

South Copeland GDF Community Partnership Newsletter

Issue 12, May 2026



Haverigg Inshore Rescue received £68,809
Community Investment Funding for the
refurbishment of the Inshore Lifeboat.

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of £4.25 million GDF funding



**South Copeland GDF
Community Partnership**

Hello and welcome to the 12th issue of the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership newsletter.

Since becoming Chair in mid-2025, my focus has been on ensuring local voices are heard, information is shared openly, and the community feels supported throughout the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) process.

The Partnership is continuing to build its connections across the area. We host drop-in events, attend meetings organised by local groups, and hold our meetings in public with Q&A sessions. We've also expanded our work with young people, including Millom School and Drigg Young Farmers. This engagement is helping us better understand what matters most to people, while creating opportunities for ongoing conversation with the GDF developer Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) (more on this on page 4).

A key focus over the past year has been developing a Community Vision to reflect local views and explore if a GDF could support the area's long-term aspirations. From 557 questionnaire responses, three main themes emerged: improvements to transport; economy and employment; and health and social care. These points have informed a draft Vision, available on our website.



In this issue, you'll find information from NWS on Wintering Bird Surveys (page 5), as well as an update on Community Investment Funding (page 9). Since the Partnership was

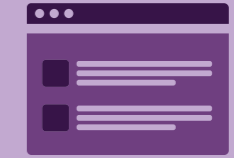
2025 in Numbers



82
helpdesk enquiries



£1M
Community Investment
Funding awarded to
local projects
£4M
awarded since 2022



14
news articles added
to the website



3 newsletters
and 1 leaflet
delivered to
5,478
households



7,285
visits to the Community
Partnership website



3
e-bulletins sent to
581
subscribers



500
comments on social media



557
Community Vision
responses



64
drop-ins, local
events and shows
attended

formed in December 2021, over £4 million has been awarded to support a wide range of local projects.

I'm also pleased to welcome Millom Town Council back to the Partnership, represented by Ray Williamson, and to welcome HMP Haverigg as a new member, represented by Elaine Chapman. They bring important local knowledge from both the Town Council and one of the Search Area's largest employers. You can read their introductions on page 7.

I hope you find this issue interesting, and as I have recently been re-appointed as Chair, I look forward to continuing this important conversation with local people in the year ahead.

**Andy Pratt, Chair of
South Copeland GDF
Community Partnership**



Community Partnership drop-in events and meetings:

Date	Venue	Drop-In Time	Meeting Time
Mon 8 June 2026	Thwaites Village Hall, The Green, Millom, LA18 5HJ	4.30pm to 6pm	6pm to 7.30pm
Wed 12 August 2026	Kirksanton Village Hall, Kirksanton, LA18 4NN	4pm to 6pm	6pm to 7.30pm



What we're hearing locally

An update on community engagement

We've really enjoyed getting out and about across South Copeland over recent months, meeting people, listening to views, and having conversations about the GDF process. It's been great to have conversations with lots of people – whether they're curious and learning more, supportive, or against having a GDF here.

While the Community Partnership has held and continues to have regular drop-in sessions, we've found that conversations in everyday settings where people spend their time are also beneficial.

We've joined in with lunch clubs, coffee mornings, warm hubs, toddler groups and chair-based exercise sessions, which have all been great places to have a chat. You may also have seen us in local cafés and community spaces, and at soft play sessions which the Community Partnership has supported during the school holidays. These have provided another way to talk to us in a relaxed environment.

People have been asking about a wide range of topics, from how a GDF works and what the process looks like, to local Areas of Focus, impact mitigations, Property Value Protection (PVP), current waste storage, and community investment. These conversations are really helping shape how we share information and what we focus on next.

Going forward, we'll keep doing more of what works, being guided by the community. If you have ideas for where we should go next, or would like to invite us along to your group or event, we'd like to hear from you – please get in touch with the NWS Helpdesk.

