



**An Evaluation of the BNFL National
Stakeholder Dialogue
Final Report**

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BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue

Summary of the Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

This is a summary of an evaluation of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue, the aim of the Dialogue being to *'inform BNFL's decision making process about the improvement of their environmental performance in the context of their overall development'*. The evaluation has been carried out by CAG Consultants and the views contained within this report are ours based on the evidence produced by the evaluation methodology outlined below.

The evaluation was undertaken by CAG Consultants between July 2003 and January 2004 and overseen by a stakeholder task group. The evaluation aimed to:

- *Assess the BNFL National Stakeholder process to date, including areas such as: process strengths and weaknesses, use of resources, evidence of impact/change, unexpected consequences, key lessons and future applications.*
- *Produce a report(s) that enables internal and external audiences to access the learning to be derived from the BNFL National Stakeholder process*

In the following sections of this summary we:

2. Describe the Dialogue in terms of history, key players and key tools
3. Outline the methods and approaches used in this evaluation
4. Summarise the key issues emerging from CAG Consultants' analysis of the evaluation findings
5. Draw out the learning points for this and future dialogues that have emerged from the findings and our analysis.

In addition we sign post the reader to the more detailed sections of the main report.

2 Background to the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue

2.1 Historic context

The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue is a process of sustained negotiation between stakeholders and at its starting point was unique, although dialogue was emerging as a process internationally, there were, at this point no UK industrial examples at such a large scale, dealing with such conflict or such complex ideas.

This historical context led to this Dialogue adopting a reflective approach to its work that welcomed learning.

2.2 A very brief history of the Dialogue¹

Exploratory work between BNFL, The Environment Council (TEC) and other key identified stakeholders to frame the Dialogue process was carried out in the initial development phase of the Dialogue. This culminated in an initial Stakeholder Workshop in 1998. Over 100 invited stakeholders attended this workshop. One outcome from the workshop was a willingness from all present to commit themselves and / or their organisations to an ongoing dialogue between BNFL and stakeholders around the aim (above).

Areas of concern or interest suggested for the Dialogue from this Workshop included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What to do with plutonium stock pile • Internal staff morale and ownership of environmental performance and corporate leadership • Proactive environmental policy • BNFL to respond proactively to international pressures and conventions • Local versus global – the impacts and benefits • Global clean up • The impacts that BNFL's operations will have on the health and environment of future generations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BNFL to develop strategies according to its three different businesses and their value sets • Nuclear Liabilities Strategy, including disposal • End reprocessing or not? • BNFL changing course, a momentum problem • Freedom of information • Diversification • Regulatory pressure • To create trust, transparency, understanding and accountability through genuine dialogue, based on mutual respect, comprehensive and clear understanding.
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To enable the process to be framed by stakeholders, following this initial workshop, a Task Group was formed by drawing together members of all the stakeholder constituencies. This Task Group developed an initial work programme proposal for the Dialogue. The work programme was based around a Main Group of all participating stakeholders, a Co-ordination Group (to inform process management) and smaller working groups which came together around specific issues, based on mandates given by the Main Group. To date the working, sub and task groups have included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordination Group • Waste Working Group • Spent Fuel Management Options Working Group • Plutonium Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Futures Working Group • Security Working Group • Discharges Working Group • Socio-Economic Sub-Group • Evaluation Steering Group
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¹ See Main Report Section 3 page 34

Each working group has produced recommendations and reports of their deliberations for the Main Group, some of these reports have been informally consulted upon and all have been publicised more widely, in particular, on The Environment Council's website².

2.3 Key Players³

The Dialogue has operated through developing and maintaining clarity about the roles of the players within it. These players include:

- **Process Managers.** The Dialogue separated process⁴ management from content management and rigorously maintained this separation. Within the Dialogue the management of the overall process was also separated from the facilitation of the process, by a further split between the "convenor" (TEC) and the facilitator role as undertaken by *independent facilitators* contracted by TEC, although the two, by necessity worked in tandem.
- **Problem Holder.** BNFL is both the problem holder and the sponsor of the Dialogue.
- **Stakeholders.** Stakeholders are those people or organisations who have a stake or interest in the Dialogue, the industry or their products and the impacts they have. In the case of this Dialogue, stakeholders were drawn from a range of constituencies identified in the development phase and listed below.

Dialogue Stakeholder Constituencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities⁵ • Customers • Other NGOs • Regulators • Company • Environmental NGOs • Government • Workforce

2.4 Key Tools⁶

Throughout the Dialogue, the process has been one of learning and as such a range of tools, frameworks and methods have been developed, reviewed and revised. The

² www.the-environment-council.org.uk

³ See Main Report Section 5 page 55

⁴ There is a useful distinction between the *process* of discussions (the way the discussion is held) and the *content* (the actual issues being discussed).

⁵ Represented in this Dialogue process by local authority members and officers

⁶ See Main Report Section 6, page 67

tools, which have been identified, through this evaluation, as fundamental to the Dialogue's successes are:

- **Ground Rules** – There have been thirteen iterations of the ground rules, in each case a change has been prompted by the stakeholders involved in the process. Stakeholders regard the ground rules as a living document over which they have control.
- **Aim** – The aim was initially devised to be a general statement around which previously conflicting parties could come together, but as such provides a frame work for the work programme of the Dialogue and its outputs and outcomes.
- **Working Group objectives and terms of reference** – following a mandate from the Main Group, through developing work programmes and associated terms of reference, working groups' roles and responsibilities are defined.
- **Scenario development and decision making tools** – The use of scenario development and other planning and / or decision making tools have provided a framework on which working groups can build recommendations.
- **Records** – The methods of record keeping used within the Dialogue have ensured that records from the meetings are the responsibility of the group and fully owned by them. They record discussions, agreements and action points from all working group and Main Group meetings.

