

ALLERDALE GDF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SEARCH AREA REFINEMENT MEETING RECORD

10th November 2022 at Energus, Workington (*and remotely on Microsoft Teams*)

Attendees: *In Person*
Mary Bradley (Allerdale GDF Community Partnership Chair)
David Wilson (Cumbria Association of Local Councils)
Adrian Davis Johnston (Independent)
Phil Davies (Independent)
Chris Gibson (Inspira)
Deborah Naylor (Inspira)
Daniel Rigg (Site Evaluation Technical Support - NWS)
Richard Griffin (Senior Policy Advisor - NWS)
Alison Beard (Community Partnership Operations Manager - NWS)
Kary Arnott (Community Engagement Coordinator - NWS)

Microsoft Teams
Marion Fitzgerald (Allerdale Borough Council)
Gordon Grant (Community Engagement Manager - NWS)
Ged Sojka (Site Evaluation Manager - NWS)

Apologies: Becky Wolstenholme (Cumbria Youth Alliance)
John Coughlan (Independent)
Tony Markley (Allerdale Borough Council)

Welcome and Introduction

Mary Bradley (chairperson) opened the meeting and set out the meeting agenda and purpose. Routine meeting agenda items were discussed, with Search Area refinement the final item on the agenda. The purpose of the Search Area refinement item on the agenda was to agree the Cumberland wards to include in the proposed refined Search Area upon implementation of the Cumberland Council on 1st April 2023.

The Community Partnership emphasises that this proposed change to the Allerdale Search Area is apolitical; it has no political basis. This proposed change is based on the desire of the Community Partnership to reduce the size of the Search Area to allow more meaningful engagement. The Community Partnership also recognises the need to respond to the local ward boundary changes that are being implemented, as the current district wards that the Search Area are based on will cease to exist.

Context

The Search Area is the geographical area within which Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) would seek to identify potentially suitable sites to host a GDF. The Search Area is originally derived from the area first put forward for consideration by the interested party and was defined using district electoral ward boundaries by the Allerdale Working Group.

The Working with Communities Policy sets out that “The geographical boundaries of the Search Area are likely to change as the search for a potential location for the surface and underground facilities progresses and more is understood about the area.

The Search Area will be refined over time by the Community Partnership. As NWS investigations progress the Community Partnership may identify areas that it wants to rule out of consideration or bring in additional areas that it did not at first consider to be part of the Search Area.”

Defining the boundaries of the Search Area is important in order to identify appropriate membership for a Community Partnership, including relevant principal Local Authorities, and to determine eligibility for Community Investment Funding. Community projects, schemes and initiatives within the Search Area may be eligible for this funding.

Since Community Partnership formation, there has been a desire to refine the Search Area due to its large size and to allow more meaningful Community Engagement. The Community Partnership considered the additional information available, and work undertaken by the GDF developer (NWS) since the Search Area was originally identified to inform and support the refinement of the Search Area.

Approach

The Community Partnership considered the general approach to the refinement of the Search Area, which is summarised below and in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Community Partnership approach summary



The Community Partnership sought to refine the Search Area focussed on technical considerations, constraints and the potential to host a GDF. NWS shared readily available information, which had been used to inform the development of their published Search Area Evaluation Report¹.

¹ Search Area Evaluation Report – Allerdale Search Area and the adjacent inshore area, Radioactive Waste Management, 2021

Any additional information and changes since Search Area Identification, such as the exclusion of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for hosting a GDF², was also used to inform Search Area refinement.

The approach recognises the work completed to date, including the contextual information provided in the Search Area Evaluation Report, to allow an overall appreciation of the geological and surface features of the Search Area and adjacent inshore area. Community Partnership members were introduced to Search Area refinement and contextual information prior to the Search Area refinement meeting, to allow a staged and informed approach.

The Community Partnership considered the work that had been carried out by NWS to date. The Search Area Evaluation report and other relevant reference materials (for example, the National Policy Statement, National Geological Screening, Implementing Geological Disposal - Working with Communities policy) were available to the Community Partnership prior to the meeting.

The Community Partnership recognised the commitment that had already been made to exclude the Lake District National Park and the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), from the area under consideration for hosting a GDF. It was recognised that the AONB affected potential access to the inshore area, which may affect the potential of some areas in the Search Area. The group also discussed the potential impact on a community holistically, recognising that communities are not solely defined by ward boundaries.

Geographical Information System (GIS) data was presented by NWS and considered by the Community Partnership. The Community Partnership members discussed the features and relative merits of future Cumberland Council wards, on a ward-by-ward basis, and discussed whether or not they should be included in the refined Search Area.

NWS's Site Evaluation, Community Engagement and Policy experts were available during the meeting to provide information and answer questions to assist the Community Partnership members.

