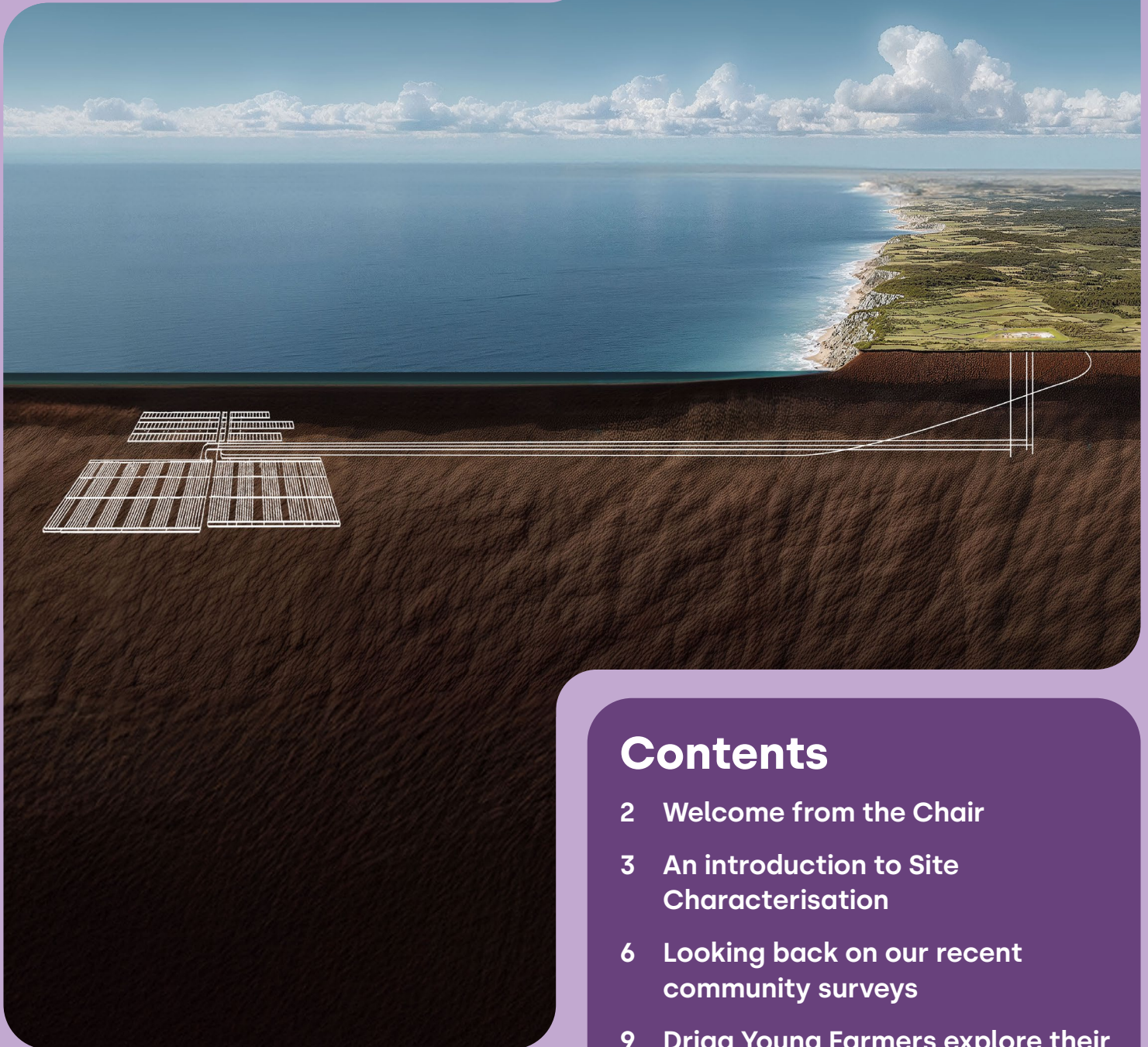


South Copeland GDF Community Partnership Newsletter

Issue 11, December 2025



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**South Copeland GDF
Community Partnership**

Welcome to the 11th edition of our newsletter.

It has been a busy and productive few months for the Community Partnership.

Our team has been out and about across the area, talking to people at community shows and events – having over 550 conversations in total. It's been great to meet people face-to-face, answer questions, and hear a wide range of views about the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) process and what it means for South Copeland.

