



The Coal  
Authority



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Agency

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# Threlkeld Mine Water Treatment Scheme: Ground Investigation taking place

Dear Resident,

The Coal Authority and Environment Agency are proposing to build a mine water treatment scheme to clean up pollution in 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).

As we explained at the community engagement event in May 2024, we are gathering further information so that we can develop the design of the scheme before applying for planning permission to build and operate the mine water treatment scheme.

## Ground Investigation

We need to investigate the ground conditions on the land selected for the proposed treatment scheme. The site is located on private land alongside the A66 above Threlkeld Hall Farm to the east of Threlkeld. The investigation will involve the use of a small drilling rig to drill multiple boreholes, and a tracked excavator to excavate trial pits across the field. The purpose of this investigation is to understand the properties of the underlying soil, rock and groundwater. These works will be overseen throughout by the Coal Authority.

We anticipate work will start in mid-September 2024 until the end of October 2024. There will be no weekend work with working hours being from 08.00 to 17.30, Monday to Friday. There will be some noise caused by the drilling on-site. We will make every effort to reduce this wherever possible, with minimal disruption anticipated beyond the site boundary. As the site is situated outside of the village, we do not expect any impact on traffic, local residents or businesses.

## What will we do following the ground investigation?

It will take a few months to analyse the results of the ground investigation and we will use our learning to develop the design of the treatment system. We will also be discussing the proposed scheme with the Lake District National Park Authority and other stakeholders.

We will update our project website at [www2.groundstability.com/project-spaces/threlkeld/](http://www2.groundstability.com/project-spaces/threlkeld/) when we have more information to share. We will also provide regular updates to the parish council, local community and other stakeholders.

## Ongoing Pollution Monitoring

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 from deep under Blencathra – contains very high concentrations of metals including cadmium, zinc and iron. The levels of zinc in Gategill Beck which is just downstream from this tunnel, can be 2,500 times greater than 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 we take action now, these rivers will continue to be polluted by the Threlkeld mines for centuries to come with harmful effects to fish and other aquatic wildlife and the continued discolouration of Gategill Beck. This is the reason that we need to act swiftly to remove the pollution at source by treating the mine water using this scheme.

## Background to 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 rivers and seas, polluting about 1,500km of English rivers. In 2023, Parliament adopted a new legally-binding 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 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](https://bit.ly/wamm_rivers) or [https://bit.ly/metal\\_pollution\\_legacy](https://bit.ly/metal_pollution_legacy).

## Contact us

If you have any questions about the ground investigation, would like to contact us while the investigation is underway, or would like to discuss the project in more detail with a member of our team, please contact us at [Threlkeld@coal.gov.uk](mailto:Threlkeld@coal.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Mark Stacey, Coal Authority Project Manager

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