

**Minutes of The South Copeland GDF Community Partnership**

**Millom Baptist Church Hall**

**Wednesday 4 February 2026 at 6pm**

**Present:**

Amy Shelton	NWS, Principal Community Engagement Manager
Andy Pratt	Chair and CALC
Chris Gigg	Drigg & Carleton Parish Council
Ben Daniels	Individual
Ray Williamson	Millom Town Council
Jonathan Cook	Cumberland Council
Vikki Pogrel	Millom Without Parish Council

**Supporting Attendees:**

Kelly Anderson	NWS, Community Engagement Manager
Anne Broome	NWS, Community Operations Manager
Lynne Purbrick	NWS, Community Engagement Coordinator
Lucy Clarke	NWS, Regional Comms Manager
Jodie Dougherty	NWS, Community Partnership Assistant
Robin Cowley	NWS, Senior Scientific Advisor
Richard Griffin	NWS, Chief Policy Advisor

Meeting Date:		04/02/2026	Time:	18:00 – 19:30
Meeting Type:		Millom Baptist Church Hall		
Location:		N/A		
Additional Material enclosed: Yes				
<b>Agenda</b>				
Item	Time	Papers	Description	Lead
1	18:00		Welcome, Introductions & Declarations of Interest	Chair
2			Approval of minutes	Chair
3			Chairs Update	Chair
4			NWS Update	Amy Shelton
5			Public Forum	Chair
6			Background and Introduction to GDF	Robin Cowley and Richard Griffin
7			AOB / Date of next meeting	Chair
8	19:30		Close	

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed Partnership Members and supporting attendees to the meeting. There were apologies from Cllr Bob Kelly. No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

### 2. Approval of minutes and actions

The previous meeting minutes from 02/12/2025 were approved.

#### Previous Actions: 02/12/2025

Action Reference:	Description:	Assigned to:
02122025.01	Updated CPA to be circulated to all members. <b>-Complete; hard copy at meeting for members to sign.</b>	Amy Shelton
02122025.02	Send questions, methodology and results of Opinion surveys to Millom Town Council representative. <b>-Complete.</b>	Lucy Clarke
02122025.03	Set up a meeting with Millom Town Council in the NewYear to induct them on to the Partnership. <b>-Complete.</b>	Kelly Anderson

### 3. Chairs Update

Members are asked to review their Declarations of Interest (DOI), particularly in relation to the nuclear industry, land ownership, and any other relevant areas, to ensure they are accurate, up to date, and reflect their current circumstances.

The NWS Communications Lead has been compiling Community Partnership statistics from the previous year to include in an annual summary. The stats will include data from engagement events and NWS Helpdesk enquiries alongside communications figures such as website and social media data. This will be circulated to members.

The RSO Conference in Manchester was attended by two Community Partnership members. A number of interesting topics were discussed, highlighting how research in the field is evolving. It was noted that ongoing research remains essential, with discussion around how this will be funded going forward. While AI is increasingly being used, a precautionary approach is needed, and reliance on AI should be carefully managed.

### 4. NWS Update

#### Simon Hughes' new role:

The NWS Board appointed Simon Hughes as our new GDF Executive Director late last year. Simon has now started that role and will lead the GDF programme moving forward.

#### Secretary of State decision:

Taking a decision on identifying a community or communities to progress to Site Characterisation including deep borehole investigations represents a significant step for the overall GDF programme. NWS will submit its decision in Spring 2026. Any decision to progress a community to deep borehole investigations requires Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (SoS) approval and there is no prescribed timetable for this work. We will proceed only once all relevant information is available.

#### Community Impacts Case Study:

The contract for the Community Impacts Case Study has been awarded to Intera and has now started. The study is anticipated to take approximately six months to complete, followed by six months to deliver engagement on the completed study. As you are aware, the study will draw on major national infrastructure

projects and international GDF programmes to look at how the impacts of major infrastructure projects have been identified and managed elsewhere, and the opportunities that could arise. This study will provide evidence from real-world examples to help inform local discussions. Andy Pratt will continue to be the Community Partnership representative throughout the contract.

#### **Wintering Bird Surveys:**

The first season of surveys will complete in April (Sept - April). We will then be able to share some high-level initial observations. The second season will commence September 2026 until April 2027.

#### **Helpdesk and Social Media**

In December and January there were only two Helpdesk enquiries, including a request for Community Partnership meeting dates and a query around GDF supply chain. Social media themes over the last two months have been Community Investment Funding, Test of Public Support and the community's right of withdrawal, the location of December's Community Partnership meeting, and public participation at Community Partnership meetings.