Following requests from residents, we held a series of Community Partnership GDF drop-ins. While we would like to see more people at these, it's been valuable to be visible in our community and available to talk directly with anyone who wants to learn more or share their thoughts.

We are listening to community feedback, and in response to comments, we've reinstated a public participation Q&A slot at our meetings in public – these meetings will be happening every other month to ensure local people have regular opportunities to put questions directly to the Partnership. The dates are on our website.

I'm also pleased to welcome Millom Town Council back onto the Partnership, represented by Ray Williamson. Their renewed involvement brings an important local voice to the table.

In this issue, you'll find updates from Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) – the developer responsible for the proposed GDF – introducing Site Characterisation, the next stage of the siting process; insights from resident research tracking awareness and views over time; and a look at our recent Community Visioning activities with Drigg Young Farmers, helping to shape what a future vision for the area could look like.

I hope you find this issue interesting. If you have any questions or would like to share your thoughts, please get in touch.

Wishing you a very merry Christmas and all the best for the upcoming year.

Andy Pratt

Chair, South Copeland GDF
Community Partnership

**Between July-November
we have attended:**

6
**Community Partnership
GDF drop-in events**

2
Community shows

14
Local events



News from Nuclear Waste Services:

An introduction to Site Characterisation

NWS has provided the below information on the next stage of the siting process, known as Site Characterisation.

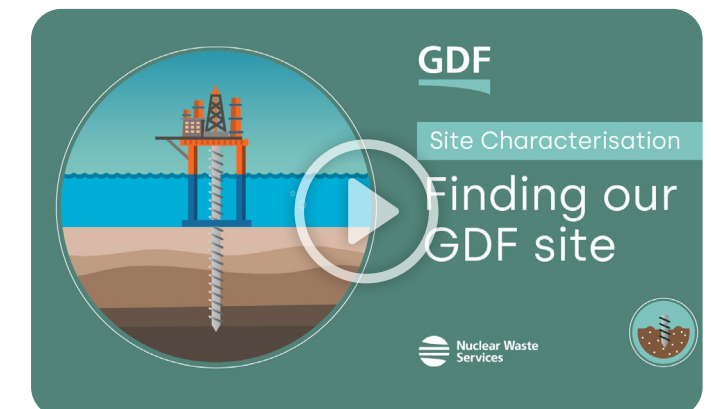
What is Site Characterisation?

Site Characterisation involves further investigative work, including drilling deep boreholes to understand more about the geology deep below the surface where a GDF could be built.

Surface-based assessments, like seismic surveys, also allow NWS to build a more detailed picture of the area's geological characteristics. They will give NWS the information needed to understand what to investigate next.

The information gathered from Site Characterisation is essential to secure the necessary regulatory permissions to build a GDF and will be key in the development of a GDF design and safety case.

NWS has developed a short video to explain Site Characterisation:



Journey to a GDF

Why Site Characterisation is critical to the siting process

Site Characterisation plays a key role in the journey to a GDF. It is the process by which NWS develops a detailed understanding of the geology and the associated environment relative to smaller Areas of Focus, which were identified earlier this year, to determine whether it is suitable to safely host a GDF.

NWS must make two key siting decisions as part of the GDF programme that require Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero approval. The first of these is a decision to identify a community or communities to progress to deep borehole investigations and the second will be to enable final site selection for the GDF.

Taking this first decision on identifying a community or communities to progress to deep borehole investigations represents a significant step for the overall GDF programme.

What permissions are needed for Site Characterisation?

The drilling of deep boreholes requires a Development Consent Order as well as Environmental Permits.

A Development Consent Order is the planning consent required to progress developments categorised as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, defined in the Planning Act 2008.

Environmental permits establish conditions which projects must meet in order to protect people and the environment. Permits are granted and regulated by the Environment Agency in England.

