

Focus on... Eskdale and Liddesdale

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Drilling work set to start on coalfield

AN AUSTRALIAN mining company will commence a second phase of drilling on the Canonbie coalfield at the end of this month.

New Age Exploration Limited (NAE) have agreed land access and licences for four more bolesholes as well as signing a contract with leading diamond drilling contractor Priority Drilling.

Initial findings indicate that the Lochinvar project, which is the company's principal project, has 'attractive fundamentals'.

NAE managing director Gary Fietz said: "The completion of all necessary approvals and signing of a drilling contract with Priority Drilling represents a significant development for the Lochinvar project.

"The phase 1b infill drilling, targeting an indicated resource, will allow the completion and release of the scoping study now expected in late July."

The new drilling programme, which is expected to be complete by early May, will provide further infor-

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mation on raw and clean coal quality, geotechnical testing and structural information, which will all be used as inputs for the scoping study.

Outlining their commitment to the local area, the company's business development manager Jon Reynolds said: "The fact we have a new drilling programme with a new drilling contractor, all being managed by a local team, shows a level of confidence by NAE that we've got a project that we like the look of.

"It ticks many of the key boxes in terms of the resources and coal quality."

And Mr Reynolds added that they have continued to receive 'excellent support' from the local community as well as the Scottish Government and other regulatory organisations.

An exploration licence and conditional underground mining licence were granted in June 2012 and the initial drilling programme, comprising of four holes, was completed last year.

Meanwhile, a number of site visits and meetings with key agencies have also taken place in recent months – including exploring the potential use of the Ministry of Defence site at Eastriggs for a wash plant.

Mr Reynolds

added: "We will start drilling at the end of the month and our initial estimates still suggest we could be producing Scottish coal in 2017.

"Our next community open day will probably be at the end of the scoping study in the middle of the year as this will determine a number of options. This will also allow further community input into the project."



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Gary Fietz

