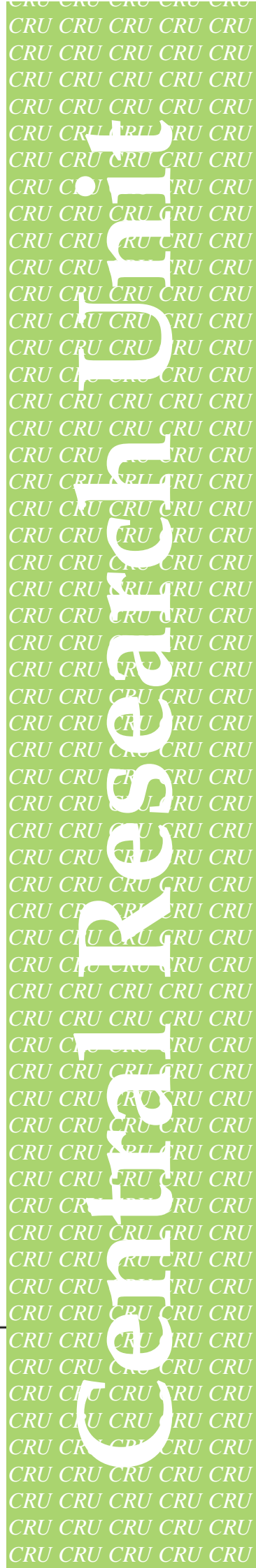


# MANAGING RADIOACTIVE WASTE SAFELY: ENGAGING SCOTLAND



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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**MANAGING RADIOACTIVE WASTE SAFELY:  
ENGAGING SCOTLAND**

**Deirdre Elrick, Linda Boyes and James McCormick  
SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOUNDATION**

**Scottish Executive Central Research Unit  
2002**

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## Contents

<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Methodology</i>		<b>6</b>
<i>Phase</i>		<b>7</b>
<i>Phase 2</i>		<b>10</b>
<i>Phase 3</i>		<b>12</b>
<i>Structure of the report</i>		<b>12</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>CONSULTING ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Overview of group responses</i>		<b>14</b>
<i>The 'unaffected public' group</i>		<b>14</b>
<i>The 'affected public' group</i>		<b>15</b>
<i>Young people group</i>		<b>15</b>
<i>The community activist group</i>		<b>16</b>
<i>General observations</i>		<b>16</b>
<i>Responses to the MRWS consultation questions</i>		<b>17</b>
<i>Summary of key points</i>		<b>21</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	<b>ENGAGING THE PUBLIC</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Importance of public involvement</i>		<b>22</b>
<i>Reasons for engaging the public</i>		<b>23</b>
<i>Experience of involvement</i>		<b>24</b>
<i>Motivation for the public to become involved</i>		<b>25</b>
<i>Information expectations</i>		<b>26</b>
<i>Sources of information</i>		<b>27</b>
<i>Understandable Information</i>		<b>28</b>
<i>Provision and presentation of information</i>		<b>28</b>
<i>Balanced information</i>		<b>29</b>
<i>Trust in the information available</i>		<b>31</b>
<i>Independent advice</i>		<b>33</b>
<i>Information sharing</i>		<b>33</b>
<i>How to engage the public</i>		<b>34</b>
<i>Summary of key points</i>		<b>37</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	<b>INVOLVING OTHER STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>38</b>
<i>Current experiences of engagement processes</i>		<b>38</b>
<i>Topics for engagement</i>		<b>40</b>
<i>Approaches and techniques</i>		<b>40</b>
<i>Resource implications</i>		<b>41</b>
<i>Effective engagement processes</i>		<b>42</b>
<i>Process points</i>		<b>43</b>
<i>Engaging the public at the local level</i>		<b>43</b>
<i>Key lessons to be learned</i>		<b>44</b>
<i>Engaging the public in radioactive waste management decision making processes</i>		<b>45</b>
<i>Essential elements of engagement</i>		<b>46</b>
<i>How to engage the public</i>		<b>48</b>
<i>Media interviews</i>		<b>52</b>
<i>Expertise and independence</i>		<b>52</b>

<i>Reporting radioactive waste</i>	53
<i>The reporter's role</i>	54
<i>Involving the public opportunities and limits</i>	54
<i>Changing the nature of public engagement</i>	55
<i>Summary of key points</i>	56
<b>CHAPTER FIVE      KEY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>57</b>
<i>A framework for engagement</i>	59
<b>CHAPTER SIX      LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>60</b>
<i>Engaging the public in radioactive waste management: overview</i>	60
<i>Engaging with the public: overview</i>	62
<i>Reasons for engagement</i>	62
<i>Purpose of engagement</i>	64
<i>Rules of engagement</i>	65
<i>Process dimensions of engagement</i>	66
<i>Methods of engagement</i>	67
<i>Engagement at local authority level</i>	67
<i>Community representation</i>	68
<i>Membership organisations</i>	69
<i>International examples</i>	70
<i>E-governance</i>	70
<i>Resources for engagement</i>	72
<i>Quality assurance</i>	72
<i>Summary of key points</i>	73
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN      CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>75</b>
<i>Public engagement and policy dilemmas</i>	75
<i>Engaging the public: ingredients for success</i>	76
<i>Clarity of purpose</i>	76
<i>Trust and expertise</i>	77
<i>Engagement as an ongoing process</i>	78
<i>Intergenerational engagement</i>	78
<i>Strengthening public engagement</i>	79
<i>Responsibility for action</i>	80
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>ANNEX 1 FIELDWORK</b>	<b>87</b>
<i>Focus group programmes</i>	87
<i>Drama presentation scroll</i>	90
<i>Young people's group PowerPoint presentation</i>	91
<i>Interview questions</i>	92
<b>ANNEX 2 CONSULTATION QUESTIONS AND BRIEFING SHEETS</b>	<b>93</b>
<i>Consultation questions</i>	93
<i>What other radioactive waste management issues</i>	94
<i>How should we involve people</i>	102
<i>Informing</i>	103
<i>Action</i>	106

## GLOSSARY

COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, membership organisation for Scottish unitary councils
Decommissioning	Dismantling a closed down nuclear facility and removing its contents, both radioactive and non radioactive waste
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment, undertaken as part of identifying the impact of major developments (including siting radioactive waste) on the local environment.
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
Half Life	The half-life is the time taken for half of any amount of atomic nuclei to decay. The half-life is unique and unchangeable.
IPPR	Institute of Policy Practice and Research, UK think tank
MRWS	Managing Radioactive Waste Safely, DEFRA consultation document, 2002
NGO	Non governmental organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SE	Scottish Executive, the Scottish civil service organisation
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SOLACE	Scottish organisation of local authority chief executives
UKAEA	United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The report presents findings from a study to explore how best to engage the public and other stakeholders in decision-making processes on the safe management of radioactive waste. Scottish Council Foundation conducted extended focus groups with the Scottish public in 4 locations, as well as group and one-to-one interviews with stakeholders from the nuclear industry, environment non-governmental organisations (NGOs), bodies experienced in using other public engagement methods, Community Planning partners and media reporters. A review of literature on public involvement in radioactive waste issues and public engagement more generally was also conducted.

### **Main findings about managing radioactive waste safely: engaging the public**

2. The majority of focus group participants concluded that it is essential for the public to become better informed and to have opportunities to be more closely involved in decision-making processes affecting the safe management of radioactive waste.

3. Participants expressed a clear desire for full disclosure of relevant information from the industry, government and the media: *“the whole story - the good news as well as the bad”*. Participants placed a high premium on accurate information from trustworthy sources, but were concerned about how far various sources *could* be trusted. Lower levels of trust were placed in government and the nuclear industry as sources of information, with a higher degree of trust placed in environmental NGOs.

4. Participants identified a need for independent expertise to be available to assist the public's informed engagement. Nevertheless, many believed that relying only on experts would not result in the best course of action, if experts cannot agree on the facts or feasible options, or if their independence appears to be compromised. The majority of participants said they would welcome a mix of experts from different sectors and with different opinions communicating with each other (and with the public) in search of common solutions.

5. Participants felt that the issue of radioactive waste needed to be considered by decision-makers at all levels, from the local and national levels, to international agreements, as well as over time. Many were interested in becoming involved in wider discussions about energy and waste.

6. Participants expressed a shared sense of responsibility, alongside government and the industry, for finding the safest possible approaches to managing radioactive waste available at any time. This study suggests that various stakeholders should reconsider how to contribute to this challenging goal:

- Government in Scotland and the UK as a whole needs to demonstrate it acts in the public interest and with due regard to what has been called the “precautionary principle”<sup>1</sup>, particularly on matters of safe management of radioactive waste.

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<sup>1</sup> The precautionary principle is based on an approach that starts from the principle of safety first.

- Agencies charged with regulatory powers must be sufficiently independent of government and the industry to inspect and advise, and must demonstrate willingness to use its full range of powers if necessary.
- The nuclear industry has a responsibility to communicate its actions fully and to be open to scrutiny.
- Environmental NGOs have a particular responsibility to communicate with other stakeholders, given their position as the most trusted source of information on radioactive waste and perceived role as protecting the public interest more effectively than others.
- These stakeholders have a responsibility to engage the wider public in an informed way, helping to develop relations with the media about the long-term as well as immediate challenges.
- The media has a responsibility to promote understanding of the strategic options facing Scotland and the rest of the UK on how to manage radioactive waste safely and shape future energy supply, going beyond the ‘fire-fight’ reporting of short-term events.

### **Main findings on engaging the public in the decision making process**

7. Strengthening relations between citizens and government represents a sound investment in building civil society. Little is documented on “the terms of engagement” for consulting bodies and those who actively participate. Meaningful involvement requires clarity around processes, roles and responsibilities for all involved.

8. Current structures provide a variety of ways for the public to become engaged in decision-making processes. There was an energy and enthusiasm from participants in this study about becoming engaged and a lack of knowledge from the general public of current engagement structures. It is important to develop a culture of engagement based on the ‘values’ described, *knowledge, relevance, transparency, dialogue, trust and full disclosure*, rather than focussing only on structures for engagement.

9. A clear sense of purpose should first be identified by an organisation undertaking an engagement process, followed by decisions on appropriate tools and techniques, when and how they should be applied, forms of feedback and links into future dialogue and action.

10. While members of the public are more motivated to engage with issues rather than processes, it is important to make the process as transparent and open as possible. The existing body of knowledge should be developed around the notion that the process of public engagement encompasses information provision, consultation and involvement leading to ongoing participation and delegation.

11. Basic ingredients for successful public engagement included accurate and accessible information that is widely available, provided by sources that can be trusted and comprehensive enough to provide participants with the knowledge to reach informed

engagement in the discussion. An important role for government is to create a context and keep an open space in which such conversation can take place.

12. Various perceived motives for public engagement were identified. These ranged from seeking to create consensus for decision-making (where there are issues of genuine uncertainty and legitimate action cannot be secured without deeper public awareness) through to ‘rubber-stamping’ decisions that have already been made, even if not explicitly. It is important to be clear about where on this spectrum a particular approach is intended to sit, from one-way information flow, through consultation to joint decision-making (a two-way relationship based on partnership).

13. Successful engagement requires appropriate feedback and “*proof of being listened to*” if it is to lead to opportunities to influence decisions. True engagement was thought to emerge from a *continuing* process of involvement rather than a series of snapshot consultation events.

14. Traditional means of engagement (such as, government publishing consultation documents and seeking responses from interested members of the public and key stakeholders) may not always be the most appropriate method, particularly where issues are of a technical nature or require ongoing deliberation rather than the presentation of well-developed views. We believe the approach taken by the Scottish Executive in commissioning this study takes us closer to a more appropriate way of engaging the public and other stakeholders on complex issues.

15. It is essential to explore the links from national to local processes for supporting engagement in national decision-making processes. A strategy for engaging the public and other stakeholders should build from current experience of how engagement is developed and supported at local level, and address weaknesses or gaps in current practice.

16. Investing in engagement processes includes covering the costs, in time, money and skills development, of each element of engagement. This includes costs for information provision, supporting participation in the process, ensuring feedback, dissemination and follow-up stages where appropriate.

17. Additional research is needed to help the Scottish Executive and others involved in engaging the public to manage the converging trends of growing demand for public involvement and rapidly evolving information technology. The issues of access, equity, learning, accountability, and management of information should be considered to help anticipate the challenges posed by increased use of electronic participation.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) commissioned research (in January 2002) on views in Scotland on the policy proposals in the consultation document “Managing Radioactive Waste Safely” (MRWS), about the proposed action programme to determine how radioactive waste should be dealt with in the future. The findings of the research will feed into the Scottish Executive’s response to the MRWS consultation document and inform the development of the plan for consultation on the future stages of the programme to identify and consider options proposals for radioactive waste management.

1.2 The MRWS consultation document was published on 12 September 2001 by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), working in partnership with the Scottish Executive (SE), The National Assembly for Wales (NAW) and the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment (DoENI). Whilst “the aim is to develop, and implement, a *UK* nuclear waste management programme which inspires public confidence”, it recognises that responsibility for radioactive waste management policy in Scotland is devolved to the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Executive undertook this research to explore how to engage the public in making decisions about managing radioactive waste in Scotland. The Scottish Executive is working in partnership with DEFRA and the other Devolved Administrations on UK-wide activity to stimulate debate and encourage responses to the consultation.

1.3 The principal aim of this research project was to assess public awareness and engagement in the issues of the consultation, and to chart a route forward for successful consultation in this area. The study aimed to provide the Scottish Executive with information on:

- the level and accuracy of knowledge and interest in radioactive waste management among different groups
- the methods that should be used to consult on future proposals

1.4 The overarching term within this study is ‘public engagement’, including such aspects as information provision, consultation, involvement and participation. The research design used the MRWS consultation document as an important element of the engagement process, designing the focus group work by using the consultation questions and supplementary information to give participants some “hands on” experience in processing some of the information.

1.5 Scottish Council Foundation explored participants’ views and previous experience of ways to engage the public decision-making processes, as well as their awareness about radioactive waste management issues and their responses to key questions in the consultation document.

## METHODOLOGY

1.6 The research was evolutionary in nature primarily using the findings within the qualitative research, to initiate a dialogue and determine the participants' views and understanding of both public engagement and the management of radioactive waste. A review of the policy and research literature was also undertaken.

1.7 The fieldwork was based on a phased approach:

- **Phase one** focussed on the views and aspirations of the general public, undertaken using 4 extended focus groups. The focus groups were held during February and March of 2002. These were:
  1. **The 'unaffected public'** - members of the public selected to reflect the characteristics of the adult population in Glasgow.
  2. **The 'affected public'** - members of the public in Thurso/Wick and surrounding villages living in proximity to the Dounreay nuclear installation.
  3. **Young people** aged 14-17 years, participating in youth work activities and drawn from 3 areas of west-central Scotland. Participants met in Argyll.
  4. **Community activists** drawn from representative bodies across the Stirling authority area.

The majority of these participants completed short introductory and concluding questionnaires (see Annex 1). These were used to gauge their level of interest and knowledge in radioactive waste management and engagement processes. There were 44 initial questionnaires completed, from a possible 47, and 47 final questionnaires<sup>2</sup>.

The focus groups were designed to explore participants' understanding of:

- radioactive waste management issues
  - their knowledge, experience and expectations of public engagement
  - their response to key information from the consultation document
  - and their views on how public engagement in decisions about managing radioactive waste should progress
- **Phase two** explored the issues and aspirations raised by the public around engagement in general and engagement in decisions about managing radioactive waste to consider the implications of the earlier findings for their sectors. The fieldwork was undertaken between March and April 2002. This focussed on why to engage and how to engage.
    1. **Stakeholder group** - extended focus group of 7 stakeholders drawn from regulatory bodies, the nuclear industry and environmental Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
    2. **Public Engagement interviews** - in-depth interviews with 6 people who have undertaken consultations with the general public, community organisations and public service bodies.

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<sup>2</sup> There was a slight discrepancy in the overall returns of the questionnaires, the "unaffected" public completed 14 initial surveys and 16 final ones, the community activists completed an initial 11 and a final 12 questionnaires. The young people completed 10 and 10 and the 'affected public' 9 and 9.

3. **NGO interviews** - in-depth interviews with 3 environmental NGO stakeholders.
  4. **Media interviews** - in-depth interviews with 3 environmental journalists
  5. **Community Planning interviews** - in-depth interviews with 4 Community Planning partnership members, elected member, policy maker, service manager and service deliverer
- **Phase 3** involved a review of literature and written material on radioactive waste management and Scottish/UK and international approaches to public engagement.

## Phase 1

1.8 The focus groups in Phase 1 were designed to explore participants' understanding of radioactive waste management issues; their knowledge, experience and expectations of public engagement; their response to key information from the consultation document; and their views on how public engagement in decisions about managing radioactive waste should progress. The composition and 'status' of these groups are shown in Table 1.1. The sequential nature of the research process and diversity of focus groups called for different approaches to the recruitment of participants (as well as the design of the programme).

**Table 1.1 Composition and status of focus groups<sup>3</sup>**

Group	Composition/Attendees	Location	Duration
1. 'Unaffected public'	16 people (8 male and 8 female) aged between 20 and retirement	Glasgow	9.30a.m. until 4.00p.m.
2. 'Affected public'	9 people (5 male and 4 female) aged between 20 and retirement	Thurso	9.30a.m. until 4.00p.m.
3. Young people	10 young people (3 male and 7 female), aged 14-17 years	Argyll	Start 12.00p.m. Saturday finished 12.00 pm Sunday
4. Community activists	12 people (7 male and 5 female)	Stirling	6.00pm until 9.00p.m.
5. Stakeholders	7 people (2 male and 5 female), working in Scotland and England	Edinburgh	5.00pm until 8.00p.m.

1.9 The 'extended'<sup>4</sup> focus groups were designed to test the public's response to this type of consultation exercise and provide responses to key questions posed in the MRWS consultation document. Copies were available for each participant at the group meetings (and in advance to community activists in Stirling). To avoid the need to read the full document, briefing sheets (see Annex 2) were prepared for participants, grouping the consultation questions around 4 themes:

- 'What' questions: describing some of the considerations and questions on the safe management of radioactive waste.

<sup>3</sup> All focus groups were noted on flipcharts and with additional notes double checked with other researchers .

<sup>4</sup> 'Extended' focus groups were used to allow for a deliberative discussion of the issues and ideas presented by participants, rather than using the standard 1 hour group sessions that would only highlight initial responses to the information provided.

- ‘How’ questions: describing some of the techniques for bringing the public into the decision making process.
- ‘Informing’ questions: focusing on meaningful information and advice, who should provide it and how should it be funded.
- ‘Action’ questions: focusing on the timescales underpinning the programme of consultation and action, and the regulatory arrangements required.

1.10 An additional short exercise explored participants’ reactions to information collected from the sources identified in Table 1.2 below, to find out how accessible they felt that current information available to the public is.

**Table 1.2 Information provided for the public**

Source	Type
British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL)	Fact file
AEA Technology (private sector)	Information sheet
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA)	Information sheet
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	Leaflet
Various <sup>5</sup>	Journal article
Scotsman	Newspaper article
Government	Report
Herald	Newspaper article

1.11 In each location participants were split into smaller groups of up to 4 people (self-selected), and allocated enough time to spend on one or two of the consultation questions. This approach provided the opportunity to develop first hand experience of responding to this type of consultation, with more participants able to contribute more actively than in the larger group setting. The next stage involved feedback on:

- their responses to the questions posed
- how they felt about the questions in terms of language, content and ease of understanding
- any additional information they required to enable a more detailed response
- how they felt other people could become involved in this process

1.12 Key findings from the focus groups were recorded on flip charts in both plenary and smaller groups sessions, complemented by one facilitator taking detailed notes. Direct quotes from participants were recorded in this way. Participants were encouraged to record individual views and the views of their group in their own words. The groups were facilitated by asking questions to stimulate discussion and to follow through on points that were raised, which proved useful in keeping to time and ensuring the main points of the discussion were captured. Qualitative data from focus groups were analysed using a simple gridding technique, where the information from the groups was gridded across the questions for ease of analysis, to identify areas of agreement and disagreement within and between the groups. In addition, the questionnaire results were analysed across the groups using an excel spreadsheet.

*The ‘unaffected public’ (Glasgow)*

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<sup>5</sup> The journal article was used to show how information is generally presented in journals, rather than to judge a particular article or journal.

1.13 There were 16 participants recruited by a market research organisation to reflect the broad socio-economic characteristics and geographical spread within the city, as well as stratified by sex, age and ethnicity (the group included 2 Asian participants, both male). The term ‘unaffected’ was used to test the assumption that participants would feel only indirectly affected by radioactive waste management issues and that levels of awareness would be relatively lower than in an area where nuclear power plays a prominent role. The group work involved a combination of full group and smaller group discussions with 3 project facilitators.

*The ‘affected public’ (Thurso)*

1.14 Participants were recruited from the communities around Dounreay nuclear installation through a random mail drop and distribution on the street in Thurso, Wick and surrounding villages (of 500 letters, with stamped addressed envelopes for response). Responses were received from 36 potential participants. There were only 5 female respondents in all, who were all invited to participate. In order to ensure a balanced group, 7 of the male respondents were invited to attend. The final group was selected on the basis of age and local profile information provided by Highland Council and Highland & Islands Enterprise covering general characteristics of the local population and taking socio-economic factors into account. This group brought together 9 participants in total<sup>6</sup>. The group involved a combination of full group and smaller group discussions with 3 project facilitators.

*Young people (Argyll)*

1.15 Ten participants previously involved in youth work activities were drawn from North Lanarkshire, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire, the latter of which is an “affected”<sup>7</sup> area. The groups were recruited and accompanied by a Community Education youth worker or a youth sessional worker<sup>8</sup>. This group was recruited to provide comparison with the 3 adult groups. The group work was extended over an evening to allow the participants additional time to think about how their peers could be informed and to explore different methods of presenting their views. The group was co-ordinated by a trained youth worker, and involved 3 youth support workers and 2 of the project facilitators. An observer from the Scottish Executive provided a ‘jargon-busting’ information as required during the session.

*Community activists (Stirling)*

1.16 People involved as community activists in the Stirling area were invited to take part in a group session, in order to involve members of the public who have direct experience of consultation and involvement processes on behalf of their communities. These participants

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<sup>6</sup> A change of date, due to adverse weather conditions, meant that one of the male participants could not attend. A second man was unable to participate due to a family illness. One female respondent could not be contacted, despite 2 letters and numerous phone calls.

<sup>7</sup> An area with an Ministry Of Defence nuclear installation.

<sup>8</sup> All of whom had been checked by the Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO) by their local authority employers for security purposes. Local workers have to receive parental consent to their children’s participation by law and an additional consent form was required by the research team from parents and participants.

were recruited through a local authority wide umbrella organisation to reflect the geographical diversity of the local authority area. There were 12 participants all aged over 30.

1.17 The purpose of the community activist group was two-fold. The programme was designed to find out their views on engaging the public in radioactive waste management decisions and on engagement in general, as with the other public focus groups. This group also provided an opportunity to explore their experience of being engaged in decision-making processes and of engaging with their communities to identify views and issues as part of decision-making processes.

1.18 Unlike the other groups, these participants were sent copies of the MRWS consultation document in advance, along with information briefing sheets based on the consultation questions that were used in the other groups. Participants were invited to read these before attending the group meeting and to consider avenues for more effective consultation and information sharing. Three project facilitators led the session using full group and small group discussions.

## **Phase 2**

### *Stakeholders (Edinburgh)*

1.19 In addition to gaining deliberative views of members of the public, a stakeholder focus group was conducted using 2 facilitators to discuss the potential for consultation and involvement. The group brought together a mixed group of people who work in the nuclear industry, regulatory bodies and people representing environmental NGOs. There were 7 participants in this group (see Table 1.1) recruited through contacts established at various stages of the study. A small number of NGO and media stakeholders were unable or unwilling to take part in the group meeting. We therefore conducted subsequent one-to-one interviews to ensure their views were included. The discussion schedule was designed to reflect on the initial findings from the other groups and discuss the implications for action.

1.20 Of the 7 participants in the focus group, 4 came from the industry and 3 from NGOs concerned about environmental issues. The consultation document was not used as part of this phase of the work, although most participants were familiar with its contents. The focus instead was on the issues, aspirations and experiences identified by the public in Phase 1:

- the public should be *enabled* to find out about options and decisions made
- engaging the public in the decision-making for managing radioactive waste safely is a necessity at international, UK, and Scottish levels and over time
- the need for accurate and accessible information as the starting point for any engagement strategy (participants had identified newspapers and television as the most likely sources of information currently available)
- the need for appropriate ‘pitch’ in engaging with people
- the problems of trust
- the issues and possibilities identified in the roles of ‘experts’

1.21 The participants then discussed what they felt were the implications of engaging the public in decisions about managing radioactive waste safely. They considered how their field

of expertise could inform the discussions and what their role might be if the public were to be engaged effectively. The NGOs had been identified as a source of trusted information in all but the young people’s focus group. The importance of understanding community level engagement processes had been identified within the public focus groups and by the public engagement interviewees. Stakeholder participants considered the implications of the findings for their sectors. This part of the research therefore focused on stakeholders’ thoughts about:

- why to engage
- how to engage

### *In-depth Interviews*

1.22 In total, 16 individual interviews (12 face-to face, 3 by telephone and 1 by e-mail and telephone) were conducted as described in Table 1.3 below.