Invite us to your local event

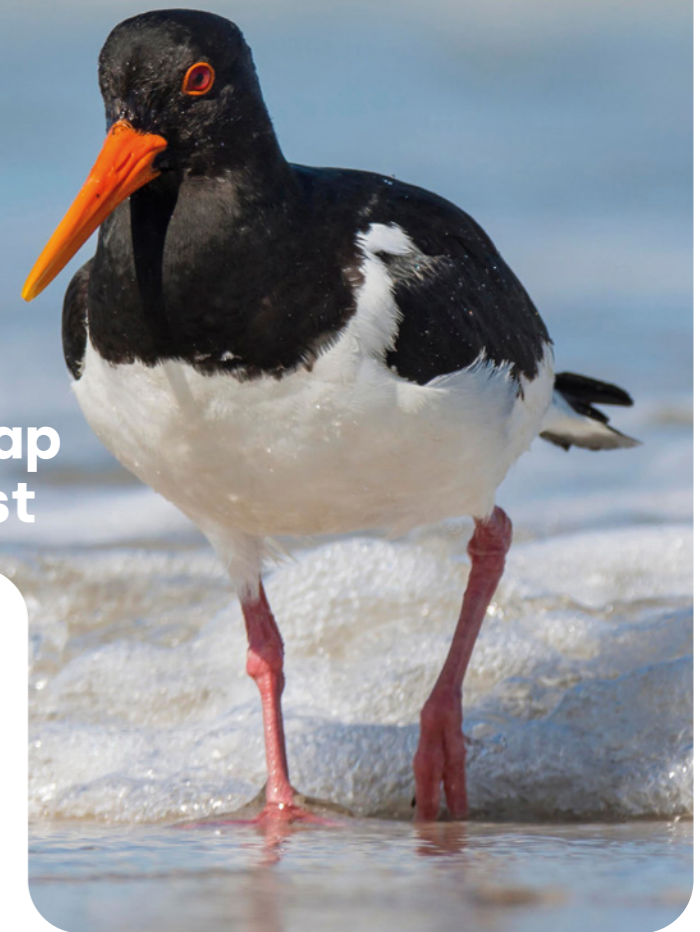
Email: gdfinfo-southcopeland@nuclearwasteservices.uk

Call: 0300 369 0000

Write: Freepost SOUTH COPELAND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Updates from NWS

Wintering Bird Surveys map life on the Copeland coast



Over the winter months, NWS surveyed wintering birds along approximately 30km of the West Cumbria coastline to understand how birds use coastal habitats over time.

What does a survey involve?

Surveys were carried out monthly between September 2025 and April 2026, with each session lasting several hours and timed to coincide with tidal cycles and daylight hours.

Ecologists stood at selected viewpoints and observed bird activity along the coastline, including beaches and estuaries.

Using binoculars and telescopes, ecologists scanned the shoreline at regular intervals, recording:

- Species present
- Numbers of birds
- Behaviour (e.g. foraging, roosting, flying, etc.)
- Movement between habitats
- Any disturbance events and bird responses

What was seen?

Ecologists have recorded a varied mix of coastal birdlife, with each month adding new insight into how species use the shoreline. Up to 46 species of waterbirds were recorded during the survey period, including:

- **Curlew** – regularly recorded in high numbers and a key conservation priority
- **Oystercatcher** – consistently present along the shoreline, often in significant flocks
- **Knot and Dunlin** – important migratory waders using intertidal habitats during winter



- **Eider** – with winter counts peaking at 600 in November and 1,100 in December
- **Herring Gull, Black-headed Gull and Cormorant** – common but ecologically important coastal species recorded throughout the survey period
- **Redshank** – widely recorded and particularly abundant in winter
- **Wigeon** – a common winter visitor, with numbers building from autumn into winter
- **Auks (including Guillemot and Razorbill)** – recorded in lower numbers, reflecting their more seasonal and inshore use of the survey area
- **Kittiwake, Gannet and Red-throated Diver** – observed occasionally in smaller numbers

What happens next?

Understanding the natural environment is a key part of developing any nationally significant infrastructure project. Surveys

form part of wider environmental studies which help inform future environmental assessment work.

If you would like to learn more about the Wintering Bird Surveys, come to the Community Partnership's next drop-in and meeting in public on Monday 8 June.

GDF programme update:

NWS is nearing the end of the current phase of work to identify if a community, or communities, could move forward to Site Characterisation for a GDF. This would include deep borehole investigations, an important next step in understanding whether an area is suitable. NWS is planning to submit its decision to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero in May 2026, and a decision to move forward to deep boreholes requires approval from the Secretary of State. There are no set timescales for this process. When we do have an update, the Community Partnership will be informed and information shared on NWS' website:
www.nuclearwasteservices.uk



Meet our new members

A key part of the GDF programme is making sure that discussions reflect the people who live and work in the area. That means having a Community Partnership made up of organisations and individuals who understand the local context and can represent a broad range of views.

