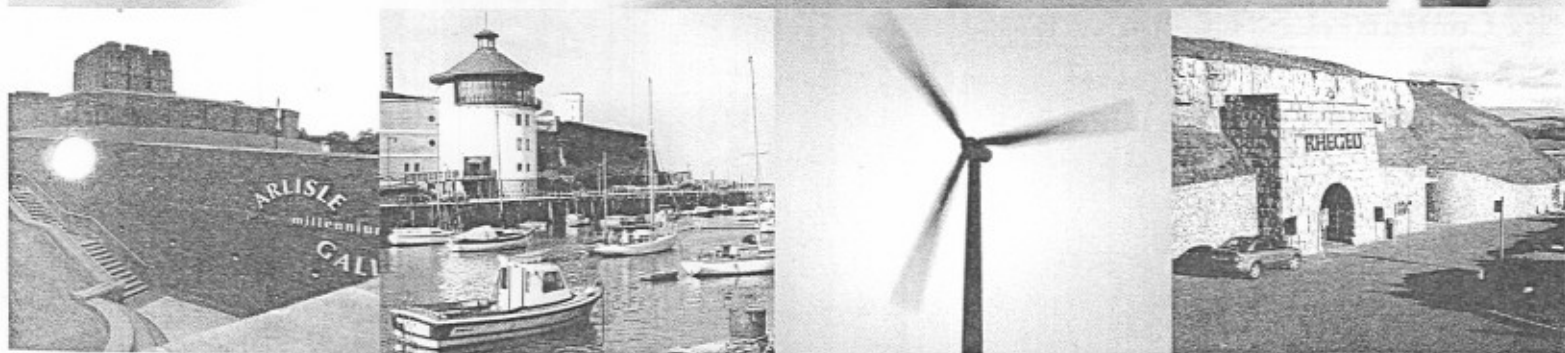




Health & Affordable Warmth Strategy



In the North & West of Cumbria

Commitment to Health & Warmth in North & West Cumbria

We welcome this document, not as a beginning to the alleviation of the fuel poverty process, but as an extension of the good work carried out to date.

Our challenge is to eradicate fuel poverty in the homes of the most vulnerable by 2010. In the East of Cumbria there remain large pockets of fuel poverty and no grant funding to assist meet the onerous target. In West Cumbria there are extensive areas of fuel poverty, but significant funding that may be accessible to help meet the targets.

Cumbria is a low wage economy and has suffered from the loss of many manufacturing jobs in recent years. The delivery of substantial energy efficiency measures to the homes of those most in need will undoubtedly generate increased incomes and new employment in the area.

The target set by Central Government will require hundreds of thousands of pounds of funding as a minimum to ensure that all householders have a right to a warm, healthy, home. While the Energy Efficiency Commitment from utility companies will provide substantial funding this will merely scratch the surface. Many more innovative sources of funding will be required to meet our targets.

This document provides an overarching commitment by Carlisle, Eden and West Cumbria Primary Care Trust and the district authorities of Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden to tackle fuel poverty in Cumbria using a partnership approach.

The Working Groups

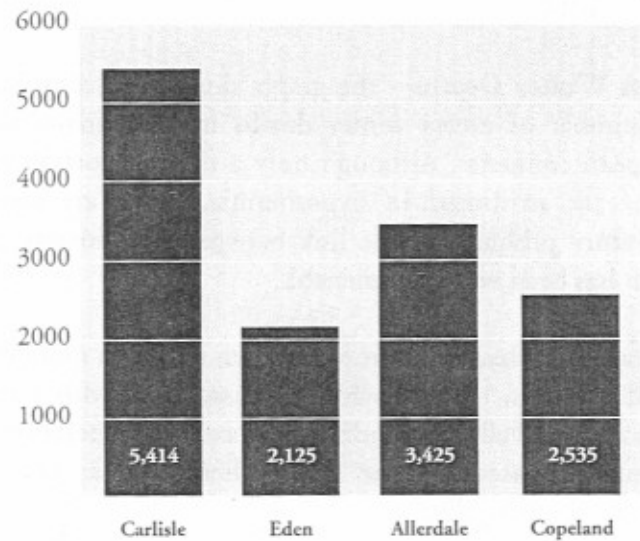
Contents

Fuel Poverty	3
Effects & Solutions	4
Development Process	5
Partnerships	6
Copeland Borough Council	8
Carlisle City Council	9
Allerdale Borough Council	10
Eden District Council	11



What is Fuel Poverty?

