Introduction:

This report captures the discussion points raised at the public meetings which took place on Tuesday 1 November 2016 at Nenthall Hotel, Nenthall. Karen Saunders and Simon Wilson from Wilson Sherriff wrote the report drawing on notes taken at the open house session and the evening workshop. Wilson Sherriff are the independent facilitation and engagement specialists engaged by The Coal Authority to support the consultation and engagement activities for the mine water treatment schemes in Nenthead and Nentsberry.

Two sessions were held:

- An open house drop-in session held from 2pm to 5pm, where people could come and meet members of The Coal Authority/Environment Agency project team to discuss individual concerns and queries
- A public workshop, held from 6pm to 8pm, involving a facilitated discussion, with a mixture of whole group and small group discussions

Seventeen people attended the drop-in session and 11 people attended the evening workshop.

Four feedback forms were received following the two events and a summary of the feedback is provided in the Appendix.

Open house drop in session

A series of exhibition boards were available for people to have a look at and members of staff from The Coal Authority and Environment Agency were available to speak with on a one to one basis. A flip chart was on display and people were invited to write comments on post-its and leave them on the flip chart for other people to read.

Comments from the flip charts:

- have you investigated metal levels in salmon in the River Tyne?
- how have the Force Crag trials gone?
- concern re: the look of signs and fences? What will the visual impact of the scheme be?
- what are the odour control measures?
- will there be Health and Safety hazards?
- land availability – what will you do if there isn’t any?
- how will you get the pipes from the discharge site to the treatment site?
- the cycle route will be affected
- distances from homes are key
- previous scheme looked pretty final ➔ it’s good that you are starting again.
- why do we need buildings on site?
- inform residents down to Alston
- how often would maintenance visits be required?
- could high flows erode/damage the treatment scheme?
- visual impact of a raised scheme
- the look/materials used for the buildings in the original scheme made it look like an agricultural building, which is good. Any new scheme should use the same principle.
- can the ponds be made smaller?
- why can’t a different treatment process be used?
- what is the role of the AONB in this round of consultation?
• why build a water treatment plant to treat only one adit when the diffuse pollution is so significant that it dwarfs the tiny possible benefit of the Haggs scheme and why waste taxpayers’ money like this?

In addition to points made on the flip chart ‘any comments?’ the project team noted the following points/queries that came up in their discussions with individual people:

• questions around the process for acquiring land
• suggestions that a number of smaller schemes spread out may be preferable to one big one
• concern about the extent to which changes underground would affect the amount of water discharging from each adit

Evening workshop – 6pm to 8pm

The evening workshop was facilitated by Simon Wilson and Karen Saunders from Wilson Sherriff. Simon welcomed everyone to the evening and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Session One: presentation and questions

Cheryl Donohoe from the Coal Authority gave a brief update on the current status of the project, explaining that the project team were restarting the engagement and technical evaluation process for Haggs Level, and were also investigating options for treating mine water discharges from the Caplecleugh and Rampgill discharges.

Following the presentation, participants were invited to ask questions. These are summarised below and are grouped into themes, so do not appear in the exact order in which they were asked:

General questions:

**Question:** Last time (April 2016) you only talked about Haggs. Now you are mentioning Rampgill and Caplecleugh. Does that mean there are three schemes

**Response:** We are looking at two schemes – one for Haggs and a combined one for the Caplecleugh and Rampgill discharges. The potential areas for locating the schemes may overlap, so we are looking to see if they can be combined, but it’s more likely that there will be two separate schemes.

**Question:** What are the changes from last time?

**Response:** The main criticism last time was that people had not been involved prior to us presenting a scheme in April 2016, so we have changed the process for involving the local community and other stakeholders. There were also a number of queries about additional sites and the visual impact, so we have gone back a step and are starting the process again.

**Question:** We are a small community, important for local tourism and the number of protected sites. Are you assessing the difference in impact that the scheme would have on this community as opposed to a community further downstream or further away?

**Response:** That is one of the reasons that we extended the search area and we will try and capture the impact on people via the Site Evaluation Criteria assessment process. At the planning stage, we will need to consider further the socio-economic impacts of any proposed scheme.

**Question:** Does this mean that you don’t have an agenda this time? Such as last time you had to be on site by January 2017?

**Response:** Yes. We do not have a deadline date that we have to have submitted to planning, but we do need to progress the scheme and ideally would start building in mid-2018, so that is an agenda.