**Table 1.3 Details of interviews undertaken**

<b>Area of experience</b>	<b>Interview Type</b>
Participation: experienced in organising public involvement and consultation processes at various levels: 1. Community and local authority level 2. Local authority planning process (Local and Structure Plans) 3. Scottish level, voluntary sector representative 4. Stakeholder engagement from within the nuclear industry 5. Wider development of stakeholder dialogue 6. Conducted and evaluated public involvement exercises across UK	6 interviews - 5 conducted face-to-face and 1 by telephone (4 tape-recorded and 1 noted). Interviewees were sent copies of their interview to agree content. <sup>9</sup>
Environmental NGO representatives	3 interviews - 2 interviews conducted face-to-face and 1 by telephone (all noted and content confirmed with interviewees).
Media interviews	3 interviews - 2 face-to-face and 1 by e-mail/telephone (all noted).
Community Planning Partnership members (different sectors)	4 interviews - 3 face-to-face and 1 by telephone (all noted).

1.23 Six people experienced in undertaking public consultation or involvement exercises at community, local authority, Scottish and UK levels, as well as from within the nuclear industry, were interviewed. These were designed to:

- explore the nature of the consultation or involvement processes that interviewees had experience of
- highlight the positive, negative and missing elements they felt were significant
- identify resource implications
- explore the implications of their experience for future work

1.24 Three representatives of NGOs were interviewed to:

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<sup>9</sup> Some interviewees said that they did not want to confirm content.

- explore the response of NGOs to the role that was identified in the earlier fieldwork
- highlight any significant issues or opportunities for involving the public in decision making on radioactive waste management
- explore their views on the safe management of radioactive waste

1.25 Three journalists with specialist knowledge of environmental issues were interviewed to:

- explore the role of the press in reporting sensitive and complex issues like how radioactive waste is managed
- highlight any issues or opportunities they felt were important for involving the public in decision-making on radioactive waste management
- explore their views on public information provision, the media's responsibility and constraints or opportunities they would expect to find in future

1.26 Four Community Planning Partnership members from different sectors were interviewed in order to:

- explore their views on radioactive waste management
- identify current engagement and involvement processes used in the Community Planning process
- highlight any issues or opportunities they identify for involving the public in decision making on radioactive waste management

1.27 Qualitative data from the in-depth interviews were analysed, using the gridding technique described on page 15, to identify areas of agreement and disagreement across the interviews and compared with the findings from the public focus groups.

### **Phase 3**

1.28 Throughout the course of the study, desk research was undertaken covering 2 specific sets of literature:

- radioactive waste, covering definitions, challenges for policy-makers and industry practitioners and transparency issues
- public consultation and wider involvement approaches from Scottish, UK and international experiences

Ultimately the findings from the qualitative data were used to frame the literature review.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT AND EMERGING KEY QUESTIONS**

1.29 The study aims to explore the actual and potential roles of public engagement in order to maximise understanding of the issues and influence decisions on radioactive waste management.

1.30 The research was designed to investigate the views of a diverse range of participants, (based on direct or indirect experience, or perceptions of the 54 people who participated) on how the public should be involved in helping decision-makers to act - specifically how the public should be engaged in decision-making on radioactive waste management and more general principles for engagement. The report is written to reflect these 2 strands.

1.31 Chapter 2, **Consulting on Radioactive Waste Management**, reports on the issues and opportunities identified in the research for engaging people in discussions about radioactive waste management.

1.32 Chapter 3, **Engaging the Public**, explores:

- reasons for engaging the public in decision-making processes
- essential elements of a successful engagement process
- some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in particular approaches

1.33 Chapter 4, **Involving Other Stakeholders**<sup>10</sup>, covers the information collected from participants who have experience and knowledge covering either:

- public engagement
- issues involved in managing radioactive waste

1.34 Chapter 5, **A Framework for Engagement**, presents the concluding questions from the focus groups and interviews and develops a framework that shapes the literature review.

1.35 Chapter 6, **Literature Review**, presents a literature review showing how the findings from this research fit with the existing body of knowledge on public involvement methods and on radioactive waste management issues.

1.36 Chapter 7, **Conclusions and Recommendations**, highlights the key findings and lessons learned from the research.

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<sup>10</sup> The community activist (Stirling) group provides a bridge between these 2 chapters, using their knowledge of engagement to raise questions and ideas for engaging the public in general which are reported in Chapters 2 and 3 and their experience of engagement to explore some of the issues and opportunities, which is reported in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER TWO: CONSULTING THE PUBLIC ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

2.1 This section details the responses to the MRWS consultation document from the 4 extended focus group sessions with the ‘unaffected public’, ‘affected public’, young people and community activists.

2.2 Participants were asked in the introductory questionnaire how well informed they felt they were about the management of radioactive waste on a scale from ‘very well informed’ to ‘not at all informed’ (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Participants’ perceptions of how well informed they were about the management of radioactive waste**

Initial questionnaire	‘Unaffected Public’ (Glasgow) 14 people	‘Affected public’ (Thurso) 9 people	‘Young people’ (Argyll) 10 people	Community activists (Stirling) 11 people
Very well informed	0	2	0	0
Fairly well informed	2	2	2	2
Not very well informed	10	5	2	7
Not at all informed	2	0	5	2
Don’t know	0	0	1	0

2.3 Results indicated a range of perceived knowledge<sup>11</sup>. As expected, the 2 participants who worked directly in the nuclear industry in the ‘affected’ area rated themselves as being very well informed. Two people from each of the groups felt that they were fairly well informed. The majority of the ‘unaffected’ and community activist groups indicated that they were not very well informed. Nearly three quarters of participants felt that they were either not very well informed (24) or that they were not informed at all (9).

### OVERVIEW OF GROUP RESPONSES

#### ‘Unaffected public’ (Glasgow)

2.4 The ‘unaffected public’, were concerned that they did not have ‘the tools’ to make informed decisions. The language of the MRWS consultation document was considered to be highly technical and ‘heavy going’. One participant expressed a typical view:

*“How would we know as lay people? We need a certain amount of technical information and the rest could be explained in a simpler manner because we are not familiar with the language or subject.”* (‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

2.5 Participants wanted to be involved in a discussion that started from a statement of the main problem(s), moving to an assessment of the issues and options and a detailed discussion about what should or could be done. In order to do this, they felt they needed information that

<sup>11</sup> These results were not used to allocate participants to smaller groups (participants were encouraged to self select their smaller groups).

they could readily understand, which provided a context for potential global as well as national and local solutions. A sentiment expressed in the ‘unaffected public’ focus group and echoed by ‘community activist’ and ‘affected public’ participants, was that “*There needs to be a wider (global) discussion on the environment as a whole*”. Learning from the experience of other countries in managing radioactive waste was also felt to be important.

**‘Unaffected public’ (Glasgow)**

“Is this just a paper exercise?”

“Changes in technology pose the question “How valid is the information now and for the future?”

“What is the Government's role in the process, both UK and Scottish?”

“What is happening to the waste during the consultation process?”

“The programme is a lengthy way of reaching solutions to an immediate problem...”

“But the more information we have, the more informed the decision!!!”

**‘Affected public’ (Thurso)**

2.6 The 'affected public' felt that having some people in the group who had a more detailed knowledge of the subject, largely gained through experience of working at Dounreay, was beneficial in helping to explain more fully and clearly terms they were unfamiliar with. The dynamic of the small group work enhanced the clarity of the responses given. For example, in answer to the question seeking views on segregating waste types by half-lives, one participant asked why separating mixtures is so difficult. Another participant suggested:

*“Think about a cocktail with rum, coke and vodka with a twist of lemon. One way of dealing with it is to drink it (deal with the waste mixture) rather than trying to separate its constituent parts into half-lives.”* (‘Affected public’ participant, Thurso)

2.7 There was general agreement that in this type of exercise participants are better positioned to learn and reach decisions through the involvement of ‘experts’ able to provide honest and trustworthy information.

**‘Affected public’ (Thurso)**

“Degrees of truth, degrees of trust, degrees of proof – all matter”

“Some things do have definitive answers, but some don’t”

“Relate hazards to action”

“Groups need the input of honest and trustworthy experts to learn and reach decisions”

**Young people (Argyll)**

2.8 The young people felt their responses to the questions were ‘confused’ until a representative of the Scottish Executive translated the questions into a more meaningful format. This ‘jargon-busting’ role was felt by all participants to make a difference to their understanding of the issues being discussed. A widely shared view was that information

should be in Plain English so people can understand it better, with greater use of pictures and diagrams.

2.9 One group was asked to develop material for a school setting. They developed a presentation, using Microsoft PowerPoint detailing their key questions and suggested responses. The output was shown on a series of PowerPoint slides (Annex 1).

2.10 The other small group focused on developing information for use in an informal youth work setting. They wrote and acted a video play, loosely based on the BBC comedy programme 'Only Fools and Horses'<sup>12</sup>, which highlighted the danger of radioactive waste being dumped by an unscrupulous businessman. They had intended to show what would happen if the radioactive waste was managed safely, but unfortunately ran out of time.

**Young people (Argyll)**

"We couldn't understand some of the words – confused"  
"Should be in simple English so people can understand it better"  
"I don't understand [the term] intermediate, the language"  
"Use of pictures and ideas to make it easier"

**Community activists (Stirling)**

2.11 Most community activist participants felt that the MRWS consultation document was largely informative and understandable, but expressed some concern about the technical nature of the language and about the layout. They felt this would be a barrier for those less experienced in responding to this type of consultation. There was an overall feeling that the information sheets provided an easier route into the questions.

**Community activists (Stirling)**

"We need to trust the source of information."  
"Is the new energy debate at odds with the document? Recent UK announcement on energy talks about new nuclear sites, whereas the document suggests this is not the case."  
"Different views from various groups depend on how much you know and where you live. How will these be accommodated?"  
"Global warming is a bigger issue than radioactive waste management: the global context is missing"

**GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

2.12 Specific questions were raised in the 'affected public' and community activist groups about the information provided in the consultation document. In the 'affected public' focus group, one participant felt that it did not cover all of the available options due to the lack of reference to waste minimisation. This participant felt that the options provided in the consultation document were linked to decommissioning and did not explore the possibility of minimising waste as part of the potential for managing radioactive waste. One community

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<sup>12</sup> A long running 'classic' BBC comedy series, featuring 2 brothers making a living from various semi-legal activities.

activist participant highlighted the need to consider the implications of the UK Energy Review of 2001, a consultation which aimed to set out the objectives of UK energy policy (PIU, 2002). If the review led to more nuclear power stations being built, this would have an impact on the level of radioactive waste produced in the future:

*“We need to recognise that the statement about waste management is based on an assumption of tailing off [use of nuclear power]. This may not be a reality.”* (Community activist participant, Stirling)

2.13 Overall the response to the MRWS consultation document was not positive. Participants felt that barriers were created by the use of technical language and the possibility that there was no ‘right’ or ‘ideal’ answer to the safe management of radioactive waste, was raised in all of the adult groups. Community activist and ‘affected public’ participants questioned whether the background information in the MRWS consultation document could be trusted. The need for ‘expert’ knowledge to increase understanding was raised in all groups except the community activist group. Participants in all groups, except the young people’s, expressed some scepticism about the impartiality of experts and the difficulty of finding agreement among them.

## **RESPONSES TO THE MRWS CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

2.14 Thirteen key questions were identified from the MRWS consultation document (listed in Annex 2). The language was simplified and the number of questions reduced to 11 by combining questions 7 and 8, and 10 and 11 (Annex 2). These were then included in 4 themed handouts: ‘How’, ‘Action’, ‘Informing’ and ‘What’. At the focus group meetings each smaller working group was given one of the handouts. Those with the ‘How’, ‘Action’ and ‘Informing’ themes were asked to answer all the questions on the handout, a maximum of 2. The ‘What’ theme contained 6 questions, and this group were asked to concentrate on 2:

- 1. Should we segregate UK waste types by half-lives?*
- 2. What are your views on the general approach outlined for decommissioning?*

2.15 Only if time allowed did groups move on to answer the further questions. The 2 questions were selected as those that the public might be expected to have a greater initial interest and knowledge in.

2.16 Bearing in mind the constraints identified around language, knowledge of the subject and previous experience of consultation, each of the smaller working groups within the focus groups had the opportunity to respond to at least 2 questions posed in the consultation. As a precursor to tackling the questions, the groups were asked to identify potential sources of radioactive waste. Participants identified a limited number of sources, with nuclear energy proving to be the most widely recognised

### **Q1. Should we segregate UK waste types by half-lives?**

2.17 One small group in the ‘unaffected public’ and another in the ‘affected public’ focus groups explored this question. Participants in the ‘unaffected public’ group felt that on the basis of the information presented their answer would be “Yes, and” or “No, but”. This was

because they identified additional questions that they felt needed to be answered in order to be sure that they could make an informed response. These included:

- is the storage to be designed for toxicity?
- will it be designed to protect for ten thousand years?
- what will the inspection procedure be?
- will storage options adapt to changes in the knowledge base, including more research into recycling?

2.18 Discussions in the community activist group also identified some concern that the storage design would not be effective for the length of time needed to secure certain radioactive waste types. Some participants in the ‘affected public’ group identified the difficulty and expense involved in separation, indicating that we should seek the most practical classification for management purposes. One participant argued that not all radioactive waste can be separated and that the separation process itself creates more radioactive waste.

## **Q2. Should additional resources be ring-fenced for the management of spent sealed sources of radioactive waste?**

2.19 One small group in the ‘unaffected public’ group, which explored the case for segregating radioactive waste by half-lives, also looked at this question. They agreed that there is a need for ring-fenced funding.

*“Yes – as long as it really is ring fenced. It needs to be seen as open and accountable. People want to know where the money goes and what happens with it. We should have a state magazine (published quarterly) about what’s happening, what the issues are and to make sure that the fund is spent accountably.”* (‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

2.20 Participants in the ‘community activist’ focus group also highlighted the need for ring fencing of resources, with one participant feeling that proper protection would be *“a legacy for future generations”*.

## **Q4. What are your views on the general approach outlined for decommissioning?**

2.21 Participants from the Young people’s group were divided into 2 smaller groups and, using the information available, asked to prepare a presentation aimed at a group of their peers. Although they did not answer the question specifically, one group developed a power point presentation highlighting the main issues they felt their classmates needed to know (Annex 1) and the other presented a play (see paragraph 2.14).

2.22 One small group in the ‘unaffected public’ focus group meeting also considered this question. They felt that it was essential to look at experience elsewhere and called for more research into experiences in other countries. They also expressed concerns that risk management was not identified as an option. They felt that there should be ring-fenced resources for waste minimisation. In the community activist group there was a call for more research into disposal options. Participants in the ‘affected public’ group were concerned that there appeared to be no guidance on decommissioning from the regulatory body.

**Q7. How could we build on these existing initiatives or develop any of the other techniques for engaging the public?**

2.23 Participants in all groups felt that it was essential that the public be given the chance to participate in discussions about managing radioactive waste safely. To do this effectively, participants believed that some of the information provided had to be of a technical nature, but identified a need, and the potential, to provide more information in Plain English.

2.24 All groups identified a variety of processes for informing and involving people, including using the media to host debates and documentaries, and through children's cartoons. This would make information on the subject more widely available. All participants felt it important to recognise that accurate and accessible information is the starting point for any involvement strategy. Community activist participants pointed out that it was important for consulting organisations to recognise that stakeholder feedback should inform the beginning of a different kind of dialogue, rather than being a 'one-off event'.

2.25 A variety of techniques for public engagement were identified. These included information dissemination, including accessibility in language and sources of information, consultation approaches with the general public and involvement processes with experts, the public in general and with those directly affected by decisions, using different degrees of engagement. Participants felt that all of these are necessary to enable anyone who wants to become involved to do so. Trust in the motives of consulting bodies and in the accuracy and completeness of information provided were felt to be key elements of any successful involvement process. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 3.

**Q8. Should there be a new advisory body and how should it be funded?**

2.26 Although this question was not asked specifically as part of the process, participant discussions in the adult groups identified a need for an independent advisory board, with expert advisers "from all sides" working together to find the most effective solutions.

2.27 At the heart of the discussions was a concern about 'vested interests', which included government, and questions raised about the independence of 'expert' views. The community activist group felt that NGOs should be involved as part of this process. There was clear support for an independent advisory board with the experience and knowledge to earn widespread respect, with sufficient independence from Government and the waste producers for its deliberations to be considered objective. There was a strong feeling that this is a Scottish, as well as an UK and international issue, and there was concern across the groups that Scottish views and expertise should be included at all levels.

**Q9. Should the advisory and research roles be combined under one body and what kind of organisation could take [this on]?**

2.28 Wherever the advisory or research function lies there was a strong feeling in the adult groups, and suggested by the young people to a lesser extent, that the organisation responsible should have some specific responsibilities. These included the need to ensure that the language used is understandable, that levels of expertise are explicit and that processes are open and accountable. Some community activist participants felt that research and advisory roles were intimately linked, and identified issues around "*funding, possible partisanship and the independence of the role*".

## Q10. What do you think of the indicative programme of action?

A Programme for Action (all timings are approximate)		
Stage One	Consultation on techniques for public participation, scientific research and institutional arrangements for the interim period. (The document you are now reading).	2001-2002
Stage Two	Research programme to examine the feasibility of the waste management options: and	2002-2004
Stage Three	Preparation of the next (Stage three) consultation paper Further consultation paper on the feasibility of the waste management options.	2005
Stage Four	Announcement of our decision on the preferred waste management strategy, and further consultation on how to implement it.	2006
Stage Five (if required)	Legislation setting out how the management strategy is to be implemented	2007

MRWS, 2001:56

2.29 Some participants again felt that they needed more information to answer this question. However, all felt that *involving*, *informing* and *consulting* the public were important to the development of policy for managing radioactive waste safely in Scotland, and that the engagement process should be a continuing process, broadening the involvement of all age groups and particularly future generations.

2.30 Some community activist participants considered that the programme proposed in the timetable is too tight and that there is a need for longer-term solutions unlikely to be decided by 2007, while others felt that the programme is not tight enough to reflect the urgent need for action. There was a common view across the groups that there is a need for ongoing public involvement alongside action.

2.31 Most participants, with the exception of the young people, wondered if the current legislation needed to be reviewed. There was surprise across all of the groups that the Nuclear Licensing Act of 1965 had not been replaced by later legislation (the MRWS consultation document included reference to it). Participants felt it may be out of date, although there was an assumption that it had been amended over the years, it was still felt that there might be a need for some fundamental changes.

## Q11. Should the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) in Scotland have a new statutory power over the storage of wastes on nuclear licensed sites?

2.32 Participants in the 3 adult groups felt that SEPA's current degree of authority called its role into question. Some community activist participants wanted to ensure that SEPA had "teeth", believing that it should have ultimate responsibility for management of all types of waste. However, some in the 'affected public' group suggested that a new independent organisation might be necessary if SEPA did not take on powers over the storage of wastes on nuclear licensed sites. Participants also posed questions about the degree of SEPA's independence from Government and the nuclear industry and its quango status. The 'unaffected public' participants felt that, based on their current information and knowledge, this was a positive proposal.

## Summary of Key Points

- Awareness of radioactive waste management issues was minimal across all groups except for some participants in the 'affected public' group.
- Perceptions of the source of radioactive waste were that it was predominantly the result of nuclear power.
- The majority of participants felt that they did not have the necessary knowledge but were interested in finding out about the issues and solutions so that they could engage in the discussion.
- Participants were concerned that they did not have the tools to make informed decisions.
- Accurate and accessible information is the starting point for any engagement strategy.
- People are better positioned to learn and reach decisions through the involvement of 'experts' who can provide honest and trustworthy information.
- Trust in the motives of consulting bodies and in the accuracy and completeness of information provided is essential for any successful engagement process.
- There was support for an independent advisory board with experience and knowledge, and sufficient independence from Government and the waste producers.
- Engaging the public in the decision-making for managing radioactive waste safely is a necessity at international, UK, and Scottish levels and over time

## CHAPTER THREE: ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

3.1 The extended focus groups conducted for phase one of the research explored the 2 themes of the project, the issues and opportunities of engaging people in decision making on managing radioactive waste safely and the issues and opportunities in engaging with people as part of decision-making processes. This chapter explores the understanding, expectations and information needs that focus group participants felt about the following questions:

- What do people feel they need to know to engage in decision-making processes about managing radioactive waste safely?
- Where do they currently get their information?
- How should other people become involved and informed?
- What role should engagement take in the future?

### IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

3.2 During the focus groups most participants agreed that engaging the public should be an essential element of the decision-making process. They felt that practical solutions would be more likely to arise from enabling a broad range of voices to be heard. However, there was also recognition that this is not without its difficulties. Most participants did not feel that they knew enough about how decisions are actually made or how they could get involved if they wanted to. This also reflected some cynicism about the intentions of those seeking to engage the public.

*“Is there a willingness, a commitment to consult? If the answer is yes then make it more to the point, easier to understand and provide sufficient information.”* (‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

3.3 Participants in the ‘community activist’ group felt that *“the time expected of you as an activist”* created difficulties for those who are active in their communities. One participant in the ‘affected public’ group posed the question: *“Should we ask people [in this kind of exercise] after all, we vote in elections.”* Ultimately public participation was considered *“a right”* because *“everyone’s opinion counts”*.

3.4 The focus group participants felt that enabling the public to become better informed and engaged was essential. Future developments in technology, new choices in energy supply and varying consequences for security, cost of energy supply and treatment of wastes might open up different solutions in future. Most participants believed that a commitment should be made to inter-generational public engagement (they also felt that future generations have the right to be considered in decisions about the safe management of radioactive waste).

*“...so they can pass on the information from generation to generation. Everyone should be involved.”* (Young people’s group participant, Argyll)

3.5 Pulling together responses from all groups on where action and decisions need be taken, common themes emerged. Groups thought action was needed at 5 different levels:

- community
- Scotland

- UK
- international
- over time (across generations)

3.6 Challenging our working distinction between the ‘affected’ and the ‘unaffected’ population, most participants came to the conclusion that everybody is affected, now and in the future, on different levels from local to international. Therefore, they proposed that engaging the public “*should be expanded and part of an ongoing process rather than one-off*” (Community activist participant).

3.7 Involvement at international level was identified as a priority. In defining who should be involved, participants included wider ‘stakeholders’, for instance NGOs and inter-governmental bodies, to ensure that global safety was central to collective decision-making:

*“... there needs to be a wider [global] discussion on the environment as a whole.”* (‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

3.8 The most important reasons identified for continued and expanded engagement included:

- lack of trust in both government and industry to make impartial decisions
- a sense that profit was more important for nuclear energy companies than safety
- concern that decisions that need to be made can be overturned if a government that makes the policy is voted out of office (participants from the ‘unaffected public’ and community activist groups)

The timescale involved in managing radioactive waste safely led some participants in all groups to identify an intergenerational responsibility to make open and transparent decisions that can be revisited if necessary.

3.9 All participants believed they had a personal responsibility, alongside Government and the industry, to become involved in developing a safe approach to managing radioactive waste.

## **REASONS FOR ENGAGING THE PUBLIC**

3.10 Participants were keen to discuss why government, its agencies and even private sector companies had become more interested in engaging the public directly in recent years. One ‘community activist’ participant wondered if one reason for increased interest among politicians was because “*in the last couple of years they don’t know what to do, so they are trying to find solutions.*” This echoed a view in the ‘affected public’ group that linked the discussions around radioactive waste to the complexities of the MMR triple vaccine. They identified similar issues around the need for understandable information, with opposing views held by ‘experts’ on the facts and the most appropriate solution. Another Stirling participant questioned the motives behind consultation exercises carried out by government more explicitly, making reference to an underlying issue of power:

*“Consultation - a wonderful activity but what they’ve done is let consultation take over from negotiation.”* (Community activist participant, Stirling)

3.11 There was discussion in all of the groups (except among young people) about the possibility that engaging the public could be used to justify decisions that had already been taken, where the consultation process could be used to arrive at the ‘preferred’ solution (the perceived problem of “rubber stamping”). One ‘community activist’ participant voiced a common concern about how much difference getting involved would make: *“They may listen, but do they do anything?”* A number of the ‘unaffected public’ participants referred to a lack of trust in the Glasgow City Council’s consultation processes:

*“You get decisions without consultation or a consultation that was so low profile most people didn’t know about it. Basically - what consultation? Community feedback isn’t encouraged. The decision is already made.”*  
(‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

3.12 These concerns and conditions did not undermine the basic belief across all of the focus groups that *“everybody should have access if they want to become involved”* (‘unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow) and that engaging people in decision-making processes can be beneficial both to the public and to the consulting organisation.