The most commonly accepted definition of 'affordable warmth' is considered to be where a household can achieve temperatures needed to maintain health and comfort for expenditure of 10% or less of income. The World Health Organisation recommends that those temperatures are 21°C in the living area and 18°C in all other areas.



Households without Central Heating in the North & West of Cumbria

Key Causes

Insufficient income

Eat or heat? Many people in fuel poverty have to make the decision about whether to eat or heat their home during the colder months. Maximising take up of benefits would increase the income available for payment towards fuel costs. It would also provide access to other grants and discounts for energy efficiency measures.

Inadequate insulation

Many householders in fuel poverty cannot afford to make the necessary improvements to their home to improve the energy efficiency and therefore reduce fuel costs to an affordable level **and** increasing disposable income as a result of the energy saved.

No central heating

Many homes still do not have central heating. This often means a significant proportion of the residents' income is spent on heating a single room. Moving from this one heated room, to a cold room increases the risk of accidents in the home.

Energy supply

Many householders are reluctant to change supplier and miss out on reduced energy prices as a result. Prepayment meters are more expensive than other forms of payment. However, some householders find it difficult to transfer to other payment methods when they have a limited understanding of the system and limited income.

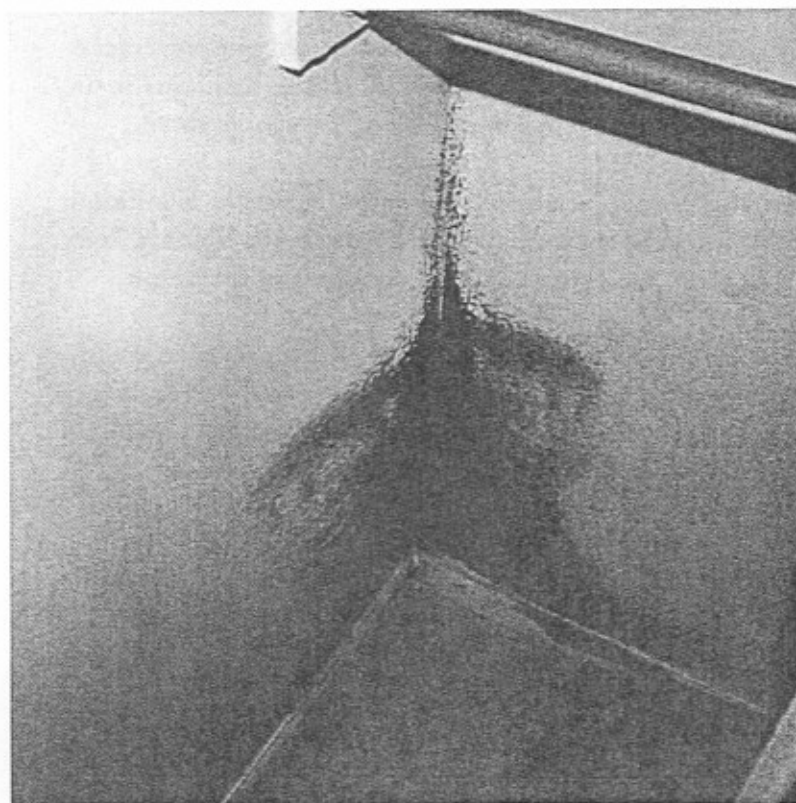
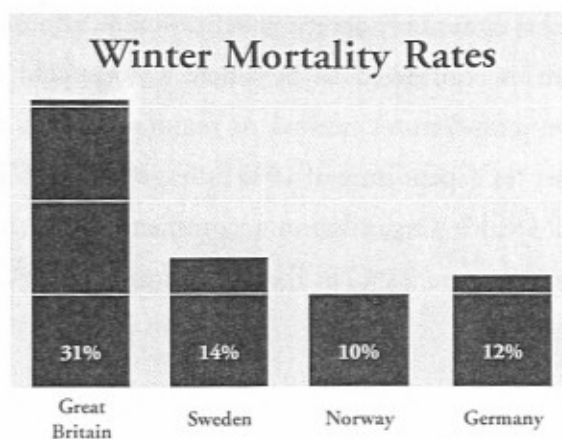


Key Effects

Excess Winter Deaths - the graph alongside clearly identifies the number of excess winter deaths in comparison to other European countries. Although only a tiny proportion of these deaths are attributed to hypothermia, many are caused by respiratory problems. The link between fuel poverty and ill-health has been well documented.

