

Minutes of The South Copeland GDF Community Partnership

Thwaites Village Hall

Tuesday 2 September 2025 at 6pm

Present:

Amy Shelton	NWS, Principal Community Engagement Manager
Andy Pratt	CALC
Malcolm Bates	Millom Without Parish Council
Bob Kelly	RPLA Representative
Chris Gigg	Drigg & Carleton Parish Council
Ben Daniels	Individual

Supporting Attendees:

Jonathan Cook	Cumberland Council
Jodie Dougherty	NWS, Community Partnership Assistant
Kelly Anderson	NWS, Community Engagement Manager
Scott Stanley	NWS, Environmental Assessment Manager
Charlotte Higgins	NWS, Senior Lead, Environmental & Sustainability Assessments

Meeting Date:		03/09/2025		Time:	18:00 – 19:30	
Meeting Type:		In person				
Location:		Thwaites 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			Environment Update			Charlotte Higgins / Scott Stanley
4		Paper attached	Delivery Plan			Kelly Anderson
5			AOB / Date of next meeting			Chair
6	19:30		Close			Chair

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed Partnership Members and supporting attendees to the meeting.
There were apologies from Kate Willshaw and Maggie Cumming.

There were 17 members of the public in attendance.
Some members of the public expressed disappointment with the new meeting format, noting that it no longer includes an opportunity for public questions.

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.
Previous minutes from the meetings held on 26/06/2025 and 06/08/2025 were approved.

Previous Actions: Online workshop (06082025)

Action Reference:	Description:	Assigned to:
06082025 01	NWS to write to Whicham Parish Council explaining the outline timescale and the status and limitations of the Community Impacts Case Study work. Complete	NWS
06082025 02	Community Partnership Assistant to circulate fortnightly emails to highlight upcoming engagement events. Complete – Will be included in Comms update email.	Community Partnership Assistant
06082025 03	NWS to arrange training for the CP member joining the CIF Panel. Complete	NWS
06082025 04	Communications Lead to circulate website link for members to provide any further input. Complete	NWS
06082025 05	Members encouraged to share engagement ideas or suggest venues and events where outreach could effectively target working-age women. Complete	CP

Previous Actions: Meeting (26062025)

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

2. NWS Update

The Principal Community Engagement Manager explained over the coming months NWS will focus communications on Site Evaluation and the Six Siting Factors used to assess site suitability. We'll highlight one factor at a time to increase understanding of their importance in the siting process. The Six Siting Factors are:

- Safety and Security
- Community
- Environment
- Engineering Feasibility
- Transport
- Value for Money

Later this year, NWS will be updating the Community Partnership on the next stage in the GDF process after Site Evaluation which is Site Characterisation. This will provide more information around what Site Characterisation entails, such as the Development Consent Order and permitting as well as introducing more information about the deep

boreholes that would be part of the work we need to understand the geology. We will have an update on this at the December meeting.

Helpdesk / Social media

We have had no enquiries since our last meeting.

Community Engagement

August was a busy and rewarding month for the South Copeland Community Engagement Team, with a diverse range of activities designed to connect with residents across the area. Engagements included Coffee Mornings, community outreach events, and attendance at Millom & Broughton Agricultural Show.

Throughout the month, the team attended various venues including Millom Baptist Church, Millom Network Centre, Drigg & Carleton Village Hall, and the Millom & Broughton Showground. The agricultural show saw excellent engagement, with 216 individuals interacting with the team over the course of the day.

A new and promising addition to our outreach efforts is the collaboration with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in Millom. This regular engagement allows the team to connect with DWP customers immediately following their appointments—a valuable opportunity to reach individuals who may not typically attend our standard outreach or drop-in sessions. Feedback from these interactions has been overwhelmingly positive.

Overall, engagement in August was marked by a positive and welcoming atmosphere. Residents have shown a strong interest in learning more about our services and engaging in meaningful conversations.

New engagement opportunities are already underway for September. The Millom Network Centre has launched a new group titled C.A.M.E.O. (Come and Meet Everyone), providing another platform for community connection. Additionally, the iCan Wellbeing Group will begin hosting exercise sessions in Drigg, further supporting local health and wellbeing initiatives.

3. Environment Update

The Chair welcomed two representatives from Nuclear Waste Services, Charlotte Higgins (Senior Lead, Environmental & Sustainability Assessments) and Scott Stanley (Environmental Assessment Manager), to provide the Community Partnership with an update on Environmental Baseline Surveys. They informed the Community Partnership that they are currently conducting Digital Aerial Surveys (DAS) of birds and marine mammals, which will transition into Wintering Bird Surveys. The DAS will conclude in September 2025 after two years of data collation, with the wintering birds surveys commencing in September 2025 until April 2026, to be repeated in 2026/27. These surveys are part of a wider programme of environmental surveys designed to collect baseline data to support the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which is required for the Development Consent Order (DCO) to carry out deep borehole investigations.

The purpose of the wintering bird surveys is to identify key habitats, species, and behaviours. This data enables proactive planning by informing the design of borehole activities and helping to avoid or minimise environmental harm before work begins.

Findings: Coastal Bird Species

The most abundant species recorded in coastal areas were Dunlin, Oystercatcher and Wigeon. There were lesser numbers of Shelduck, Redshank, Curlew and Knot. Numbers peaked during the winter months with the arrival of overwintering species and are relatively low during spring and summer as they return to their breeding grounds. The total number of birds has varied between surveys:

Highest number recorded in November 2023 – 10,434 observations.

