*Dear GDF Community Partnership members in Mid-Copeland, Allerdale and Theddlethorpe,*

*The purpose of the letter is to explain why the South Copeland Community Partnership felt it appropriate to withdraw from the imminent visit to the Onkalo GDF site in Finland.*

*Like members of other Community Partnerships, a number of us in the South Copeland Partnership were keen to increase our knowledge of the Finnish experience, and in particular, learn how community engagement has worked there, hence our original desire to travel with other partnership colleagues to gain a greater understanding of these subjects.*

*However, we subsequently found out only ten days ago that the visit was to take place at the same time as a visit by members of the UK Government, including our own MP. We are pleased that it appears MPs are looking to learn from the Finnish GDF experience and wish them well. However, we were concerned about the ‘optics’ of such a joint visit and the way in which it might well lead some in our community to question our determination to act as a neutral party in the process.  We believe that our credibility as a neutral party is critical to the integrity of the Community Partnership process in South Copeland and to comprehensive engagement with local communities.*

*You may be interested to view on our website our Members Approach, in which we set out in detail how we aim to assist everyone in our local community through the Geological Disposal Facility process, whatever their views.*

*Best wishes,*

*The members of the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership.*