We're pleased to welcome two new members to the Community Partnership: Elaine Chapman from HMP Haverigg and Ray Williamson from Millom Town Council. Together, they help to bring the views of a significant proportion of the area's population and one of the region's largest employers, bringing local experience to Partnership discussions.

**Elaine Chapman –
Community Business Engagement
Manager at HMP Haverigg**



HMP Haverigg

HMP Haverigg is an important part of the local economy. Many staff, including Elaine, the prison's Community Partnership representative, live within the area. The prison has strong connections to the community and an understanding of local employment and social considerations.

Why did HMP Haverigg want to be a part of the Community Partnership?

HMP Haverigg's Governor asked me to join the Community Partnership on behalf of the prison and help the Community Partnership strengthen its links with the local community. As a large employer in the area, we see the importance of being part of conversations that affect the people who live and work here.

What perspective do you hope to bring to the Partnership?

In my role as Community Business Engagement Manager, I have strong links with the local area, including working closely with the local council and external employers. Our community workers regularly carry out work within Millom and Haverigg. I also live locally, so I have a practical understanding of the community and its priorities.

How do you want community engagement to look moving forward?

Community engagement should be about building strong, practical connections and making it easier for people to get involved. Through our existing links with the local community, we can help support that.

Millom Town Council

Millom Town Council rejoined the Community Partnership last year. The Council plays an important role in representing the views of residents and understanding the day-to-day issues that matter to the community.

What does representing Millom Town Council and your community mean to you in this role?

Millom has been good to me; having lived here now for almost 40 years, it's where I have brought up my family, and it's a great place to live.

I feel very proud to represent Millom Town Council and the community in my role on the Community Partnership. With over 35 years' experience in the nuclear industry in operations and engineering, I believe I have the knowledge and background to engage NWS with balanced debate, and to challenge NWS, promoting an impartial viewpoint regarding the potential siting of a GDF in South Copeland.

Are there key issues or priorities you feel are important to bring to Partnership discussions?

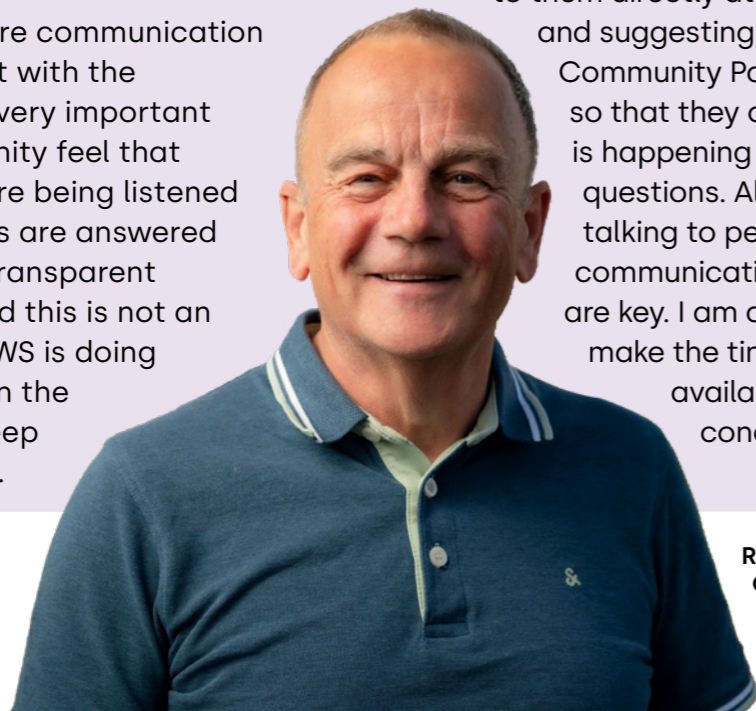
Two key issues are communication and engagement with the community. It is very important that the community feel that their concerns are being listened to, and questions are answered in an open and transparent way. I understand this is not an easy task and NWS is doing great work within the community to keep people informed.



I also believe it is important to address detail and concerns in a "non-technical" way, in plain English, to help understanding when engaging with the community. It is important to get information out in a way that is understood.

How would you encourage residents to engage with the Partnership and share their thoughts?

I hope to encourage residents by talking to them directly at drop-in events, and suggesting that they attend Community Partnership meetings so that they can see what is happening and ask their questions. Also, just generally talking to people in the area – communication and engagement are key. I am always happy to make the time and make myself available to discuss concerns regarding a GDF.