3 The Evaluation

3.1 Background

This evaluation emerged from a desire expressed initially within the Coordination Group and subsequently supported by the Main Group to identify learning areas and trace the impacts of the Dialogue. In the first instance the Co-ordination Group carried out an evidence gathering exercise, and reported to the Main Group in 2002. From this exercise the Co-ordination Group was mandated to carry out further research through the use of independent consultants. The previous "evidence gathering" exercise was unconnected, although it informed the Co-ordination Group about setting the aims of this independent, external evaluation (above) and the emphasis on the learning as a focus for the evaluation process.

3.2 Methods⁷

CAG Consultants were appointed, by the Co-ordination Group, from a number of consultancies invited to tender.

During the course of the evaluation we have used the following methods to gather data to inform the analysis.

⁷ See Main Report Section 2, page 30

- **Observations** - The Main Group, Security Working Group, Business Futures Working Group and the Coordination Group were observed by experienced consultants. In total seven observations were undertaken.
- **Discussion Groups** - Discussions groups have been held with BNFL participants, technical advisors, trade union representatives, convenors and facilitators and Main Group participants. Four discussion groups were facilitated.
- **Interviews** - Interviews have taken place with Co-ordination Group members, stakeholders, former participants, BNFL managers, sponsor, convenor and facilitators. A total of 45 individuals were interviewed.
- **Questionnaires⁸** - A series of questionnaires were developed, one for facilitators and convenors, one for current Main Group members, one for members of working and other groups and one for a sample of former Main Group members.
- **Cost definition** - CAG Consultants worked on establishing the level of resources that stakeholders input into the Dialogue. This enabled some analysis of costs. All current and former Main Group participants completing questionnaires provided cost information.

To enable maximum participation and to encourage the contribution of the greatest levels of information CAG Consultants have employed a qualitative approach to this evaluation⁹. While providing high quality information these methods do not lend themselves to subsequent quantitative collation. Therefore due both to the method and a wish not to distract from the evidence, findings information is not displayed numerically.

As this is an evaluation of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue, CAG Consultants have not included any information collected during the evaluation process that relates to the separate Magnox Decommissioning Dialogue.

3.3 Previous Evaluations¹⁰

During the course of the Dialogue other evaluation activities have taken place, these include:

- 1) Evaluation at the end of Main Group meetings seeking feedback from stakeholders for the facilitation team
- 2) The production of the *Evidence Report* in 2002 following a mandate from the Main Group to the Co-ordination Group to gather evidence of impact

⁸ The total numbers of questionnaires completed and sample numbers are in section 2.1.2 of the Main Report.

⁹ These methodology choices, in particular not developing specific evaluation indicators were informed and influenced by the Co-ordination Group in the development stage of the evaluation process.

¹⁰ See Main Report Section 13, page 104

- 3) Ongoing reflection and informal evaluation by facilitators with stakeholders and through their own observations
- 4) Evaluations at the end of working groups' lifetimes.

These evaluations have informed ongoing learning about dialogue and the process management of this Dialogue.

In terms of informing this evaluation the most significant point of reference has been the evidence gathering process. The Co-ordination Group's comments on the *Evidence Report*¹¹ outlined the following themes to be looked at in further detail:

- a. Demonstration of influence on the Company
- b. Stakeholder expectations of the Dialogue
- c. Collaborative negotiation
- d. Engagement of stakeholders outside the Dialogue
- e. Role of Strategic Action Planning
- f. Information provision within the Dialogue

These previous evaluation products have been reviewed within this evaluation process.

4. Key issues emerging from the Dialogue.

Some key issues have emerged from this evaluation process, some of which reflect those emerging from previous internal evaluations. This section of the summary aims to describe these issues and thereby provides some background to the learning points emerging from the evaluation and outlined in section 5 of this summary. There is some interdependence amongst these issues but they can be summarised under the following headings:

- Ensuring legitimacy
- Some pre-requisites for a successful Dialogue, including collaborative negotiation¹², structured decision making e.g. role of strategic action planning, information provision and communication.
- Stakeholder representation
- Stakeholders' expectations of the Dialogue

¹¹ Produced by the Co-ordination Group in 2002 and available on TEC web site: www.the-environment-council.org.uk

¹² Issues emerging from previous internal Dialogue evaluations include: collaborative negotiation, role of strategic action planning, stakeholders outside the Company and demonstrating the influence on the Company.

- Working together effectively and developing trust
- Ensuring all relevant views are considered within the Dialogue, the capacity of stakeholders outside the Dialogue to be involved and reduction of barriers to participation
- Measuring the impacts and demonstrating influence of the Dialogue on the Company
- Evaluation of the Dialogue.

4.1 Ensuring legitimacy¹³

Legitimacy in this context refers to the right to take part in the Dialogue: to represent a legitimate interest in the aim and outcomes and have this acknowledged by all the other participants. However, in the case of this Dialogue, a significant amount of work has taken place to develop trust between parties who were traditionally in conflict, in order to establish an acceptance of contributions as legitimate by all parties.

At the start of the engagement process the Dialogue was seen to be legitimate by those within it. However, during the Dialogue some of those stakeholders initially identified decided to leave. As evaluators we were told by some respondents that this affected the legitimacy of the Dialogue, specifically because those views were now seen to be missing and under-represented in the process. One mechanism to respond to this gap, which evolved within the process, is the use of 'reflectors'¹⁴ rather than representatives.