## **EXPERIENCE OF INVOLVEMENT**

3.13 Participants discussed their knowledge of consultation and involvement before moving on to exploring practical suggestions about ways of making it more effective. This provided scope for them to share experiences about what they felt works, what does not work and to discuss what support other people might need to become involved. One participant defined a three-step process to effective involvement that was agreed by other group members as a useful summary:

1. *“Finding out about the issues and opportunities that are involved in dealing with the issue.*
2. *Providing information as a critical part of the process – if we don’t understand, how can we have a view?*
3. *We can then reach a decision if we understand.”*  
(‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

3.14 Knowledge of current systems for engaging people in discussion and in decision-making was minimal in the focus groups with the public. The majority of participants did not feel that they had avenues to influence decisions at either local or national level. However, the community activist participants who were actively involved in communities and the young people involved in youth work activities did feel that they had some knowledge of how to influence decisions.

3.15 The majority of participants identified a high level of distrust with how current engagement processes tend to work in practice, alongside the widespread belief that engaging the public is a positive thing in principle. This lack of trust was reinforced in discussions about previous engagement experiences. Some participants were concerned that even when they have become engaged nobody appears to be listening to them:

*“Previous experience skews your view, it makes you cynical.”* (‘Affected public’ participant, Thurso)

3.16 When asked in the initial questionnaire how they felt their involvement in the focus groups would influence future engagement exercises, just over half of participants felt that this was an important thing to be involved in, with a similar number hopeful that their participation would make a difference (Table 3.1). Results from the concluding questionnaire show a marked difference. A large majority felt that it was both an important thing to be involved in and were hopeful that it would make a difference. A small number of participants from each of the focus groups indicated they would be happy to continue to be engaged in the process.

**Table 3.1 – How participants felt involvement in the focus groups would influence future consultation.**

	'Unaffected public' (Glasgow)		'Affected public' (Thurso)		Young People (Argyll)		Community Activists (Stirling)		Total	
	14	16	9	9	10	10	11	12	44	47
	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after
An important thing to be involved in	7	16	4	8	7	10	10	10	28	43
Hopeful that it will make a difference	4	15	6	8	3	7	10	11	24	44

## MOTIVATION FOR THE PUBLIC TO BECOME INVOLVED

3.17 Participants were asked in the initial questionnaire to select responses from a list of considerations which led them to decide to take part in the focus groups, and to determine how important each was. This was based on a scale of “very important” to “not at all important”. When asked to respond to the statement “*It is a good way of getting my views heard*”, 39 of the 44 participants rated this as either very or fairly important compared with 44 of the 47 in the concluding questionnaire. Four participants at the outset (one in the ‘unaffected public’ focus group and 3 from the community activist group) indicated this was not an important consideration, compared with 3 in the concluding questionnaire. Almost all felt that this type of forum offered the opportunity to get their views heard. There was little difference between the views expressed in the initial questionnaire and those in the concluding one.

3.18 “*Being paid to attend*” was considered as very or fairly important by only 13 of the participants, 9 of these were in the ‘unaffected public’ group in Glasgow. The community activists in Stirling, who are more used to giving their time in this way, were least likely to view payment as important. The young people rated payment as either not very or not at all important, although they appreciated the accommodation and refreshments provided<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Payment has been found to be a relatively more important factor in participation among 14-17 year olds recruited to citizens’ jury exercises. See, for example, findings from the Glasgow Young People’s Jury on Drugs (Opinion Leader Research, 2001).

3.19 More generally, participants identified varying levels of interest in different issues as an important factor in engagement. This was echoed in the community activist group, where one participant felt it was important to recognise the different motivations for engagement involved in discussions of national policy compared with discussions with communities that stood to be directly affected by any decisions taken. This led to a discussion on different reasons for non-participation:

*“Joe Public turns away from the solution, intuitively. They don’t know the answers, so they turn their backs. Unless you offer real solutions that will work, people will ignore these issues because they feel out of their depth.”*  
(Community activist participant, Stirling)

3.20 One participant in the ‘affected public’ group suggested that as others who are viewed as ‘experts’ influence decisions, a high proportion of the public feel no need to get involved. Another possibility identified in the group was that some non-participants are either content or at least unconcerned. If people are not responding, *“it may mean that they trust the information, not that they don’t know [how to respond]”*. Relatively high levels of distrust of government and industry sources of information and consultation motives were identified across the groups, although these were not considered to be a primary reason for non-participation.

3.21 Participants felt it was important that people should be *able* to find out about options and decisions made, with the emphasis being on availability and accessibility of relevant information, but few participants saw involvement as an *obligation*. While one ‘unaffected public’ participant suggested that *“compulsory civic duty”* to get involved in discussions like these might be needed on a similar basis to jury service (random selection across all adults without payment), others agreed that public engagement should be by choice.

## INFORMATION EXPECTATIONS

3.22 To test public opinion on their expectations of the access and availability of information on the management of radioactive waste in the future, participants were asked in the initial questionnaire *“If you or your family were still living in this area 5 or 10 years from now, what would you expect to find?”* Findings are shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Participant expectations of information provision in relation to radioactive waste management in 5 or 10 years time**

	‘Unaffected public’ (Glasgow) 14 people	‘Affected public’ (Thurso) 9 people	Young people (Argyll) 10 people	Community activists (Stirling) 11 people	<b>Total</b> 44 people
That we are better informed about how waste is managed	11	7	4	8	30
That access to information has more or less stayed the same	3	2	1	2	8
That we are less well informed than we are today	0	0	0	2	2
Don't Know	0	0	5	0	5

3.23 There was initial expectation among the majority (30) of participants that in 5 or 10 years the public will be better informed about how radioactive waste is managed. This was borne out during discussions where many participants felt that young people and children could be better informed through increased environmental education, 8 participants expected access to information to more or less stay the same, and 2 (both in the community activist group) felt that the public would become less well informed.

### Sources of information

3.24 In the introductory questionnaire, participants were asked to identify how they currently get information on radioactive waste issues and, in a concluding questionnaire, where they would look for information in the future.

**Table 3.3 Current and potential sources of information on radioactive waste management**

	'Unaffected public' (Glasgow)		'Affected public' (Thurso)		Young people (Argyll)		Community activists (Stirling)		Total	
	14	16	9	9	10	10	11	12	44	47
	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after
Newspapers	12	14	5	2	4	9	8	8	29	33
Television	12	14	6	5	6	8	9	9	29	36
Friends/neighbours	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	4
Waste management agencies	0	4	1	4	0	6	5	5	6	19
Government	2	9	1	5	0	5	1	10	4	29
Internet	0	12	1	4	1	8	2	6	4	30
Community groups	1	8	0	2	4	7	4	3	9	20
Library	1	8	0	5	2	5	0	1	3	19
Family members	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
People who work in the industry	0	0	4	4	1	1	0	0	5	5

3.25 Newspapers and television were by far the most likely current sources of information, with low levels of usage of the other sources recorded in each group. Internet usage was low (only 4 participants reported using the Internet for this purpose) even among young people. The end of each focus group meeting noted some significant changes between current and potential future sources of information. By this stage of the engagement major changes in the potential sources of information noted across the groups were the Internet (which rose from 4 to 30), government (4 to 29), libraries (3 to 19), waste management agencies (6 to 19) and community groups (9 to 20). Participants in all but the community activist group identified how the US television cartoon series 'The Simpson's', where Homer Simpson (the father character) works in a dangerously ill-managed nuclear power plant, as another source of information.

3.26 Participants suggested that the source of information could create questions about the validity of the information provided:

- who is providing the information?
- what vested interests, if any, are involved in providing the information?

- what are the right answers (if indeed ‘right answers’ exist)?
- how can answers to these and other questions be identified?

### **Understandable information**

3.27 Based on discussion of the materials on display, views on what they would read and not read were influenced by:

- length - it should be short
- language - explanation should be clear
- visuals - pictures and diagrams are useful

3.28 This is mirrored in the young people’s response to the Dounreay advertisement where the graphics and some parts of the text were considered helpful. The young people preferred the leaflets, which were considered to be more attractive and easier to understand.

3.29 Within the adult groups, there was general agreement that leaflets produced by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) were most accessible. Participants felt these used plain language and explained technical terms. The SEPA leaflet was felt to be particularly well designed, with maps, diagrams and other illustrations adding to the text. The British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) fact file report was considered to be “dense” because it lacked any illustrative material to break up the text. Young people reacted more strongly against technical language, while adults were more willing to pass over parts they did not quite understand.

3.30 Across the groups, participants felt that access to understandable information was an essential starting point. While there was an acceptance that some of the terminology might be difficult to translate for the layperson, there was general agreement that some of the language used was unnecessarily difficult. It was agreed that information should not only be in Plain English, but that attention to the type of information provided and its presentation would help to engage the public more successfully.

### **Provision and presentation of information**

3.31 Concerns about the level of understanding required to become fully involved were expressed in all of the focus groups. This prompted a variety of suggestions on how information should be developed, presented and shared. The adult groups identified publications, advertising and media campaigns, a free phone service “*with a person rather than a computer to talk to*”, interactive TV and debates on TV, focus groups, documentaries and cartoons as possible options. The young people agreed that schools and existing youth services, as well as peer support, were the most effective way to inform young people's understanding. The younger participants did some work in preparing materials for their peers. They felt strongly that peer education is an important way of engaging young people. One participant from the young people’s group felt that it was important to think about people who face language barriers, such as asylum seekers and those who have difficulty with reading.

3.32 Environmental education through schools was identified as a promising route to engagement, in part because some participants felt that children and young people would then be an effective source of information for parents. While there was some disagreement on how well this would work in practice, the main reason for this suggestion was the belief that, with such a long-term issue, young people should be able to become fully informed and involved.

3.33 When asked about the ease of understanding of the MRWS consultation document, the response was largely positive among community activists in Stirling. It was considered informative and comprehensive, although difficult in parts because of the technical aspects, and there was general agreement that “*understanding is dependent on educational advantage.*” Participants in the ‘unaffected’ and ‘affected’ public groups, as well as in the young people's group, found the document overly technical and dense and felt that it would be difficult for the general public to understand.

3.34 The younger participants felt that experts could make understanding information difficult, due to the use of technical language. A ‘jargon-busting’ exercise, where participants read out a piece of information which was then translated into Plain English by a member of the Scottish Executive, was reflected upon as an important element of how they made sense of the consultation questions. There was agreement across the group that this had been essential to their level of understanding:

*“We need a better format so that young people can understand. Once[explained] through the jargon buster - before that it was gobbledegook. What was written on the cards [information from the consultation document] was for professor to professor rather than professor to people. The jargon buster made it easier to understand.”* (Young people’s group participant, Argyll)

3.35 The community activist participants were more experienced in dealing with consultation documents, which appears to have made it easier for them to respond to the MRWS document. They also commented on the fact that the information briefing sheets provided had helped them to navigate the document more easily. The briefing sheets were considered by most participants to offer a more accessible means of engaging the general public.

3.36 The highly technical and detailed nature of the MRWS consultation document led to agreement in all groups that the information has to be as accessible as possible to ‘lay people’, who in turn need support to become involved in this kind of dialogue. While accepting that some technical detail may be required, they believed this should be kept to a minimum in order to enhance understanding and enable them to reach their own conclusions about appropriate solutions. The majority of participants felt that the whole process of engaging the public, irrespective of the issues involved, could fail if information is not written in Plain English and presented in a more accessible format.

### **Balanced information**

3.37 There was a recognition that “correct” or best answers are not easily found on issues like these, prompting the common view that the public should be enabled to find out all relevant sides of an argument. In Glasgow, one small group of participants felt that it is

essential for people to have access to all of the information in simple terms, with “*experts on tap rather than on top*” (‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow).

3.38 As discussed earlier, participants were asked to identify where they would currently find information on radioactive waste issues and management. While each group identified the media as their main source of information, many participants also felt that the media provides information in a sensationalised form: “*The Media, newspapers, radio, TV: it's all bad news stories*” (‘unaffected public’ participant). Some participants in each adult group expressed cynicism about officially provided information from both government and industry, believing that this was likely to be equally one-sided, “selling the positives” rather than “the whole truth”. Some participants in the ‘affected public’ group identified the nuclear industry as one source of information, through an exhibition at the Dounreay nuclear installation, although they considered a more balanced view came from friends and family who work at the plant. Distrust of media and of government information emerged during the discussions in all groups, but this distrust of both sources of information was more keenly felt by some participants in the ‘affected public’ group.

3.39 All groups felt that the style of reporting through the media had an impact on how they think about the issues involved. Discussions highlighted how participants tended to remember what is in the news for longest, typically those stories which appeared to be “sensationalised”. The mainly negative reporting of radioactive waste issues was considered confusing and unhelpful in all of the groups except the young people’s, where their artwork reflected the negative images although they did not specifically identify media reports as an issue. Experiences of interviews with the media discussed during the ‘affected public’ group and how they were reported left some participants feeling that they are generally misrepresented.

3.40 This was reinforced during an exercise where participants were asked what words they would use to describe radioactive waste. The disastrous events in Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and Hiroshima were mentioned without prompting. Other common words were “secret”, “dangerous” and “scary”. This was echoed by some of the younger participants, who used artwork to express how they felt about radioactive waste (Figure 3.1). Some of the young people however added a more positive dimension by using the artwork to show the dangers of unmanaged waste interspersed with positive images of safely managed radioactive waste; caged for safety.

3.41 However, in the ‘affected public’ focus group, although similar words were used by some, initial discussions centred on the belief that some radioactive waste is only dangerous if it is not managed properly:

*“The government can’t allay my fears about any risk. My partner works there. We all live here. As long as waste is handled properly there is no risk.”*

(‘Affected public’ participant, Thurso)

3.42 There was a commonly expressed view that expertise is required to generate meaningful information, but that experts often disagree on the key issues and feasible solutions. Discussions in both the ‘unaffected’ and ‘affected’ public groups identified the current debate on the MMR vaccine as a way of explaining both their distrust of Government information and their understanding of the difficulties of ‘expert’ agreement. Both groups wanted access to expert advice that covered a range of views, so that they could make up

their own minds. They also called for “independent experts” to feed into the process, as well as experts from environmental groups and the industry. There was a general feeling across the groups that “telling the whole story, good and bad”, would help to change the nature of the discussion. Most participants were in favour of full disclosure, rather than some information remaining withheld by government or industry.

**Figure 3.1 Graffiti Wall describing radioactive waste from the Young people’s group**



### **Trust in the information available**

3.43 The complex and emotive nature of the issue highlighted the importance of *trust* in the information provided to engage the public in this debate. During the focus group discussions, a common feature across the adult groups was the sense of scepticism about information provided by government organisations and the nuclear power industry and in the consultation and involvement procedures undertaken by them.

3.44 The issue of trust was highlighted in findings from both the introductory and final questionnaires. Details of the summary results from the questionnaires can be found at Annex 1. From a prepared list of responses, participants were asked: “*Suppose the following individuals/organisations had to provide information to help you make an important decision that was going to affect you or your family. To what extent would you trust them to provide the most accurate information available or make decisions in your best interests.*” The

figures in Table 3.4 show net scores for both the introductory and concluding questionnaires<sup>14</sup>. A high score denotes a high level of trust and a low score a low level. The data is based on a small sample, with a different number of participants in each group, therefore we would caution against drawing firm conclusions on this basis.

**Table 3.4 Levels of trust: providing accurate information and making decisions**

	'Unaffected public' (Glasgow)		'Affected public' (Thurso)		Young people (Argyll)		Community activists (Stirling)	
	14	16	9	9	10	10	11	12
	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after
Local Councillor	- 2	-10	0	4	2	2	1	1
The Council	- 4	-5	6	0	- 1	2	0	1
The Scottish Parliament	- 5	-7	1	-2	1	4	0	-1
UK Government	- 12	-9	1	-2	12	-1	1	-3
Nuclear industry	- 10	-3	7	7	- 10	-5	- 11	-12
MSPs	- 10	-10	1	-3	0	0	3	4
Community groups	7	9	5	4	3	3	9	6
Newspapers	3	6	- 2	-4	2	0	- 6	-6

**Key:**    *Positive*    *Neutral*    *Negative*

3.45 It is difficult to discern an overall pattern from the table because the rank order varied across the groups. The most trusted source of information and decision-making in the initial survey in the 'unaffected public' and the community activist groups was Community Groups (the only source with net positive ratings from all groups). In the 'affected public' group, the nuclear industry was the most trusted source, followed by the Council, while among young people UK government was initially the most trusted. The 'unaffected public' participants were alone in scoring newspapers positively, although these are the second most common way for members of the public to access information (See Table 3.3).

3.46 In contrast, UK government was the least trusted source among 'unaffected public' participants, followed closely by the nuclear industry and MSPs. The nuclear industry was also least trusted among the community activist' group and among young people (who also gave negative trust ratings to newspapers and their Council<sup>15</sup>). A clear distinction can therefore be seen in levels of trust in the industry between the 'affected public' group and other participants.

3.47 However, there are broad differences in ranking between the areas and, despite a small difference in the numbers completing the introductory and concluding questionnaires, the changes between results at the start and end of each meeting are worthy of further consideration. UK government ended up as the only source of information with a net negative rating in all groups, including the young people who had been positive at the start. None of the sources changed score in the same direction in each group, although it is worth

<sup>14</sup> We have used a simple scoring system to summarise the results in Table 3.4 Where participants stated that they had "A great deal of trust", a score of +2 was recorded, followed by "A fair amount" (+1), "Not much" (-1), "None at all" (-2) and "Don't know" (0).

<sup>15</sup> The Young people's group was composed of participants from 3 local authority areas, making this result difficult to interpret.

noting that ‘unaffected public’ participants appeared to be somewhat less suspicious of the nuclear industry by the end of the meeting, no change was observed in the ‘affected public’ and young people groups and the community activist group members expressed no higher levels of trust in the industry than at the start.

3.48 Concern about the willingness of the industry to provide accurate and comprehensive information was expressed by participants in the ‘unaffected public’ and the community activist groups.

*“There’s a sense of concern that this whole process is open. Direct honesty on the part of the nuclear industry – how do we get them to recognise the value of complete honesty?”* (Community activist participant, Stirling)

3.49 The Internet was seen as an important means of accessing independent information in future, although some participants questioned the independence of web-based information, unless the source, motives and beliefs of the information providers were disclosed.

3.50 Trust in available information was mentioned consistently in the group discussions. Given that the initial response to the subject was generally very negative, the trustworthiness of information sources that might address participants’ concerns was thought to be an essential element in the development of a successful engagement process.

### **Independent advice**

*“More guidance is needed for the public. This [MRWS consultation document] could not be issued as it stands for consideration. There is a need for an independent party to explain the questions and considerations to a group of the general public.”* (Community activist participant, Stirling)

3.51 This highlights a common theme running across all discussions except the Young people’s group: namely a requirement for “independent” as well as easily accessible information, as far as possible. Among the typical views expressed in the adult groups were:

*“Who do you trust? - is the information open, honest and impartial?”*  
(‘Affected public’ participant, Thurso)

*“Independent information that is reliable and can be trusted - how widely available is it?”* (‘Affected public’ participant, Thurso)

### **Information sharing**

3.52 Participants displayed a willingness to engage in discussion of difficult issues, but expressed the need for increased knowledge to participate fully. A critical consideration therefore is how information can be shared. Different dynamics emerged between the public focus groups, depending on the level of knowledge and experience of participants. The group work sessions were designed to allow participants to share knowledge and experience as they discussed the subject. In the ‘unaffected public’ group this highlighted the emotive nature of

the subject: “*We have a different emotional response to this issue than to other information*”(‘unaffected public’ participant). It also demonstrated the need that people felt to access additional information when required to make their engagement meaningful. For example, in exploring the MRWS consultation document question of whether UK waste types should be segregated by half-lives, one participant summed up the mood in the group as:

*“There needs to be other questions behind it. Is the storage to be designed for toxicity? Will it be designed to protect for ten thousand years? How good will it be? What inspection procedures will there be? It needs to be accessible to changes in the knowledge base.”* (‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

3.53 In the ‘affected public’ focus group, some participants had much more detailed knowledge about the industry and some of the issues raised in the MRWS consultation document as a result of working at Dounreay. This provided participants with a ready source of ‘expertise’ as part of the discussion. This ‘expertise’ was used to deepen discussions, was seen as non-threatening and to a great extent was seen as independent, in a way that external sources of expertise presented to the group may not have been.

3.54 The provision of expert advice to participants was explored differently in the 4 groups. The views of ‘expert’ participants in the ‘affected public’ group were not accepted uncritically. Instead individuals were challenged to justify the basis for their conclusions, and also to translate technical aspects of information into more meaningful language. If external experts had been brought into the process to provide the kind of information that was sought in the ‘unaffected public’ group and used in the ‘affected public’ group, the experience suggests that it would have changed the way participants accepted the expert information. The nature of the expertise that became an essential part of the discussion in the ‘affected public’ group was to a great extent dependent on the personal interactions between participants. The questions asked of people with direct experience of the industry were embedded in the discussions. This was helped by the fact that they did not give the impression that their own knowledge was ‘the last word’ or unproblematic.

## **HOW TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC**

*“People are more aware, more interested now about the environment...it’s a good time to consult”.* (‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

3.55 Participants in one of the group work sessions with the ‘unaffected public’ felt that there is a need for “*an organisation whose sole purpose is to get people to be involved and informed*”. The kind of organisation participants wished to see would be:

- independently funded
- concentrate on enabling the public to participate in an informed way
- seek feedback from the industry and government on an ongoing basis

Participants also expressed the need for information to be available on the process itself.

3.56 One participant felt that it is important to think about the difference between organising national and local discussions irrespective of the subject, and to recognise the role that local organisations can play:

*“National consultation is different from local. Local people know where to meet. The community itself knows how to get to people and should have a big part to play, while national consultation uses the media. Trying to get to everybody needs a variety of ways to do it.”* (‘Unaffected public’ participant, Glasgow)

*“There is a depth at the community level of both knowledge and experience – use it.”* (Community activist participant, Stirling)

3.57 Participants thought the essential elements of successful engagement were:

- transparency in the process
- trust in its purpose
- central role for independent sources of information and expertise
- open and informed discussion with feedback from decision makers

3.58 Overall the majority of the focus group participants felt that important steps for effective engagement included:

- Using a variety of methods to raise awareness of the issues and areas for discussion.
- Providing guidance on how to get involved, recognising that people have a choice as to whether and how to get involved.
- Recognising that non-participation is not always due to a lack of interest. Non-participants can be classified as: those who want to become involved but do not know how; those who tend to agree with the decisions being made or trust authority and have no motivation to be involved; and those who do not want to become involved for a variety of reasons that we are only now beginning to understand (for example former participants who have become disappointed by the results of their efforts).
- Ensuring that people know where they can access meaningful and trusted information, enabling people to judge the information based on who is providing it, and what their interest is in the outcome.
- Providing access to independent expert advice. This should recognise that experts hold different beliefs. There was a general acceptance that consensus is hard to negotiate, but this was a reason for different experts and interest groups to communicate with each other and work together to find common solutions.
- Providing the opportunity to influence decisions. Participants felt that bodies undertaking consultation and involvement processes had to demonstrate an ability to listen and respond to their views if they are to be persuaded of their validity.

3.59 Rather than simply performing a research or information function, participants hoped public engagement approaches would offer a means of establishing better-informed dialogue, and identified the public as having a role in influencing action in the future. True engagement was thought to emerge from a *continuing* process of involvement - ongoing dialogue rather than a series of snapshot consultation events.

3.60 Overall the majority of participants enjoyed their participation in the research. In the concluding questionnaire more participants felt that this was an important things to be involved in and they were hopeful that their participation would make a difference (see Table 3.5)

**Table 3.5 How participants felt about their involvement in the focus groups**

	'Unaffected public' (Glasgow) 16 people	'Affected public' (Thurso) 9 people	Young people (Argyll) 10 people	Community activist (Stirling) 12 people
Enjoyed it	14	8	10	10
An important thing to be involved in	16	8	9	10
Hopeful that it will make a difference	15	8	7	11

*Other relevant data*

3.61 The Scottish Executive commissioned an omnibus survey of 1,000 Scottish adults in February 2002 by Scottish Opinion<sup>16</sup>. Respondents were asked to what extent they would trust a range of bodies including government, regulators, and the industry to ensure that radioactive waste is managed in the interests of public safety, on a scale from “completely” to “not at all”. Results showed the most trusted body to manage waste safely is the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), followed by the Environment Agency and the Health & Safety Executive, with British Nuclear Fuels Limited, British Energy and NIREX as the least trusted.

3.62 In the same survey respondents were asked, to what extent would they trust the information regarding nuclear waste provided by a range of bodies including government, regulators, industry and NGO's. The highest levels of trust were found for information provided by environmental NGOs such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. The nuclear industry regulators (HSE and SEPA) also scored relatively high ratings as trusted sources of information. The nuclear industry itself was the least trusted source, with the UK Parliament the next least trusted.