Decision

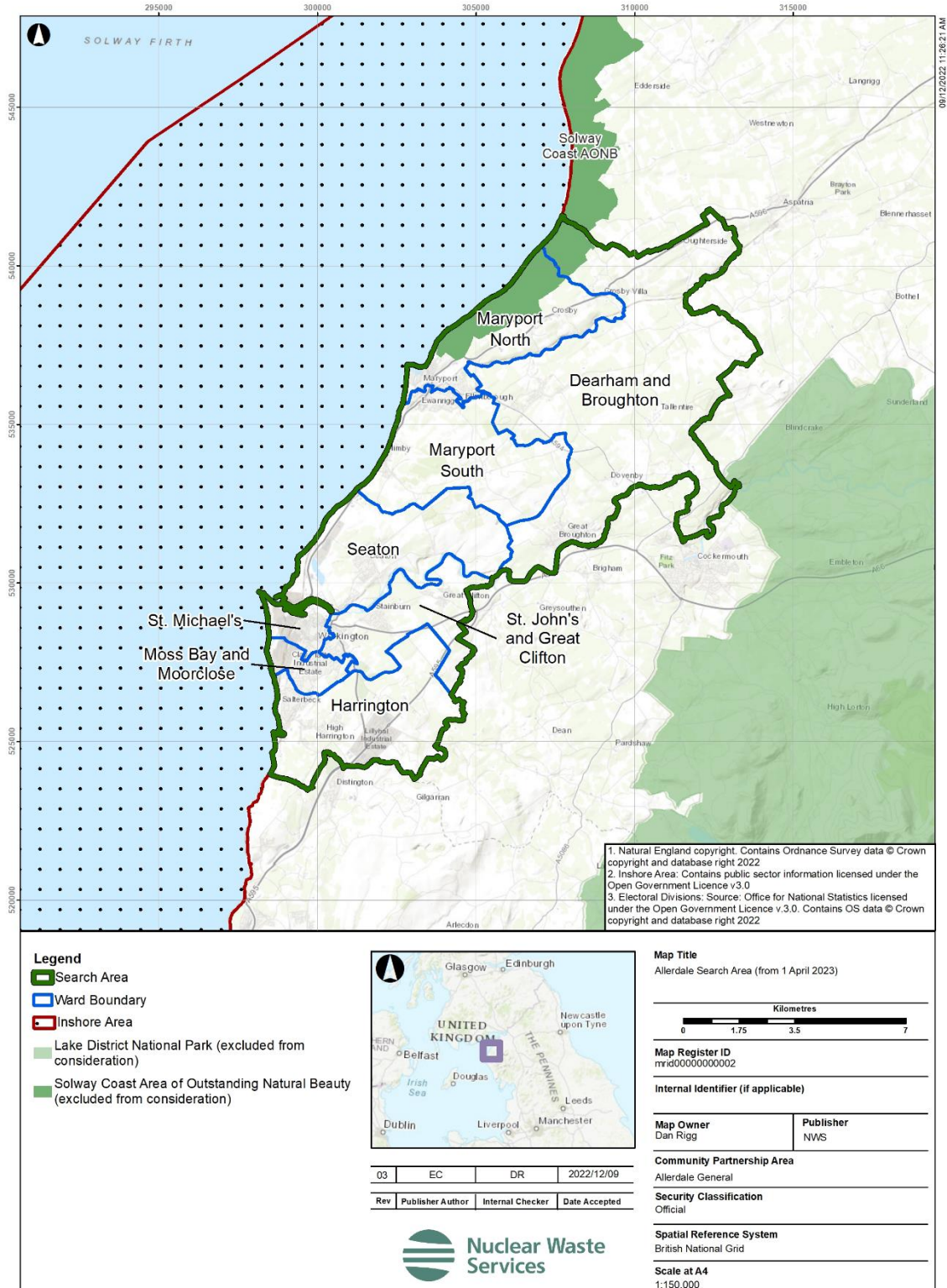
The Community Partnership reached a decision to include 8 Cumberland Council wards in the Search Area, effective from 1 April 2023 (*Table 1*).

<i>Table 1 – Search Area Wards from 1 April 2023 (in alphabetical order)</i>
Dearham and Broughton
Harrington
Maryport North
Maryport South
Moss Bay and Moorclose
Seaton
St. John's and Great Clifton
St. Michael's

² Allerdale Borough Council – Executive decision to join the Community Partnership with the proviso that the AONB was removed from the Search Area, Allerdale Working Group Meeting 1st December 2021

The wards included in the proposed refined Search Area are highlighted on *Figure 2*.

Figure 2 – Search Area (from 1 April 2023)



After careful consideration of the information currently available, the wards identified in Figure 2 above were included within the refined Search Area. The refined Search Area will come into effect on 1 April 2023, with the implementation of Cumberland Council electoral ward boundaries. The refined Search Area is notably smaller (about 40%) than the original Search Area and it is anticipated that it will allow more focussed and effective engagement with the local community.