Location of Ponds:

**Question:** Is the last site proposed in April 2016 still on the table?
Response: Yes, but it needs re-evaluating along with all the other potential sites. The eventual ponds on any particular site will need to be a certain size to treat the flow, but we can change the layout and design of the ponds.

Question: Isn't the best place going to be away from houses, businesses and flood risk somewhere up on the hill?

Response: Possibly, but that is part of the process of evaluating all of the potential site locations.

Question: Why have you limited the area to above Alston and not looked at Nent Force Level and Leadgate why not catch them all and do a single treatment further downstream? If there are no SSSIs downstream of Alston, why not do a scheme there and treat the whole river?

Response: We recognise that Haggs and Caplecleugh/Rampgill are not the only schemes that are needed. You could in theory dam the river and treat the whole flow, but the impact on the valley would be much greater since it would be like creating a large reservoir, and it would be hugely expensive. A dam would capture lots of sediments but would not clean up the metals dissolved in the river water which is an important way that metals are transported. It is easier to deal with high concentrations of metals and low flows rather than trying to extract metals from very large flows.

The County Council has installed sediment traps and we are considering installing more of them, but need to think about the maintenance. When the Council traps were cleared by the Coal Authority in March 2016, this caused siltation problems further downstream and the sediment removal process had to stop. 340 tonnes of sediment containing about 10 tonnes of zinc and lead were removed from the river system and had to be disposed of to landfill as hazardous waste.

Question: Surely you have a good idea of which site to pick?

Response: No. Following the discussions in April, we have extended the search area, so there are a number of new sites that weren’t considered previously.

Question: What about the field that you’ve bought – the one for the previous proposed scheme?

Response: We are in discussions with the land owner, but we haven’t bought any land yet for this scheme. Land is one of the key constraints and we have been, and will continue to have discussions with Land owners regarding the purchase of their land. To minimise any risks to the progress of the project, we will be actively pursuing any land that is made available. If, after we have gone through the consultation process we find that the land isn’t used for a mine water treatment scheme, we will sell it on.

Question: Are you in discussions with other landowners?

Response: Yes.

Comment: It’s not a big area, which only leaves very few green areas in reality that could be used for a scheme. Taking visual impact and proximity to houses into account reduces this even further you need to think up on the hill, rather than down by the river; that will remove the impact of odour, closeness to houses.

Question: How much influence will people’s views have over the site selection?

Response: The consultation process is really important and we will involve people in giving feedback on both the long list and the shortlist. Once a preferred site has been agreed, the Coal Authority will consult with people further as part of the detailed design/layout of any proposed scheme.

Odour Management:

Question: I have heard examples of where the odour from sites can make people physically ill.

Response: There is odour generated as part of the process, which is Hydrogen Sulphide. The odour only happens when the treated water is exposed to air. The plan is to inject an oxidant (Hydrogen Peroxide) into the
treated water before it flows out into open air. This will convert the Hydrogen Sulphide back into Sulphate which has no smell.

**Question:** Do you have a working model of the method for odour control?

**Response:** The method is well tested and the proposal for odour management has been reviewed. We also ran trials at Force Crag. If for some reason, we found the odour control method wasn’t working, we could turn off the whole treatment scheme. The trial is about providing extra confidence that Hydrogen Peroxide is effective for the effluent from a compost-based treatment pond.

**Question:** Does the water only smell when it comes out?

**Response:** We have monitored all areas of the Force Crag ponds and reviewed experience from around the world. There are no smells/gases generated from the ponds themselves. The odour is created in the chambers at the edge of the ponds as the treated water comes out and the plan is to eliminate it before that point.

**Level of Pollution:**

**Question:** What’s the point of putting clean water back into a river with dirty water in it?

**Response:** We can’t do all the schemes at once. We need to start with the worst sources. We know that each individual scheme won’t solve the problem, but with 50 x the acceptable level of zinc, we can make a significant improvement.

**Question:** What about the spoil heaps, such as Haggs Bank? One is on my land and I can’t get any trees to grow on it. The water just runs off, untreated, into the River Nent and turns it brown.

**Response:** We also need to deal with this type of pollution, referred to as diffuse pollution. We have done some work with the Tyne Rivers Trust and are looking to see what can be done to prevent some of the spoil heaps from slipping and falling into the river, but it is challenging as they are also classified as Scheduled Monuments.

**Comment:** I have some settling tanks on my land and stuff is growing in them, so it can’t all be poisonous.

**Response:** Over time, life will adapt and we have examples of metal tolerant plants that have established themselves within the catchment.
Construction and Scheme Maintenance:

Question: What is the plan for dealing with midges? Won’t new areas of standing water attract more?

