



The Coal
Authority



Environment
Agency

The Coal Authority
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Pollution from the Threlkeld mines

Dear Resident of Threlkeld area,

The Coal Authority and Environment Agency are proposing to build a mine water treatment scheme to clean up pollution along 25km of river from Gategill Beck to Bassenthwaite Lake. This work is part of the Water & Abandoned Metal Mines (WAMM) Programme, a National programme sponsored by Defra (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

On Tuesday 14 May, we are holding a public information event about the proposed mine water treatment scheme in Threlkeld Village Hall. There will be two sessions during the day:

- 2:30pm to 4pm: a drop-in session when staff from the WAMM project team (Coal Authority and Environment Agency) will be available to answer questions,
- 7pm to 8pm: a formal presentation followed by a Q&A session.

Please note that children and young people below the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

What is the river pollution that is being addressed?

Long term monitoring by the Environment Agency shows that the mine water flowing out of the *Woodend Low Level Adit* – the tunnel dug by the miners so they could extract lead and zinc from deep under Blencathra – contains very high concentrations of metals including cadmium, zinc and iron. Just downstream of this tunnel, the levels of zinc in Gategill Beck can be 2,500 times the safe level for river wildlife. Pollution by zinc and cadmium extends up to 25km downstream along the Rivers Glenderamackin, Greta and Derwent, into Bassenthwaite Lake.

Unless action is taken, these rivers will continue to be polluted by the Threlkeld mines for hundreds more years, harming fish and other aquatic wildlife. Gategill Beck will continue to be discoloured.

We need to remove the pollution at source by treating the mine water to which we have been developing proposals for a mine water treatment scheme for some years. You may remember we organised a public information event in 2018, but progress was then delayed by COVID 19 and other factors. We are now ready to update the local community and other stakeholders on the proposed scheme and the timeline for the project.

What we will do next

We are discussing the proposed mine water treatment scheme with the local community and other stakeholders to hear what people think about the proposals. Before we can build the scheme, we need planning permission from the Lake District National Park Authority. We will provide updates on progress via our website, which will be live after the community event, and by updating you later in 2024.

Contact us

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project in more detail with a member of our team, please email us at Threlkeld@coal.gov.uk.

About the WAMM Programme

Metal mines played a major part in Britain's history and, although almost all the mines closed 100 years ago, abandoned mines are still the largest source of metals to our rivers and seas, and pollute about 1,500km of English rivers. In 2023, Parliament adopted a new statutory metal mines target, under the Environment Act 2021, to halve the length of English rivers polluted by harmful metals from abandoned metal mines by 2038. The WAMM Programme is the main mechanism to achieve this target, and the proposed Threlkeld mine water treatment scheme is one of the highest priority projects.

You can find out more about the WAMM Programme at https://bit.ly/wamm_rivers or https://bit.ly/metal_pollution_legacy.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Stacey, Coal Authority Project Manager

Pete Miles, Cumbria & Lancashire Area Environment Manager, Environment Agency