The use of reflectors has been perceived, by participating stakeholders¹⁵, as very successful in inputting a wide range of views which broadly reflect those of the Environmental NGO constituency. This has contributed to maintaining the legitimacy of the process and its outputs. However capturing and incorporating the views of those outside the Dialogue still remains a challenge.

4.2 Pre-requisites for a successful dialogue, including collaborative negotiation, structured decision making e.g. role of strategic action planning¹⁶, information provision and communication¹⁷.

The evaluation identified a number of pre-requisites which have enabled this Dialogue to be effective, and may be applicable to all dialogues:

¹³ See Main Report Section 7, page 74

¹⁴ Reflector is a term commonly in use in participative processes; here it is used to describe a Dialogue stakeholder who participates in the Dialogue without a clear mandate or association in order to present the general views of a sector. For more discussion of the reflector role see the Main Report.

¹⁵ But not necessarily non participating stakeholders, former participating stakeholders and others

¹⁶ See Main Report Section 6, page 67

¹⁷ See Main Report Section 10, page 89

Pre-requisites	Description
Willingness to understand and respect a range of views	Within this Dialogue there are stakeholders who have changed their views about the opinions and perspectives of other, previously conflicting stakeholders. Many stakeholders reported that they now saw opposing views as legitimate.
Company recognition of stakeholder's role	Stakeholders reported that through the Dialogue, BNFL had developed a greater understanding that stakeholders outside the Company have a legitimate role in informing the Company's direction.
Company's senior management commitment	BNFL have placed the Dialogue in a high profile position through committing senior management time to it, and encouraging Board level feedback.
Willingness to operate through collaborative negotiation, rather than positional bargaining	Stakeholders need to develop an attitude of collaborative negotiation for dialogue to succeed. Later periods of the Dialogue may be considered to be more 'successful' as stakeholders have made more positive behavioural choices.
Independent process management and facilitation	The Dialogue has maintained a separation between content (stakeholders and sponsor) and process (convenor, facilitator and Co-ordination Group).
Role of decision making frameworks	In order to bring clarity to a complex setting with a range of sometimes conflicting views, early Dialogue working groups developed options scenarios, which have informed many work programmes. Other frameworks have included Strategic Action Planning and Multi-Attribute Decision Analysis.
Information provision	Although part of the wider issue of communication (below) the successful provision of information from the Company and other stakeholders, into the Dialogue (or clear explanations, which are acceptable to all stakeholders, as to why information cannot be provided) is crucial to its success.

4.3 Stakeholder representation¹⁸

This Dialogue has been a learning process throughout, and representation is an area where learning has been significant, the Dialogue has employed processes of representation in a number of ways.

- a. ***Initial stakeholder choice*** – Initially a group of stakeholders were identified by the convenor, sponsor and selected stakeholders as being the key stakeholders to involve in a dialogue about aspects of the Company's business, who would represent the views of all stakeholder constituencies.

¹⁸ See Main Report Section 11, page 97

- b. **Review of Main Group** – The convenor has repeatedly reviewed this initial selection, usually with the Main Group, to ensure the make up of the Main Group is representative of stakeholder constituencies.
- c. **Working group membership selection** – Membership of working groups is designed to reflect all participating constituencies and stakeholders volunteer to participate in order to represent and feed in the views of their constituencies.
- d. **Role of constituency** – Those stakeholders who participate in the Dialogue representing a specific constituency are expected to feedback to that community and seek a mandate from it. This process is monitored informally by stakeholders, but more proactively by the convenor and facilitators. (However it is useful to note that, although the Dialogue is founded on representativeness, not all constituencies are expected to operate this system within the Dialogue).
- e. **Reflectors** – A number of different kinds of reflectors exist within the Main Group and the use of reflectors, rather than representatives has emerged within the Dialogue as a response to specific identified constituency gaps (as previously discussed).
- f. **Filling gaps in representation** – Gaps in representation have been identified from time to time and in some cases alternative methods have been used to plug them, others have been more problematic.

Issues relating to the use of representation within the Dialogue have emerged from the evaluation. These include problems around representatives feeding back and being mandated¹⁹ by their organisations; how representation on such a scale needs supporting and resourcing; problems that organisations have in supplying representatives when overburdened with requests; the development of an elite of individuals participating in all engagement processes; the payment of representatives and the processes by which individuals enter the Dialogue.

4.4 Stakeholders expectations of the Dialogue²⁰

The management of stakeholder expectations remains a key issue within the Dialogue, perhaps brought into even sharper focus as the process begins to draw to a close.

In considering stakeholder expectations within the Dialogue we need to understand the expectations of both existing and former stakeholders. In this way we are able to find out whether stakeholders believe that their expectations have been met. When exploring with Dialogue stakeholders whether their expectations have been met, we have posed the following questions:

- How were stakeholder expectations assessed initially?
- How were the expectations of late joiners assessed?

¹⁹ Without which the Dialogue becomes an exchange of personal / individual views.

²⁰ See Main Report Section 6, page 67

- How were stakeholder expectations recorded and reviewed?
- What systems were used to manage expectations?
- How far have current and former participants felt that their expectations have been met?

In general terms, unsurprisingly those still involved were more likely to report that their expectations have been met than those who had left the process. But stakeholders who had stayed in the Dialogue also told us that their expectations had become more realistic as they learned more about what dialogue as a process could achieve, although this had not diminished their aspirations.