3.63 Recent survey evidence on public trust and radioactive waste across Europe was identified in the Eurobarometer 56.2, 2002<sup>17</sup>. A sample of EU citizens aged 15 and over were surveyed about their beliefs, knowledge and wishes about radioactive waste between 13 October and 19 November 2001. There were 16,000 interviews across Europe with 1300 in the UK, 312 of which were in Northern Ireland. When asked what sources of information they trust on how radioactive waste is managed, across the EU the most trusted group were independent scientists (32%) and 1 in 10 Europeans trusted information from the nuclear industry. In the UK respondents showed more trust in official sources of information, with 24.5% saying they trust the national agency in charge of dealing with it, 26.8% and listing the government, while 29.7% identified NGOs. The highest level of trust was felt for independent scientists (36.7%). The lowest for trust ratings were for information from the

<sup>16</sup> *Managing Radioactive Waste: Awareness and attitudes of the Scottish Public* Research Findings Summary, prepared by Scottish Opinion Ltd for Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> *Europeans and Radioactive Waste Report*, INRA (Europe), 2002

nuclear industry (14.9%) and those who trusted none of the sources of information (11.5%). This is not reflected in the findings of this research project. Potentially highlighting the need to balance surveys and interviews with more in-depth discussions about the issues and options for action in engaging the public on managing radioactive waste.

### Summary of key points

- Public engagement conducted properly is an important element of effective decision-making. People should be *enabled* to find out about options and decisions made.
- Everybody is affected, now and in the future, and that engaging the public should be expanded and on going, rather than one-off. Involvement at international level was identified as a priority.
- A lack of trust in government and industry making impartial decisions is one reason for continued and expanded engagement.
- Knowledge of current systems for engaging people in discussion and in decision-making was minimal.
- There was a high level of distrust of how engagement processes work in practice.
- Two levels of engagement are needed for decision-making at a national level and for those who will be directly affected by the decisions made.
- Awareness raising through media and education is an important element of engaging the public.
- Information should be in Plain English and attention to the type of information provided and its presentation would help to engage the public more successfully.
- Newspapers and television were the most likely sources of information.
- Distrust of media and of Government information undermines public engagement.
- The internet may provide an important means of accessing independent information in the future.

## CHAPTER FOUR: INVOLVING OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

4.1 Phase two of the research (see Chapter 1) explored the issues and aspirations identified by stakeholders in developing public engagement in managing radioactive waste and by stakeholders in public engagement processes. The community activist group in Stirling provided a bridge from the general public focus groups to those with experience in managing and organising engagement processes. This was based on their experience of being engaged in decision-making processes at local authority level and in organising engagement processes within their own communities.

4.2 The stakeholders brought a variety of expertise and interest to the discussions. Some had particular knowledge of engagement processes as organisers, others had particular knowledge of radioactive waste management issues and others of environmental discussions and debates. This chapter explores their views on two further elements of public engagement in decision-making processes on managing radioactive waste:

1. recent experiences of engagement processes
2. issues and opportunities in developing any future strategy for engagement

### CURRENT EXPERIENCES OF ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES

4.3 Discussions with the ‘community activist’ group about participants’ experiences of being engaged in decision-making processes brought a mixed response. There were issues identified about the time commitment expected of activists, both in participating in discussions and in responding to “*tons of documents*”.

Participants also felt that there is a need for clarity about engagement.

*“Clarity of purpose is very important. People need to know why the meeting is taking place and what outcomes are expected.”* (‘Community activist’ participant, Stirling)

4.4 Some of the important elements that participants felt would ensure an effective engagement were identified as:

- clarity of the process
- more coherence from agencies in consulting
- departments talking to departments and co-ordinating the processes
- understanding that there are learning curves for organisations undertaking engagement processes
- awareness of the need to build trust in the process
- Plain English documents
- choosing issues of clear relevance to people if they are going to engage
- working with existing structures
- working with the knowledge base of the participants
- using the knowledge and experience that is available at local level
- responding to any conclusions or recommendations with an explanation of decisions, including why action is not being taken.

- appropriate feedback to participants

4.5 Members of the ‘community activist’ group made additional points about the value of facilitation in group discussions, enabling people to participate fully and keeping the process open, with an added stipulation that a “*sense of humour*” is required. Discussion about the role of experts in informing the participants touched on the need to involve a range of experts to give balanced views in providing information, acknowledging that experts do not necessarily agree with one another. One participant felt that it was important to hear from “*experts from both sides*” to get that balance, while another felt that the role of an expert was one of a “*guide, not as someone who only has their own point of view*”.

4.6 As a result of their experience of being engaged in discussions about local decision-making processes, some community activist participants felt that they had developed a better-informed relationship with public service departments, although they believed that feedback mechanisms were insufficient. Participants felt that it was important to recognise that there is a learning curve for the organisations, as well as for public participants, involved in any engagement process, because organisations have to be willing and able to respond to the outcomes.

4.7 When discussing their experience of engaging with the public within their own communities, some community activists participants identified mechanisms they had found useful for informing people about issues and discussed some of the ways they had organised engagement locally. Public meetings were felt to be effective by some, as ways of providing information to people, but participants felt there was also a danger that one person or a few people with strongly held views could dominate the proceedings. This was echoed in the interviews with those who have organised public engagement processes, where public meetings were seen as the least effective mechanism for engaging the public. Some participants felt that small group work was an effective way of engaging in deliberative discussions, although they could be expensive to run. The experience of the ‘community activist’ group indicated that no single approach is the best, but that methods should be appropriate for purpose and type of engagement desired.

4.8 There was some discussion about the difficulties of getting people to engage. Some participants had been involved in trying to raise awareness and increase tenants’ involvement in discussions about local authority housing . Time, money and effort had been invested to engage with tenants, but only 1% of tenants had come forward. Several participants felt that this was to be expected and that at least a number of the issues and concerns expressed by those tenants would reflect wider views, while others felt that there were issues of ‘representativeness’ in such cases. A few participants felt some frustration that people did not recognise that they would benefit from involvement. Raising awareness by leafleting and using newsletters was seen as one method of increasing engagement possibilities, if resource intensive, while other participants felt that campaigning and targeted literature would be more effective in encouraging people to act.

*“In each community there’s an archetypal presence of some kind of ‘council’ potential to come together to take action at local level.”* (Community activist participant, Stirling)

4.9 The most important elements of engaging with the public at a local level were the same as those for engaging people in local authority and other decision-making processes:

- having clarity of purpose
- using the most appropriate approach for informing and involving people
- being creative
- being responsive
- providing feedback

### **Topics for engagement**

4.10 Interviewees had organised and undertaken engagement with the public on a broad range of topics. Some of these were specific to legislative requirements, for instance planning legislation. Some facilitated consultation on policy developments at national (Scotland and UK) level to undertake consultations on government policies, involving workshops aimed at improving decision-making and focus groups to identify public priorities. Others were based on engaging with the public at a local level, to identify needs and opportunities and facilitate involvement in local decisions about service delivery and policy and service priorities.

### **Approaches and techniques**

4.11 The approaches used to engage the public varied according to 4 elements:

1. The type of the organisation undertaking the engagement process
2. The reasons for engaging the public
3. The intended outcomes
4. Local knowledge

4.12 One participant worked for a voluntary sector membership organisation. The members were an important focus for the engagement process, providing feedback on consultation documents and participating in stakeholder discussions. Another element of their engagement processes was the networks of their member organisations.

*“We set up a stakeholder steering group who provided advice and also access to their networks and contacts for meetings. Three open meetings were held across Scotland and an Internet electronic chat room was set up.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

4.13 Interviewees had used a wide range of approaches and techniques. These included public meetings, attendance at local meetings, organising community meetings, road shows, drop-in centres, focus groups, exhibitions, public inquiries and surveys. The techniques used by interviewees were varied, sometimes using a “mix and match” approach to engage with people. Thus one interviewee had described the local authority Structure Plan<sup>18</sup> consultation

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<sup>18</sup> “Structure Plans contain the land use planning policies and proposals which coordinate the requirements for development land with the protection of the environment at the strategic level.” Scottish Executive’s Planning Advice Note 37.

process that used a combination of mail shots and advertising in the local press followed by a series of workshops in key locations and council officers attending area committee<sup>19</sup>. A second series of meetings was organised to look at the draft plan produced. Two issues were identified. The process was affected by a lack of attendance at the initial meetings, with the second round consequently smaller. Attendance was also varied according to area type.

*“We then had workshops in key locations. These worked OK in the more middle class areas but the turn out in the [an outlying disadvantaged area] was very poor.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

## **Resource implications**

4.14 The cost of engagement processes, in time and money, was explored with interviewees. All agreed that effective consultation costs both time and money, with a need for adequate resources to cover all aspect of the engagement process. These included:

- the production of materials
- organisation of events
- facilitation
- recording
- feedback to those interested in the results of the engagement and to the participants

4.15 Interviewees however felt that it was important to clarify the purpose of the engagement, choose the most appropriate process and ensure that the resources were available.

*“Engagement is dependent on the issue at hand and the need to involve/consult people prior to progress being made. In terms of cost/benefit each has to be considered on its own merit. Public involvement does cost money, and take time – however if the outcome is successful it can be money and time well spent.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

4.16 Training and support for participants was not raised under the discussion of resources, but one interviewee highlighted the use of small group work sessions and facilitated meetings as successful processes. Another identified a stakeholder dialogue<sup>20</sup> process as the most effective engagement processes, both of which are time consuming for all participants. Another interviewee felt that:

*“Community councils also are consulted on developments as a matter of course. They perhaps should be better at getting informed of public opinion rather than the Council consulting them and then the wider community.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

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<sup>19</sup> Open meetings at local level involving councillors, council officers, community representatives and the general public.

<sup>20</sup> A stakeholder dialogue process is one where people with different perspectives and views, sometimes opposing views, work together to find consensus. It is a facilitated (independent facilitator), long term process aimed at increasing participants understanding of each others’ views and value bases in order to reach a workable agreement.

4.17 Participants felt that discussions about resourcing engagement processes could explore the broader benefits and implications of developing local capacity for engagement.

*“The community participants gain in the process, through learning, networking, developing and improving their ability to get involved.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

### **Effective engagement processes**

4.18 Exhibitions and information provision were identified as important elements of raising awareness and beginning any engagement process. Small groups, focus group work and facilitated meetings were seen as effective ways to engage with people. Stakeholder dialogue processes, which bring together a group of stakeholders, some with differing views, organised and facilitated by an independent body, is a long-term process of negotiation and discussion to ultimately impact on decisions. These were identified as important as a way of involving people in discussing concerns and issues, and in the longer term creating the basis for better decision-making. They are aimed at:

- developing an increased understanding of other peoples views
- reaching agreement where possible
- accepting that there will be times when agreement is not possible
- working towards consensus about the most effective decisions to meet the needs of the majority of the participants

*“Stakeholder dialogue has been the most successful so far, although not without its problems. It is about recognising the value judgements that people place on facts and information, and understanding why these judgements are made. Participants have to come prepared to compromise, and engage not from their own or organisation’s position on a subject, but to reach workable agreement where possible.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

4.19 Independent facilitation and organisation of engagement processes were identified as essential by 3 interviewees and the need for the process to be transparent and understandable, with each stage thought through. Participants also believed that dialogue, rather than information provision, is critical to process development.

4.20 Suspicion of the motives of those organising an engagement process, a fear of hidden agendas and manipulation of opinion were felt to have a negative impact on participative processes. All participants identified public meetings as potentially inadequate. Some felt that they could be hi-jacked by people with strong and unrepresentative views. One interviewee identified using websites to initiate a dialogue as a potentially useful development for the future. Another felt that consulting through the web can be ineffective because people first need to know where the information is. The information provided may prove to be inadequate and the response rate can be low.

## Process points

4.21 All interviewees agreed that the process of engagement is critical. They felt that whatever engagement approach is used the process has to be open and everyone who wishes to should have an opportunity to participate. This included involving people in framing the questions for discussion, shaping the process through a shared ownership of how it develops and in supporting people so that they can fully articulate their views about issues and opportunities.

4.22 One interviewee felt that discussion about the ‘principles of the process’ was an important starting point for establishing shared values.

*“What are the ‘principles’ of the process? There is a need to understand the importance and sanctity of the process, with agreement of all parties and realistic timescales. There is a need to create ‘space in the middle’ where core values sit. These can be eroded by other influences like funding bodies or the political process.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

This links back to elements of engagement identified in the general public focus groups. The process needs to have values that:

- enables trust to be established
- is based on on-going dialogue
- is transparent
- provides feedback on what decisions are made and why

## ENGAGING THE PUBLIC AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

4.23 The initial quality of engagement was seen to be dependent on:

- how much information people had
- whether the issue was important at local level
- if local people had a direct interest in the outcomes of the process

Some interviewees felt that people were more likely to engage in the process if the issue was contentious.

*“Any differences are about how contentious the issues are and what impact it might have on the local community. These factors we don’t really, but should, take into account in designing consultations.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

4.24 Understanding local engagement structures, how they work, the role they play within the community, was seen as an important element of engaging the public. There were 2 benefits identified in working alongside and informing these local groupings. Participants felt that these provide a useful way of ensuring that people can become engaged and they enable agencies to work with the community to establish joint solutions.

*“There is a need to get the community behind decisions being made, otherwise the “backlash” can be intense, long lasting and ultimately destructive.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

### *Non-participants*

4.25 All of the interviewees agreed that every effort should be made to ensure that the public is informed about the engagement processes, invited to participate and that a variety of methods and approaches are used to encourage engagement. There was agreement that the process should be accessible, although people could not be forced to engage.

*“You can only do so much and you should draw a line at some point and say ‘no more’. If it is designed properly and people have a choice to participate and don’t, then why labour it!”* (Public engagement interviewee)

4.26 Two interviewees also felt that people would only become involved when decisions they do not agree with have been taken, or that people will not participate until a decision affects them directly.

### **Key lessons to be learned**

4.27 The public engagement interviewees had varied experiences that provided important lessons for them in engaging the public had been very varied. The nature of these lessons can be brought together under 7 headings.

1. Clarity about the reason for engagement, the purpose of engagement and the potential interest level of those being asked to engage.

*“There is an issue about thinking strategically. Most people were interested in their own community. We spent time encouraging them to look outside their ‘own box’ and think about other communities and wider issues. Should we? Perhaps it would be better if they did not want to comment in one area on what should happen in another we should leave it at that.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

2. Establishing a set of core values with all participants as part of the initial process of engagement, including rules of engagement that everybody is aware of and accepts and the process dimensions of the engagement.

*“There needs to be a clear understanding, a contract at the beginning, setting out the responsibilities and expectations of everyone involved.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

3. Ensuring different techniques are used to engage with a variety of people and areas.

*“There needs to be a number of strands to the overall consultation that can and should be adapted to local circumstances when the process dictates.”*  
(Public engagement interviewee)

4. The process is based on understanding that views and knowledge change throughout, is transparent, responsive and long-term.

*“Providing people with the facts won’t make things all right, it is the judgement they place on the facts that is important. – there is a need to recognise this as part of the process.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

5. Providing effective support for participants based on the needs of those being engaged with (including information, training and access to additional support where necessary).

*“Skilled, objective and independent facilitators who understand group dynamics and negotiation, have tools and techniques to diffuse disagreements or enable dialogue, and can define and work with process are very important.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

6. The process is properly resourced based on the time and cost to all participants involved in the process.

*“The dialogue process is long term; short- term results cannot be achieved. It is resource intensive, and needs long- term commitment.”* (Public engagement interviewee)

7. Outcomes are evaluated and reported, by looking at the impact of the decision-making, the quality of the feedback and the experience of all those involved.

*“Make sure feedback is given – and decision-making process clarified.”*  
(Public engagement interviewee)

## **ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT DECISION MAKING PROCESSES**

4.28 There was agreement that public engagement and awareness around radioactive waste management are important elements of future decision-making. Participants felt that there was an obligation for government to consult people on issues that directly affected them. There was some concern expressed that traditional means of consultation, *“responding to publications”* (NGO interviewee) was inadequate. One interviewee suggested:

*“With issues that are of a conceptual or technical nature, some consultations of this kind require a level of expertise on issues which the public may not always have.”* (NGO interviewee)

4.29 Stakeholders (in the focus group and the interviews) considered it important to engage the public in current discussions and over the long-term. One participant suggested: *“If you don’t keep people informed they’ll find out and they’ll distrust/question reasons”*

(Stakeholder focus group participant). A group participant thought that people did not have the context to engage, and that this was an important issue for taking the process forward. This feeling was echoed by one of the Community Planning interviewees who expressed concern that in the short-term it is difficult to engage people because of the complexity of the subject and the emotional reaction that people may have.

*“People need their attitudes honed to the issues. They’re not knowledgeable enough or interested enough. They’re not interested in how we handle street waste. There’s a deficit of citizenship that has to be tackled across the board in the long term. The public are negative about [all] scientific experts [with conversations within and between] organisations going on above their heads. They have to be engaged. The language is hard, even though simpler language is feasible. It’s nonsense that you can’t translate; it can be translated so that people can understand.”* (Community Planning interviewee)

## **Essential elements of engagement**

4.30 Some essential elements of engagement were identified in the stakeholder focus group and the interviews. These included:

- stimulating interest and raising awareness of the issues (Stakeholder focus group and interviews)
- providing information for informed engagement, dealing with problems over technical language and the emotional response that some participants felt the subject can raise (Stakeholder focus group)
- engaging with people when there is a chance to help frame the questions and influence decisions (Stakeholder focus group)
- keeping the process open and transparent, to establish trust in the process (Stakeholder focus group and all of the interviews)

4.31 These were linked into the inter-generational responsibility that some participants felt was important to the long-term success of public engagement in decision-making on radioactive waste management (Stakeholder Focus Group). Developing a process that is open and transparent so that current and future generations can become engaged. This however led to at least 3 levels of engagement at national level, at local level, and over time.

*“There needs to be ongoing consultation, intergenerational. We’re talking about involving people at national level. It then becomes very local. Can it be phased? So science can change.”* (Stakeholder group participant)

4.32 All participants agreed that what has happened in the past has an effect on how people view current engagement processes. A national process was identified as one level of engagement required, with a more specific engagement process needed for working with particular communities who were directly affected by the decisions. The need for long-term engagement processes was identified to ensure an informed engagement process.

*“Is it the public’s right to know? What would they do with that information? But the pressure groups might use it. There’s a way through discussing this with people in a long-term process.”* (Community Planning interviewee)

4.33 Participants agreed that there is distrust of information in general, often linked to its source. *“If a solution is identified – where the information comes from comes into the discussion”* (Stakeholder focus group participant). The beliefs of those involved in promoting issues were identified as potential blocks to engagement. The media might sensationalise in preference to informing, NGOs might not accept the evidence of the government or industry experts, the government or the industry might not inform people about opposing views and the public might not want to know (Stakeholder focus group and NGO interviews). One participant felt that people did not want to become informed or involved, another however felt that: *“There’s a comfort factor in knowing that they can be if they want to be”* (Stakeholder group participant).

4.34 There was agreement amongst participants in the Stakeholder group about the importance of trust in developing any process of engagement, partly linked to the perceived lack of knowledge about the most effective solution to managing radioactive waste.

*“A problem the public will have is that they don’t think there is a solution at the moment. Much more public acceptance of something interim. How can the public trust something like that? It has to make sense.”* (Stakeholder group participant)

4.35 The stakeholder interviews and focus group identified the need for being clear about what possible outcomes there could be from the engagement process. Some participants felt that this was an essential element to consider when making a decision on why, and how, to engage the public. This reflected a particular concern about the power of those involved in an engagement process to influence any final decisions, especially where the power to decide to legislate might lie at a different level of government. One NGO interviewee reflected on the advertising campaign organised by a number of the green NGOs in response to a DTLR consultation in England, about a new Parliamentary Procedure for Processing Major Infrastructure Projects (such as airport runways and nuclear power plants). The slogan used: *“Your new power station goes here. What colour would you like the gates?”* highlighted what the NGOs felt was an important implication, that the decisions about the siting would be made before any engagement process was initiated.

*“This does not sit well alongside the DEFRA approach on consultation and public involvement, and has almost certainly engendered further public cynicism about getting involved in the nuclear debate.”* (NGO interviewee)

4.36 This concern was echoed by a Community Planning interviewee who felt that some issues go beyond the locality and beyond the powers of local service providers. The interviewee thought it was important to remember that the structures in place for engagement at local level also provide an opportunity to develop a national civic forum where national issues and opportunities can be discussed.

4.37 Studies by NGOs had identified a high level of trust in organisations like theirs. One NGO interviewee felt that this was because NGOs have *“the interests and welfare of the public as a priority”*, while another felt that it was partly about a democratic deficit, as shown by turnout at elections. *“NGOs have a membership of around 500,000 people in Scotland”*

(NGO interviewee) which was thought to reflect “*the interest and support for their values and philosophies.*”

4.38 Some NGO interviewees suggested that Government and other agencies could earn trust by:

- undertaking independent reviews of consultation processes and outcomes, and making these publicly available
- openness and transparency around the availability of information
- being clear about decision-making processes and the role and power of different levels of government and different departments to make or influence decisions

4.39 One NGO interviewee felt that the MRWS consultation document provided a more open approach to the issue of radioactive waste management than in the past. The interviewee thought that the lack of a pre-determined decision to bury the waste was positive. It was thought that most organisations would respond directly to the remaining questions, and perhaps gloss over the ‘How’ question.

### **How to engage the public**

*“If we want to change then decision-makers require learning and practising the skills associated with engagement processes to ensure effective presentation, pitch, level and use of available techniques. The public requires to learn, to be critical thinkers, able to assimilate information, be informed and to act as global citizens. If both sides developed the skills identified we could then have different discussions and responses to the engagement process. We should use civic society more as a voice to offer opinions on major consultation exercises and as a means of countering current vested interest by some stakeholders.”* (NGO interviewee)

4.40 The majority of participants felt that engagement processes need to be clear, with some adding that it also needs to have understandable and openly stated or agreed rules of engagement. Two NGO interviewees felt that while there has been some improvement in the government’s approach to presenting results of consultation processes, but that the process needs to be more open and transparent. One added some concern about current consultation processes, which leave organisations to comment and ultimately hope that they can influence a policy. One of the NGO interviewees suggested that:

*“Perhaps there is a need to be clear about the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.”* (NGO interviewee)

4.41 All participants agreed that there is the need for an informed debate and discussion. Some suggested that an imbalance of power between those involved in any engagement process meant that it is necessary to develop the most effective support and resources for all those involved, particularly in relation to radioactive waste.

*“This needs time and resources if we are talking about dialogue...The keys are time, stages and no pre-ordained outcome.”* (Stakeholder group participant)

4.42 There was some discussion about how engagement could be developed in Scotland. It was generally felt that the government needed a national overview of how people can become engaged. There was some cynicism expressed about the constant ‘reinvention of the wheel’. Interviewees pointed to the importance of not only responding to participants views and interests, but also of ensuring that experience was fed in to any continuing engagement process. Some Stakeholder group participants felt that Scotland and the UK were not used to referenda and there is no public forum for engagement or involvement.

4.43 NGO and Community Planning interviewees and Stakeholder participants had a range of experience and ideas on how to engage the public. One NGO interviewee identified using websites to post information and key messages, mailing information and literature to interested parties, leafleting the general public, and working with other NGOs towards common goals. Another NGO interviewee used public events like the science festival, country fairs, supporters conferences, facilitated research focus groups of supporters and non-supporters. The use of independent reviews of performance was felt by this interviewee to be an important part of their engagement procedure.

4.44 Community Planning interviewees had also used a range of methods and techniques for engaging with the public. Local Authority Community Planning members had experience of local engagement structures established as part of their approach to local governance and service delivery. These included information provision, citizens panels and area committees and forums, as well as working with community councils individually and collectively. One interviewee identified community councils<sup>21</sup> as an important avenue for increased involvement and activity.

4.45 Another community plan area was following the development of the initial community plan with developments at local level.

*“There are 40 groups writing the local plan to fit into the community plan. Initially the process was top down, now it is more bottom-up, so communities can engage more. Different communities have different issues, so that has to be balanced.”* (Community Planning interviewee)

4.46 This meant that existing area committees and neighbourhood and area forums were identified as important aspects of developing the Community Planning strategy and ultimately its implementation. While the majority of these structures for engagement were part of the local authority overall engagement process, 3 interviewees were hopeful that ultimately other service providers, like health and the local enterprise company, would increasingly work with them.

*“The Health Board were inclined to be separate before, but they now use the area forums etc. The Acute Trust tried to undertake an engagement process on a programme they wanted to consult on without working through the Council system. Nobody came. Then they did it through the Council system, with more success.”* (Community Planning interviewee)

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<sup>21</sup> There are approximately 1200 community councils in Scotland representing populations of between 80 and 30,000 people.

4.47 The role of these kinds of engagement structures in developing a national engagement approaches poses an interesting question about the potential links there are from national to local public engagement. While generally interviewees did feel that the community plan was a way to engage the public at local level, engaging the public on decision-making about radioactive waste management was identified as partly about the development of civic Scotland. One Community Planning interviewee felt that such issues go beyond the locality and powers of local service providers, and need some form of a national civic discussion is necessary. Public experience of engaging at local authority level creates space to develop people's skills and knowledge in understanding and influencing decision-making.