Increased Ill Health - Dampness often results in mould growth and dust mites, both of which are associated with a range of respiratory and allergic conditions. In colder temperatures blood pressure increases and the risk of heart attacks and strokes increases dramatically.

Reduced Quality of life - the inability to pay for adequately heated homes forces householders to make difficult decisions about how to spend their money. Food and clothing rival for attention with fuel payments and luxuries such as socialising within the local community rarely win the competition for funding. The lack of social opportunity for those in fuel poverty provides little prospect of improvement when their access to information, to take them out of fuel poverty is limited.



Dampness often results in mould growth which contributes to ill health

Key Solutions

- Increase income levels – to make fuel more affordable.
- Improve the energy efficiency of all homes in fuel poverty.
- Provide easy access to grants.
- Provide easy access to advice about energy suppliers.
- Raise awareness of fuel poverty issues with a much wider audience. There are many synergies to be achieved from multi-agency partnerships.

Development Process

Raising Awareness

During National Energy Action's Warm Homes Week in 2002 Carlisle City Council hosted a conference to raise awareness of the cause and effect of fuel poverty.

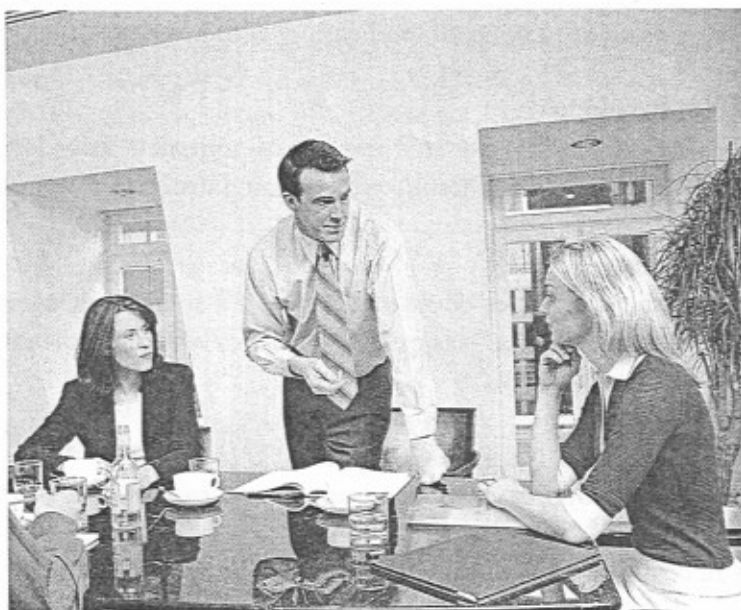
Presentations were made from a variety of organisations including Energywatch, Scottish Power, National Energy Action, East Riding District Council who hold Beacon Status for fuel poverty and Cumbria Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.

Almost 100 people attended the conference, which lasted for a full day. Representatives from all Carlisle, Eden, Allerdale and Copeland district councils attended along with representatives from the health authority, the Health Action Zone, voluntary agencies and housing associations. The breadth of interest was evident from the feedback, which was extremely positive.

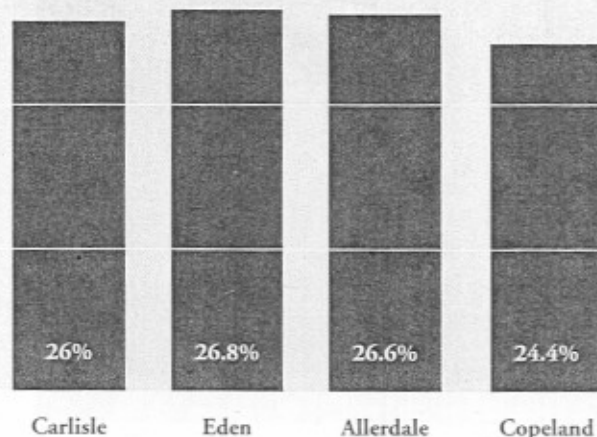
Local Workshops

Following on from the conference a number of workshops were held in each district to identify local priorities.

Once again the workshops were very well attended with a total of 57 people attending. It became evident from the early workshops that there was a genuine desire in each area to develop a strategy that would begin to make a difference to fuel poverty in the North & West of Cumbria.



Households with Retired Occupants



Working Groups

Representatives from the workshops formed working groups which were established to identify local priorities. The aim of the working groups was to enable the delivery of the Health & Affordable Warmth Strategy through implementation of action plans according to local needs. This approach is absolutely essential if local people are to receive relevant help and support to alleviate fuel poverty.