4.5 Working together effectively and developing trust²¹

By definition Dialogue is an interactive process wherein those engaged deliberate and, in this case, make recommendations to the problem holder about potential decisions and courses of action. In a typology²² or continuum of consultation and engagement processes dialogue is situated towards an extreme end of engagement. Its position on such a scale suggests that the process is more than a mere inputting of views, but that those engaged will work out solutions together and make recommendations to the problem holder.

For the debate and the development of solutions to take place, within the context of this Dialogue, stakeholders (and the convenor/facilitators) need to develop ways in which they can work together. Some of the methods used in this Dialogue are outlined in the pre-requisites (above) others include:

- Establishing an atmosphere of mutual learning
- The development of mutual trust and respect, between formally untrusting parties and recognising that developing trust is an important part of the process
- Giving the process enough time for trust to develop
- Using a range of formal and informal methods to ensure that trust can develop, this will include the use of confidentiality.
- Engendering an environment of openness and inclusivity.

Dialogue is not a process in which all people can participate; this Dialogue has developed ways of addressing the issue of participants who are less comfortable within such a process.

4.6 Ensuring all relevant views are considered within the Dialogue, the capacity of stakeholders outside the Dialogue to be involved and reduction of barriers to participation²³

²¹ See Main Report Section 9, page 80

²² See Appendix One, page 121

²³ See Main Report Section 10, page 89

During the course of the Dialogue the convenor and others have reviewed membership to ensure that all views and stakeholder constituencies / organisations are present within the process. In some cases processes have been put in place to respond to deficiencies in this area.

Ensuring that all views are considered in the Dialogue does remain a key challenge, for the Dialogue, issues to be considered include:

- Capacity of participating organisations (to participate in terms of time, resources, information and skills).
- The Dialogue's responsibility to develop the capacity of constituencies to engage
- Whether this Dialogue is a process in which all constituency organisations are able to participate in, in terms of their approach to their activities and work
- What alternative approaches and methods to seek, secure and incorporate views of absent stakeholders are appropriate for this Dialogue and when should they be undertaken?

4.7 Measuring the impacts and demonstrating influence on the Company²⁴

All currently participating stakeholders thought that the Dialogue process had influenced the Company and that this influence had taken place in two areas:

- Influence on Company's culture and the way Directors and Managers behave and work. For example stakeholders felt that BNFL had learnt the value of engaging with stakeholders and valued their input, and thought this was demonstrated by the fact that the Company now presented technical information in a more accessible way.
- Influence on the actual work of the Company, for example the introduction of a Plutonium Research and Development Programme

Stakeholders' perceptions that the Dialogue had influenced the Company no doubt informed their continuing commitment to and involvement in the process, while others outside the process were less sure that there had been any influence from the Dialogue to the Company. Measuring direct impact has proved difficult as, although they felt it had happened, few stakeholders could define the impact in any quantifiable way, plus tracking of a base line and progress against recommendations to demonstrate impacts and ongoing monitoring has been limited. In addition there have also been external factors which have impinged upon the Company's business which further frustrate attribution of change to the Dialogue.

After the initial evidence gathering process (in 2002), the Co-ordination Group identified a mismatch between perceptions of change and evidence of recordable change. To address this mismatch, the Business Futures Working Group has incorporated into its work programme the issue of reporting BNFL's response to all

²⁴ See Main Reports Sections 13 and 14 pages 104 and 112

Dialogue recommendations and recommended that evaluation and reporting of change should be improved.

In the course of the Dialogue, participating stakeholders have worked together to examine options around specific areas of Company activity. The process of examining options has led to the development of recommendations to the Company. The options and recommendations have been encapsulated into a series of collaboratively produced working group reports. These reports are:

- **West Cumbria: Socio Economic Study - 2003 Update** (August 2003)
Sets out the economic and social impacts of future business scenarios for BNFL's Sellafield site on the economy of West Cumbria.
- **Plutonium Working Group Report** (March 2003)
The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue identifies key recommendations to BNFL and the Government on management options for plutonium.
- **Principles for Liability Management** (November 2002)
A Response to the DTI's White Paper *'Managing the Nuclear Legacy'*²⁵
- **Spent Fuel Management Options Working Group Report** (July 2002)
An examination of the spent fuel management options available to BNFL within the context of advising the Company on how to improve environmental performance.
- **Evidence Report - Influence, Productivity and Impact of the Dialogue** (May 2002)
An examination of progress within the Dialogue led by the Co-ordination Group and carried out by TEC
- **Waste Working Group Combined Report** (November 2002)
A combined report comprising; the Interim Report of February 2000, the First Update October 2000 and the Second Update January 2002

This report and the updates review and recommend possible strategies to guide BNFL's management of radioactive waste.

- **Discharges Working Group Combined Report** (November 2002)
A combined report comprising; the Interim Report of February 2000, a First Update of October 2000 and a Second Update of January 2002

This report and the updates have the aim of recommending a framework for BNFL's management of radioactive discharges.

4.8 Evaluation of the Dialogue²⁶

Evaluation itself has emerged as an issue within this Dialogue. We have outlined the evaluations that have taken place within the Dialogue to date above. This participative assessment and the work currently being carried out by the Business

²⁵ For more information see the DTI web site www.dti.gov.uk

²⁶ See Main Report Section 13, page 104

Futures Working Group²⁷ to trace BNFL's response to all working group recommendations can be added to this list.