4.48 A suggestion was made in the Stakeholder group that it might be useful to train some people within a community to enable them to inform their neighbours. It was felt that this broadening out of discussions and information could enable "*more ambitious and innovative approaches to tackling areas of public concern*" (NGO interviewee).

4.49 One NGO interviewee felt that the BNFL Stakeholder Dialogue Process<sup>22</sup> brought together interested parties in a different way. The interviewee, however, raised 2 important issues in relation to this process:

1. The time commitment it entails from all participants
2. The fact that the influence on BNFL policy was not transparent

4.50 Raising awareness through press releases and face-to-face briefings with environmental, energy and industry journalists and some campaigning through rock concerts and clubs to engage with a wider public had also been used (NGO interviewee). Education as a means of raising awareness and knowledge was felt to be important.

*"Young people and their education is an important way of introducing energy alternatives into public awareness. The focus of activity should be aimed at the younger generation."* (NGO interviewee)

4.51 Plain English and as little technical language as possible would help to ensure that people can understand the issues and options under discussion (all participants). A broader discussion about the environment, particularly alternative sources of energy, was felt to be important as part of decision making processes on the management of current radioactive waste (Stakeholder Focus Group participants and for the NGO interviewees). Appropriate mechanisms for engagement, and adequate resources in time and money were identified as other necessary elements for consideration.

4.52 The Community Planning partner interviewees from local authorities felt that their experience in public engagement, accumulated over the last decade, had taught them a great deal.

*"The local authority has learned and needs to learn more. Partner organisations need to change."* (Community Planning interviewee)

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<sup>22</sup> The BNFL stakeholder dialogue involves a wide range of organisations and individuals interested in or concerned about nuclear issues. Its aim is to inform BNFL's decision-making process about the improvement of their environmental performance in the context of their overall development.

4.53 There was agreement about the importance of trust in developing any process of engagement, partly linked to the perceived lack of knowledge about the most effective solution to managing radioactive waste.

*“A problem the public will have is that they don’t think there is a solution at the moment. Much more public acceptance of something interim. How can the public trust something like that? It has to make sense.”* (NGO interviewee)

4.54 Who people trust was also part of a wide-ranging discussion, covering issues outside the management of radioactive waste. The experiences of some participants around landfill sites and the perceived dangers of other substances that create waste products were seen as part of the difficulty in establishing an effective engagement process. One participant highlighted this concern and linked it to some of the unequal pressures on the public face when trying they are to influence decisions.

*“There was a public inquiry into open cast mining and the community activist who was trying to influence the process was on night shift [therefore working all night and attending the inquiry during the day]. It was unequal and adversarial.”* (Stakeholder group participant)

4.55 There was some discussion about how people respond emotionally to radioactive waste and the difficulties that this poses for the industry and for decision-making processes.

*“There is a dislocation between industry and the other side. The industry side sees it as half-lives and even those decay over in the long term. It is not seen as the same [kind of issue] as asbestos, toxic. What about asbestos? This does not have the same emotional response.”* (Stakeholder group participant)

One participant felt that there was a difference because people believe that there will be solutions for dealing with other waste products and therefore people can ‘disconnect from it’.

4.56 Some group participants and interviewees thought that a perceived secrecy about radioactive waste in the past was a stumbling block to engaging the public. There was also a feeling that discussion is polarised, with widely different, and often opposing, views on radioactive waste issues. This meant that the majority of participants saw problems in developing effective public engagement and in coming to consensual decisions. However, all stakeholder group participants agreed that it is important to begin to have a broader and less polarised discussion so that solutions could be agreed and implemented.

*“What is missing at national level? What are the costs and benefits of this route? What will happen if everybody says no?”* (Stakeholder group participant)

4.57 Different levels of engagement were also seen as an important element of engaging with the public. Stakeholder participants also noted that some of the ‘affected’ public probably feel compelled to participate in this debate - for them, involvement is not a ‘take it or leave it’ option. Some also highlighted the difficulties the process might come up against if there was general agreement on siting and the local community did not accept this consensus. One participant suggested that effective engagement at all levels of the process

needed to be: “*Up front on what the process will be, use that and then it will not be adversarial.*” (Stakeholder group participant)

4.58 The need for balanced and trusted information was very clearly reflected across all of the focus group work and within the participation interviews. One potential source of trusted information was that provided by NGOs, which many participants felt was ‘independent’. Although some stakeholder group participants and NGO interviewees also felt that it was not always unbiased, the importance of being able to understand the issues around radioactive waste management meant that the majority of participants wished to access ‘both sides’ of the story.

4.59 Production of information, raising awareness of the issues and attending meetings and events were all seen as roles that NGOs could play in moving the discussion forward (NGO interviewee). However, one interviewee raised concerns about becoming involved in discussions about “the solution” to nuclear waste, feeling that it might involve accepting the “*least worst option*” and because the organisation “*will only fully discuss options after there are decisions taken to stop producing more waste.*” (NGO interviewee)

## **MEDIA INTERVIEWS**

4.60 The role of the media in providing information about radioactive waste had been identified as an issue in the all of the focus groups and some of the interviews, with one NGO interviewee feeling that:

*“Some media coverage lacked depth of analysis and objectivity, sometimes focusing on the sensational, although there were some fair and objectives articles to be found.”* (NGO interviewee)

## **Expertise and independence**

4.61 One media interviewee referred to the Eurobarometer survey (see paragraph 3.62), which showed similar average patterns of trust to those found during this research project (with some important variations between EU member states). Independent experts and scientists were found to be the most trusted source of information on radioactive waste. The industry were the least trusted and the media scored middling levels of trust. When asked about the findings that focus group participants valued the role of “independent experts”, while recognising the limits to formal expertise and that participants had wanted the public to make an informed contribution to decision-making, one interviewee felt:

*“There is a lot of subjectivity amid the science. Experts give you information and choices, but politicians must make the decisions...and this is a part of science that the public really should be involved in. That has to be the way of getting better decisions.”* (Media interviewee)

## Reporting radioactive waste

4.62 Media interviewees were asked about the finding that most focus group participants thought that the media tended to “sensationalise” stories about the nuclear industry and waste management. One agreed that much tabloid reporting has been “nonsense”, guaranteed to have a scare-mongering effect. The interviewee felt that a detailed dossier could be compiled on all of the inaccurate “waste to be dumped here” stories.

*“It is almost a badge of honour on some tabloids to know nothing more than Joe Public...flawed logic among these editors about what their readers want to know is taking us backwards.” (Media interviewee)*

4.63 Interviewees were not surprised that participants in the ‘unaffected public’ focus group were particularly critical of media reporting of the Dounreay nuclear installation. One felt that exaggerated reporting had provoked a defensive reaction from the local population, making it all the more difficult to stand back and assess the overall effect of developments like Dounreay.

4.64 In contrast, a broadsheet paper that one interviewee writes for expected the journalist to have prior knowledge and be able to explain the broader context around a story, in order to write for the interested non-expert.

4.65 Interviewees felt that the incentives for journalists rarely to report “*the whole story - good and bad news*”, as some focus group participants had called for, were rare. They agreed that, particularly in the print media, articles are most often prompted by information that leaks out or news that would otherwise be covered up: “*something that someone doesn't want you to print.*” Interviewees believed that the pressure is on journalists to find a distinctive news angle rather than to report “*good news which is not news*”. One identified some of the frustrations felt by government and the industry about the reporting of positive factual information, feeling that both had learned from environmental NGOs, which had long recognised the impact of their work with the media.

*“In the past at least, one press officer at [an environmental NGO] got more publicity for a government department/agency than it did itself... The radioactive waste problem is as much a public relations problem as a technical problem. It has been poorly handled for decades.” (Media interviewee)*

4.66 When asked about the trend in reporting issues like radioactive waste over recent years, 2 interviewees believed that the changing media environment meant it had been getting harder to report seriously, even in broadsheet newspapers. They felt that the television news offered some scope for “*fair and accurate reporting*”. One thought, however, it had become particularly difficult to get in-depth discussion on difficult issues of public interest through documentaries or general discussions on television.

4.67 On the other hand, one interviewee believed the conditions for reporting in the public interest may have been improving slowly, identifying a combination of government pressure and media scrutiny as important in encouraging the nuclear industry to disclose relevant information.

*“The industry has got better slowly, but it could be more straightforward. It still gets caught out not telling the whole truth.”* (Media interviewee)

4.68 Interviewees identified the emergence of multiple news channels through the Internet and digital television as possible routes to change, perhaps increasing choice (depending on patterns of media ownership). It was thought that these trends could reduce public interest in in-depth news reporting or they might stimulate a better-informed and more demanding public.

### **The reporter's role**

4.69 One interviewee, with experience of writing for the generalist newspaper market as well as for specialist journals, felt that articles are written to prompt responses. The interviewee pointed to a sense of frustration when an article gets no response, believing that *“negative feedback is better than silence”*. Another thought that a well-researched and challenging story can be *“surprisingly influential”* and that its impact might not be fully understood at the time. In one example, a source who had been close to the policy-making process revealed that the direction of government policy appeared to have been influenced by a *“change in climate”* coinciding with a hard-hitting newspaper article.

4.70 Interviewees were asked to consider the issue of accountability - how journalists and media companies do and should take responsibility for their actions to match the influence they have. Interviewees said that for individual journalists (especially freelance) and broadcasters, their personal reputation is crucially important. They agreed that there was one basic rule: *“you don't write things that are going to land you in legal trouble.”* They pointed out that the legal system can provide redress for individuals and organisations found to be misrepresented in a damaging way. Interviewees mentioned cases of colleagues who had been subjected to action through the Press Complaints Commission, feeling that libel laws have helped to underline:

*“...the duty that most broadsheets and broadcasters feel to report in an accurate manner...complaints made without an obvious vested interest would be taken very seriously by editors.”* (Media interviewee)

4.71 One interviewee believed that this meant non-tabloid reporters were less likely to take risks and develop stories as speculatively as they might have in the past.

### **Involving the public: opportunities and limits**

4.72 Media interviewees believed that better ways of informing and involving the public in radioactive waste decisions have to be found, partly because of the historical experience in Britain. They all felt that the industry's control of waste production and disposal had had a damaging effect on public confidence but that the government now appeared to have recognised the extent of the problem. One pointed to the process for identifying a shortlist of sites for waste storage, feeling it had been *“patronising, secretive and assumed that government knew best”*, even if it had been based on the cautionary principle of not taking further action until the evidence base was improved. Sweden was identified by one

interviewee as a European neighbour that had handled the process of public engagement better than Britain.

4.73 While none of the interviewees claimed detailed knowledge about how best to involve the public, they agreed that even the most effective approaches would not result in “*easy answers to complex problems*”. The Ministry of Defence consultation on dismantling of nuclear submarines and disposal of radioactive waste<sup>23</sup> was identified as an example of a significant change towards greater openness in one part of government. The current process of engaging the public around the MRWS consultation programme was itself seen as a step forward. However, all interviewees talked of a “crunch point” after consultation and consensus-building, when hard decisions would have to be made on how to dispose of nuclear submarines and where to store or bury waste from nuclear installations. They felt that carefully agreed principles arising from a process of engaging *the public as citizens* would have to be negotiated in an even more sensitive manner as part of a process of engaging *the public as residents* in a potentially affected community.

### **Changing the nature of public engagement**

4.74 A comprehensive review of how environmental NGOs approach public consultation and engagement was considered a possible way forward (NGO interviewee). All 3 NGO interviewees felt that they have an important role to play in engaging the public on this kind of issue. One suggested:

*“One approach may be to change the current process, by adding an additional step, which would involve consulting other groups e.g. Scottish Civic Forum, NGOs, community groups for their opinion and input prior to information going out to the general public. NGOs can also use their networks and Internet facilities to act as a medium to host discussions on areas of common interest (e.g. education, planning). This could help to streamline the process, broaden the range of participants, engage NGOs as active participants and provide a more balanced approach.”* (NGO interviewee)

However, participants raised issues about the resources required to fulfil these roles and how these could be met.

4.75 The Community Planning partners interviewed also felt that the public experience of engaging at local authority level creates space to develop people’s skills and knowledge in understanding and influencing decision-making. Awareness raising and increased public engagement in local service planning are one of the aims of the Community Planning process, a second is to support the development of independent civic engagement, which can interact with and influence policy makers. The possible links between national and local public engagement processes were identified as an important element in moving forward (Community Planning interviewee).

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<sup>23</sup> Project ISOLUS – Front End Consultation – Final Report to MOD, CSEC, Lancaster University, September 2001 .

4.76 The international dimension of public engagement had changed over the last few years and one interviewee pointed out that most of their enquiries from the public come from the internet, increasing the global audience who access to their website. International interest is not just from members of the public; it was also suggested that Norway and Ireland are interested in the outcome of the MRWS consultation.

### Summary of key points

- Clarity about the reason and purpose of engagement and the potential interest level of those being asked to engage is essential.
- Establish a set of core values with all participants as part of the initial process of engagement, including rules of engagement that everybody is aware of and accepts.
- Ensure that different techniques are used to engage with a variety of people and areas.
- Develop processes that are transparent, responsive and long-term and based on understanding that views and knowledge change throughout.
- Provide effective support for participants based on the needs of those being engaged.
- Ensure that the processes are properly resourced based on the time and cost to all participants involved.
- Ensure that outcomes are evaluated and reported, by looking at the impact of decision-making, the quality of the feedback and the experience of all those involved.
- A broader discussion about the environment, particularly alternative sources of energy, is an important part of decision-making processes on the management of radioactive waste.
- A broader and less polarised discussion about radioactive waste management is needed so that solutions can be agreed and implemented.
- Media coverage of managing radioactive waste is most often prompted by information that leaks out and the pressure is on journalists to find a distinctive news angle rather than to report “*good news which is not news*”.
- Develop processes based on the ‘values’ of *knowledge, relevance, transparency, dialogue, trust and full disclosure*.

## CHAPTER FIVE: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Participants in the study generated a great many ideas, based on their general experience and on their expert knowledge. They also raised some important questions to be considered in any engagement process. This section explores the most important themes that were identified:

- reasons for engagement
- rules of engagement
- issues and opportunities in engagement
- methods and processes
- necessary support
- resource implications

5.2 Participants' experience has been used to develop a framework for engagement (Figure 5.1). This will enable decision-makers to identify the most important elements for consideration when engaging the public. This provides the framework for the literature review. There are a series of questions to be posed in initiating any engagement process:

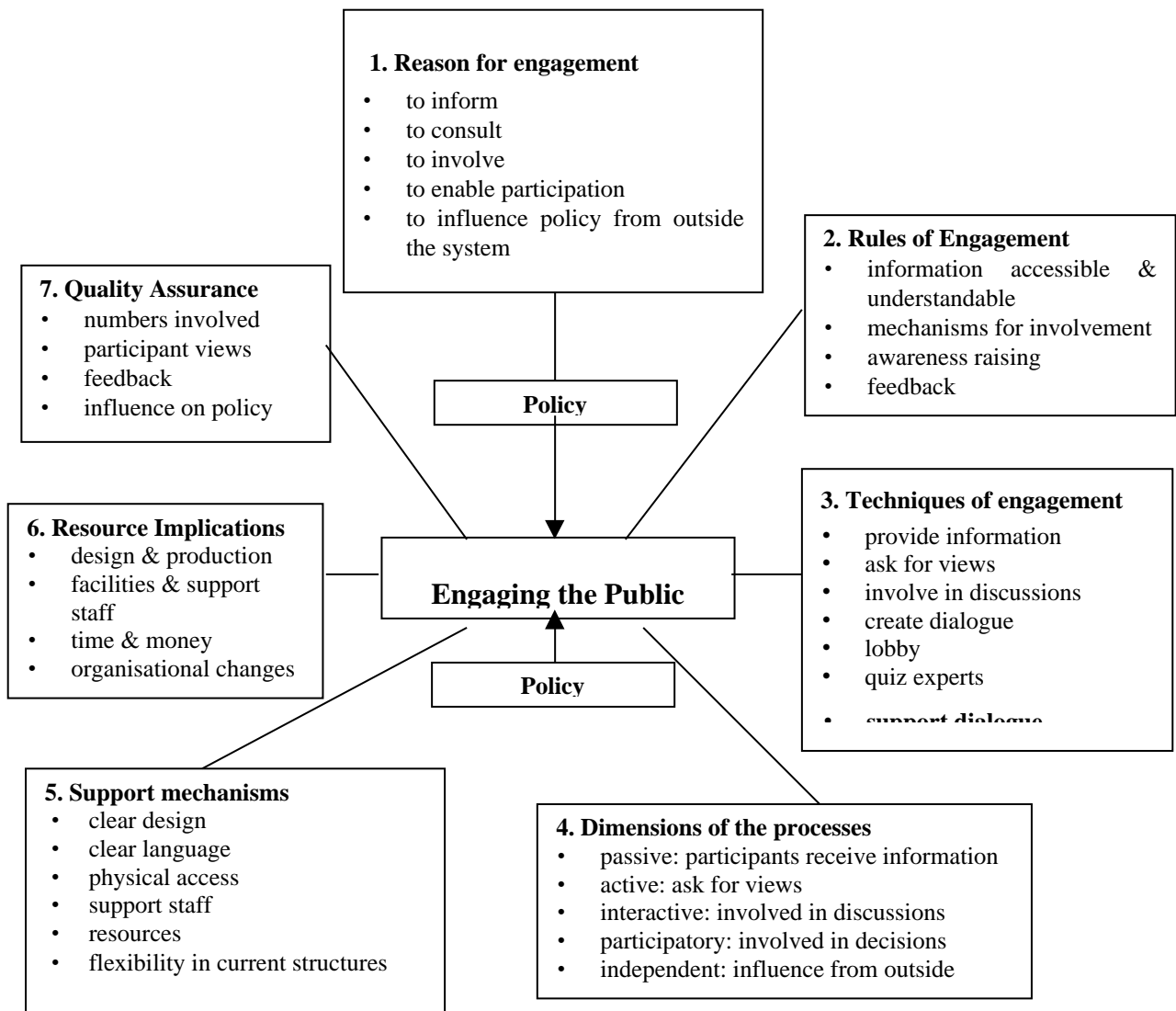
- **Why involve the public?** If decision-makers do not see engagement as valid, they will need to engage in a dialogue to explain the reasons for that decision. This in itself initiates an engagement process. It is therefore feasible to decide 'no', as realistically meaning 'not yet'. This research highlights a strong level of interest *from the public* in engaging with people around long-term and difficult decisions. This can legitimate decision-making processes.
- **What are the implications of engagement?** One of the first issues identified by participants and interviewees was a lack of trust in decision-making processes. Many felt that this was a result of experience where feedback was not given, they did not know if they had influenced policy and they did not know why the final decision had been taken. Interviewees all felt that effective engagement needed information that could be trusted. Some felt that it is important that engagement shows different expert opinions about possible options and that it recognises that those engaging will also change as they learn through the process.
- **Do bodies organising engagement processes expect to learn?** Some cynicism was expressed about the constant 'reinvention of the wheel'. Interviewees pointed to the importance of not only responding to participants views and interests, but also of ensuring that experience was fed in to any continuing engagement process.
- **Is there a commitment in the long-term?** All of those interviewed identified the importance of continuing to inform and involve people, enabling them to engage if they wish. This is an important element of whatever process is undertaken.
- **What can the engagement process do or not do?** Honesty about the possibilities of the engagement process was seen as an essential element of engagement. Some of the confusion identified in this area was based on conflicting legislation, so that consultation might be obligatory when the ability to influence the decision does not exist.

- **Is the purpose of the engagement clear?** Techniques and processes for engagement can determine the outcome of the engagement. It is important that methodologies are open enough to challenge underlying assumptions (of all participants) and benefit from the learning process that they initiate.
- **What is the difference between process and practice?** Engagement involves a process of consent, from those who are undertaking it and from those who are participating in it. By its nature it involves people in developing more understanding of the issues and opportunities involved. It is thus important to recognise the fact that the techniques used will stimulate a different level of knowledge and understanding, that the process involved provides a learning opportunity to change the shape of the engagement, potentially requiring new techniques to deal with this. To a great extent process is practice.
- **Who should be involved?** One of the main findings of this study has been the level of trust that people have in NGOs or organisations seen as independent of the decision making process. This poses particular questions to those organisations about the nature of their engagement in decision-making processes. Their ability to influence policy from outside of the policy-making process is an important element of their perceived independence. Is it possible that they can participate in a dialogue with the public and decision-makers and continue to be seen as independent?
- **Where can people access public information?** The importance of information for any engagement process was reflected across the focus groups and interviews. People felt that engagement demands clear, understandable and full information. Information provided by the government and the industry was generally viewed with suspicion. Independent information from NGOs was felt to be more balanced by some participants, although others felt that it was presented for the organisations' agendas rather than for balance. The majority of participants felt coverage by the media was generally sensationalist and often misleading. Media interviewees agreed that some reporting could be inaccurate, but also noted that it could be difficult to report seriously even in the broadsheets. Overall participants felt that any information provided needs to reflect some of the different views of experts, allowing those involved to feel that they are building a better understanding of the issues, so that they can engage more effectively.

### Summary of questions

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why involve the public?</li> <li>• What are the implications of engagement?</li> <li>• Do bodies organising engagement processes expect to learn?</li> <li>• Is there a commitment in the long term?</li> <li>• What can or can't the engagement process do?</li> <li>• Is the purpose of the engagement clear?</li> <li>• What is the difference between process and practice?</li> <li>• Who should be involved?</li> <li>• Where can people access public information</li> </ul> |
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**Figure 5.1 Engaging the public: a framework for engagement**



## CHAPTER SIX: LITERATURE REVIEW

6.1 The literature review presented in this chapter follows the structure of the preceding chapters. The chapter begins with an overview of findings from the literature on engaging the public in decision-making processes specific to radioactive waste management, exploring approaches, lessons and principles identified from the field. This is followed by an investigation of the processes involved in the broader field of public engagement, with a particular interest in current methods in use in Scotland.

## **ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT: OVERVIEW**

6.2 Recent research (Ferguson & Malina, 1999; Hunt & Wynne, 2000) related to consultation and involvement in issues around radioactive waste has highlighted the importance of engaging with the public at an early stage and the need for clear and concise information provided in a format appropriate to the audience. There is now considerable international experience in engaging with the public to develop radioactive waste management policy. The MWRS consultation document gives a useful overview of processes undertaken in other countries (DEFRA, 2001), while an independent analysis of the different approaches identifies the following lessons (Hunt *et al*, 2001:23):

- innovation in methods of dialogue and procedures for engagement
- public and stakeholder involvement in determining the guiding principles is increasingly seen as essential to legitimising the process
- the opportunity to deal with societal issues around radioactive waste management solutions is essential
- longer timescales for public engagement are now recognised as inevitable and necessary
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures are based on sound principles. In countries where EIAs have drawn upon wider societal values in the dialogue appear to have made more consistent progress (Finland and Sweden are cited as examples)
- site selection has to be part of a comprehensive package of actions tailored to the communities in question
- stakeholders, including the public, have brought valuable information, ideas and opinions to the decision-making process

6.3 These can be categorised under 3 headings, namely *informing*, *consulting* and *involving* stakeholders (including the public) in discussions about national policy development and in decision-making about siting arrangements. The experience of different national and local approaches demonstrates the varying criteria that distinct engagement processes require.

6.4 The public involvement experience of recent years has increased awareness of when and why the public is most likely to become engaged. These are issues considered as “close to home”, of national relevance and involving a high enough degree of risk or resonance at the local level (Edwards, 2001; Hunt *et al*, 2001). If the subject is considered clearly relevant, there is a keener interest in becoming engaged. Although it is thought that the majority of members of the public only become motivated to become involved when the issue has clear local significance, members of the public taking part in this study demonstrated a high level of interest in whole population approaches to engagement, as well as specific engagement processes around siting decisions.

6.5 Before the 1990s, most public engagement work in the UK was based on standard consultation procedures. Increased interest and experience in local government and health authorities in public engagement has impacted on processes used to develop public involvement in radioactive waste management (Hunt *et al*, 2001). The combination of increased awareness of the range of methods, learning from processes in other sectors and international experience raises important questions about the purpose of engagement:

*“Legitimacy follows on from transparency. If action is taken by agencies on the basis of process results, it will not be considered legitimate unless the processes themselves were conducted in as transparent a manner as possible. However, the process itself needs to be judged as legitimate by the participants as well as wider audiences.”* (Hunt, 2001:10)

6.6 In developing processes that are considered legitimate, equal attention has to be given to the primary purpose and intended outcomes when choosing the methods to be used. This relates to previous findings that organising an engagement process reflects the underlying beliefs of those undertaking the process, about what people need to know and how this can be provided (Hunt, 2001). An engagement process, whether a paper-based exercise or a public discussion forum, that assumes all that is needed is the “right” information, and ignores alternative or conflicting arguments from others with an informed interest in the subject, can create a cynical response.