A large proportion of the occupied properties in the region have retired occupants, as the chart shows

Partners in Action

Registered Social Landlords

Social housing that allows tenants to sustain a reasonable heating regime not only reduces lengthy voids but also reduces the need for major repairs to the building as a result of dampness and/or condensation.

Tenants who potentially fall in the fuel poverty trap could be eligible for grant aided energy efficiency improvements. Therefore allocation of tenancies in difficult to let areas could easily be assisted by enhancing the affordability of living in those areas.

Private Landlords

Will inevitably find warmer, damp free properties easier to let and also undoubtedly easier to maintain.

Local Authorities

Local authorities have a key role to play in reporting, developing, researching and delivering strategies that will achieve government targets of eradicating all fuel poverty by 2016.

Health Partners

The health links to fuel poverty are well documented. Poor levels of heating can lead to increased incidences of respiratory illnesses and difficulty with hospital discharges because of inadequate heating or insufficient insulation.

Voluntary Agencies

Many voluntary agencies could make referrals to existing energy efficiency schemes relating to fuel poverty, if access to this information was readily available. Just as importantly they can help to identify needs and trends that may lead to fuel poverty.

Insulation/Central Heating Companies

A commitment by installation companies to recruit and train local employees will ensure:

- Acceptance of local schemes delivered by local people
- Increased employment
- Sustainability of schemes and employment due to the local emphasis.
- Increased ability to attract and retain funding for priority areas.

Energywatch

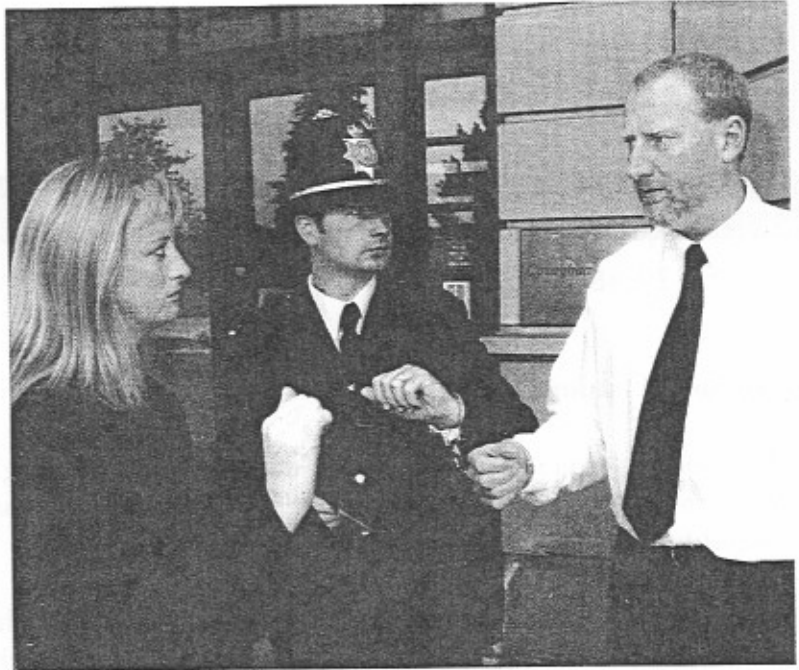
Energywatch provide free, impartial advice about changing energy supplier and help with serious complaints about utility companies. Their guidance can be invaluable where householders have tried the conventional methods of resolving billing and supply issues with the utility companies.



Local Employers

Looking after the welfare of staff has long been the role of an effective Human Resource department. By ensuring that employees have easy access to energy efficiency advice and products, an obvious payback for the company is the potential reduction of sickness absence due to inadequately heated and insulated homes.

Cavaghan & Gray part of the Northern Food group has recently participated in a promotional week where the energy efficiency police (local EEAC staff) were brought in to tackle issues surrounding wastage of energy in the homes of their staff. Many employees took advantage of grants & discounts that they otherwise wouldn't have known about.



Energy Efficiency staff stage the mock arrest of Cavaghan & Gray's director Martin Phillips

Energy Efficiency Advice Centre

Not only does the EEAC provide free and impartial energy saving advice to everyone, co-ordinate energy efficiency awareness campaigns and administer current promotions whilst working in partnership with Local Authorities, they also target those people most likely to be in need of assistance. Referrals to other agencies, for example the Energy Action Grants Agency (EAGA) partnership, are forwarded from the EEAC.