The processes used have ensured that process managers have had ongoing evaluation information to inform methods and techniques. Other areas within the Dialogue have been less well informed by ongoing evaluation, in particular progress towards achieving recommendations and the impact of the Dialogue.

Evaluation seeks to address a number of needs in this Dialogue:

- Ongoing improvements to process management
- Identification of impacts
- Identification of process learning points.

The latter two needs have only been addressed in the mid to later stages of the Dialogue, and then only partially due to the lack of timely evidence and ongoing evaluation.

5 Learning Points²⁸

A strength of this Dialogue has been to maintain a flexibility and responsiveness to both content and process demands and it reflects a commitment to continuous learning. In this way the Dialogue has been a learning process, both about dialogue in general and about dialogue within the nuclear context.

This evaluation has also focused on learning, including learning about evaluation. Thus this report brings together a range of learning points, based on the evidence gathered during the evaluation process. These learning points are listed here, some being collated from the full lists within the main body of the report.

The timing and retrospective nature of this evaluation means that some learning outputs from it are unavailable in time for application in the final phase of this Dialogue, but they can be applied elsewhere. This evaluation has therefore identified learning for immediate application, for continuing application and those which may be applied in other dialogues. All learning points arise from this evaluation of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue and as such do not form a 'recipe' for dialogue overall.

5.1 Lessons for the end of this Dialogue

5.1.1 Reassert the aim

A success of this Dialogue has been bringing constituencies in conflict together around an uncontroversial aim, the information from this evaluation suggests that the aim must be shared by all, in order to ensure effective participation. As the Dialogue draws to a close, and its outputs and potential outcomes will be widely

²⁷ This work passed to the Co-ordination Group in the period after this evaluation.

²⁸ Collated from throughout the Main Report

circulated it will be helpful to put these outputs into the context of the Dialogue aim. Thus strengthening ownership within the Dialogue and contribute to creating clarity beyond the Dialogue.

5.1.2 Describe the decision making boundaries at the close

Participants were not clear about the decision making boundaries of this Dialogue. During the evaluation stakeholders viewed their role to be on a continuum from 'providing information to BNFL' to 'making policy decisions for BNFL and monitoring their work'²⁹. While most stakeholders were in the middle of this continuum, the Dialogue will be well served if the results are disseminated with a description of the decision making boundaries of the Dialogue i.e. the Dialogue aims to *inform* BNFL's decision making processes.

This activity will also reaffirm the bounded nature of the Dialogue

5.1.3 Describe the checks and balances that maintain independence

Transparency of all activities between the problem holder and convenor is crucial to ensure stakeholder acceptance of independence. This transparency and independence has been recognised by participating stakeholders. However, outside the process, non-participating stakeholders have been worried about this independence. When disseminating the results of the Dialogue it would be useful to provide information on how this transparency and independence has been maintained.

5.1.4 Review the bridging mechanism, participating stakeholders, non participating stakeholders and reflector's role

Within the Dialogue various structures have developed to improve communication with Environmental NGO stakeholders, especially those outside the Dialogue. Whilst being largely successful, these structures could be improved by the following: the Bridge Mechanism provides a process through which BNFL announcements can be given to stakeholders in an 'early warning' system, and the use of reflectors ensures that some of the Environmental NGO perspectives, thought not to be represented in other ways are fed into the Dialogue.

- The Bridge Mechanism would have benefited from a clearer set of guidelines for invoking this channel of communication. As the Dialogue draws to a close, communication outside the Dialogue will gain higher priority and this mechanism needs revisiting to ensure maximum effectiveness. In addition the mechanism may inform part of future BNFL stakeholder engagement activity.
- Other more effective methods or techniques are required to feed in the views of identified stakeholders who cannot or chose not to become involved in the process. This activity should be addressed as a matter of urgency and may need to employ methods or approaches other than dialogue. This is particularly relevant in the case of working group conclusions and

²⁹ These are composite and not direct quotations

recommendations, and BNFL responses. This will necessitate a review of the role of all reflectors.

- Views should be sought from stakeholders identified initially, but currently outside the Dialogue, on Dialogue products at the close of the Dialogue.
- More effective methods to enable interested individuals to feed into the Dialogue at arms length need exploration.
- Evaluators found a level of negativity from some stakeholders within the process about organisations who choose not to, or can not become involved in the process. We would suggest that this is not helpful in encouraging long term dialogue and would need to be addressed.
- The possibility of using structural reflectors in all unrepresented or under represented constituencies needs further consideration.
- More clarity about the role of stakeholders who neither represent nor reflect a constituency needs to be introduced in to working groups in particular.
- An examination of why participants attend Dialogue activities, but choose not to participate when there, is required.
- The Dialogue would benefit from a transparent restating of which organisations participating stakeholders represent, if any.

5.1.5 Review external communication

As communities and the general public are not involved in this process consideration should be given to more effective ways of disseminating the Dialogue products, bearing in mind the audience. In addition it should be considered how to encourage these excluded groups to input to BNFL, or other bodies who will assume ownership of the issues which are still outstanding (as input would be beyond the life of the Dialogue). This will entail a proactive and imaginative approach to external communication, added to the press coverage currently managed by the Communications Sub Group.

5.1.6 Extend recommendations to include milestones and proxy outcome measures³⁰

Working group objectives have been developed collaboratively by working group members, in all cases over a period of months. All recommendations have been taken to the Main Group for final agreement.