6.7 An evaluation of stakeholder involvement and public participation in the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified similar issues to this research (January 2001). The EPA found that people may have difficulty in becoming involved in technical discussions because of a belief that they will be unable to influence outcomes significantly, or because they lack time to participate. Non-participation may be a cultural way of indicating opposition. The provision of information and its credibility may depend on whether the conclusions can be confirmed or reproduced by an outside source. The researchers also found that easy access to credible experts helped participants to become engaged, and that agency staff themselves required training in participation techniques. It was also suggested that care should be taken to ensure that the media understand partnership efforts and explain them to the community.

6.8 Experience in developing strategies for radioactive waste management is being used to develop the ‘step-wise’ decision-making approach which has been developed over the last few years with important considerations identified for the process of engagement (OECD, 2002). This identifies 3 principles of decision-making:

1. decision-making should facilitate social learning processes, by promoting interactions between various stakeholders and experts
2. constructive and high-quality communication should be facilitated between individuals with different knowledge, beliefs, interests, values and world-views
3. decision-making should be iterative and should provide for adaptation to contextual changes

This suggests some important implications for the most effective way of engaging with the public in managing radioactive waste safely in Scotland.

## **ENGAGING WITH THE PUBLIC OVERVIEW**

6.9 Literature on engaging with the public across a range of decision-making processes provides the basis of this section of the literature review. These findings are presented around the following themes that were discussed in Chapter 5:

- reasons for engagement
- purpose of engagement
- rules of engagement
- methods
- support and resources
- quality assurance

### **Reasons for engagement**

*“If values are socially embedded and must be interpreted in light of the realities to which they are applied, then the people who actually experience social problems must be given a voice in the analysis and development of policies which are intended to solve those problems. It is “their” reality, after all, which the policies are to address.” (Donnison, 1994:31)*

6.10 Experience of policy development at local level has increased awareness of the benefits of involving those whose lives will be changed by implementing policy. Effective decision-making is considered by decision-makers and those responsible for delivery of services (DETR, 1998, SOLACE, 1998, Scottish Office & COSLA, 1998) to be dependent on increased public awareness of issues and growing demand from policy-makers to engage the public. One element in the growth of public involvement in UK policy can be traced during the 1980s as part of the process of implementing policies based on a consumerist choice model of society (Taylor, 1988). A customer approach was fostered by the development of the Conservative Governments’ local government policies during the 1980s and 1990s. The language of consumerism, of customers and clients, became an everyday part of local service delivery as local government’s role was redefined to that of ‘enabling authority’, a commissioner rather than a provider of services (Brown & Elrick, 1999). A customer approach centres on individuals as service users, using primarily the consumer principles of *access, information, choice, safety, redress and representation* (Scottish Consumer Council, 1997).

6.11 These principles of consumerism provided the basis for policy developments in engaging with the public, underpinning increased activities in listening to, speaking to and becoming more accessible to the consumer. One element, however that created some confusion in the implementation of engagement processes was choice. It is argued that assumptions about choice - an individual's right to access services they need or to go elsewhere - proved to have some fundamental difficulties (Burns *et al*, 1994, Brown & Elrick, 1999). For example, customers have choice, taking their business to where they will get what they seek, while service receivers (in services like social work or housing) do not generally have the freedom to seek those services elsewhere. Generally during this period the emerging policies created a clear strand of public participation based on consumerist rights and values.

6.12 A second element of increased interest in public engagement in the policy process is concern about the democratic deficit highlighted by:

- the low turn out at elections
- a lack of public engagement in the political process
- a perception of sleaze in politics
- an identified need for a strong civic society to revive interest in representative democracy (Henderson & Salmon, 1998).

6.13 The consumerist principle of engagement is one part of the equation, for improving people's quality of life. It is important to focus not only on getting close to the consumer however, but also on the development of citizenship (Hambleton & Hoggett, 1990)

*“Market research oversimplifies and complaints procedures isolate and individualise users. Joint committees expect user and community participants to understand and conform to organisational practices, without any introduction or explanation, and without any consideration for their needs and way of operating.”* (Taylor & McConnell, 1988:226)

6.14 At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all levels of government have an interest in working more closely with citizens and their associations, seeking a greater input into decision-making, shaping policies for the future and delivering key services. In North America this has been organised at national level through the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA carried out a state source water assessment programme in one state in 1996, where groups of citizens chose the structure and the decision-making process of an agency sponsored citizen advisory committee. At a more local level, the City of Vancouver produced a guide entitled *How to Participate in City Processes: A Guide for the Public*, inviting the public to sit on a variety of advisory committees and boards that advise the city administration and set policy or direction in important services like the Police and the Library. There is a growing set of opportunities available for people to become engaged with policy makers in Scotland (see Methods of Engagement below). These vary from statutory processes where consultation is required, for instance in local planning, to organisations that have been established to represent views or lobby on issues.

6.15 As these new relationships have evolved; governments have increased their reliance upon the active contribution of citizens to making better decisions and achieving policy objectives. From this perspective, strengthening government relations with citizens represents a sound investment for tapping new sources of policy-relevant ideas and resources

for implementation. Such efforts also make a major contribution to enhancing the transparency, openness and accountability of government (OECD 2001). The reason for engagement begins by establishing whether the public is to be engaged as citizens (the broad public interest) or consumers (service users).

### **Purpose of engagement**

6.16 Despite the resurgence of interest in public engagement there are questions about whether it is an essential element of a democratic decision-making process (Donnison, 1994), an opening up of local democracy and consumer choice (Burns *et al*, 1996), an approach to empowering disenfranchised groups or a process that makes it easier for government agencies to implement programmes (Beierle, 1998). There is also an increasing global dimension to governmental decision-making. Decisions are open to public scrutiny and subject to direct and indirect pressure from citizens in other countries, notably via international media and the Internet. External observers will closely watch how they respond to such new influences when making policy decisions (OECD, 2001). A lack of trust in formal decision-making processes and in politics in general has also stimulated many of the developments in public engagement processes:

*“One of the central themes [of modernising government] is that government will make policy by learning and not thinking it always has the right answer. By listening to, and learning from, people’s views government is better able to provide the services that people want.”* (Cunningham, 1999: 1)

6.17 For others, engagement can be a legal requirement, or it can be undertaken for public relations/corporate social responsibility reasons. The purpose can be to influence decision-making where there are issues of genuine uncertainty. The purpose of engagement can be (Boyes *et al*, 2001):

- to inform the public of decisions that have already been made
- to ask for the public’s views on decisions that are to be made
- to involve the public in discussions about what they feel are the issues and opportunities that need to be considered in the decision-making process
- to involve them directly in making decisions
- to influence the decision making process from outside the policy process

There is an underlying assumption at all levels of government that engagement processes will help better-informed and more legitimate decisions to be made (Armstrong, 1997, COSLA, 1998, Scottish Office, 1996).

6.18 The literature review identified the purposes of engagement across a range of processes. These varied from consultations, for instance on the development of National Parks in Scotland (Downie & Forsyth, 2001), to providing information on policy developments in order to seek views, for example by informing young people about the development of the Scottish Parliament and seeking their ideas and aspirations (Scottish Office, 1998). Other examples include approaches to establishing mechanisms for engagement in local authority services, in developing decentralisation (Elrick, 1999), members of the public identifying their own priorities and opportunities to inform decision-

makers (McCormick, 1998) and jointly developing local solutions in partnership with decision-makers (Elrick, 1996).

## **Rules of engagement**

6.19 There are some fundamental rules to be considered when an engagement process is initiated, to ensure that all participants have an understanding of how their engagement in the process will impact on decision-making. In the UK, a code of practice on written consultations by the Cabinet Office issued in 2001 highlights that post-consultation decisions should be made public promptly with a summary of views expressed (subject to respondents' requests for confidentiality) and clear reasons for rejecting options that were not adopted, offering an implicit set of rules of engagement. The Scottish Parliament has 4 founding principles that should have an impact on developing engagement processes in Scotland (Consultative Steering Group, 1999). These are:

- power sharing
- accountability
- openness and participation
- equal opportunities

6.20 There appears to be very little published evidence setting out the roles and responsibilities of consulting bodies and of those who actively participate. Evaluation instead tends to focus on how processes of involvement were used. Involvement in the decision-making process requires not only an open invitation to participate but also a forum for careful deliberation and a mechanism for incorporating the results of technical analyses (Gregory, 2000).

6.21 Use of the Internet as a means of involving the public is increasing and rules of engagement can generally be found early on in the process. However, these tend to be of a technical nature as specified in an electronic consultation study commissioned by the Scottish Executive (Smith & Macintosh, 2001) using a website address for e-consultation. This contained a clear statement on the conditions of use of the site and a clear statement on privacy.

6.22 Rules of engagement were identified in 3 of the international reports and 15 of the Scottish reports reviewed. These included the need for engagement to be open, inclusive, and not solely dependent on written or verbal skills of participants (Hallhead *et al*, 2001, Downie & Forsyth, 2001, Ritchie, 2001). Experience also indicated that using structures that already exist to inform and involve people can be an effective way of dealing with consultation fatigue (Scottish Office, 1998) and using the arts as a medium for engagement broadens the scope of the process (Elrick, 1998). It was also seen as important to work with issues that are of direct interest to participants (Elrick, 1996), as well as providing access to independent expertise as an important element of the process (McCormick, 2001). Finally those organising the engagement process should inform participants how they will be informed of the outcomes of their involvement (Scottish Executive, 2002).

## Process dimensions of the Processes of Engagement

6.23 No consistent set of definitions is applied to ways of enabling the public to explore significant issues and express their views more effectively. “Engagement”, “consultation”, “involvement” and “participation” have tended to be used interchangeably, despite meaning different things to consulting bodies and those engaged in the process. The terms “stakeholder” and the “public” also cover a range of definitions. “Stakeholder” is typically used to mean everyone who has an interest in an issue, which could mean the population as a whole, those who are directly affected, or the institutional parties more closely involved (Hunt *et al*, 2001). Harris & Robinson (2000) suggest that members of the public are motivated *to engage with issues rather than processes*, and are best thought of as made up of 3 groups:

- those who have a stake and are aware of it
- those who have a stake but are not yet aware of it
- those with neither a stake nor an interest in the issue

6.24 Arnstein’s ladder of participation identified 3 elements in engagement processes (Arnstein, 1971):

- non-participation, based on manipulation and therapy
- tokenism, based on information, consultation and placation
- citizens’ power, based on partnership, delegated power and citizen control

6.25 This typology was adapted by Burns *et al* (1994) to focus on citizen non-participation, citizen participation and citizen control. Here non-participation includes cynical consultation, poor levels of information, customer care and civic hype, while genuine consultation and high quality information provision are positioned higher up the ladder as the starting points of citizen participation.

6.26 The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, (DETR, 2001) defined the process of public engagement on the basis of information provision, consultation, involvement and delegation (Martin, 2001). The OECD (2001) defined relations between government and citizens in policy-making as a broad spectrum of interactions at each stage of the policy-making cycle including information (a one-way relationship), consultation (a two-way relationship) and active participation (a dynamic relationship based on partnership).

6.27 Underlying assumptions about the outcomes of engagement will have an impact on the processes chosen (Boyes *et al*, 2001). The purpose of any engagement process needs to be clarified if it is to be effective (Brown & Elrick, 1999). If there is an assumption that the public only needs to be informed about why a decision has been taken, then the information provided will be the basis of a one-way relationship (Hunt *et al*, 2001). Those who may feel that they wish to influence decisions in some way are likely to be frustrated if the process has not been designed to allow this.

6.28 These models identify the importance of defining the purpose of the engagement, deciding where it sits on the spectrum from informing to joint decision-making and from there determining the suitability of various approaches. This will allow the organisation carrying out the engagement to clarify the scope for public and stakeholder involvement, and to be explicit about the role of participants in the decision-making process. Consistency in

language is also important to ensure that everyone can understand what is being proposed and why, the role of each participant, how decisions will ultimately be reached and by whom (Laird *et al*, 2000).

6.29 The World Bank (1995) defines “participation” as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources that affect them. Another view expressed by Hunt *et al* (2001) suggests that participation involves the transfer of ultimate power for decision-making from the responsible institution to the public.

6.30 Public engagement processes will fail if the participants expect to influence decisions and actions through a process that is not designed for this purpose. If establishing trust is one of the main aims of public engagement it is important that processes reflect this. Some methods of engagement seek to address the issue of “commonly shared norms” by starting to define them as an integral part of the process.

## **METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT**

### **Engagement at local authority level**

6.31 A unitary local authority system was established in Scotland in 1996, with 32 local authorities that were required to develop decentralisation schemes as a result of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994. Guidance produced by the Scottish Office (1996) identified the positive outcomes from decentralisation as:

- enhancing local democracy and accountability
- promoting closer communication
- encouraging public participation and joint ownership of problems and solutions;
- enhancing the role of the elected representative
- generally promoting improved effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery and council functioning

6.32 Local authorities identified information provision, access to services and engagement in decision-making processes as essential elements of decentralisation with a resulting growth of a variety of structures for engaging the public at local authority level (Elrick, 1999). The introduction of Best Value<sup>24</sup> in 1997 required “customer and citizen involvement” in service evaluation, using many of the decentralisation initiatives to engage the public, (Brown & Elrick, 1999), while Community Planning<sup>25</sup> (Rogers *et al*, 2000) requires a significant element of public consultation and the production of material for information and explanation purposes. The development of the Community Planning process has the potential for significantly increasing public engagement across a range of services, with the Local Authority leading and Health services, the Police and the Local Enterprise Company on the majority of Community Planning Partnerships (COSLA, 2001). Policy and practice that focuses on engaging with the public has been widespread. Empowering Communities

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<sup>24</sup> Best Value is a set of guiding principles across all local government functions: sound governance; performance measurement and monitoring; continuous improvement; and long-term planning and budgeting.

<sup>25</sup> Community Planning is based on the concept of local government taking a lead role in bringing other public agencies together to link public agency strategy and policy and ultimately linking these to community views and aspirations.

(Scottish Executive, 2000) provided resources to support community participation in Social Inclusion Partnerships<sup>26</sup>, while the Scottish Executive funded Learning Together Working Together a national training and development programme for SIP partners across the country. The Working for Communities programme engaged with local communities in 11 pathfinder areas to explore new ways for delivering services (Scottish Executive, 2000). The lessons from public engagement since 1996 have been used to develop a range of approaches at local and national level (COSLA, 2002).

6.33 Processes for engagement have been established as a significant factor in local authority decision making over the last decade. As a result, a variety of local structures have been developed to help inform and involve people in these processes. These include:

- Area Committees, generally made up of local ward councillors although some also have community participants
- Area and Neighbourhood Community Forums, which can include councillors, community councillors, representatives from local business and community organisations
- Community Forums, working with communities of interest generally across the whole council area, for instance Community Council forums, Community Care Forums and Youth Forums

6.34 There has also been an increase in methods used to inform the public and improve access for service users and citizens, for instance the production of A-Z directories about council services, newsletters, freephone services, services on-line and a growing commitment to producing information in plain English, community languages and alternative formats.

### **Community representation**

6.35 There are just under 1200 community councils in Scotland, involving around 12,000 people (Elrick, 1995), established by statute (Local Government Scotland Act, 1973) although not statutory bodies. Their remit creates a responsibility to:

- ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local authorities for its area and to other public authorities the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible
- take such action in the interests of that community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable

6.36 Community councils are dependent on their parent local authority for funding, and there are large disparities between them. Research in the late 1990s found that some community councils received under £100 per annum to perform their role, while others received over £5000 (Elrick & Macintosh, 1999). The role they play at local level is often linked more directly to planning decisions than representing their communities. In some areas, however, they have been working to ascertain community views and at local authority and national (Scotland) level to try and influence decisions (Elrick, 1995). Local community groups and voluntary activities can provide scope for local people to participate in decision-making and negotiation of policy priorities in some areas (Hallhead *et al*, 2001).

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<sup>26</sup> SIPs are area and theme based partnerships bringing agencies and communities together to address social inclusion issues.

6.37 One product of this activity identified in some communities is “consultation fatigue” because they are being consulted on an increasing number of issues and plans (Rogers *et al*, 2000). Another is confusion about the purpose of engaging the public. Engaging people as customers suggests a different set of criteria compared with engaging them as citizens (Brown & Elrick, 1999).

### **Membership organisations**

6.38 The Scottish Civic Forum is a national membership organisation that seeks to reflect and represent the views of its 350-400 member organisations (Civic Forum, 2002). These vary from community council members, to local authority wide representative groups (for instance local civic assemblies) and issue based groups. The forum receives support funding from the Scottish Executive.

6.39 Similar national representative bodies, such as the Association of Scottish Community Councils, which represents over 50% of the community councils in Scotland, also receive some funding from the Executive (ASCC, 2002).

6.40 The Scottish Youth Parliament is made up of 14-25 years olds, with 3 categories of membership, 2 per Scottish Parliamentary constituency, 2 per national youth voluntary organisation and individuals can self-nominate. There are 228 members in total. It is Europe’s only wholly youth led parliament and is an independent voluntary organisation which receives core funding from the Scottish Executive. It works with an extensive network of local co-ordinators drawn from Connect Youth, which enables a socially inclusive approach to enabling participation from a range of young people across Scotland.

6.41 Representative groups of voluntary sector organisations also play a role at national and local level. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is made up of a membership of voluntary sector organisations, while at local authority level the 50 Local Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS) are membership organisations providing support and development services to voluntary sector organisations. The CVS network links into SCVO.

6.42 There are also 55 Volunteer Centres; these are membership organisations developing opportunities to volunteer, which are members of their national organisation, Volunteer Centre Scotland. Volunteer Development Scotland provides a national membership organisation for volunteer based organisations.

6.43 Issue based membership organisations also play an important role in the life of civic Scotland, for instance Community Care Scotland is a membership organisation for those involved in the community care sector in Scotland, while the Independent Living Movement is made up of people with disabilities to lobby for change across the UK.

6.44 At national (Scottish) level these organisations aim to identify and represent their members’ views. They can also provide a mechanism for consultation and involvement in national decision-making processes (as demonstrated by the group of community activists recruited for this study in Stirling).

### **INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES**

6.45 The use of People's Panels<sup>27</sup> is advocated by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), which recently (2001) recommended that the provincial governments of Canada should establish a Panel of Citizens that would oversee the process of engaging citizens in decision-making. Panel members would be selected "on the basis of merit, not political patronage". A benefit of this approach would be to help ensure that governments do not revert to traditional "tell-and-sell" consultation, simply re-labelled as "public engagement". The CCSD distributed the report to key Canadian decision-makers within and outside government.

6.46 The Danish Board of Technology has recently introduced a method called "Future Search Conference", first developed in the USA. This method is described as suitable for finding common goals and actions in a situation of gridlock and inaction. Instead of facilitating a debate about the controversies and vested interests, it focuses on finding some visions that the groups can all accept, and from this common ground then develops action plans to create the agreed visions (Gram & Kluver, 2001). In developing the environmental and health protection strategy of the Ukraine, a video of the consultation process was made and aired on television on more than one occasion with the aim of informing the whole population (NEHAP, 2001).

## **E-governance**

6.47 While new technologies have increased the capacity of governments to engage with the public, they have also raised citizens' expectations with regard to the scope, quality and speed of government response (OECD, 2001). The introduction of digital or electronic governance (Nath, 2000) aims to ensure that the public can be part of decision-making processes that affect them directly or indirectly. The Internet has the potential to allow a large number of people to communicate on-line with each other as well as with consulting bodies, increase participation in decision-making and create new networks among citizens (Beierle & Cahill, 2000).

6.48 Governments and agencies across the globe are moving towards Internet usage as a means of informing and consulting. This raises issues about access to Information Communication Technology (ICT), with the possibility of some people becoming more excluded from decision-making processes. Scandinavian countries continue to lead Europe in the proportion of individuals online, although access in the UK is ahead of much of Europe (Netvalue, 2001). The OECD among others have identified the need to devote more attention and resources to bridging the 'digital divide' and ensuring the quality of on-line information, consultation and participation is raised in future. The Scottish Executive's vision for a digitally connected and inclusive Scotland, which supports access to digital technologies and Web facilities for all people (Digital Scotland) goes some way towards preparing for greater effective use of technology to engage the public. A breakdown by Government, Commercial and Educational activity over a six-month period on various websites (Mitchell, 2001) suggests that government websites have significantly lower levels of usage than the others.

6.49 In the UK, all Government departments now use the Web as a means of posting information to enable organisations and citizens to contribute to consultation processes. The

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<sup>27</sup> People's Panels consist of people who have agreed to be consulted on a regular basis about public service issues (Cunningham 1999:2).

Government's *Citizen Space* (accessed through [ukonline](http://ukonline.gov.uk)) was created alongside the UK's new government portal, [ukonline.gov.uk](http://ukonline.gov.uk). It was decided from the outset that it should have space for citizen-to-government as well as citizen-to-citizen interaction. Its main purposes are:

- to provide a gateway to government consultations
- to facilitate public discussion of policy issues
- to offer useful political and civic information that can help citizens navigate government
- to create a space for e-democracy

6.50 *Citizen Space* has the potential to become a useful resource for citizens' interaction with government and with one another. Access to information from the Scottish Executive and local authorities is available through websites. Interactive approaches have been used to enhance the design and range of the information available.

6.51 When judging the impact of ICT, several governments have reported to the OECD that its use has led to much higher levels of feedback from citizens – for instance in Japan and Spain. At the same time, governments in Norway and Switzerland have found that their contact with citizens has become faster and less formal. Some governments have started to expand existing legal, policy and institutional frameworks in order to support the use of ICT. Policy frameworks also concentrate on the general aspects of ICT use. Some treat the issue as part of policies on e-government (Korea and Norway) or within policies on the modernisation of public services (France).

6.52 In some countries, policy frameworks also refer directly to government-citizen relations. For example, the Danish Minister of Education holds an on-line discussion once a week; the European Union offers occasional open, multilingual chats with Commissioners; and the governments of Finland and Canada have created virtual workspaces in the form of on-line working groups, with virtual libraries and archives for citizens to engage with government in policy-making. The Canadian federal government has created a specific web site for this purpose, in co-operation with partner organisations representing citizens the government seeks to involve.

6.53 The purpose of public engagement is an important consideration when developing e-governance processes. The Internet provides a means for people to raise issues, access services or relevant information. It can assist service development and standards of customer care. However, the promise of the Internet is emphasised more than consistent achievements in practice. If the Internet is to effectively assist public engagement in decision-making, it is important to remember that it is a tool for engagement rather than a process. Internet-based approaches need commitment from senior decision-makers to enhance the quality of feedback and to raise expectations. Without a clear context and understanding of what web-based engagement is designed to achieve, new technology risks being a tool for low levels of deliberation. Continued reliance on conventional methods of consultation through hard copy or web-based materials makes inclusion difficult for those facing literacy and language barriers. A range of approaches is emerging to enable information to encourage broader participation, in addition to traditional consultation methods.

## **Resources for engagement**

6.54 Research on local authority approaches to young people's involvement in decision-making (Edwards, 2001) has identified the importance of training programmes for those taking part. This echoes findings in Scotland that area committee's participants benefit from training and support programmes, in some cases including officers and councillors (Elrick, 1999). Time is also an essential element for engagement to enable the process to develop (Hunt *et al*, 2001). This recognition of the importance of enabling participants to engage effectively was identified as an important aspect of improving the quality of future public dialogue about radioactive waste management during the STEP-wise process in Finland (OECD, 2001).

6.55 When undertaking any kind of engagement exercise it is important to consider the most appropriate method (s) and identify the resources required. This includes time, money, and people. Recent examples from 'Engaging Communities: Directory of Examples from Practice' (COSLA, 2001) aimed to identify the resource requirements of undertaking various engagement processes<sup>28</sup>.

6.56 Time is also an essential element for engagement. Time to enable the process to develop (Hunt *et al*, 2001); this includes a time commitment from participants. This recognition of the importance of enabling participants to engage effectively was identified as an important aspect of improving involvement in future discussions about radioactive waste management during the STEP-wise process in Finland (OECD, 2001).

### **Quality assurance**

6.57 Engaging with the public initiates a process of change that ought to result in an ongoing review of the consultation process itself, creating an iterative process with review stages built in (Hunt & Wynn, 2000). Very little is known about the *impact* of consultation and engagement processes. An OECD (2001) analysis suggests none of its member states currently conducts a systematic evaluation of government performance in providing information, undertaking consultation and engaging citizens in policy-making, and that it is not only governments which fare poorly - there was little evidence to suggest that government agencies or other institutions fare any better.

6.58 Recent figures published by the IPPR (2001) indicate that fewer than one in 3 authorities evaluate the impact of their initiatives to engage young people in decision-making. Over three-quarters of authorities are working with young people to involve them in decisions, but less than one-third (30%) evaluate the quality of the process or the impact. Similar results come from others who have considered the impact of their activities. The EPA in the United States outlined the need for performance measures to ensure its public involvement is effective and proposes the need for standard evaluation criteria and performance measure that evaluators can draw upon.