Lowest number recorded in April 2024 – 1517 observations.

Findings: Marine Bird Species

Observations of marine species were dominated by Auks (Guillemot and Razorbill), Herring Gulls and Kittiwake. Other species such as Gannet and Red-throated Divers were recorded in low densities.

The highest densities were observed along the west and central regions of the survey area.

Findings: Marine Mammals

The DAS also provides valuable information on marine mammals, particularly harbour porpoise, which are expected to be a key species. Seal species are also present; however, the species are not often distinguishable using aerial imagery. Other cetaceans are not identified to the species level and are recorded as ‘small cetacean’. Consideration for any further marine mammal surveys by other techniques will be given in future planning.

Wintering Bird Surveys: Methodology

On the ground surveys with surveyors looking at the coast and intertidal areas from vantage points along the coast. Provides detailed data to assess how birds use the intertidal zones and how they react to human and commercial activity. The surveys will be undertaken monthly from September 2025 to April 2026 and repeated the following year. The survey covers 30km of coastline with target species including those which are qualifying features of the adjacent Special Protection Area (SPA) and/ or Ramsar sites including curlew, oystercatchers and ringed plovers. However, all observed waterbirds species will be recorded

Vantage point locations are spaced at 2km intervals along the coastline (assuming 1km visibility, this gives full coverage). A team of 5-8 surveyors will travel to site and undertake surveys on consecutive days to cover all vantage points. Survey periods last for 6 hours commencing at either high or low tide, times to coincide with daylight hours. Surveyors observe the intertidal and inshore and record all targeted species. Data collection for the surveys will be undertaken by two methods: Through-the-tide-cycle-counts (TTTCC) and Disturbance Monitoring.

Through-the-tide-cycle-counts (TTTCC)

This helps determine how the distribution of waterbirds in intertidal areas varies during the day. Surveys last for 6 hours and is varied monthly to ensure all tidal states are covered. TTTCC counts will be undertaken at 60-minute intervals from the same vantage point. Each count represents 'snapshot scans' recording species, numbers and behaviours onto a standardised field map. Bird activities are recorded in the following:

- A: Feeding / foraging
- B: Roosting / loafing
- C: Preening / bathing
- D: Other

Disturbance Monitoring:

This assesses the behaviour of birds in response to human or natural disturbances. A disturbance stimulus is something that has the potential to elicit a reaction from the birds present, such as the presence of predators, vessels or aircraft. Details of any disturbances that occur are recorded, along with observations of the bird species present and their reactions, including:

Number of birds of each species within the disturbance zone will be recorded – usually within 150m

The level of response from birds on a scale of 1 to 5:

- 1: No response
- 2: Behavioural change
- 3: Movement within zone
- 4: Remaining in survey area but change of zone
- 5: Departure of birds or constant aerial circling

Question: Do you have any plans to share this information?

Answer: While we don't release individual pieces of data or information to the public on a rolling basis, we may share selected insights where appropriate and of interest. However, as required by the DCO process, relevant data or information will be made publicly available at key stages in the consultation and application timeline.

Question: Will the results influence the process?

Answer: Findings from surveys feed into an iterative design process, allowing us to identify potential impacts and mitigate against them. The mitigation hierarchy prioritises avoidance (preventing impacts from occurring in the first place), minimisation (reducing the scale or severity of impacts), mitigation (taking steps to offset impacts where they can't be avoided) and then compensation (as a last resort, for example, creating new habitat to compensate for any habitat loss)

A member of the Community Partnership proposed reaching out to a local bird group based in Drigg, which has been collecting data over a number of years, as a potential source of valuable long-term environmental information.

4. Delivery Plan

The Delivery Plan for the South Copeland Community Partnership serves as the strategic workplan for the upcoming year and is a key deliverable of the Community Partnership as defined in the UK policy framework for managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning (defined as Programme of Activities, Appendix 1 para 30). Co-

creation of the Delivery Plan collaboratively amongst Community Partnership members is essential in shaping activities that facilitate stronger engagement with the community.

Historically, the Delivery Plan has been managed and updated by the Operations Subgroup, with progress reported to the full Community Partnership on a six-monthly basis. Following the recent Community Partnership Review, it was agreed that subgroups be disbanded and that all work going forward would be agreed and carried out by the full Community Partnership.

Since there has been no Delivery Plan for 2025, Q4 of 2025 has also been included in the plan for completeness going forward.

The Community Partnership Operations Manager has prepared an outline draft of a Delivery plan for 2026 to be developed further with Partnership members based on:

- Insight from most recent Yonder survey data
- Response to an action from the CP meeting on 26 July (Action: Members encouraged to share engagement ideas or suggest venues and events where outreach could effectively target working-age women)
- Current/planned activities

The Delivery plan is split into sections:

- Communications and Engagement
- Community Vision
- Community Investment Funding (CIF)

The Community Partnership agreed to have Delivery Plan updates included in the Communications update email along with the previous and upcoming engagement, going into more details of themes of conversations at events.

5. AOB / Date of next meeting

Thursday 9 October 2025 – Online Workshop

Wednesday 5 November 2025 – Millom Baptist Church

New Actions

Action Reference:	Description:	Assigned to:
04092026	Community Partnership Assistant to forward website link to Jonathan Cook	Community Partnership Assistant