As previously stated the Business Futures Working Group (BFWG) is currently undertaking a review of BNFL's response to all recommendations. However, it is clear that most of the activities suggested in the recommendations will fall beyond the life of the Dialogue. Recommendations from BFWG's review should be extended

³⁰ Outcomes fall outside the life a engagement programmes, and therefore indicators that demonstrate progress to the fulfilling of an outcome need to be established, these are known as proxy indicators.

to include milestones and proxy outcome indicators against which BNFL's actions and progress can be demonstrated.

5.1.7 Feedback action to all stakeholders

Feedback on progress is essential to maintaining trust and momentum in the Dialogue, and currently BNFL gives regular presentations to the Main Group and Business Futures Working Group, this should be linked to milestones and proxies.

5.1.8 Review the induction of new stakeholders

In response to new stakeholders joining the Dialogue at different times an induction process has been developed. Although stakeholders recognised that an induction process was of benefit, suggestions for improvement to content were made. The process of induction requires significant time and resources and can be used as a means of assessing capacity issues and ways to address them.

5.1.9 Maintain appropriate levels of technical information

Stakeholders and the Dialogue process have benefited from the appropriate input of technical support. This has included technical advisors, environmental experts and a content advisor. Deliberate, ongoing effort is needed to keep the Dialogue at an appropriate technical level, with the appointment of technical advisers being open and transparent. The responsibility for identifying the need for such technical information lies with stakeholders.

5.1.10 Record external impacts on the industry

Within this evaluation stakeholders suggested that the industry had been exposed to external impacts outside the Dialogue (e.g. the announcement of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority). We found no shared understanding or record of these impacts and therefore recommend that external impacts on the process and content need to be recorded from now until the close of the Dialogue, to ensure any further discussion of impact is informed by more comprehensive information, and that if possible a record of past external impacts should be made.

5.1.11 Rationalise payments to stakeholders and review the stakeholder support fund

The Stakeholder Support Fund has been introduced by TEC to enable participation in activity by stakeholders, TEC also provides all accommodation and travel costs for stakeholders. However stakeholders suggested that while the fund was extremely useful in supporting their participation, it did not fulfil all their needs. During the process some anomalies in payments to specific stakeholders emerged. TEC is in the process of reviewing this situation and the transparency of processes used. They are now considering making payment available to stakeholders for subgroup and drafting work.

TEC, together with the sponsor of the Dialogue process, needs to continue to rationalise payments to stakeholders to achieve clarity, inclusivity and openness around the issue, together with a review of the Stakeholder Support Fund.

5.2 Learning points for continuing application after closure

5.2.1 Develop continuous feedback systems for beyond the life of the Dialogue

Many of the outputs and outcomes of the Dialogue will fall outside the life time of the process. BNFL, as the sponsor, has a responsibility to the participating and other stakeholders to continue to feed back progress on recommendations.

In order to achieve this, BNFL may consider the following learning points from this evaluation:

- Clarity about the original aim and decision making boundaries will need to be maintained in all future feedback
- The involvement of senior decision makers from the problem holder has been critical to the success of the Dialogue, and their involvement will need to be maintained in the future feedback phase of the process.

5.2.2 Maintain and continue culture change within the Company

The Dialogue may have led to organisational culture changes within BNFL, including:

- A recognition of its responsibility to engage with stakeholders and their views and that this can be a resource for the company
- A respect for opposing positions and views
- The Company learning to present itself in a more accessible way

This culture change will need to be maintained or further developed in order to ensure post-dialogue feedback to stakeholders through new processes.

5.2.3 Develop a two way feedback process

Dialogue is a process, in which all views are recognised as being legitimate and are respected. To mirror this achievement we recommend that when post-dialogue feedback is given by the company there should also be opportunities for stakeholders to input. If feedback is also inviting comment and other input from stakeholders then in addition to current engagement practice employed by the Company in the Dialogue, we also suggest that:

- Feedback beyond the life of the Dialogue should incorporate ways in which the general public and communities can also input their views on progress
- Effective methods are needed to gather and input views of those stakeholders who have not been able or have chosen not to be involved in the Dialogue process to date.

5.3 Generic learning about dialogue

Below we outline some generic learning about dialogue as a process, arising from the evaluation. These learning points relate specifically to this Dialogue, and had an evaluation taken place earlier in the life of the Dialogue may well have informed recommendations made to the Main Group. However, the members of the Dialogue may take these lessons to other processes in which they may participate in the future.

5.3.1 Degrees of boundedness

All dialogue processes have parameters which are variously “open” (where agreed by the stakeholders together) or “bounded” (defined by the sponsor or problem-holder). Potential parameters in dialogue might include; “what is discussed”, “for how long”, “how”, “by whom” and “to what end”. Changes in parameters need to be transparently managed especially with respect to the dialogue’s aim, what can realistically be achieved and the stakeholder’s role within it.

This process may also include the development and review of a shared understanding of what is available for negotiation.

In this Dialogue, there has been a tendency toward open discussion and agreement of parameters as a direct response to historic levels of conflict and the need to build trust.

5.3.2 Importance and features of facilitators

In this Dialogue, the facilitators have been highly skilled and experienced, and they have maintained an independence from the content throughout.

- The use of well trained and supported facilitators from outside TEC has been an important key to success in this Dialogue, as has maintaining their independence from BNFL and other stakeholders. In particular facilitators control and manage the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to developing trust.
- Achieving real and perceived independence between convenor and facilitators appears to have been more problematic but it is important in providing a further sense of ‘distance’ between problem holder and process management. Consideration needs to be given to how to both maintain and demonstrate this independence in dialogue processes.
- Challenges to independence of process managers need to be resolved early and recorded in an ongoing evaluation.