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<sup>28</sup> In 2002 evidence suggests that citizen's juries cost between £20,000 and £25,000. Stirling Council estimated a high percentage of citizen participation costs are the cost of staff time involvement (2001). For instance direct officer time and resource costs of the Stirling Assembly were estimated at £25,645 in 2000/01 and for Area Forums at £20,300. At the same time Perth and Kinross identified the cost of setting up a 'Viewfinder' citizen's panel at £17,200 (including consultancy fees and recruitment costs). Angus Council incurred similar costs for their citizen's panel in 2000 with £20,000 allocated to support the work of the panel in the medium term. Their youth congress cost £40,000 in 1999-2000.

6.59 The government of Finland undertook a national survey on consultation and participation activity, which showed a potentially significant gap in expectations. Although Government Ministries were happy with the current situation, citizens were less enthusiastic. This has led to a review of how consultation should take place in the future, including the development of new strategies to include consultation and participation processes at the drafting stage of policy, and training for civil servants involved in the process (OECD, 2001)

6.60 An evaluation was undertaken on the consensus conferences on genetically modified food in Norway (Morkrid, 2001). However, this was concerned with the process and did not look at impacts on decision-making by government, or the benefits versus the costs of the consensus conference model.

6.61 A review of information on the environment in the United States (Reeder, 2001), with a focus on reviewing information leading to citizen participation in government, concluded that technology has increased access for citizens and NGOs, and heightened the need for NGOs and others to help individuals and groups understand and interpret the greater volume of information more easily available.

6.62 According to the review *‘What sort of Scotland do we want to live in?’* (Smith & Macintosh, 2001), e-consultation provides the opportunity for deliberative participation. However, the authors caution that it should not be viewed as a one-way process to gather opinions, but instead as a two-way process designed to support other opinion gathering events, which should clearly link to one another.

6.63 The relative lack of evaluation may also have an impact on how participants on all sides engage in the process. Evaluation allows the sponsor to construct the process in a way that defines the roles and terms of engagement for other participants (Estrella, 2000).

### **Summary of key points - Literature on radioactive waste management**

- In issues around radioactive waste management it is important to engage with the public at an early stage and provide clear and concise information in a format appropriate to the audience.
- Increased interest in and experience of engagement by local government and health authorities has impacted on processes used to develop public involvement in radioactive waste management.
- In developing processes that are considered legitimate, equal attention has to be given to the primary purpose and intended outcomes when choosing the methods to be used.

### **Summary of key points – Engagement Literature**

- Effective decision-making is considered to be dependent on increased public awareness of issues and growing demand from policy-makers to engage the public.
- There is a growing set of opportunities available for people to become engaged with policy makers in Scotland.
- The reason for engagement begins by establishing whether the public is to be engaged as citizens (the broad public interest) or consumers (service users for example).
- A lack of trust in formal decision-making processes and in politics in general has also stimulated many of the developments in public engagement processes.
- There appears to be very little published evidence setting out the roles and responsibilities of consulting bodies and of those who actively participate.
- The purpose of any engagement process needs to be clarified if it is to be effective.
- Processes for engagement have been established as a significant factor in local authority decision-making over the last decade.
- The Internet has the potential to allow a large number of people communicate on line with each other as well as with consulting bodies, increase participation in decision-making and create new networks among citizens.
- Resourcing engagement, in the time, money and support, is an important is essential.
- Evaluation allows the sponsor to construct the process in a way that defines the roles and terms of engagement for other participants.

## CHAPTER SEVEN : CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 In this final chapter we present conclusions and recommendations for action at different levels arising from what we have learned in the course of the study. Following the criteria identified in the model (Figure 5.1) the conclusions are grouped under the relevant headings:

- reason for engagement
- rules of engagement
- techniques for engagement
- processes of engagement
- support mechanisms
- resource implications
- quality assurance

7.2 Participants demonstrated levels of interest and willingness to engage in discussion of a complex issue of long-term significance<sup>29</sup>. The majority believed that it was important to be involved in this process and were hopeful that their participation would make a difference. This could not be assumed at the outset, particularly among those focus group participants who did not see themselves as directly affected or to have much knowledge about the issues in advance. Indeed, the majority of participants concluded that the issue is so important that it is essential for the public to become better informed and to have opportunities to be more closely involved in decision-making processes.

7.3 The research was designed to identify different responses to the issue of managing nuclear waste among people whom we assumed were directly affected by it and those who saw themselves as unaffected. Participants challenged this assumption. There was certainly a difference in understanding and experience between participants in the ‘affected public’ group and the other groups, but most of those described as the ‘unaffected’ public did feel affected by the issues being discussed and were prepared to challenge others who did not see the direct relevance of the discussion to their own lives.

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY DILEMMAS

#### *Reasons for engagement*

7.4 Recent trends suggest that some of the big dilemmas for decision-makers of the next decade and beyond will be matters of an ethical nature, where values and principles for decision-making will need to be negotiated with the public. Examples include the MMR triple vaccine (mentioned by several participants as a ‘live’ issue at the time of the fieldwork), BSE, GM foods and gene therapy<sup>30</sup>. On these and other matters, the “genie of

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<sup>29</sup> Safe management of radioactive waste is an example of what the Performance and Innovation Unit and Cabinet Office would recognise as a "wicked issue", with a mixture of opposing views on solutions, an emotional response from the public and a history of negative media coverage blocking open discussion.

<sup>30</sup> - Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) inoculation some people believe can cause autism, despite continued reassurance from government and their advisers

- Experience of the **BSE crisis**, when the disease spread from animals to humans, despite continued reassurances from the Government of the day and their scientific advisers that it could not

doubt” is out of the bottle: it appears that appeals to evidence-based policy by Ministers and scientific advisers will not fully satisfy an inquiring public. “*Who can we trust now?*” asked a number of participants, aware that relying only on ‘experts’ will not lead to the best course of action if they cannot come to some agreement on the facts or feasible options, or their independence is believed to be compromised.

7.5 How should such decisions be made in future on how and where radioactive waste should be stored? What are the levels of technical knowledge or agreement that exist among scientific experts? How can the public become engaged in the process? The UK does not have a referendum culture or an ultimate community right of veto, with public involvement securely resourced as in some other European countries. Nor is the planning system used explicitly, to lever maximum benefits for communities directly affected. Lacking these structural supports, there is a need to consider with some urgency how the public can engage in a more meaningful dialogue with government and the industry about perceived and actual risks and options for action.

## **ENGAGING THE PUBLIC: INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS**

### *Rules of Engagement*

7.6 Ingredients for successful public engagement include the need for information that is widely available, provided by sources that can be trusted and comprehensive enough to provide participants with the knowledge to become engaged in the discussion. While some participants believed the amount of information provided to be adequate, others felt it was important to become involved in further discussion to deepen their understanding and offer the possibility of influencing decisions that are made. In addition, information should be accessible in language and style, particularly on issues of a complex or technical nature. Participants agreed that a ‘jargon-busting’ role, where information was translated into plain English, had been essential to their level of understanding.

### **Clarity of purpose**

7.7 Consultation as one common strand of public engagement does not imply any necessary shift of power towards the public as citizens or consumers. Consultation should open up a process of active dialogue, where all participants are open to changing how they think and act over time. According to one industry stakeholder, governments in Westminster and Edinburgh are changing the nature of consultation, applying new tools more often and in new areas, but it is not yet clear how far these have influenced decision-making processes or outcomes.

7.8 Organisations seeking to engage the public need to demonstrate a high level of awareness about the outcomes they are aiming for, in order to be clear about the type of process they are engaging in. A clear sense of purpose should first be identified, followed by decisions on appropriate tools and techniques, when they should be applied, forms of feedback and linkages into future dialogue and action. A growing number of methods for

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- Development of **GM crops** has caused concern about the impact of the crops on non-GM crops and the possible effect on the food chain

involving the public have emerged in recent years. The primary strategic question is not, which of these works best in different circumstances, but *why* the public is to be involved in dialogue around particular issues. Are they being involved as customers or as citizens? Without prior attention to these questions, there is a risk that future exercises to engage the public are conducted as projects, without context or sufficient linkage to mainstream decision-making.

7.9 Creating consensus for decision-making where there are issues of genuine uncertainty and legitimate action cannot be secured without deeper public awareness. There are various motives among consulting bodies for involving the public:

- seeking out new sources of policy-relevant ideas
- research/informational purposes
- public relations
- corporate social responsibility reasons

7.10 It is important to be clear about where on the spectrum from one-way information flow; through consultation to joint decision-making (a two-way relationship based on partnership) a particular engagement is intended to sit. As discussed in the literature review, this will allow the engaging organisation to clarify the scope for public and stakeholder involvement, and to be explicit about the role of participants in the decision-making process. If participants expect to influence decisions and action through a process that is not designed for this purpose, the validity of the exercise will be undermined.

## **Trust and expertise**

### *Techniques for Engagement*

7.11 An important tension was evident around the issue of independent expertise. Participants expressed relatively low levels of trust in how engagement processes tend to work in practice, combined with a strong belief that engaging the public is a positive thing in principle. Participants tended to have low levels of trust in government and the nuclear industry as sources of information (although the industry was the most trusted source among those most directly affected in the ‘affected public’ group) and identified a need for independent information and expertise to be available to the public to assist their informed engagement. The public invested a higher degree of trust in environmental NGO expertise.

7.12 Information provision, like engagement is a dynamic process. Providing people with accurate and evidence-based information is unlikely to build trust, unless judgements about the sources of information are also changed. Participants placed a premium on the trustworthiness of information sources in the development of a successful engagement process.

7.13 Participants recognised that there are some major disagreements about what the “best” solutions might be and expressed a desire to access information from experts with different opinions. The majority of participants would welcome a mix of experts from different sectors and with different views communicating with each other (and with the public) in search of common solutions. This would help to ensure that decisions are made on the basis of “what’s best”, rather than vested interests getting in the way. Some participants pointed to

expertise within their group among people who had worked in the nuclear industry or had other direct experience of the issues. A smaller number of participants believed that the specific nature of this issue meant that current expertise and technology were not sufficiently advanced to offer anything like an “ideal” solution. A few admitted to feeling “terrified” by the uncertainty and risk they read into the consultation document. Others believed the best that can be done is to find a legitimate and “safe enough” approach free from conflicting interests around profit, while addressing waste and energy issues at an international level

7.14 Two further elements were identified as important in building trust: full disclosure of information and appropriate feedback. Underlying our findings was a clear desire for “the whole story - the good news as well as the bad” to be easily accessible.

## **Engagement as an ongoing process**

### *Supporting Engagement*

7.15 Our study has focused mainly on management of legacy waste, where the task is to put into practice government commitments to make the safest decisions possible on disposal, recycling and storage. There are, however, future decisions to be made on waste minimisation, efficiency in power generation and waste volumes/types from whatever system of nuclear reactors is in place in future. Participants were interested in becoming involved in a wider discussion about energy, some noting that Scotland and the rest of the UK could decide to reduce its dependence on nuclear power and/or replace older technological installations with newer, more efficient, clean ones.

7.16 The key finding here is not that participants had clear views about the best way forward, but that they were aware that the technology could advance significantly and that appropriate ways of informing and engaging the public would be needed in the long-term. Thereby ensuring decisions are taken in the public interest, rather than by assuming that government, the nuclear industry or even independent experts know best. True engagement was thought to emerge from a *continuing* process of involvement rather than a series of snapshot consultation events.

### *Resourcing Engagement*

7.17 Making a commitment to engage the public in the long-term has resource implications, including time, money and investing in people's skills. Evaluation is needed to identify the most appropriate and effective use of these resources for organisations undertaking this type of engagement.

## **Inter-generational engagement**

7.18 Participants felt that the issue of radioactive waste needed to be considered by decision-makers at all level, from the neighbourhood to international agreements, as well as over time. Feeling that they could not bind future generations to a solution that may be inadequate (because of future technological advances for example), participants wanted to see

a commitment to public engagement stretching beyond the lifetime of any one elected parliament and beyond their own life times.

## **Strengthening public engagement**

### *Quality Assurance*

7.19 Successful engagement points to appropriate feedback and “proof of being listened to” as a basic requirement. This is essential if engagement is to lead to opportunities to influence decisions. Participants stated that bodies undertaking consultation and involvement processes need to demonstrate an ability to listen and respond to their views if they are to be persuaded of their validity. Very little is known about the impact of consultation and engagement processes. We believe there needs to be a systematic evaluation of government performance in providing information, undertaking consultation and engaging citizens in policy making by government agencies if public engagement exercises are to build confidence and legitimacy on all sides.

7.20 Strengthening relations between citizens and government represents a sound investment in building civil society. However, we are still at an early stage on the learning curve towards a society where politically mature and active citizens can work with government and other agencies determined to engage the public more closely in setting policy in a variety of areas. Very little is documented which sets out the terms of engagement of consulting bodies and those who actively participate. Meaningful involvement requires clarity around roles and responsibilities for all involved, and potentially a shift in the decision-making process towards communities and individuals.

7.21 Traditional means of engagement, using published government consultation documents to seek responses from interested members of the public and key stakeholders, is not always the most appropriate method. Where there are issues of a technical nature or that require ongoing deliberation, rather than the presentation of well-developed views, it is important to choose the most effective process of engagement. Some consultation issues require a level of expertise that the public does not have and cannot communicate in ways that organisations are able to. In these cases, sticking with traditional methods is likely to be disappointing, frustrating and engender a lowering of expectations on all sides. We believe the approach taken by the Scottish Executive in commissioning this study takes us closer to a more appropriate way of engaging the public and other stakeholders on complex issues.

7.22 While members of the public are more motivated to engage with issues rather than processes, it is important to make the process as transparent and open as possible. In the ‘unaffected public’ focus group, participants were recruited without knowing the theme of the meeting. They may have been attracted by the general reference to “an issue of long-term significance”, the fact that the Scottish Executive had commissioned the study or by having their time and expenses covered. Some of these participants said that they would have been unlikely to take part in a public meeting about radioactive waste.

7.23 No consistent set of definitions is applied to ways of enabling the public to explore significant issues and express their views more effectively. “Engagement”, “consultation”, “involvement” and “participation” have tended to be used interchangeably, despite meaning

different things to consulting bodies and those engaged in the process. Re-branding of traditional consultation approaches as “engagement” even by default can only exacerbate the problems. Consistency in language across Government, its agencies and other organisations in the private and voluntary sectors, is important to help create a higher level of understanding about what is being proposed and why, the role of each participant, how decisions will ultimately be reached and by whom. The existing body of knowledge should be developed around the notion that the process of public engagement encompasses information provision, consultation and involvement leading to ongoing participation and delegation (shared decision-making).

7.24 Additional research is needed to help the Scottish Executive and others involved in engaging the public to manage the converging trends of growing demand for public involvement and rapidly evolving information technology. The issues of access, equity, learning, accountability, and management of information should be considered to help anticipate and respond to the challenges of providing accessible, understandable and interactive engagement processes posed by increased use of electronic participation. This would allow the identification of appropriate opportunities and recommendations as to how these should fit into an overall strategy for civic participation. We would note that the Internet *could be* a powerful tool for wider engagement, but it is not a process in itself. Continued reliance on conventional methods of consultation through hard copy or web-based materials will make inclusion difficult for those facing literacy, language or technology barriers. As a minimum, the quality of on-line content should be continually enhanced and actual as opposed to potential effectiveness properly evaluated.

## **RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION**

7.25 Current structures provide a variety of ways for the public to become engaged in decision-making processes. There was energy and enthusiasm from participants in this study about becoming engaged and a lack of knowledge from the general public of current engagement structures. It is important to develop a culture of engagement based on the ‘values’ described, *knowledge, relevance, transparency, dialogue, trust and full disclosure*, rather than focussing only on structures for engagement.

7.26 Participants expressed a sense of responsibility, alongside government and the industry, for becoming involved in finding the safest possible approach to managing radioactive waste available to us at any time. Some were also willing to take the initiative in sharing information with others. Participants in the Young People's group, for example, concluded that peer education is an important way of engaging other young people. However, participants did not assume the process of securing agreement and raising awareness would be easy. There was a strong desire for responsibility to be located with bodies able to take decisive and legitimate action. The findings of this study suggests all stakeholders should reconsider the responsibilities expected of them:

- Government needs to demonstrate it acts in the public interest and with due regard to what has been called the ‘precautionary principle’, particularly on matters of safe management of radioactive waste. Those undertaking engagement processes need to be aware of the skills and capacity issues required to do so effectively. A relative lack of evaluation suggests the need to set up an appropriate framework for evaluation

linked to a holistic set of performance measures (including feedback and forward links to future action).

- Agencies charged with regulatory powers must be sufficiently independent of government and the industry to inspect and advise, and must demonstrate willingness to use its full range of powers if necessary.
- The nuclear industry has a responsibility to communicate its actions fully and to be open to scrutiny.
- Environmental NGOs have a particular responsibility, given their position as the most trusted sources of information and perceived role as protecting the public interest more effectively than others. While NGOs are influential advocates of how energy policy should change in future, this should not prevent them from fully engaging with government and the industry, as well as public and media campaigning, on how best to address current dilemmas.
- All stakeholders have a responsibility to engage the wider public in an informed way, helping to develop relations with media commentators about the long-term as well as immediate challenges.
- The media has a responsibility to promote understanding of the strategic options facing Scotland and the rest of the UK on how to manage radioactive waste and shape future energy supply, in addition to the ‘fire-fight’ reporting of short-term events.

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## Focus Group Programmes

### ‘Unaffected public’ (Glasgow) and ‘affected public’ (Thurso)

- 9.45 Introductions – SCF, the research and the programme
- 10.15 Group work on knowledge of participation, involvement, decision making
- 11.00 Group work Initial reactions to radioactive waste as issue.
- 11.45 Feedback
- 12.15 Introduction to consultation document and questions presentation
- 12.40 Testing the information available- participants to rate information on boards
- 12.50 Copies of questions & background information handed out, discuss in pairs
- 1.00 Lunch
- 2.00 Group Work On questions in the consultation document
- 3.00 Group Work How can we involve other people
- 3.55 Anything to add

### Young people (Argyll)

- 1.00 Introduction (what's it all about then?)
- 1.30 Graffiti Wall on first responses
- 2.00 Drama input and discussion prompts
- 3.00 Making sense of the information - Input
- 3.20 Making sense of the information Workshop
- 5.30 Dinner
- 9.00 Feedback Presentations

### Day 2

- 10.00 Feedback on yesterday, where are we up to?
- 10.30 What kind of materials workshop
- 11.45 What kind of feedback?
- 12.00 Quick debrief and evaluation of event

### Community activists (Stirling)

- 6.00 Introductions
- 6.15 Group work on consultation document
- 7.15 Plenary
- 7.45 Group work Informing and involving people
- 8.30 *Group work Informing and involving people in decision making about managing radioactive waste safely in Scotland*
- 8.50 Plenary Key points of the process

### Stakeholders (Edinburgh)

- 6.00 Introductions, the research process and the role of the focus group
- 6.15 Initial findings on the consultation questions
- 6.30 Discussion
- 7.30 Key elements
- 7.45 Engaging the public – initial findings

- 8.00 Discussion
- 8.45 Key issues and opportunities
- 8.55 Final points for consideration

#### *The 'unaffected public' (Glasgow)*

Members of the public (16) were selected to reflect the characteristics of the adult population in Glasgow. A full-day session was organised to find out what people who lived in an area that had no direct knowledge of radioactive waste management issues felt about the engaging the public on the subject. Participants felt that the technical nature of the language and their lack of knowledge of the subject made it difficult for them to engage. They also felt however that it was important that they and people like them should be able to find out the information they need so that they can choose to become engaged in the decision making process. *"But the more information we have, the more informed the decision!!!"* ('unaffected public' participant, Glasgow). Participants felt that it was the responsibility of the government, the industry and the public to discuss and decide the most effective ways of managing radioactive waste safely.

#### *The 'affected public' (Thurso)*

Members of the public (9) were recruited from the communities around Dounreay nuclear installation through a random mail drop and distribution on the street in Thurso, Wick and surrounding villages. In reflecting the characteristics of the area it was felt important to include participants who worked in Dounreay as well as those who did not. All the participants felt that it was beneficial to have the expertise this provided as part of the discussion. The group agreed with the Glasgow participants that it was important that people should be able to access the information that they needed for informed discussions about the issues and that it is necessary to support public engagement for those who want to be involved. There was concern about how the media reports the issues involved in radioactive waste management and where the public could access information that they can trust. As in Glasgow, participants felt it was important to develop the general public's awareness and understanding so that they can engage in an informed way.

#### *Young people (Argyll)*

Ten participants who are involved in youth work activities (aged between 14 and 17 years) were drawn from North Lanarkshire, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire, which is an 'affected' area. The participants worked through the consultation materials and discussed their views as they prepared presentations that they felt would inform their peers. They thought, as the previous participants had, that the technical language involved made it very difficult for them to understand the issues. They also felt that other ways of informing people should be thought about. Pictures and drawings for easier understanding. The media for awareness raising. Informal peer education, both in school and out of school hours, were felt to be the most effective ways of engaging their peers in the discussion. They felt that informing young people is essential because of the long-term nature of the issue.

### *Community activists (Stirling)*

People involved as community activists in the Stirling area (13) were invited to take part in a 3 hour evening focus group session, in order to involve members of the public who have direct experience of engagement processes on behalf of their communities. They felt that their experience of dealing with complex consultation documents made it easier for them to understand the information provided, and that without that experience it would be difficult for the public to become engaged. Many of their reactions to the issue echoed those of the general public and the young people. Access to information, in plain English, awareness raising about the discussions so that other people could respond and long-term planning and engagement were seen as essential elements of the engagement process. Participants explored engagement processes as those who engage, as well as those who are engaged with. The essential elements that they identified included, clarity of purpose, establishing that there will be feedback on what decisions are made and why and of continuing the process, rather than a one-off.

### *Stakeholders (Edinburgh)*

An extended focus group of 7 stakeholders drawn from regulatory bodies, the nuclear industry and environmental Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) met for a 3 hour evening focus group. The research was designed to build on the interest and awareness shown by the general public in managing radioactive waste safely and the findings from the earlier focus groups were used to stimulate discussion in the stakeholder focus group and to consider the implications of the earlier findings for their sectors, focusing on why to engage and how to engage

Participants agreed that access to information, which can be understood and trusted is an important consideration for engaging the public in this process. They felt it was important to find ways of moving away from the technical nature of the language where it was possible. They also felt that the differences of opinion about what the 'right' answers might be needed to be discussed, so that solutions would be transparent, on how the decision was reached, what the alternatives might be, and where there are disagreements. This group also identified the need for awareness raising and for finding effective ways to share public information and discussions.

*This is a typed version of the scroll used in the drama sketch presented to the young people to convey information about the issues of managing radioactive waste.*

## **Drama Presentation – Scroll**

Some of the nuclear waste which has to be managed in the UK contains atomic nuclei with half-lives of hundreds of thousands of years and therefore needs to be segregated from the environment and human contact during the lifetime of many generations to come.

Nuclear waste is ..... waste contaminated by or incorporating radioactivity above threshold levels defined in legislation.

It can be divided into four levels;

1. Very low level wastes (VLLW).

This can be disposed of with ordinary refuse and mostly originates from hospitals, research labs and other non-nuclear industry.

2. Low level wastes (LLW).

These are not suitable for disposal with ordinary refuse but require authorised burial at specialised landfill sites.

3. Intermediate level wastes (ILW).

These have radioactivity levels exceeding that of LLW's but do not require heating to be taken into account in the storage or disposal facilities. Mostly arises from reprocessing of spent fuel and also from general operations and maintenance of radioactive plant.

4. High level wastes (HLW).

*Wastes in which the temperature may rise significantly as a result of their high level of radioactivity so this must be taken into account when designing storage or disposal facilities.*

- The main producers of radioactive waste are:
  - The nuclear power sector.
  - The ministry of defence.
  - Small users such as hospitals and universities, research labs and offshore gas and oil industries.

Nuclear decommissioning is ..... the dismantling of a closed down nuclear facility and the removal of it's contents, both radioactive and non-radioactive. The key objective in this is to remove the hazard safely.

# Young People's group PowerPoint Presentation: 'Mad Mental Thing'

**What can we do ?**

And what you can do!

