Feedback report on the public engagement events held in March 2017 about proposed mine water treatment schemes for discharges in Nenthead and Nentsberry

The Coal Authority (CA) and Environment Agency (EA) held two engagement events to further the consultation process on mine water treatment schemes required to treat the mine water discharges in Nenthead and Nentsberry. They were facilitated by Wilson Sherriff, an independent firm of stakeholder engagement and facilitation specialists.

These events were designed to update the public on the proposed consultation process and to enable people to get involved in shaping the development of proposed schemes. The events were widely advertised using the gov.uk website, letters to local residents, posters and notices in public spaces, local newspaper advertising and editorial and social media.

Feedback at the events was collected through a variety of methods including evaluation questionnaires, comments made to the team during conversations in the afternoon drop in sessions, and with comments written on flip charts by the facilitators at the evening sessions. There was also an opportunity for people to review an on-line consultation, following the events and for them to return feedback via email. A separate summary of the feedback will be produced in early April, following the end of the consultation.

Afternoon and evening events were held in two venues as follows:

At Nenthead Village Hall, 13 March 2017
In total 15 people attended the afternoon open house session and 13 people attended the evening session, with a few people attending both sessions.

At Nent Hall Hotel, 14 March 2017
In total 24 people attended the afternoon open house session and 25 people attended the evening session. Some people attended both sessions.

Topic of the events
The events focused on presenting a ‘long list’ of possible areas which could be chosen for the proposed schemes to treat mine water from the Caplecleugh and Haggs adits.

Through display boards, maps and the attendance of experts from each organisation, information was available and discussions were held on:
• the need for mine water treatment
• how the long list of areas had been produced
• what was important to residents and businesses
• which areas should be taken forward for further consideration
• how people could continue to be involved.

Building on the first round of engagement events in the Autumn of 2016, these events were intended to encourage members of the community to help find an acceptable way of treating polluted mine water, from concept through to operation. This involved the clear presentation of information and a genuine opportunity for all the community to have their say.

Setting the scene

The afternoon drop in sessions were planned as an open discussion session for individuals to access and discuss any of the information available and a number of 1:1 discussions took place with the team members.

The evening session included an introduction and update on the story so far, presentation of the possible areas for locating the schemes with an explanation of how they had been chosen, and discussion among the participants of which of the areas should be taken forward for further consideration.

The Coal Authority and Environment Agency speakers also provided updates on a number of background reports that had been produced to address particular aspects of the proposed schemes.

The timetable for further engagement and decision making was also confirmed. The next step would the presentation of a ‘short list’ of possible sites for comment.

A full record of each of these consultation events can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/haggs-mine-water-treatment-scheme

Summary of the themes discussed

Numerous viewpoints were expressed but the following points were most frequently raised:

• the most important consideration in finding a site for the proposed schemes was proximity to housing and proximity to businesses
• this should be given proper weight even if it made the schemes more expensive
• a number of those present were yet to be persuaded of the need for the schemes at all, or were not convinced that the technology proposed could be operated without odour impacts on the local community
• there was some scepticism about how much influence public views would have on the choice of site
• there were some comments that more work should have been done to rule out areas that landowners were unwilling to sell, before asking people to comment on the potential areas
What’s happening now?

Having listened to all of the comments during the consultation the project team are doing the following:

- taking into account all the feedback and comments from the events and online engagement
- producing a new “short list” of sites to evaluate and bring for discussion later in 2017 (probably in June) and this short list would be based on three factors: the technical evaluation criteria drawn up by the project team; community and stakeholder views; and the availability of land
- working up possible designs for the scheme for the different short-listed sites

In addition, we will:

- investigate why some of those who should have received information by Royal Mail apparently did not
- provide email updates to those who have provided contact details
- consider the potential for holding a future event on a Saturday and a more accessible event in Nenthead – both to maximise the opportunities for residents to have a say
- publish a summary of these events on the Gov.uk website

For any questions that you may have, please contact:

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