#### **New Engagement Opportunities:**

The Community Engagement Manager provided an update some good neighbour initiatives that the CP had encouraged within the community. In February, support will be given for soft play sessions at Millom Recreation Centre, allowing children to attend for free.

### **5. Public Forum**

A member of the public commented on the work of the CIF panel over the past four years, noting that their efforts have been well received. However, it was also observed that consideration of the sustainability of funded projects and prioritisation of sustainability in grant proposal appeared to be limited. It was suggested that the CIF panel could take a more proactive role in proposing to the community the types of projects and initiatives they would support.

If funding increases to £2.5 million, the community will require clear ideas and guidance on how the funding could be effectively spent.

The Community Engagement Manager explained the CIF panel is currently developing a CIF Strategy which has included discussions about how things could be done differently to ensure that CIF funding delivers the best possible value for the community.

### **6. Background and Introduction to GDF**

Richard Griffin and Robin Cowley gave the members an informative presentation on the background to GDF.

#### **Sources of Nuclear Waste:**

Nuclear technology has been part of our lives for more than 60 years. These activities – such as nuclear power generation, medical procedures, industrial processes and defence activities - have generated radioactive waste that needs to be managed safely.

#### **Where is it now:**

Radioactive waste destined for a GDF is currently stored above ground at more than 20 sites around the UK. Over 80% of the volume is stored at Sellafield. Current surface stores last approximately 100 years and are not a permanent solution. They require ongoing monitoring, maintenance and replacement.

#### **What is a GDF?**

A GDF is an underground facility with specially engineered vaults and tunnels designed to permanently and securely dispose of the UK's most hazardous nuclear waste.

Waste is isolated and contained between 200m and 1000m underground in a system of natural and engineered barriers that will last hundreds of thousands of years.

There is broad international agreement from scientists, governments and technical experts that the safest, permanent way to manage the most hazardous radioactive waste is geological disposal.

**Willing Community:**

The siting Policy for a GDF is based on community support where communities get a genuine choice on whether it goes ahead:

- Anyone can start a conversation about siting a GDF. Starting this process, there were several Interested Parties who put forward Copeland to NWS.
- Following initial evaluation, the Copeland GDF Working Group was established and two Search Areas identified. Two Community Partnership's formed: South Copeland and Mid Copeland, to support conversations with NWS.
- Communities can be withdrawn at any time by their Relevant Principal Local Authority. In Copeland, this is Cumberland Council.
- If a suitable site is found, the Potential Host Community will have its say through a Test of Public Support.
- If there is not a positive Test of Public Support, then the project cannot progress in that location.

**The Role of the Community Partnership:**

The UK's policy for managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning defines the role of the Community Partnership as to:

- Facilitate discussion with the community.
- Identify relevant information that people in the Search Area and Potential Host Community want or need about the siting process.
- Be the key vehicle for community dialogue with NWS.
- Review and refine the boundaries of the Search Area as NWS's investigations progress.
- Identify priorities for Community Investment Funding.
- Make recommendations to the relevant principal local authorities on the Community Partnership on whether to invoke the Right of Withdrawal and if and when to launch a Test of Public Support - the Community Partnership as a whole will choose the mechanism for carrying out the Test of Public Support.
- Agree a programme of activities to develop the community's understanding of the siting process and the potential implications of hosting a GDF.
- Develop a community vision and consider the part a GDF may play in that vision.
- Monitor public opinion in relation to siting a GDF within the Search Area and the Potential Host Community.

**NWS' Next Steps:**

- We have been sharing more on the Six Siting Factors through NWS' channels recently.
- Wintering Bird Surveys are underway to gain a deeper understanding of bird movements along the Copeland coast.
- NWS anticipates deciding on a community or communities to progress to Site Characterisation in Spring 2026.

**7. AOB / Date of Next Meeting**

The next Community Partnership meeting is Wednesday 8 April 2026 at Millom Rugby Union Club.

**New Actions**

Action Reference:	Description:	Assigned to:
04022026 01	A Question was raised regarding the total scope of environmental surveys that are planned. Invite the Environmental Team to provide a response to this when they provide feedback from the wintering bird surveys.	Kelly Anderson
04022026 02	Community Partnership Assistant to circulate the presentation slides.	Jodie Dougherty