610002

1

**What is Nuclear Waste?**

It is something that is harmful to the environment and humans

610002

1

**How can we clean this up**

- ◆ Using Robots
- ◆ Leave it till it is away
- ◆ Hide it so it can't effect the public

2

**What is Decommissioning?**

◆ Dismantling a closed down nuclear facility and removal of its contents, both radioactive and non-radioactive, is known as decommissioning. Nuclear facilities include:

- ◆ Power stations
- ◆ Chemical plants
- ◆ Research Facilities

3

**Different types of WASTE!**

- ◆ Very low level wastes (VLLW)
- ◆ Low Level Wastes (LLW)
- ◆ Intermediate Level Waste (ILW)
- ◆ High Level Waste (HLW)

4

**Why is nuclear Waste Bad**

- ◆ IT CAN KILL PEOPLE
- ◆ IT CAN KILL ANIMALS AND PLANTS
- ◆ IT CAN KILL THE WORLD

5

**WANT TO SAVE THE WORLD!!!**

**◆ LEARN ABOUT NUCLEAR WASTE!!!!!!!!!!!!**

6

## **Interview Questions**

### **Public Engagement interviews**

- What topics do you engage the public on?
- What approaches and techniques do you use?
- What are the resource implications?
- What are the most effective approaches and why?
- What are the least effective approaches and why?
- What are the key lessons that you have learned?
- What does the process involve? (e.g. identifying participants, support to participants, dialogue, exit strategy, impact of engagement, feedback)
- What other experience of engagement do you have?
- Do you think there would be differences in public interest in engagement on other topics?
- What local engagement structures are there? Is there work through or in partnership?
- How do you bring in those who don't normally engage?

### **Community Planning interviews**

- Is public engagement an element of CP? Why/why not?
- What kinds of processes are used?
- Do all of the partners engage the public?
- Do the partners share engagement activities?
- What works and what doesn't work?
- What are the resource implications?
- Do you think engaging the public in decisions about radioactive waste management is necessary?
- How do you think the public can become engaged?

### **NGO interviews**

- Should there be public engagement?
- Do you think there are issues around 'trust'?
- What experience does your organisation have of engaging the public?
- What are the key issues for engaging the public in decisions about radioactive waste?
- What are the key issues in engaging the public?
- What needs to happen?
- What is the role of the green NGO's in engaging the public about radioactive waste?
- What are the rules of engagement?

### **Media interviews**

- What opportunities do you think there are in engaging the public?
- What limits do you think there are in engaging the public?
- What is the role of the press in reporting issues like how radioactive waste is managed?
- What issues or opportunities are important for involving the public in decision-making on radioactive waste management?
- What are your views on public information provision?
- What is the media's responsibility?
- What constraints or opportunities do you expect to find in future?

## Consultation Questions and Briefing Sheets

### Consultation Questions

1. Views are invited on the principle of segregating UK waste types by half-lives.
2. Views are invited on RWMAC's proposals for the management of spent sealed sources: the ring-fencing of additional resources for the management of historic redundant registered sources for which there is no current budget; requiring arrangements to be put in place such that all sales of new sources include provision for future disposal; and setting up a dedicated organisation with responsibility for taking abandoned sources under control.
3. Views are invited on the link between waste substitution and the availability of a long-term management strategy.
4. Views are invited on the general approach for decommissioning.
5. Views are invited on the policy to be adopted for the long-term management of UK separated plutonium, including whether some should be considered as waste.
6. Views are invited on the policy to be adopted for the long-term management of UK uranium stocks, including whether some should be considered as waste.
7. Views are invited on the suitability of these or any other consultation techniques for engaging the public in the radioactive management debate.
8. Views are invited on how the Government and the Devolved Administrations could build on these existing initiatives or develop any of the other techniques for engaging the public.
9. Your views are invited on the practicalities of this approach or alternative arrangement for funding the work.
10. Your views are invited on the need for an independent body to advise the government and the Devolved Administrations on information needs and research requirements ' and whether any of the organisations or models above would be able to provide the independent and authoritative advice and/or the research management we require. You are also invited, if you wish, to outline alternative arrangements for discharging these roles.
11. Your views are invited on this, and on which type of organisation could take on this co-ordination role.
12. Your views are invited on this indicative programme of action.
13. Views are invited on the whether the Environment Agency in England and Wales, and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency on Scotland require a new statutory power over the storage of wastes on nuclear licensed sites.

**This theme describes some of the considerations and questions on the management of radioactive waste**

# What

**Other radioactive waste management issues**

## Radioactive Waste

- Waste contaminated by, or incorporating radioactivity above threshold levels defined in legislation, is known as radioactive waste
- Radioactivity is the spontaneous disintegration of unstable atomic nuclei in a process known as radioactive decay.
- The half-life is the time taken for half of any amount of atomic nuclei to decay. The half-life is unique and unchangeable.
- Some of the radioactive waste which needs to be managed in the UK contains atomic nuclei with half-lives of hundreds of thousands of years, and therefore needs to be segregated from the environment and human contact during the lifetimes of many generations to come.

The treatment and handling of radioactive wastes has been determined by the actual characteristics of the waste. However, for management purposes, rather than for any regulatory need, radioactive waste is divided into 4 categories according to its how much heat it generates and the activity content.

### Very low level wastes (VLLW)

Wastes which can be disposed of with ordinary refuse. It arises from a variety of sources, including hospitals and non-nuclear industry.

### Low level wastes (LLW)

Containing radioactive materials other than those suitable for disposal with ordinary refuse – that is, wastes which can be accepted for authorised disposal at Drigg, Dounreay or other landfill sites by controlled burial.

### Intermediate level wastes (ILW)

Wastes with radioactivity levels exceeding the upper boundaries for LLW, but which do not need heating to be taken into account in the design of storage or disposal facilities. Intermediate level waste arises mainly from the reprocessing of spent fuel, and from general operations and maintenance of radioactive plant

### High level wastes (HIW)

Wastes in which the temperature may rise significantly as a result of their radioactivity, so this factor has to be taken into account in designing storage or disposal facilities.

# ***1 Should we segregate UK waste types by half-lives?***

## **Classification**

- The classification systems for radioactive waste in use across the European Union vary widely in approach and application. Some are used purely for communication purposes, while most are based on how types of waste are managed or by activity concentration.
- An EU Classification system has been proposed (to be used as well as National systems, not replace them). It is to be used to provide information to the Commission for the compilation of a European waste inventory.
- The main difference from the UK classification is the addition of categories for transitional waste that will decay within a short period of storage to unrestricted clearance levels, and the division of our ILW and LLW classifications into short-lived and long-lived LILW (Low and Intermediate Level Waste).
- This system would have the advantage of making it easier to identify appropriate ways of managing waste. However most UK wastes contain a mixture of atomic nuclei of different half-lives, which presents problems in operating such a system.
- Also the dose resulting from contact is not related to their half-life. The toxicity of similar half-lives is not necessarily the same.
- Therefore, the management of wastes is determined by the actual characteristics of the waste rather than by its classification.

Use this space for notes if you want

## ***2 Should additional resources be ring-fenced for the management of spent sealed sources of radioactive waste?***

This needs arrangements for all sales of new sources to include provision for future disposal and the setting up of a dedicated organisation with responsibility for taking abandoned sources under control.

### **Users**

#### **Nuclear Power Sector**

- The large majority of the radioactivity in the UK's radioactive waste comes from the nuclear power sector.

#### **Defence**

- Defence wastes are those wastes that have been generated by Ministry of Defence (MOD) service and civilian establishments or companies that have undertaken work on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

#### **Small Users**

- A 'small user' is the term given to organisations that produce radioactive wastes, but do not have sites licensed under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965. Small users include hospitals, universities, research laboratories, the offshore oil and gas industry and some non-nuclear industries. There are approximately 5,600 small users on civil unlicensed sites in England and Wales, about 900 in Scotland and 150 in Northern Ireland.

#### **Spent Sealed Sources**

- A 'sealed source' is a device in which a radioactive material has been contained within an outer casing. This outer casing makes an accidental release of the contents extremely unlikely.
- Sealed sources have an extensive range of medical, educational and industrial uses, notably in general diagnosis and cancer treatments, and in the oil and gas industries.
- Some spent sealed sources can be recycled into new sources by specialist source manufacturers, reusing the radioactivity contained in them. Others are simply wastes, for which a management route must eventually be found.
- As the UK currently has no final management route for ILW, special arrangements entailing considerable cost are required for the long-term storage of these sources at dedicated sites.
- Redundant sources are therefore frequently retained on small user premises. In addition to their own spent sources, small user organisations may also take control of sources that are found in the public domain (either as a result of accident, loss or abandonment) on a voluntary basis.
- Small users face serious difficulties, primarily financial, in dealing with spent sources.
- The Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee view is that the Government should consider the case for ring-fencing additional resources in order that the health and university sectors can make effective arrangements for the management of historic redundant registered sources for which there is no current budget. All sales of new sources should also include provision for future disposal. RWMAC also considers that for the UK a dedicated organisation could be given responsibility for taking abandoned sources under control.

Use this space for notes if you want

### ***3 What link should there be between waste substitution and the availability of a long-term management strategy?***

#### **Waste substitution**

- Waste substitution is a means of changing the proportion of wastes through reprocessing, held in different categories and so the management of some contaminated materials.
- New reprocessing contracts for overseas customers signed since 1976 have included returning the resulting wastes back to the country of origin. However, waste substitution would reduce significantly the volume of wastes to be returned, and so the number of waste shipments to overseas customers through waste substitution.
- Current policy is that HLW arising from reprocessing should be returned to the country of origin as soon as possible. Waste substitution is allowed for LLW, where a disposal route exists.
- Substitution of HLW for ILW is dependent on the construction of a repository for intermediate level wastes – or some other kind of waste management facility if it is decided that disposal is not the right solution.
- Waste substitution would decrease the level of waste shipments around the world. It would also result in a decrease in the volumes of HLW to be managed in the UK, and an increase in the volumes of ILW.
- These wastes are only a small fraction of the volume of wastes of domestic origin and their retention should not create any new problems.
- They should not increase the amount of radioactivity, since the radioactive content of the additional wastes to be returned would be no less than that in the wastes remaining in the UK.
- Any approach to substitution needs to recognise principle of self-sufficiency in radioactive waste.

- No steps should be taken that would discourage other countries from providing their own waste facilities or which would create a waste management problem in the UK or create detriment.

Use this space for notes if you want

## 4 What are your views on the general approach outlined for decommissioning?

### *Decommissioning*

Dismantling a closed down nuclear facility and removal of its contents, both radioactive and non-radioactive, is known as decommissioning. Nuclear facilities include power stations, stores, and chemical plant and research facilities. The key objective in decommissioning a nuclear facility is to remove the hazard, safely.

### **Issues to be considered**

There are many issues to be considered when decommissioning a nuclear facility. They include the type of facility (e.g. power station, chemical plant), its age, the condition of buildings and equipment, the level of radioactivity, the atomic nuclei involved and their concentration, or dispersal, around the facility, and many others.

- Decommissioning should be carried out without risks to people's safety and health.
- Early decommissioning has a number of advantages. For example, removing a large structure, often in an isolated and rural area, avoiding leaving problems for future generations, making good use of the expertise available among the staff and optimising the amount of site material available for reuse at the facility or elsewhere, or for recycling.
- Early decommissioning could produce considerably more radioactive waste (2 to 4 times as much intermediate level waste).
- Delaying decommissioning might benefit from the development of new technologies, though this should not be relied upon.
- In the case of reactors, early removal of radioactive material from the reactor (to be stored in waste containers) could increase the risk of radioactivity leakage.
- Dismantling of non-radioactive structures, or equipment, is normally carried out manually. The longer the facility has been closed down before decommissioning, the greater the opportunity for manual intervention.
- Remote techniques (robotics) for these operations exist and are being further developed. Use of robotics would enable decommissioning to start immediately after close down. Such techniques may prove to be slower, less resource efficient and more expensive. However, they could allow an earlier start to decommissioning and offer safety benefits.

- Completely decommissioning a facility immediately after close down would result in higher costs because of the more complex techniques and because of the larger volume of higher level waste produced.
- Costs are likely to increase from any delay in decommissioning beyond a few years because of the need to maintain the facility in a safe and secure condition.
- The UK currently has no intermediate level waste disposal facilities. There is, therefore, no scope for making savings in this area by early decommissioning.
- The cost of storing intermediate level waste until a long term solution has been found, would probably be greater than the alternative which would be to leave the facility in situ in a safe and secure condition.
- The likelihood of new innovations being developed is an important consideration. In drawing up a strategy it is important to recognise that during actual decommissioning new and improved technologies and techniques will become available.
- For this reason it is important that the strategies are reviewed regularly, and revised as appropriate so as to maximise the benefits arising from new technical developments.

Following these principles should allow robust and effective decommissioning. It is proposed that decommissioning strategies should continue to be prepared on a facility by facility basis. Strategies should be living documents and reviewed for their adequacy every 5 years. For nuclear reactors, the statutory consultations also need to be built in. The timetable for decommissioning should be determined by the licensee, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive. It should take into account all relevant factors including the type of facility, the nature of its radioactive inventory, the techniques needed to ensure worker safety and to protect the public and the environment, the costs of various options, and overall financial, economic and national resource issues.

Use this space for notes if you want

## **5 What policy should adopted for the long-term management of UK separated plutonium, including whether some should be considered as waste?**

### **Plutonium**

- Plutonium is not currently classified as waste. On 31 December 2000, there were 61.5 tonnes of UK civil separated plutonium in the UK. The Government is committed to ensure that holdings of plutonium are managed safely and effectively in accordance with its international commitments on non-proliferation and in ways that ensure the protection of workers, the public and the environment. The Government's policy is designed to prevent the risk of the material being stolen or diverted for misuse. Plutonium can be used as a component in certain reactors such as Sizewell B or in other more advanced reactor designs.

- The longer separated plutonium remains in storage the less useful as reactor fuel as time progresses which is important in its potential use for power production.
- The House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology recommended that a strategic stock of plutonium should be retained in case it was required to fuel fast reactors in the future. They suggested that the remainder of existing stocks be declared as a waste. The Royal Society has also called for the disposal of some plutonium as waste.
- If plutonium, unsuitable for fuel, were categorised as waste it would be included in the UK's Radioactive Waste Inventory. There would also be a requirement that financial provisions should be made, such that if the option to re-use were not taken, the material could be treated in readiness for its long-term management.
- If some plutonium were classified as a waste, the combined stocks would, for the present, continue to be stored at Sellafield.
- In view of the large stock of plutonium existing in the UK, the fact that a fraction of it is currently unusable as fuel and the lack of UK reactor capacity to accept such fuel, it is important to consider whether some of the plutonium should now be classified as waste.

Use this space for notes if you want

## ***6 What policy should be adopted for the long-term management of UK uranium stocks, including whether some should be considered as waste?***

### **Uranium**

- Uranium is not currently classified as waste.
- Reprocessed uranium can be, and has been, used to manufacture new fuel. However, it is currently uneconomic to use for this purpose due to the low cost of fresh uranium and the material is kept in storage.
- The measures which could be taken to address the issue of stocks of both reprocessed and depleted uranium are similar to those for plutonium.
- To avoid foreclosing any options for the future the materials could be retained in their current forms in safe secure storage, keeping it as a potential fuel should an increase in the cost of fresh uranium make its future use economic.
- Reprocessed uranium stored as drummed uranium oxide is already regarded as passively safe and depleted uranium hexafluoride could be treated to put it in a similar passive form for long-term storage pending a decision on future options. While this could be achieved without foreclosing the option of future use, the costs would be significant.

- If it were decided that the uranium is not going to be used in the future it would be put it in a form where it is unavailable for use. This would foreclose any future possibility of extracting the energy contained within it and require that in addition to the treatment costs, significant financial should be made available for its long-term management.
- In view of the large stock of uranium existing in the UK, the question arises whether this material should be retained for possible re-use in the future or if some should be considered as a waste.

Use this space for notes if you want

**This theme describes some of the techniques for bringing people into the decision making process**

# How

Should we involve people

***7 How could we build on these existing initiatives or develop any of the other techniques for engaging the public?***

## **Involving people**

- There is a desire to provide more opportunities for public participation in environmental decision-making.
- There should be the widest opportunity for participation by people throughout society, without over-simplifying complex issues.
- To achieve this, we need to use a variety of methods for public participation sensitive to people with differing levels of knowledge and experience.

## **Techniques for Engaging the Public**

Workshops  
Interactive Panels  
Community Advisory Committees  
Citizens Juries Opinion Polls  
Consensus Conference  
Stakeholder Dialogue  
Local Agenda 21 Groups

Public Meetings  
Public hearings and inquiries  
Open Houses  
Research Panels  
Internet  
Community Council Consultations

Use this space for notes if you want

**This theme focuses on good information and advice, who should provide it and how should it be funded.**

# Informing

## Information Needs

- Whichever methods are chosen to involve the public the process will only work if the information given is accepted as accurate, objective and complete by all interested parties.

## ***8 Should there be a new advisory body and how should it be funded?***

- It is suggested that an independent body be appointed to advise on what that information is, where further information is needed, and when enough information has been gathered for decisions to be taken.
- This body would need to have the experience and knowledge to give its views widespread respect, and sufficient independence from Government and the waste producers for its deliberations to be considered objective.
- The Government and the Devolved Administrations currently have available the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee (RWMAC).

RWMAC is a non-departmental public body set up in 1978. Its primary role is to advise on radioactive waste management topics. It also provides advice to bodies such as regulators, local authorities and other Government advisory committees. Members of RWMAC are appointed jointly by the UK Government (Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and the Devolved Administrations for one or 2 three-year terms. Since 1991 RWMAC has routinely published individual reports on specific topics, and annual reports which provide a compendium of the year's work and set out the Committee's future work programme.

- It may be that RWMAC would need to be modified to perform the role envisaged, although new alternatives are not ruled out.
- If a new advisory body is set up, any further research, which is required, might be co-ordinated by another organisation acting as a centre for research expertise on radioactive waste management issues.
- While this organisation would also need to demonstrate its authority and independence, to be consistent with the polluter pays principle, its work should be financed by the waste producers, public and private.

Use this space for notes if you want

## ***9 Should the advisory and research roles be combined under one body and what kind of organisation could take on this?***

- A further option would be to combine the advisory and research roles. This would provide a more integrated approach to advance of the knowledge required to develop policy.
- There are a number of organisations in existence, or which could be created, that would be able to fulfil one or both of these roles.

### **Information and Advice**

#### **1. THE ROYAL SOCIETY**

The Royal Society is an independent academy founded in 1660 to promote the natural and applied sciences. The Society has a dual role as the UK Academy of Science, acting nationally or internationally and as the provider of a broad range of services for the scientific community in the national interest. The Society consists of over a thousand Fellows elected for their scientific achievements, and is governed by a Council headed by the President and Officers. The Society has been active for many years in public debate and the development of public policy on science and technology. The Society brings together the experience and knowledge of its Fellows to develop independent studies and submissions which inform Government, Parliament, universities, industry and other sectors. Reports emerging from these studies are usually published. To date it has never been actively involved in research management.

#### **2. UK NIREX LTD**

Currently, what little research management there is in the UK on the disposal of ILW is undertaken by the radioactive waste disposal company, Nirex. It is funded, in proportion to the volume of wastes they produce, by the waste producers (mainly BNFL, British Energy and other Government organisations, UKAEA and MOD). If Nirex were to become the centre for independent research management expertise, its Board would need to be expanded to cover a wider range of interests than it does currently. Additionally, to reflect the need for a fully comprehensive policy, Nirex would have to consider a greater range of radioactive wastes. It would also need to lead research in to all options and not just disposal.

#### **3. RESEARCH BOARD MODEL**

In March 1997 the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR, now DEFRA) launched a research project to consider the research and development requirements for the disposal of high-level waste and spent fuel. The project was undertaken by consultants under DETR management. The project was overseen by a Project Board comprising 12 representatives from the UK Government and the territorial departments (pre-devolution), the waste producers, the regulators, RWMAC and the Royal Society. A similar Board, expanded to include representatives from other organisations such as environmental organisations and local authorities, might also oversee the development of the wider research programme managed by DEFRA on behalf of the Government and the Devolved Administrations.

#### **4. RESEARCH INSTITUTE MODEL**

Another option is to create an organisation that pulls together and builds upon existing expertise, such as that developing from work funded by the UK Research Councils. An organisation of this type (The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research) has already been set up by the Research Councils. The Centre performs interdisciplinary scientific research on climate change, drawing upon existing knowledge and expertise within the separate disciplines. It also provides a national centre for advice to stakeholders.

#### **5. A NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMISSION**

The House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology have proposed setting up an integrated organisation, the Nuclear Waste Management Commission, to make arrangements for research and to oversee the implementation of policy. Initially, the Commission would be set up without legislation, with the task of

holding discussions about a consultation paper covering a comprehensive policy for the management of all long-lived wastes, and undertaking any associated technical research and economic analyses. It would report its findings to the Government and the Devolved Administrations, which would use them in formulating the policy to be put to the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures in the form of Bills for debate and decision.

The Bills would establish policy and give the Commission powers to ensure that the policy was implemented. This role would include research management, undertaking consultation on means to implement policy, and providing information. The workings of the Commission would be as open as possible, with a presumption that everything it produced would be published.

Members of the Commission would be appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the equivalent Ministers in the devolved administrations after appropriate consultation, and would be drawn from a wide range of backgrounds to ensure that no one point of view was dominant. The Commission would report annually to the Secretary of State and the Devolved Administrations, who would place their reports before Parliament and the Devolved Bodies respectively. At appropriate intervals debates would be held on the Commission's reports to provide explicit Parliamentary / Assembly approval. The Commission would be responsible for co-ordinating all UK research on the long-term management of radioactive wastes.

- When it has been determined what policies should apply to the long-term management of radioactive waste, there will be a requirement to put them into effect. There are a number of organisations in existence, which might be responsible for implementation. Or new ones could be created.

## **6. Policy**

### **7. NIREX**

Nirex was first formed to construct and operate new land disposal facilities for LLW and ILW. Although Nirex have scaled down their operations it has retained the core skills and knowledge required to implement a disposal policy. Nirex has time to build expertise to support other management options but if these involve processes on existing sites then the site operators might be the more logical organisations to use.

### **8. LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**

As part of the current Quinquennial Review of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, options are being explored which include the creation of a new body responsible for the management of part of or all publicly funded civil nuclear liabilities. This includes decommissioning and the associated radioactive wastes. If a single body on these lines were to be set up, its focus would be on developing and managing century-long strategies for the decommissioning of the liabilities for which it was responsible and the environmental restoration of the sites at which they are situated. Implementation would be carried out by third parties, either in the public or the private sectors. The single body would be responsible to Government which, in turn, would exercise control through a high level board appointed by and accountable to Ministers.

### **9. THE RADIOACTIVE WASTE DISPOSAL COMPANY**

The House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology recommended that the Government embark on a phased approach to geological disposal. If this recommendation were accepted, the Select Committee also recommended that a 'Radioactive Waste Disposal Company' should be set up. This would have the remit to investigate a small number of potential repository sites, to select the preferred site (or sites) and to design, construct, operate, monitor and eventually close the repository (or repositories).

Use this space for notes if you want

**This theme focuses on the programme from here and the regulatory arrangements required.**

# Action

## Generating Public Debate

For illustrative purposes a programme of action is shown subject to amendment in the light of responses to this consultation. The dates suggested are dependent upon the level of research required following the end of Stage One. Consequently, they can only be rough guides as to when future stages might begin.

## ***11 What do you think of the indicative programme of action?***

<i>A Programme for Action (all timings are approximate)</i>		
<b>Stage One</b>	Consultation on techniques for public participation, scientific research and institutional arrangements for the interim period. (The document you are now reading).	2001-2002
<b>Stage Two</b>	Research programme to examine the feasibility of the waste management options: and	2002-2004
<b>Stage Three</b>	Preparation of the next (Stage three) consultation paper Further consultation paper on the feasibility of the waste management options.	2005
<b>Stage Four</b>	Announcement of our decision on the preferred waste management strategy, and further consultation on how to implement it.	2006
<b>Stage Five (if required)</b>	Legislation setting out how the management strategy is to be implemented	2007

Use this space for notes if you want

## Regulation

- Under any regulatory system, storage will continue to be needed for radioactive wastes until a final management strategy is available.
- In the case of solid wastes with more than low levels of radioactivity, the implementation of a final management strategy is unlikely to be complete for several decades. Wastes requiring storage pending the development of a final management strategy will need to be maintained safely with minimal need for human intervention. Some wastes will need to be processed and packaged to achieve this.

- Over 99% of radioactive wastes are on sites licensed under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 (nuclear licensed sites). The HSE regulates radioactive waste management on these sites.

## ***11 Should the Scottish Environment Protection Agency in Scotland have a new statutory power over the storage of wastes on nuclear licensed sites?***

- One view is that the arrangements described above are incomplete and may not be appropriate to today's needs.
- The agencies cannot directly require a site licensee to provide the information needed to judge the environmental impact of the storage and ultimate final management of waste. Nor can they set regulatory requirements. If the environment agencies were given a new statutory power over the storage of wastes, nuclear licensees would need to provide the relevant information to the agencies in order to obtain authorisations for storing wastes.
- The authorisation process would also give additional opportunities for consulting, and providing information to, the public.
- The alternative view is that there is no evidence that the current regime fails to provide effective regulation, nor that a statutory power for the agencies would enhance it.
- The existing arrangements provide positive advantages, including a robust and complete regime for the protection of workers, the public and the environment.
- They also ensure that the agencies are fully involved in matters affecting radioactive waste management, and full consultation by HSE on regulation of radioactive waste storage will provide sufficient opportunity for the views of the public to be taken into account.

Use this final space for notes if you want

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