policy advisor, as well as other website updates. Social media adverts from NWS will be running across South and Mid Copeland starting this week, and this will be re-shared to Community Partnership social media pages.

**Environment** - Aerial Surveys began in October 2023 and take place once a month. These surveys record the presence and numbers of birds and marine wildlife in the area giving NWS a baseline of seasonal data to inform more extensive environmental surveys, impact assessments and support applications for major permissions.

Further environmental surveys are planned to commence from September. These are Vantage Point Surveys which will look at the presence of overwintering and passage birds and identify the sensitivities of the environment. This data will form part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure that sensitivities are taken into account in the planning for where and when we may undertake future Site Characterisation works, including deep borehole investigations. A recce visit took place early June to identify suitable vantage points for the survey work.

**Theddlethorpe** – Lincolnshire County Council's Executive Committee voted on 3 June to withdraw from the Theddlethorpe Community Partnership. This decision means the siting process for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) in the communities of Withern and Theddlethorpe, and Mablethorpe has now come to an end, as the process cannot continue without the support of a relevant Principal Local Authority.

**Letter from Whicham Parish Council** – a letter has been received from Whicham Parish Council which states:

*Whicham Parish Council formally requests that the area of focus for the proposed siting of a GDF within the environs of Kirksanton village be withdrawn, and that the residents of Kirksanton and its surrounds within the parish of Whicham are no longer considered as a willing community.*

NWS is preparing a response which will be sent to the Clerk.

**Visioning** – A paper was circulated to the Partnership on 25 May outlining all the work that has been done so far on Visioning and what work is coming up. This document highlighted the poor attendance at the focus groups and resulting change in approach which saw us agree with members of the visioning subgroup to send out another postal and online questionnaire to delve deeper into the three emerging themes that came out of the first survey (transport, health and wellbeing and economy). This second questionnaire has seen another good response rate with over 150 returns so far

As stated in the document, there will be production of:

- (a) Public facing document with the culmination and outcomes of the work to date
- (b) Engagement material to support dissemination of outcomes within the community.

CP members will be asked to provide any feedback on these in the coming weeks.

There has been some criticism on social media and via the Helpdesk that the online questionnaire could be completed by anyone. This questionnaire was only shared locally and the vast majority – over 75% of responses - were postal. The questions were specific to South Copeland, so it would be very difficult to answer by anyone who wasn't local. We are therefore confident in the responses received so far.

**Yonder surveys** – The next Yonder survey is due to commence in the next few weeks. It will follow the same format as the previous questionnaires with the addition of a couple of questions related to Property Value Protection (PVP) which Kelly shared with you a couple of weeks ago. The results of both this upcoming survey, and the previous one (following the announcement of Areas of Focus) will be shared once we have the results.

**New Action: CEM to circulate geographic data from Yonder surveys in November.**

Question: We talked about getting Yonder to run focus groups for working age women, did this happen? It makes sense to tackle one focus group at a time.

Answer: Yes. Happy to circulate the outcome.

**New Action: CEM to circulate Yonder data from working age women.**

Question: Regarding the Visioning document, at what point do local community plans that are already in existence feed into it?

Answer: The very first bit of work that took place was to look at existing plans, including Parish plans and Copeland plans. This has been the baseline of the visioning work.

**New Action: CEM to circulate Visioning Base Plans from Parish Councils.**

**Helpdesk enquiries and social media reporting** – Given the nature of Helpdesk enquiries now coming in following the announcement of Areas of Focus – including personal and identifiable information – we will be moving to a monthly summary report of the Helpdesk enquiries and responses, including the top themes. Members are encouraged to follow the Community Partnership's social media accounts to keep up-to-date with the comments and responses there. Social media comments continue to go through the usual approval process of being sent to Kate Wilshaw and Kelly Anderson for input ahead of responding. Lucy will send the report on Helpdesk enquiries in the communications update by email.

**Recent and upcoming engagement** - We attended Drigg Gala on Saturday 14 June, and it was a really good event which saw us speak to 100 people.

We held a webinar for the staff of HMP Haverigg on Monday 23 June. We had approximately 20 members of staff in attendance and hope this is the start of more engagement with the prison.

We have another drop-in planned at Kirksanton village hall on 1 July. This was something that Martin Walkingshaw committed to when he attended the Whicham Parish annual meeting. There will be no new information, it will be a re-run of the last AoF event earlier in the year.

We will also be attending Millom & Broughton show at the end of August.

### **3. Process for CP Meetings**

At the meeting of CP members on 30 April 2025, members agreed that they would like to consider options for how future CP meetings are organised and recorded. The following points were agreed as the basis of the organisation of future CP meetings:

#### **Frequency of Meetings:**

**The Community Partnership members agreed they would continue meeting monthly.**

#### **Holding meetings in person or online:**

**The Community Partnership members agreed they would alternate between in person and online meetings.**

#### **Holding meetings in public or private:**

**The Community Partnership members agreed for the meetings to be held in private.**

#### **Approach to recording minutes:**

**The Community Partnership members agreed all meetings would be recorded on an audio device which will then be published on the website with an action log.**

*Post-Meeting Note: At the Community Partnership's following meeting held on 6 August, members revisited this topic and agreed to alternate monthly between meetings in public and online working groups, which will be minuted and published on the Community Partnership website. Further opportunities for engagement to invite meaningful community input will be considered as part of the Community Partnership's Engagement Plan.*

### **4. Chair Recruitment**

The previous Chair's tenure came to an end in March 2025. At the meeting of Community Partnership members on 30 April 2025, Andy Pratt was asked, with the agreement of CP members, to take on the Chairship on an interim basis.

