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**GDF Community Partnership forms in Copeland**

A Community Partnership has formed in Copeland to take forward discussions around geological disposal.

Following decisions from Copeland Borough Council and Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) to form two Community Partnerships in Copeland, the first - in Mid Copeland - has now launched.

The second proposed Community Partnership - in South Copeland - will be launched in a few weeks once details of initial community members have been confirmed.

The development follows the recommendation of two Search Areas – one includes the electoral wards of Gosforth & Seascale and Beckermet (Mid Copeland) and the other includes the electoral wards of Millom and Black Combe & Scafell (South Copeland).

The area within the Lake District National Park (LDNP) and proposed extension will continue to be excluded from consideration, as will any existing or future coal mines.

Community Partnerships are longer-term groups made up of a larger number of people to consider the possibilities of hosting a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) within the identified Search Areas in more detail. A GDF is an underground facility designed to safely and securely dispose of higher activity radioactive waste.

Progressing to the formation of Community Partnerships unlocks access to £1m a year investment funding for communities, per Partnership, for local projects, rising to £2.5m per year if deep borehole investigations to assess geology take place.

To begin with, Mark Cullinan (current Chair of the Working Group) will Chair Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership until more members join and another Chair is appointed.

Along with RWM and Copeland Borough Council, Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) is also a member of the Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership.

District councillors within the Search Area and Parish Councils within the area of consideration are being invited to join. One of the first main tasks for the Community Partnership is to recruit more community members.

Mark Cullinan said: “Our first priority is to recruit other Community Partnership members, that are reflective of the area, to take forward these discussions. In Mid Copeland we’re a few weeks ahead, and therefore we’ve launched this Community Partnership first. We expect to launch our second Community Partnership (in South Copeland) in a few weeks, once the initial membership has been confirmed.

“In the coming months, households in the Search Area will receive further information about how to get involved and how groups can apply for Community Investment Funding. There will also be an opportunity to join other groups such as a stakeholder forum.”

Community Investment Funding is now available to projects that would benefit communities in the Mid Copeland Search Area. The funding could be used to support initiatives that provide economic development opportunities, enhance the natural and built environment, or improve community wellbeing.

Construction of a GDF requires both a suitable site and willing community. If a suitable site is eventually found in Copeland – which could take 10-15 years - a Test of Public Support, which would give people a direct say, would be held with those living in the wards affected. Without public support the project would not go ahead.

RWM is also considering the potential of the deep geology beyond the coast for siting the underground elements of a GDF. The Copeland Working Group has recommended this area for RWM’s initial focus.

This means a surface facility on the coast could provide access to a disposal area deep in rock beyond the coast. The Working Group has agreed it would support RWM conducting geophysical surveys to gather evidence about the nature of these deep rocks in an area off the coast of Copeland in summer 2022.

The community that takes the opportunity to host a GDF will receive significant additional investment and long-term benefits for future generations, including jobs and skills.

Please see the website for further information including details of how to apply for Community Investment Funding: <https://mid-copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk>

Ends

**Notes to editors**

1. A GDF would be made up of surface facilities, access ways, highly engineered vaults and tunnels located deep underground designed to protect people and the environment and keep the radioactive waste safe and secure while the radioactivity naturally decays to safe levels.
2. Successive UK Governments, supported by scientific advice, agree that geological disposal is the right long-term solution for our higher activity radioactive waste, and there is overwhelming international consensus, with advanced programmes now underway in Canada, Finland, France, Sweden, Switzerland and many other countries.
3. The independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) recommends that geological disposal, coupled with safe and secure interim storage, is the best approach for the long-term management of the UK’s higher activity radioactive waste.
4. The search for a host community is a nationwide process, construction is based on community consent, and includes detailed investigations to make sure there is a suitable site to construct a safe and secure GDF. If the independent regulators don’t agree that a GDF can be designed, constructed and operated safely and securely then it won’t be built.

**About Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership and the GDF siting process**

The Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership has been formed following the proposal of two Search Areas by the Copeland GDF Working Group – it includes the electoral wards of Gosforth & Seascale and Beckermet.

The Community Partnership’s initial membership includes a Chair, relevant principal local authority, RWM as developer and Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC). District councillors within the Search Area and Parish Councils within the area of consideration are also being invited. One of the Partnership’s first tasks is to recruit more community members.

Community Partnerships are longer-term groups made up of a larger number of people to consider the possibilities of Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting in more detail and unlock access to £1m a year investment funding for communities, per partnership, rising to £2.5m per year if deep borehole investigations to assess geology take place. For further information go to the website: <https://mid-copeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk>

**About RWM**

Radioactive Waste Management Limited (RWM), formed in 2014, is responsible for geological disposal to manage higher activity waste in England and Wales by finding a willing community and suitable site to construct and operate a UK GDF for the long-term management of higher-activity radioactive waste. RWM is a public organisation and a wholly owned subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.