5.3.3 Confidentiality within dialogue

Within a commercial setting there are issues for companies around what can be shared openly. However efforts to overcome confidentiality issues lead to building

trust and cooperation within a dialogue process, as we have seen within this Dialogue. Openness around information issues needs to be incorporated into processes as dialogue brings a heightened expectation of information-sharing responsibilities.

5.3.4 Stakeholders, representatives and others

Significant learning has taken place within this Dialogue about representation and how stakeholders represent their constituencies and / or organisations. For example the use of reflectors has emerged as a useful tool in expressing the views of absent organisations.

- Clear criteria for the definition of stakeholders need to be developed and applied in a fair, open, consistent and transparent way, especially when differing constituency requirements are made, as within this Dialogue.
- Membership reviews have been conducted regularly and have involved all stakeholders, but the process may have benefited from their being recorded. In addition openness and transparency is needed in screening of new members.
- Where the general public are excluded from the process, consideration should be given to mechanisms for testing and incorporating their views.
- Dialogue presupposes a willingness to negotiate collaboratively on the part of stakeholders. This may prove especially difficult for campaigning groups who are defined by their 'fixed' position.
- Dialogue also presupposes that there is an interest and commitment from stakeholder groups.
- More clarity is needed about the role of participating stakeholders who do not represent or reflect constituencies, in particular within working groups.
- Thought needs to be given to the Dialogue's responsibility to develop the capacity of organisations to participate.
- The use of reflectors needs review, while the role can provide a useful means of maintaining the legitimacy and / or effectiveness of the dialogue when groups withdraw, or cannot become involved, it is not the only option available. The legitimacy of this role is strengthened when the reflectors are selected by the constituency group and could be extended to all participating constituencies.

5.3.5 Expectations may change

Stakeholders reported to us that their expectations changed during the course of their involvement. In some cases this led to an increased commitment; in other cases these changes led to less commitment to the process. Recognising the change in expectations which occurs during a dialogue process is important to facilitators and stakeholders alike. To accommodate this change, re-visiting the dialogue aim to provide a more specific focus may be necessary as a dialogue process matures

5.3.6 Some tools are universal

There are a range of dialogue tools which have assisted the support and delivery of this Dialogue, some of which may be universal to effective dialogue processes:

- The development of a clear aim provides a foundation for dialogues. An uncontroversial aim needs to be linked to an understanding of what the Dialogue can achieve and stakeholders roles within it.
- Stakeholders require quality induction into dialogue processes
- The use of 'terms of reference' and objectives to set a clear mandate for the conditions of engagement are essential to the success for a working group or subgroups and when they are developed by working group members, participating stakeholders' feelings of ownership over them increase.
- Where, as in this case, content and process facilitation are kept separate, the need for up-to-date information briefings is particularly important for process managers.
- The process may have benefited from using a range of specialist advisers rather than a single content adviser. Where their views on a particular issue are regarded as independent, participants in the Dialogue could have been utilised to develop briefing material and methods other than 'briefing notes' could be considered for future activity. Appointment of all advisers needs to be transparent and the need for technical support may be as great among facilitators and convenors as it is among stakeholders.
- Scenario planning is especially useful in circumstances where strategic choices have to be made in the face of significant uncertainty and complexity. It is important to take a long-term view of strategy and where there are a limited number of key factors influencing the success of that strategy, there are a range of decision making frameworks available. This Dialogue has used two. After trust had been developed, Strategic Action Planning (SAP) with scenarios was considered to be much more successful than Multi-Attribute Decision Analysis (MADA). SAP appears to be particularly well suited to this Dialogue because it provided a framework for stakeholders, with diverse views on contentious issues. It enabled participants to think beyond their own positions and develop common understandings. The processes are time-consuming, suggesting that they should be introduced at the earliest possible stage. Although time-consuming and laborious, SAP has enabled a consensual product to be developed on highly contentious issues. The end undoubtedly justified the means.
- The wall report is a useful live record, which needs complementing by more formal meeting accounts in working groups. Specifically, all agreements and actions should be typed and circulated, soon after meetings.
- The rigorous timescales of circulation maintained by TEC are a significant contributor to trust and responsibility within the process.

- An appropriate amount of time is needed to develop content capacity, this would be informed by an initial assessment of capacity and provision of technical supporters.
- Greater recognition, resourcing and practical support of the mandating and representing activities undertaken by stakeholders within their constituencies needs to be structured into the process.
- The joint fact-finding approach is important in addressing information needs, whilst avoiding potential disputes over the integrity of the results. This also contributes more broadly to achieving a balance in the sense of power and influence.
- Financial support is necessary for those participating in their own time.
- Financial support should be administered by an independent convenor in a transparent way and be widely publicised.
- Providing the room for expressions of strong feeling on issues is important, within the boundaries set in the ground rules.
- The importance of non verbal communication in dialogue should not be underestimated
- Embedding roles and behaviours in the ground rules is essential, especially for those around the use of power.
- Dialogue depends on collaborative negotiation and active and effective participation in good faith. Therefore, the processes and structures of the Dialogue need to encourage this, including ground rules, entry processes, induction, capacity building, participant selection and management of expectations.
- Stakeholders need to develop a respect for the views and the legitimacy of the contributions of other stakeholders before collaboration and complete inclusivity can take place. This is often described as major outcome of this Dialogue, but is, in fact, to a lesser degree, a process prerequisite.

5.3.7 Trust needs development within dialogue

Where there is a history of hostility, simply making the dialogue happen may need to take priority in the early stages, as happened in this Dialogue. Following this decision, focus was given to activities and processes that forged trust between stakeholder constituencies.

