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**GDF Community Partnership invites funding bids**

Formation of a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) Community Partnership in Mid Copeland has given access to £1million investment funding.

Bids and enquiries for local projects have been coming in since the Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership was launched in November last year.

The Partnership was the first to be formed in the country to take forward discussions around geological disposal and includes the electoral wards of Gosforth & Seascale and Beckermet.

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

Mark Cullinan, Interim Chair of the Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership, said: “It’s fantastic that funding applications are coming in with projects being suggested to benefit people in the Search Area for Mid Copeland.

“This funding is provided to make a difference to local communities while they are part of this process and we invite groups and organisations to come forward and take a look at the opportunities on offer.”

Investment funding can be used to support initiatives that provide economic development opportunities, enhance the natural and built environment, or improve community wellbeing. It would rise to £2.5m per year if deep borehole investigations to assess geology take place.

A leaflet is going out to households in these areas over the next week to provide further information about the Community Partnership, geological disposal and Community Investment Funding.

The Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership has initial membership until further people join. It will be looking to recruit additional community members in the near future, reflective of the local area, and those opportunities will be advertised.

Members so far also include the developer Radioactive Waste Management (RWM), Copeland Borough Council, Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) and local councillors.

Mr Cullinan added: “This Community Partnership is a starting point to consider possibilities in more detail and a chance to ensure people’s voices are heard. No decisions have been made about where a GDF could be sited.”

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

As part of its investigations, RWM is considering the potential of the deep geology beyond the coast for siting the underground elements of a GDF. The Copeland Working Group 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.

A 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.

If you would like to find out further information about the Mid Copeland GDF Community Partnership or Community Investment Funding, please see the website: <https://midcopeland.workinginpartnership.org.uk>

Other ways to contact the Partnership include email:

Gdfinfo-midcopeland@nda.gov.uk or telephone 0300 369 0000. You can also email the Community Investment Funding team direct on: communityinvestment-midcopeland@nda.gov.uk