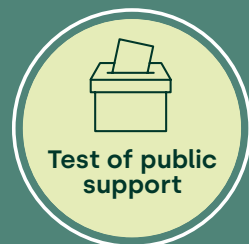
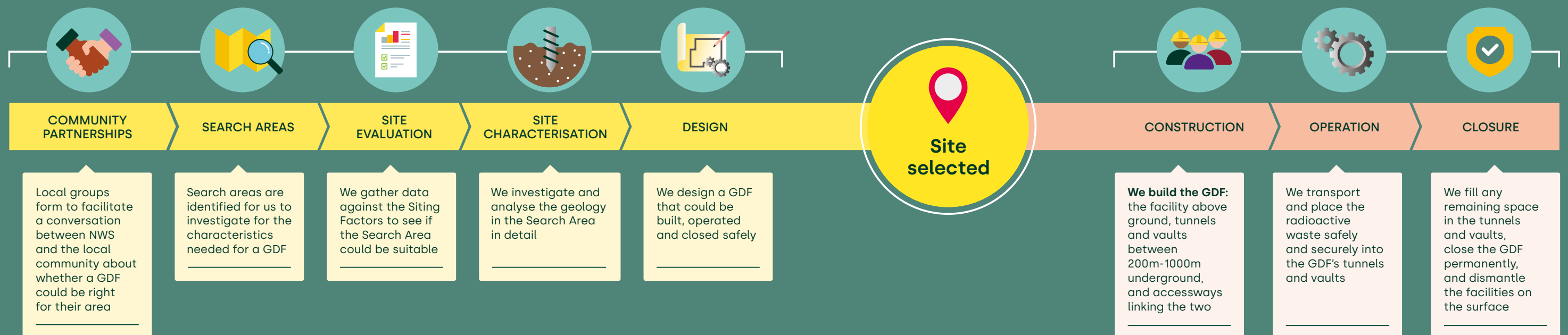
How long does Site Characterisation take?

The Site Characterisation stage is a long period of time, it could take around 10 years, and it may result in NWS finding reasons why an area is not suitable and withdrawing from that community.

After the Site Characterisation work is completed, NWS will move to the next major phase of selecting a site and seeking approvals for the GDF itself. Before NWS can seek the regulatory approvals required for the GDF (including a new Development Consent Order and Environmental Permit, as well as a Nuclear Site License), there must first have been a positive Test of Public Support in the Potential Host Community.

Selecting a Geological Disposal Facility site

up to **20** years



Test of public support

A GDF needs both a suitable site and a willing community, who has expressed consent in a Test of Public Support.

South Copeland Resident Research: Looking back on our recent community surveys



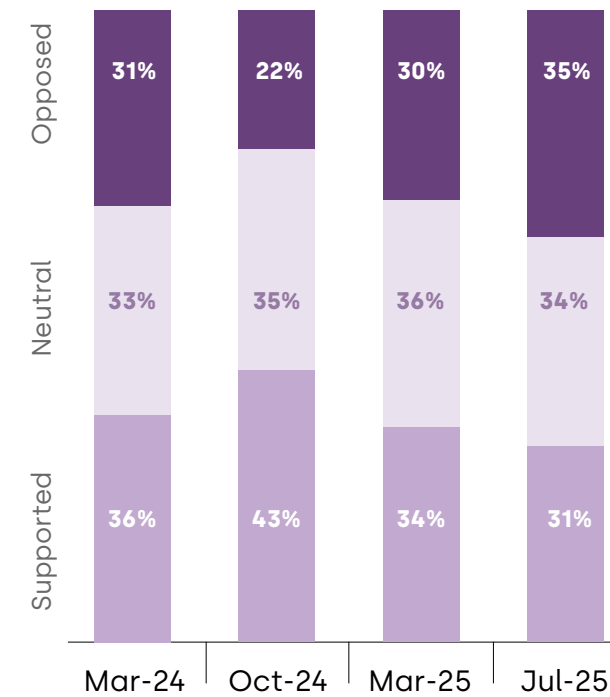
As part of our commitment to listen to the community and ensure local people shape the work of the Community Partnership, we regularly complete independent resident research.

These surveys, carried out by Yonder since June 2022, are designed to provide a clear picture of local awareness and opinions over time, and help us understand how people in the area feel about the GDF programme, how much they know about it, and what questions or concerns they may have.

By repeating the research at regular intervals, we can track how awareness, understanding and attitudes evolve as the GDF siting process continues. This helps the Partnership make better-informed decisions about community engagement, communications, and priorities for local discussion.