Response: We have consulted with ecologists and the population is affected by temperature and moisture levels. If there are midges in the valley now, there will also be predators and the new ponds should not increase the overall population. [ACTION: CA/EA provide information from ecologists on the potential of the scheme to increase the midge population].

Question: What will happen if there is flash flooding?

Response: Flows in the River Nent are very variable, but the mine water discharges don’t respond in the same way – the flow from the Haggs discharge is fairly constant. We will continue with flow monitoring at all sites. The risk of flooding will also be taken account of in the design process and site evaluation.

Comment: You need to consider the impact of lorries and other vehicles during construction and ongoing maintenance

Response: It is expected to take 6 -9 months to build the scheme, subject to weather. The planning authority would also impose conditions on noise levels and the number of lorries per day for example. For maintenance, The Coal Authority would need to bring in chemicals for the odour treatment, but this would be small vans rather than lorries. When emptying the compost, which might be every 10 -20 years, there may be some disruption then.

Comment: Need to be careful, as the local bridge was closed recently leading to a diversion of over 1 hour.

Treatment Technology:

Question: Are ponds the only possible treatment method?

Response: There are other treatment technologies available which CA/EA have reviewed. Some are active, others are passive and we need to balance the technology with the setting, costs and sustainability. Having reviewed all the treatment options, we think that ponds are the best option.

Question: Can you provide evidence of this?

Response: Yes, we can share a review of the treatment technologies with you. [ACTION: EA/CA to share information on the evaluation of the different treatment options].

Question: Are the ponds open or closed?

Response: The plan is to have open ponds, with about 30 – 40cm of water over 40 – 50cm of the treatment compost. This sits on a layer of limestone and the ponds will be lined.

Funding:

Question: Last time we were told this was being done using EU money, now we are told it’s UK government money. With the plan to leave the EU, will we still have to do this?

Response: The money was never EU money, but the overall driver for the work is from the EU – the Water Framework Directive. However, that is enshrined in UK law and the principles within it came from the UK. We don’t know what will happen post-Brexit but Defra expect that the rules on the water environment will be the same – it will still be part of British law.
Session Two: Site Evaluation Criteria

Michael Sherman, The Coal Authority, briefly explained the process that would be used to identify and evaluate potential sites, on which a scheme could be located. There was then an opportunity for comments or questions, all of which are shown below:

**Question**: There is a lot of tourism in the area, with Haggs accounting for about 60% of the ‘beds’ in the area. In mapping, the Site Evaluation Criteria refers to houses, but you also need to consider the impact on tourists and local businesses ➔ the economic impact.

**Response**: That is something that can be added into the Site Evaluation Criteria and will include proximity to housing, tourist accommodation and businesses.

**Question**: Will there be a threshold for a site to be included on the short-list?

**Response**: We will score all of the potential sites and share the scores publicly. The top 5 (or so) will then be consulted on and assessed in more detail. If no sites come out as being suitable, we will have to re-evaluate. The minimum size requirement for the site has not been determined yet, but we expect to produce a long list of potential sites ➔ about 15 in total by February next year.

**Question**: What if the landowner says no and won’t sell the land?

**Response**: Then that site won’t proceed. Part of the evaluation of the different sites will involve discussions with landowners to see if they would be willing to sell their land.

**Question**: You said that the public’s views were very important. What does ‘very’ mean? Will we have a veto?

**Response**: We will come back to discuss the different long list of sites and short list of sites with people and your views will be very important as part of that process. However, there are many different ‘voices’ that we need to consider and so you will not have an overall veto.

**Question**: At the long list stage, will you have an indication of whether a landowner is willing to consider a sale?

**Response**: We are still at the very early stages, as the map with the larger search area and potential sites has only just been produced, but as part of scoring the different sites and visiting them to check scores, we will start discussions with landowners and begin negotiations on their potential purchase.

**Comment**: I understand some of the criteria you mention, but I wouldn’t have any idea how to assess the impact of some of the others, such as the different costs of different options ➔ I would need more information to assess those.

**Response**: We don’t expect individuals to do the detailed assessment. The Coal Authority will do the initial data collection and assessment for people to review and comment on.

**Question**: Is there a point where with evaluating all the factors, you may need to reconsider the whole treatment process as no scheme can be built?

