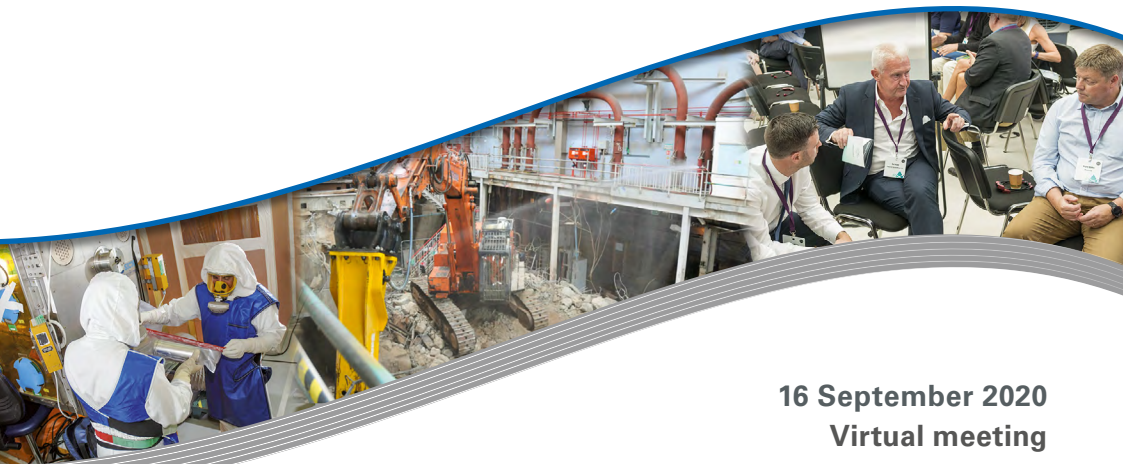


Stakeholder Confidence Workshop on the Decommissioning of Nuclear Facilities in the United Kingdom

An International Learning
and Sharing Experience



16 September 2020
Virtual meeting



Background

The Committee on Decommissioning of Nuclear Installations and Legacy Management (CDLM) was created in 2018 following the request from Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) member countries to enhance the NEA's work in nuclear decommissioning and managing the remediation of legacy sites. The creation of the CDLM reflects the NEA goals in providing governments and other interested stakeholders with authoritative, reliable information on the political, strategic, regulatory and social aspects of decommissioning activities and the management of legacy and complex sites.

The Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC) was established in 2000 with the initial focus on fostering learning about stakeholder dialogue and ways to develop shared confidence, informed consent and acceptance of radioactive waste management solutions. With the creation of CDLM, the FSC is applying its experience from the last 20 years and expanding its activities to address the mission and goals of CDLM.

In collaboration with the United Kingdom (UK) Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), the NEA developed a workshop to initiate a stakeholders engagement study between the FSC experts and the stakeholders engaged in ongoing decommissioning activities in the UK, i.e. anyone with a role to play in decommissioning of a nuclear facility or an interest in the decision-making process for such an activity. The aim is to promote an exchange in an atmosphere of mutual respect and learning and draw a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Workshop objectives

The workshop programme committee developed a concept paper in preparation for the workshop with the following objectives in mind:

- Provide the FSC with the possibility to learn from UK stakeholders about their concerns, views, roles and interactions.
- Share collected experience and learnings from the FSC based on 20 years of collaboration;
- Examine the concrete approaches of stakeholder involvement in the process of decommissioning a nuclear facility in the UK.
- Promote a neutral, respectful and learning dialogue on the subject.
- Enhance international collaboration on the subject for the long term;

Workshop concept and structure

Given the travelling restrictions due to the global pandemic, dialogue with stakeholders was carried out virtually. With participants from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, it took place on one afternoon over four hours. The participants to the workshop included experts from the United Kingdom including the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), the Environment Agency, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), as well as stakeholders from various organisations including the Nuclear Non-Governmental Organisation Forum of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the UK Site Stakeholder Group Forum, the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (NuLeAF) and the UK Nuclear Free Authorities (NFLA). It was also supported by members of the NEA FSC



as well as the NEA CDLM. The workshop was divided into the following four sessions:

1. Opening remarks, objectives and a presentation by the NDA setting the stage of the workshop?
2. Two separate panels focusing on:
 - The viewpoint of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs),
 - The viewpoints of the FSC, and the UK regulators.
3. Open dialogue among all participants, including the FSC and CDLM participants.
4. Summary of the main takeaways and ending with a roundtable discussion.