The latest survey in July 2025 saw 201 adult residents interviewed across the Millom and Millom Without wards. Quotas and weights were employed to ensure the samples were representative in terms of the relative populations of the two wards and the age and sex profiles of the area in question. Here, we take a look at the latest results alongside previous surveys completed in 2024 and 2025.

Views on hosting a GDF



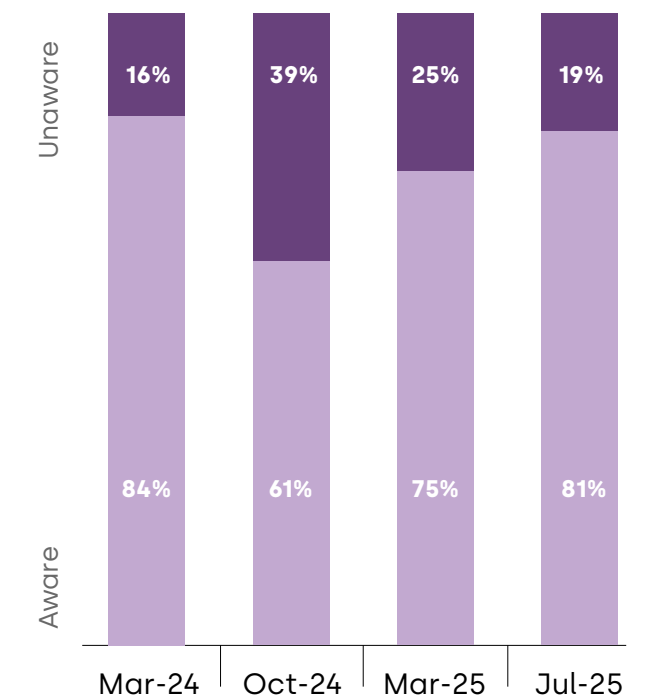
Views on hosting a GDF in South Copeland

In the latest round of surveying, 31% supported the construction of a GDF, 34% were neutral, and 35% opposed it. This has fluctuated since we started surveying.

Awareness and understanding

In July 2025, 81% recalled seeing, reading or hearing something about geological

Recall of geological disposal or a GDF



disposal or a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). 54% correctly identified the current storage approach for the UK's most hazardous radioactive waste, and 80% correctly identified an accurate description of a GDF.



The UK's radioactive waste is currently stored at interim surface or ground-level storage facilities – mainly at Sellafield in Cumbria and over 20 other sites nationwide.

What is a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)?

Geological disposal involves isolating radioactive waste deep underground, inside a suitable rock volume to ensure that no harmful quantities of radioactivity ever reach the surface environment. A GDF will be a highly engineered structure consisting of multiple barriers that will provide protection over hundreds of thousands of years.

Awareness of the Community Partnership in the July 2025 survey was at 82%, and awareness of the South Copeland Search Area - the wards of Millom and Millom Without (the Lake District National Park and Southern Boundary Extension are excluded from consideration) - was at 91%.

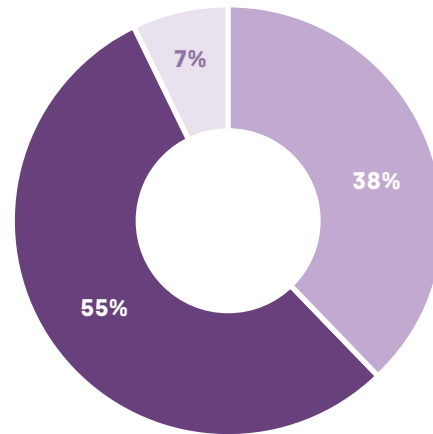
Since March, the proportion of residents with awareness of Areas of Focus (announced in February 2025) increased.

You can read about Areas of Focus on the NWS website:

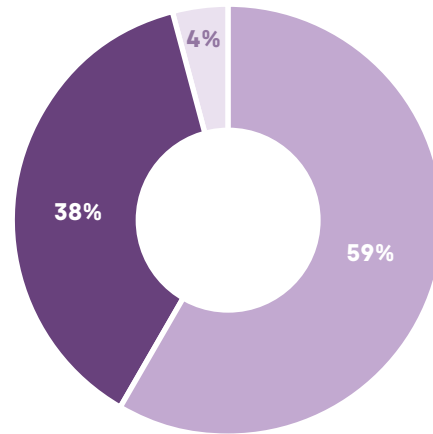


Q. Before today were you aware or unaware of the following? "NWS has identified areas within the South Copeland Search Area, which are called 'Areas of Focus'."