Since formation in December 2021, the Partnership has had two Chairs. Mark Cullinan was the first Chair, and he oversaw the move from Working Group to Community Partnership. The Partnership quickly decided they wanted to have a local Chair and elected Ged McGrath for a period of 2 years which was later extended to 3, ending in March 2025.

It is currently expected that NWS will submit a decision on the communities to take forward for further Site Characterization to DESNZ in December 2025, to enable Secretary of State approval,

expected in Spring 2026. It is important that a Chair is in place to enable effective CP operation through and beyond that decision point.

Partnership members discussed the proposal to appoint a Chair for a minimum period of one year. There was general agreement to exclude a public recruitment process and to nominate a current member for the role.

Concerns were raised by some members regarding the existing job description for the Chair position, expressing uncertainty about its content and limitations. NWS confirmed that the Chair role description should remain consistent across all Partnerships to ensure fairness and equity.

The Cumberland Council representative made a proposal that Andy Pratt be put forward as the Chair of the CP. He explained that this proposal was supported by the Leader of Cumberland Council (a letter to this effect had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting). This proposal was supported by several other members of the Partnership. However, concerns were raised by some members about clarity of the recruitment process and the ability to effectively represent both Mid and South Copeland.

The proposal was put to a vote.

**Andy Pratt was voted to be South Copeland Community Partnership Chair for a 1-year term.**

#### **5. CIF Memberships and Priorities**

At the meeting of Community Partnership members on 30 April 2025, members agreed that they would like to discuss membership of the Community Investment Funding panel and the priorities for CIF. The CEM explained that there wasn't enough time on the agenda to give CIF priorities the time it deserved and it would therefore be better to plan a workshop to cover this topic in the coming weeks. It would however be helpful to look at membership.

**New Action: CEM to arrange a workshop to discuss CIF strategy and priorities.**

The CEM explained that two more Partnership members were needed to join the CIF panel to replace previous members who had since left the partnership. Two members expressed interest but requested further information regarding the time commitment involved. The CEM suggested that they attend the next panel meeting as observers, scheduled for 16 July 2025, to gain a clearer understanding of the role.

**New Action: CEM to invite interested CP members to observe next CIF panel.**

#### **6. Community Impact Report**

The South Copeland Community Partnership would like to procure a study to consider the impacts, both positive and negative of a GDF. This study aims to address questions from the community raised through previous Community Forums. The scope of the report was agreed by CP members in March 2024 and a Prior Information Notice (PIN) was released to the supply chain for feedback.

In summary, the key messages from the PIN feedback were:

- It was evident from the diversity in supply chain comments that the purpose of the work and the scope were not clear or well understood.

- The significantly wide range in feedback on project budget also inferred confusion with the scope requirements.
- There was a perception of overlap with NWS existing and future work as the GDF developer.

The PCEM shared an updated scope document which acknowledges why it is not possible to assess the specific impacts of a GDF in South Copeland at the current stage of the GDF Siting process. It explains that a way to achieve a broad understanding of the types of impacts and opportunities would be to undertake a high-level study of experience of identifying and mitigating impacts of other international GDF programmes and other major infrastructure projects. This would enable the community to understand the potential impacts of hosting a major infrastructure project, both positive and negative, and examples of the controls that have been successfully implemented to mitigate those impacts and maximise opportunities. These 'principles' are associated with the specifics of a design, the local environment and the relevant consenting regime and as such are to be used as 'case studies'.

Members acknowledged the importance of concerns and questions raised by the community, particularly around the experience of living near a construction site. It was agreed that further work should include reviewing relevant case studies, including how impact assessments were conducted and how mitigations were implemented. Real-world project examples will be selected to reflect the types of questions raised in Community Forums. Partnership members were supportive of the intention to engage with experts to better understand how similar processes have been managed elsewhere and requested that the scope also includes the experience of community members.

Question: How long will it take to procure and complete the impacts report?

Answer: The Strategic Commercial Lead gave an overview of the full process to members. Timelines can range from 6-9 months.

**Post-meeting Note:** The Community Impacts Case Study is currently planned to be released for Invitation to Tender in late September 2025. We expect the tender period to be complete by the end of 2025 with work starting in early 2026. Subject to confirmation of project timescales following the tender period, we envisage the work will complete in 6 months.

**New Action: Maggie Cummings to receive the timeline for procurement of Community Impact in advance of Whicham Parish council meeting.**

**New Action: NWS to work with Community Partnership to develop a statement for the community regarding timelines for the Community Impact Report.**

## **7. AOB / Date of next meeting**

John Sutton raised a proposed item regarding building relationships within the Partnership. As the meeting had run over schedule, they stated their intention to develop a proposal for consideration at the next meeting.

**New Action: CEM to schedule the next CP meeting(s).**

### **New Actions**

Action Reference:	Description:	Assigned to:
26062025 01	Community Engagement Manager to circulate geographic data from Yonder surveys in November.	Kelly Anderson
26062025 02	Community Engagement Manager to circulate Yonder data from working age women.	Kelly Anderson
26062025 03	Community Engagement Manager to circulate Visioning Base Plans from Parish Councils.	Kelly Anderson
26062025 04	Community Engagement Manager to arrange a workshop to discuss CIF strategy and priorities.	Kelly Anderson
26062025 05	Community Engagement Manager to invite interested CP members to observe next CIF panel.	Kelly Anderson
26062025 06	Whicham Parish Council representative to receive the timeline for procurement on Community Impact.	Amy Shelton
26062025 07	NWS to work with Community Partnership to develop a statement for the community regarding timelines for the Community Impact Report.	Amy Shelton
26062025 08	CEM to schedule the next CP meeting(s).	Kelly Anderson