A recent joint promotion between EAGA and Cumbria EEAC resulted in an extra 250 householders, who were experiencing difficulty heating their homes, being identified and referred for **free** insulation grants.

The work generated by Cumbria EEAC has resulted in Everwarm Services Ltd opening their first fully operational branch in England, employing local people to deliver energy efficiency measures to local homes.

Energy Action Grants Agency (EAGA)

The EAGA partnership manages the delivery of energy efficiency programmes for Government, local authorities and utilities. They operate from six regional bases throughout the country which offer an advisory service and local delivery of energy efficiency programmes.

Utility Companies

The Energy Efficiency Commitment programmes run by all utility companies are an extremely valuable source of private funding. This funding should be used to target specific areas of need.

For example, Scottish Power have been providing funding in Carlisle and Allerdale to help householders over 60 to insulate their homes. All homeowners over 60 have had access to at least 75% discount and in many cases the full cost of the insulation has been covered. In Carlisle this has benefited over 700 households. The Allerdale scheme has only been running for 12 months and has already helped over 100 pensioners heat their homes more efficiently. The numbers are double those originally intended, thanks to Scottish Power funding.



Copeland Borough Council

Number of Inhabited Households	Number of Households in Fuel Poverty	Percentage
29,486	6,637	23%

Prioritisation of Actions

Copeland working group has taken the decision that unless funding can be secured in the first place there will be little opportunity to reduce the incidence of fuel poverty in the Copeland area.

Although there are some advice services, grants and discounts available in the area, there is little knowledge about how to access them or where the gaps are to fill with the provision of service etc.

The areas in order of priority that this group will tackle in order to deliver the Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy in their area are:

- Funding, potentially for a support worker in the first instance to pull together all of the sources of information that already exist and identify methods of making efficient referrals to existing systems.
- Raise awareness
- Establish training sessions for frontline staff



Photo courtesy Cumbrian Newspapers Ltd

Carlisle City Council

Number of Inhabited Households	Number of Households in Fuel Poverty	Percentage
43,124	10,056	23%

Prioritisation of Actions

The Working group in Carlisle has decided to take a pilot approach to delivering the Health & Affordable Warmth Strategy. Group consultation will agree on a particular geographical area.

Within this area an action plan will be developed that will encourage all identified partners to work together towards the common aim of delivering the following actions:

- Training of front line staff to utilise existing referral mechanisms
- Raising public awareness – including developing a strategy for those with literacy problems
- Funding – identify sources of funding to enhance the existing sources of advice, information, grants and discounts.
- Maximising income to reduce the incidence of fuel poverty related not to property efficiency or energy supplier but just to income.

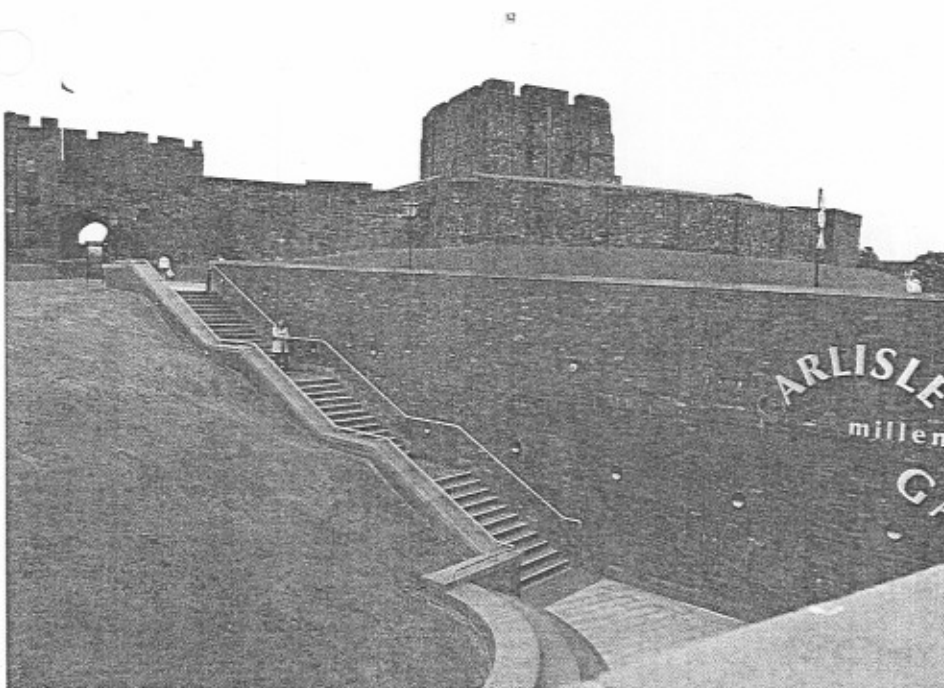


Photo courtesy Cumbrian Newspapers Ltd



Allerdale Borough Council

Number of Inhabited Households	Number of Households in Fuel Poverty	Percentage
39,781	9,097	23%