**Ray Williamson –
Councillor at Millom
Town Council**

Muncaster Microbus is now on the road thanks to £29,100 granted by the Community Partnership



Over 100 projects receive share of £4.25 million GDF funding

Over the last four years, almost £4.25 million has been invested in community projects across South Copeland through NWS' GDF programme.

Since the South Copeland GDF Community Partnership formed in late 2021, Community Investment Funding (CIF) of up to £1 million per year has been available to the Search Area, granted by the Community Partnership from NWS' GDF programme, to support local ideas that create economic opportunities, enhance the natural or built environment and improve community wellbeing.

Investment making a visible difference

105 projects have been awarded funding to date, delivering benefits for residents, community groups and local organisations.



Shackles Off Youth and Community Project

Shackles Off Youth and Community Project was awarded £100,000 by South Copeland Partnership in 2025 to expand the service the charity is currently delivering for young people in Millom, increasing sessions to seven each week. The award enabled them to secure staffing costs, which will include 1:1 support so that they can work with all young people in an environment where they feel safe.

South Copeland GDF Community Partnership

Mandy Taylor, Executive Officer of Shackles Off, said: "This investment is already making a meaningful difference, enabling Shackles Off to support more young people in Millom with a safe, welcoming and accessible space.

"For many, it is one of the few places where they can relax, connect with others and talk openly when they need to. The funding is strengthening and expanding this vital provision, helping young people build confidence, improve their wellbeing and feel more positive about their future.

"It is also supporting the charity's long-term sustainability, ensuring Shackles Off can continue to be a trusted and inclusive resource for the whole community.

"The funding means so much to the young people we support, our staff, volunteers, and other local groups. We're incredibly grateful."

Haverigg Inshore Rescue team

Haverigg Inshore Rescue team was awarded £68,809 for the refurbishment of the Inshore Lifeboat. The boat benefitted from a full strip down and rebuild with repairs, plus equipment upgrades. This work is expected to extend the life of the boat by 15+ years.

Paul Dawson, from the Rescue Team, said: "This project has made a massive difference to the organisation. It ensures that our volunteer crew have a safe, reliable and up-to-date vessel to put to sea on. We can now have confidence that our craft will serve us for 15 or more years as a rescue boat.

"As tourism and sea-based recreation is increasing in the area, Haverigg Lifeboat is needed more than ever to assist anyone in need at sea or along the foreshore. Fund raising and maintenance has always taken up a lot of the team's time. Because of the funding from South Copeland GDF Community Partnership, we can now focus on training our crew, recruiting new members and offering training opportunities and skills to youngsters in the area."



The University of Leeds

The University of Leeds was awarded £40,000 towards Nature Rich Miterdale, a project which will restore 200 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat in Miterdale, engaging volunteers from South Copeland, training residents in land-based skills, and involving local schoolchildren in outdoor learning. The grant is specifically to appoint a new Project Assistant, who will be central to expanding engagement with South Copeland residents.

Katherine Andrews said of the project: "We are delighted and grateful to have received funding to support the continuation of our work in Miterdale. Nature recovery is a long-term process, and continuity is so important for projects like ours to create a lasting legacy within our landscape and our communities.

"The funding received from South Copeland GDF Community Partnership is supporting the employment of a locally-based Project Assistant, who will co-lead efforts to remove invasive Rhododendron in Miterdale. They will also help to deliver our community programme over the next two years, offering ongoing opportunities for local schoolchildren, adult volunteers, community groups, and partners to take part in outdoor learning and nature conservation across the Miterdale Valley."

Over 100 projects receive share of £4.25 million GDF funding

Millom Community Track

Millom Community Track received £23,238 in 2025 to provide an additional seven solar lights for the Millom Community Track and enable full light coverage of the track. This will contribute to the safety of current users and encourage use of the track later in the day.

Andrew Rigg, a trustee from Millom Community Track, said: "We're really pleased to receive this funding, which allows us to complete the lighting along the track. Adding these solar lights will make a real difference to safety and accessibility, especially during the darker months, and we hope it encourages even more people in the community to use and enjoy the track throughout the day and into the evening."



Community Investment Funding

For more information about Community Investment Funding and how to apply, visit the Community Investment Funding webpage or contact the grants teams: southcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk/apply-for-funding/





South Copeland GDF Community Partnership

Helpdesk

Managed by NWS

 0300 369 0000

 gdfinfo-southcopeland@nuclearwasteservices.uk

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