

**Stop Hinkley at the 2nd Nuclear Energy Agency Workshop on Stakeholder Involvement:
Risk Communication
24-26 September 2019, Paris**

What, you may well ask, were Stop Hinkley doing cosying up to the NEA, the international proponents of nuclear energy? The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) let us know that NEA was looking to attract a wider audience, sent us an invitation, SH applied and we were lucky enough to be in the first 125 successful applicants. So, last minute scrabbling to get to Paris and find a room.

The NEA is an agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Its Paris HQ is a great place for an international conference; as a previous organiser of conferences, I was amazed at the level and quality of support for the event. When participants were working in nine groups, there were nine highly qualified NEA staff taking notes and helping produce summaries!

What I hoped to learn was something of how the promoters of nuclear energy operate, what their concerns are and how they view their opposition. The fact that the Workshop was all about Risk Communication makes it clear that they know they have an image problem and want to do something about it. As one speaker said "Most people don't want to know about radiation until there's an incident that effects **them**. Then, it's too late for education, they just want to be told what to do that'll make them safe."

Rather than wading through three days of intensive inputs – nine to five thirty, no morning coffee, hour for lunch – I thought ten points that seemed pertinent might make it easier to absorb. Bear in mind, as far as I could tell, SH was the only anti-nuclear organisation there; 'Mothers for Nuclear' and 'Voices of Nuclear', unlikely as it sounds, were represented organisations.

- 1) New nuclear is only likely to happen on 'brown field' sites, except in countries where the state rules with ineffective opposition.
- 2) People find the topic of risk from radiation from a nuclear installation too complex and too frightening to take on board; the NEA accepts it is a struggle to communicate effectively.
- 3) Finding a risk model for radiation that experts agree on and which is readily understandable by the public is a real challenge!
- 4) When Stop Hinkley is trying to make its point, **we need to find 3 key messages, 27 words that summarise our point of view and have a 9 second sound-bite ready**; telling journalists our conclusions, why they're new and why they're important turns accepted methods on their head but will get our message across more effectively.
- 5) ASN (the French ONR) does things differently; their consultation on a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) had meetings in Paris and other major cities, which attracted considerable opposition, despite the certainty that their GDF will be in the back of beyond. In the UK, Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) tiptoed around peripheral cities (Exeter and Cheltenham for two) and cancelled a session in Cardiff because of likely opposition when taking soundings on a UK GDF.
- 6) Nuclear's proponents could learn a lot from other sectors that need to (and do) communicate risk more effectively:- road safety, public health, food safety and aviation provided great examples.
- 7) Not all promoters of new build for the UK have the 'decide and defend' mentality of EdeF that made their HPC 'Consultations' so meaningless. Horizon (whose Wylfa project has stalled due to finance) went from on- and off-site worker hostels to 'all on-site' proposal after consulting with local people.
- 8) Fukushima experiences are hard to hear. Imagine being 8 and finding yourself alone and apparently abandoned by your relatives. And there are still radiation hotspots around the site that people weren't told about after the disaster.
- 9) Whether as a pro- or an anti-, younger people aren't necessarily interested in nuclear, unless we (or nuclear's proponents!) can demonstrate why they should care, why they should get involved and that they will make a difference.
- 10) The protests and petitions against dumping 300,000t of mud from HPC in the Cardiff Grounds clearly stung the UK's Society for Radiological Protection. They hadn't grasped that the scale of the opposition was as much about 'English muck being dumped on Wales' as our genuine concerns about the radiological status of the mud.

Report by Roy Pumfrey