March-25



July-25



● Aware
● Unaware
● Don't know

Information needs

The community's information requests are diverse, with geology or geological suitability being the most common request in the latest survey. Other key themes across the 2024 and 2025 surveys were the safety of a GDF, the rationale for the area being considered for a GDF, and the impact of construction and operation on the transport network.

We will continue to monitor and review questions coming in and answer them as best we can, given we are at an early stage in the process.

For further information on this research, please visit the Community Partnership website news section: southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/news



Drigg Young Farmers

Drigg Young Farmers explore their hopes for the future

Thank you to everyone who has contributed so far to developing a Community Vision for South Copeland. Your ideas and feedback have been invaluable in shaping the Vision to date.

You may have seen our new leaflet, which summarises progress so far on the Community Vision. It highlights the main themes on how people would like to see South Copeland develop. This Vision will continue to grow and evolve, with plenty of opportunities for you to get involved and share your thoughts.

You can read the leaflet *Shaping a Community Vision for South Copeland* here:



Significant Additional Investment

The community that ultimately hosts a GDF will receive Significant Additional Investment. This investment will be guided by a local community's Vision and could support areas such as education and skills, transport infrastructure, or new recreational facilities.

Recently, Drigg Young Farmers took part in joint sessions with the South Copeland and Mid Copeland Community Partnerships to explore their aspirations for the local area.

Discussions covered a wide range of topics, including culture and heritage; technology and innovation in agriculture; mental health and work-life balance; and transport links.

Here's a snapshot of some of the ideas and priorities that emerged from their conversations – highlighting what they believe would make a real difference for them and their community.

Culture and heritage

- Promotion of farming culture
- Promotion of the 'Farm Sunday' programme
- Keeping young people involved at shows, like Young Handlers
- Keeping traditions e.g. dry-stone walling, hedge laying
- Country shows
- Open farm access
- Training courses for young people in forestry, dry stone walling etc.
- Old traditions passed on to younger generations
- Education of Farm to Fork initiative



Technology and innovation in agriculture

- Need for more affordable machinery with technology
- Training/education closer to home
- Better GPS training and availability
- More accurate yield monitoring for fertiliser application
- Better phone signal/internet in rural areas to access new technology
- More local job opportunities connected with agriculture
- Drones for checking livestock
- Lowering carbon emissions through use of cameras to check lambing/calving stock

Mental health and life balance

- Improved work-life balance
- Over-worked, under-paid
- Undervalued; not enough acknowledgement about farming from members of the community
- No time to spend with friends
- Going to the auction is a day off
- The weather influences a bad crop for winter feeding and ruins animals' health
- Feeling of isolation due to lack of local transport

Transport links

- Clearer, better maintained, and more foot and cycle paths
- Fewer potholes
- Wider roads
- Less wait for tractor and car tests
- A well-maintained and reliable train service and timetable
- Village transport links
- A system to link larger towns
- Infrastructure improved
- Transport to 16+ education to help career choices
- Hedges cut back so there is more room on the roads/cycleways
- Minibus to help get around the small roads

The Young Farmers group and local agricultural shows were seen as valuable ways for people to stay connected, and there was a strong interest in having more social opportunities.

Open for applications – get your project funded

We've supported many projects in South Copeland through the GDF programme's Community Investment Funding (CIF) and a wide range of projects are now up and running – from youth projects to community health initiatives.

Up to £1 million CIF per year is available to the area, and by the time this newsletter arrives with you, we will have reached around £4 million invested locally.

CIF offers an opportunity to secure funding for projects, big or small, that:

- Create economic opportunities
- Enhance the natural or built environment
- Improve community wellbeing

If you have a new idea or an existing project in mind that could benefit the South Copeland communities within the Millom and Millom Without wards, we encourage you to make an application.

For more information, please visit the Community Partnership's website and/or get in touch with us at: communityinvestment-southcopeland@nuclearwasteservices.uk



A steel-signing ceremony in September marked a milestone for the new Millom Leisure Centre; the Community Partnership contributed £500,000 to help deliver the facility



South Copeland GDF Community Partnership

Helpdesk

Managed by NWS



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