**Response**: It is conceivable. If no land becomes available, we would have to look again.

In addition to the questions above, the following comments were also made about the site evaluation criteria and the site evaluation process:

- evaluation of human costs/impact should be the most important factor
- need to include proximity to tourism and other businesses
Session Three: How do you want to be involved:

In the final session, participants were asked how they would like to be involved as the project progresses and whether there were other groups or individuals that the team should be talking to. Comments made in this session are outlined below:

- the Nentsberry Community Group represents some people, but we recognise we don’t represent everybody. The Group could be used as a route for sending round email updates
- need to do a mail drop to every household
- efficient/effective consultation is the key ➔ not like the process used in April 2016
- a presentation followed by Q&A would be better, as everybody gets the same information at the same time, rather than drop-ins when you have lots of groups of a few people talking to staff from the EA/CA
- compliment on the current engagement process ➔ feel consulted this time ➔ much better than in April and they accept that the final decision may not be right for all
- once you start creating a separate group, concern that it creates a ‘them and us’ situation and some people will inevitably feel excluded – need more general communications that are sent to everybody
- the Alston Moor Partnership would be a good idea for those people who don’t want to attend a meeting in Nentsberry or Nenthead
- put articles in the Cumberland and Westmorland Herald.
- a slightly later meeting might be better ➔ 7.30pm?
- in April, you had a meeting in the morning for the public and one in the afternoon for stakeholders, which wasn’t ideal. Response: Everyone is a stakeholder and anybody could have attended tonight’s events, including Councillors and others. Everyone is welcome. There will inevitably be some parallel meetings or separate discussions that take place. If for example the Parish Council invites CA to come to one of their meetings, it would not be appropriate for CA to invite everybody as the meeting is not being hosted by CA ➔ who is invited/attends meetings will depend on who has called the meeting
- the sign-in sheet needs to make a distinction between residents and businesses, as businesses may want to have a separate discussion with CA as the impacts will be different to the impact on residents as businesses could be affected
- could we have the same faces from the EA/CA going forward to future events, rather than different people each time please?

Summary of actions agreed:

1) EA/CA to share information on the evaluation of the different treatment options
2) CA/EA provide information from ecologists on the potential of the scheme to increase the midge population
3) CA/EA to publish a summary of the public events on the gov.uk website

Wilson Sherriff
November 2016
Appendix - Analysis of feedback forms

Below is a summary of the feedback forms received from individuals who attended either the open house session or workshop session on Tuesday 1st November 2016 at Nenthall Hotel, Nenthall.

1. Summary of attendance

In total 17 people attended the open house session and 11 people attended the evening session. 4 feedback forms were received in total - Three people who had attended both sessions, submitted a single feedback form.

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of feedback forms</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Evening workshop</td>
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2. How did you find out about this event?

3. Which village, parish or community do you live in?

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4. What, if any, are your concerns about the proposal to treat mine water discharges on the River Nent?

- that there should be no detrimental effect on the local population e.g. On health, on finances, on safety
- impact on the community; impact on tourism; impact on businesses; air pollution.
- proximity to houses, businesses; visual impact - this is an AONB best enjoyed on foot or bicycle; odour and odour from the elimination process; the vertical flow ponds have a large 'footprint' for the amount of water/sediment treated
- the worry is that "our input" is still just an exercise and the original site will go ahead despite our objections

5. How useful did you find the exhibition materials? (Score 1 = not useful at all; 10 = very useful)
6. Please let us have any comments on the exhibition – this will help us plan future events.

- make it relevant and useful
- maps too small and unclear; background colours too strong; very difficult to locate places.
- I was involved in the initial planning earlier this year and with the exception of the maps showing the possible sites, I thought the material on display was the same. The maps were too small.
- larger scale map would be very helpful

7. What are your views about the public workshop (held from 6-8 pm)? (Score 1 = not useful at all; 10 = very useful).

Please note below any further comments you would like to make about the workshop.

- it is very important that speakers project their voices so that all can hear, this was a problem in the bigger venue.
- useful to learn other local people's opinion and the responses from the Coal Authority members. Sometimes people asking questions or answering were too quiet. There was very little projection of voices.
- workshop good idea in that everyone can hear the questions and answers. Need to encourage more residents/businesses to attend.
- very open and useful.
8. What, if anything, would you like to know more about or to have explained more clearly?

- why is the only process being discussed that of vertical flow ponds? Other decontamination methods exist. There are large underground spaces - can't these be used? Is it a question of limited financial resources?
- what happens if only one piece of land is available for you to buy - so all the other evaluations are pointless.

9. Would you like to be kept informed in the future?

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How would you like to be kept informed?

Local paper: Cumberland and Westmorland Herald