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Coal firm says mining will benefit residents

REASSURANCES have been sought that local people will benefit from any coal mining operations to be conducted in Annandale and Eskdale.

South of Scotland MSP Joan McAlpine met with New Age Exploration's managing director Gary Fietz in the Scottish Parliament to hear more about the Australian company's plans for deep coal mining on the Canonbie coalfield.

And she was pleased to hear that subsidiary company Lochinvar Coal Limited has pledged to employ an estimated 200 people should permission be granted and they are also looking into community benefit schemes.

Ms McAlpine said: "There are a number of issues that need to be explored with regard to New Age's Lochinvar coking coal project, particularly in terms of environmental im-



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By Lisa Herbert

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pact. However, I was very encouraged to hear Mr Fietz say that the company was looking at a substantial community benefit."

She added: "I emphasised to Mr Fietz that my support for the project was contingent on the employment of local people, particularly young people.

Joan McAlpine MSP

"While some of the skills required are not available in this country at present, and will need to be imported, I made it very clear that I would expect training to be put in place to skill up local people. I was very encouraged by the response."

Ms McAlpine also praised the company for conducting an 'exemplary' community engagement exercise and believes there are a number of local and national opportunities which the project could bring.