Prioritisation of actions

- Provide advice and support to enable householders achieve increased income.
- Raise awareness of energy efficiency and health and affordable warmth.
- To secure sufficient funding and resources to implement the action plans.
- Provide awareness training to all front line staff.
- Provide a 'one-stop shop' referral system.
- Ensure integration with other strategies.



Number of Inhabited Households	Number of Households in Fuel Poverty	Percentage
21,143	3,699	17%

Prioritisation of actions

Eden working group took the view that there were a number of grants and discounts that weren't currently being fully utilised. Therefore they felt that to train frontline staff and then regularly update them should be the first action taken.

The first training session has already taken place and 25 front line staff have participated. More training sessions are being planned for the New Year.

- Provide training to front line staff about fuel poverty issues and solutions that are currently available.
- Raise public awareness about health and affordable warmth issues in general.
- Secure funding to implement action plans.
- Identify methods of maximising householder income.
- Create communication methods appropriate for those with literacy problems.
- Provide a 'one-stop shop' referral system.

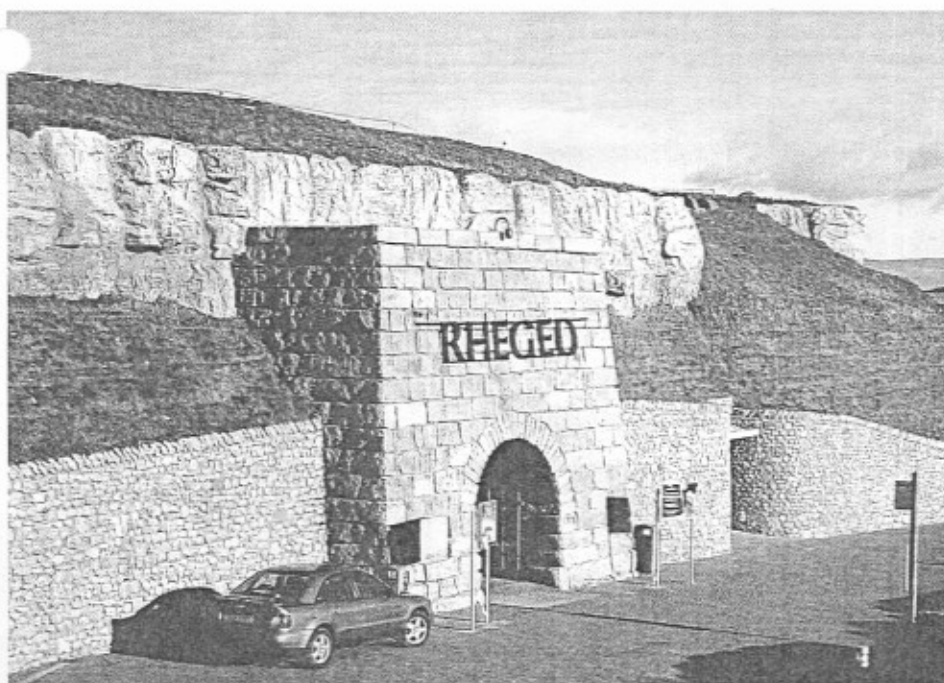
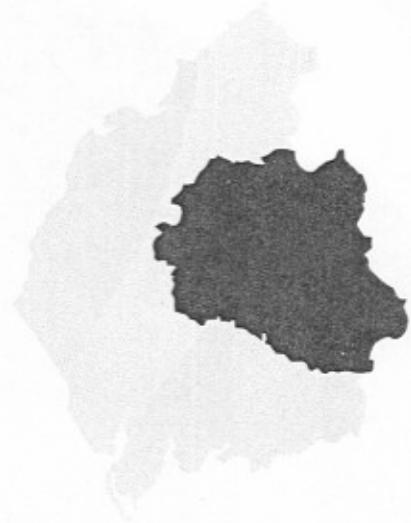


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