The Community Partnership sought an overall technical understanding of Site Evaluation activities from NWS (as the developer). This included a consideration of the current technical information and perceived constraints on a ward basis. Wards were included in the refined Search Area with consideration to their features and on the current technical understanding of Site Evaluation activities, acknowledging that both difficulties and opportunities should be considered. This information included recognising the location of the potential host geology, the distance to potential host geology, and the potential impacts on construction time, and cost. The effect of the AONB on partly restricting access to the potential inshore host geology, was considered. The locations of settlements, acknowledging the potential impact of a GDF development, was also considered. Overall, there was consideration of many potential constraints, such as physical and environmental features, with wards discussed holistically.

Wards were discussed on a ward-by-ward basis using the new Cumberland ward boundaries. A summary of why they were included or not included in the proposed refined Search Area is presented below:

Aspatria: Not Included

- Exclusion of AONB from consideration to host a GDF doesn't allow direct access to inshore
- Distance to potential host geology, with indirect access, and impact on time and cost
- Preference to consider wards with shorter accessways to the potential host geology in the inshore

Bothel and Wharrels: Not Included

- Distance to potential host geology, impact on time and cost
- Preference to consider wards with shorter accessways to the potential host geology in the inshore

Cockermouth North: Not Included

- Cockermouth should be considered holistically as one community, not divided by ward boundary
- Distance to potential host geology, impact on time and cost
- Preference to consider wards with shorter accessways to the potential host geology in the inshore
- Preference to limit accessways under settlements, limited space available
- Limited access to rail infrastructure

Cockermouth South: Not Included

- Cockermouth should be considered holistically as one community, not divided by ward boundary
- Distance to potential host geology, impact on time and cost
- Preference to consider wards with shorter accessways to the potential host geology in the inshore

Dearham and Broughton: Included

- Direct access to inshore
- Proximity to potential inshore host geology
- Potential brownfield areas to consider, including as a sustainability consideration
- Proximity to transport infrastructure

Harrington: Included

- Direct access to inshore
- Proximity to potential inshore host geology
- Proximity to transport infrastructure
- Potential brownfield/industrial areas to consider, including as a sustainability consideration

Maryport North: Included

- Maryport should be considered holistically as one community, not divided by ward boundary recognising that the exclusion of AONB from consideration to host a GDF does mean that much of this ward does not have direct access to inshore.
- Proximity to transport infrastructure is important in connecting other wards.

Maryport South: Included

- Maryport should be considered holistically as one community, not divided by ward boundary
- Direct access to inshore
- Proximity to potential inshore host geology
- Proximity to transport infrastructure
- Potential brownfield areas to consider, including as a sustainability consideration

Mossbay and Moorclose: Included

- Proximity to potential inshore host geology
- Proximity to transport infrastructure
- Consideration of future potential for a GDF surface site to be hosted across two locations

Seaton: Included

- Direct access to inshore
- Proximity to potential inshore host geology
- Proximity to transport infrastructure
- Potential brownfield areas to consider, including as a sustainability consideration

St. John's and Great Clifton: Included

- Proximity to potential inshore host geology
- Proximity to transport infrastructure

St. Michael's: Included

- Proximity to potential inshore host geology
- Proximity to rail and port infrastructure
- Consideration of future potential for a GDF surface site to be hosted across two locations

The Community Partnership would like to emphasise that just because a ward is included in the Search Area, it doesn't mean all of the ward has potential or will be considered. Wards that may have limited potential to host a GDF may be included due to supporting transport links, or to be part of the community dialogue, as they may be impacted by the development.

If a ward wasn't included in the refined Search Area, it is due to the current understanding of the above factors and the overall potential of the ward. The Community Partnership will be providing further information and holding community engagement events to discuss the refined Search Area further.

The Community Partnership recognises that the Search Area would be further refined over time as new information becomes available. As investigations progress the Community Partnership may identify areas that it wants to rule out of consideration. The Community Partnership may also bring additional areas into the Search Area that were not included at this time, due to the technical understanding or information available at the time. Any further future changes to electoral ward boundaries will be reflected in the Search Area as it evolves over time.

The inshore area adjacent to the Borough of Allerdale is the focus for the underground part of the GDF, although the term "Search Area" defined in the Working with Communities Policy stipulates that it includes only the relevant electoral wards on land. For the avoidance of doubt, the Community Partnership recognises that at this stage, while the inshore area is the focus for the underground part of a GDF, both the onshore and inshore areas remain under consideration. Also, as previously stated, the Lake District National Park and Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are, and will remain, excluded from consideration for hosting a GDF.

Next Steps

Following agreement of the wards to be put forward for the refined Search Area, NWS confirmed it will evaluate the refined Search Area and confirm (or otherwise) to the Community Partnership whether the refined Search Area has potential to host a GDF.