Content of the dialogue

The discussion brought forward a good overview of the current situation in the UK and also reflected the following main issues related to stakeholder involvement in the field of decommissioning:

- Trust and confidence are a vital part of engaging stakeholders. Openness and transparency, as well as consistency between involved entities, are key.
- The usual top-down approach (“Decide-Announce-Defend”) was widely applied in the last century, leaving a feeling of no engagement nor involvement; the partnership approach which followed showed significant improvements, however, in the view of some stakeholders, the UK “new build” policy has cast a shadow, reversing the improvements achieved in previous years.
- Large quantities of consultations (“consultation fatigue”) creates frustration and leaves the impression of promoting participation for the purpose of legitimisation.
- It is noted that consultation is not equal to engagement.
- Stakeholder confidence means a long term engagement and needs to be built and maintained. Long timeframes mean that it is challenging to maintain sustainable engagement mechanisms.
- Capacity building and youth engagement is a very important aspect. This requires “future citizens” and multigenerational aspects to engagement.
- The geographical context matters and local perspective (project level) is quite different as at the national policy level; different concerns/interests (national/regional/local).
- It is important to include NGOs – their perspectives are important and valued both on a national NGO as well as local site stakeholder group level (which are the most affected).
- Better and more sustainable decisions can be reached through stakeholder involvement.
- NGOs with different amounts of resources can create an imbalance; dependencies have to be carefully evaluated and the independence of each actor is crucial.
- Clarity of expectations and roles is crucial; UK regulators have a clear role regarding environment and society.
- Specific/clear communication for different target groups is important, including different channels (disseminating information, local liaison, social media, etc.).
- Verifying how information is received and understood (level of scientific depth) provides a challenge for engaging diverse groups of stakeholders.
- Engaging and building confidence with stakeholders requires time and have a cost, so there is a need to be focused and deliberate.

FSC future perspectives

The workshop was an excellent opportunity for the FSC to better understand the challenges of stakeholder engagement in decommissioning. The participation and availability of the UK participants and agencies was highly appreciated. The restrictions imposed by the current travelling limitations have provided a good opportunity to engage and put the existing videoconferencing tools to the test. It was noted that in-person interactions are of great importance, but, given constraints, good interaction with stakeholders can still be achieved with thorough and adequate preparation and appropriate group size by a virtual exchange.

The main takeaways for FSC and future potential activities include:

- A good preliminary understanding of the main drivers to gain stakeholder confidence in nuclear decommissioning projects was achieved (see figure below).
- Although very different views were expressed in this workshop, the value of providing a neutral and respectful atmosphere and the integration of stakeholder feedback contributed to the open and respectful exchange.
- Based on FSC experience, there are many overlapping and common themes regarding stakeholder confidence between decommissioning projects and deep geological repositories for radioactive waste projects;
- Questions of how/with which methods and on what level to engage stakeholders are central and this is where the FSC could contribute with experience and already existing publications.
- Lessons learnt from stakeholder involvement by virtual engagement is a topic that the FSC could further explore.
- Further workshops could be considered; compiling the results of these could result in a new report while integrating some of the important findings of the past.

Potential drivers affecting stakeholder confidence in decommissioning and legacy management projects

- Safety and security of people and the environment
- Timeliness of engagement
- Integration of feedback from the most affected local stakeholders
- Building and maintaining trust
- Degree of transparency (communication, strategy, process, roles, etc.)
- Planned future land use
- Potential socio-economic losses
- Likely environmental impact
- Intergenerational equity
- Impact of affected communities and workforce on quality of life/well-being
- Degree of preparation and foresight
- Overall time required for building and maintaining stakeholder confidence
- Total costs