Thus the development of trust between previously hostile parties has been time consuming within this process, but one from which lessons can be drawn, including:

- Team building events need to be built into dialogue events.
- Openness about the causes of mistrust will allow people to move on.

- Recognising 'cultural' differences and differentials in power will help to identify points of common interest.
- Informal contacts and events, designed around the culture of those involved, are as important as formal events.
- Continuity of involvement in the process builds relationships.
- The influence on dialogue of the principles of 'exchange' between partners needs to be explicitly recognised and formalised.
- Feedback on progress against recommendations is essential to maintaining trust
- Effective dialogue requires measures and actions that work within the constraints of the differing belief systems and organising principles of stakeholders, and encourages stakeholders to move beyond them

5.3.8 Considerations for the problem holder within dialogue

The problem holder is key to the effectiveness and outcome of a dialogue process, the findings from this evaluation indicate some significant considerations for them including;

- Transparency about activities that take place between the convenor and problem holder is essential
- There is a need for clarity and honesty about what information can and cannot be provided to dialogue participants
- Efforts to overcome confidentiality issues are required to build trust and cooperation
- Dialogue brings a heightened expectation of information-sharing responsibilities outside the Dialogue, mechanisms to share information outside the Dialogue need clear guidelines
- Problem holders need to recognise some basic issues on entering into dialogue, these include;
 - a recognition of their responsibility to engage with stakeholders
 - an appreciation of the value of engagement
 - a respect for opposing positions and views
 - learning to present themselves in a less-technical way

5.3.9 Issues of time

The evaluation of this Dialogue has exposed many concerns about time within the process; the length of time the process has taken, the time expected from

participants; the time commitment of keeping up to date with the process and of feeding back the process to constituencies.

Some of the time issues are outlined elsewhere in the learning points, others are summarised here.

- In developing a dialogue it is necessary to acknowledge the amount of time needed and whether this has implications for making the process more bounded and therefore less time consuming.
- The role of reflectors and other non-representative types of stakeholders could be explored further to address issues of time.
- Recognition of the time involved for mandating and representing activities is important.

5.3.10 On-going monitoring and evaluation is essential

Although there have been a number of process evaluations and a significant evidence gathering process, evaluation has been a weakness in this Dialogue. Lessons learned from this evaluation process include:

- Recommendations should be constructed in a SMART way
- Monitoring and evaluation need to be integral to dialogue processes.
- The value of monitoring needs to be accepted by all participants to ensure it is effective.
- Baseline process and content information needs to be recorded and updated consistently.
- External impacts on the process and content need to be recorded at the time.
- Evaluation management structures need to be incorporated into dialogue.
- Stakeholder, working groups and facilitator monitoring and recording responsibilities would benefit from being recorded in contracts and/or ground rules.
- Indicators, proxies and benchmarks need to be developed to effectively monitor and demonstrate impact.
- Evaluation data gathering methods need to be flexible and responsive.
- Evaluation data should be reviewed by as wide a stakeholder group as possible.
- Impact information needs to be shared with Main Group structures regularly.

6. Conclusion

The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue has been extremely successful in using dialogue processes to bring together and develop trust between organisations and individuals who were previously in conflict. It has facilitated a process in which the full range of views are brought to an issue, from which, through collaborative negotiation, solutions have been developed in a systematic way and set in recommendations to the Company.

The process has used some key tools which emerge as prerequisites for its success, as does the clear and shared understanding of the roles of the key players within the process.

A further key to the success of the Dialogue's processes has been the willingness of stakeholders and facilitators to learn and respond to learning. The Dialogue has therefore inevitably been a flexible one, evolving in response to the emerging needs of both the industry and the Dialogue itself.

The Dialogue has been least successful in incorporating the views of other stakeholders previously involved (or not involved in the process at all), feeding back Company responses to recommendations and evaluating and therefore demonstrating the impact of the process.

We have developed learning points emerging from the evaluation process for application both now and beyond the life of the current Dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This Final Report outlines and discusses information gathered in an evaluation process carried out between July 2003 and January 2004 as part of the British Nuclear Fuels PLC (BNFL) National Stakeholder Dialogue³¹ process (the process). As such, it is a review of one dialogue.

Consultants and associates of CAG Consultants carried out the work, on behalf of the Main Group members of the Dialogue and The Environment Council (TEC), who were stakeholders in the context of this evaluation. Thus the views contained within this report are the views of CAG Consultants based on the evidence produced by the evaluation methodology. CAG Consultants is a regeneration, stakeholder engagement, economic development and sustainability consultancy. They provide practical and policy level solutions to social, economic and environmental issues, specialising in delivering, researching and evaluating stakeholder involvement processes, designing and implementing consultation processes, supporting partnerships and developing decision-making tools.

The evaluation arose from the Main Group, who mandated its Co-ordination Group to oversee the first stages of the process. The Co-ordination Group drafted an evaluation brief and identified and interviewed a number of organisations, from which CAG Consultants were appointed.

Following the appointment of CAG Consultants, an Evaluation Steering Group was formed at the next Main Group meeting, in July 2003. CAG Consultants were supported and advised by this group, which included a range of stakeholder constituencies and a convenor.³²

1.2 Purpose and structure of the report

This report aims to feed back evaluation results to the Main Group for their consideration.

The evaluation findings are covered in a number of sections, each of which draws on the findings of the evaluation and discusses theory and/or other case study evidence to define lessons that can be learnt. The sections are:

- **Methodology.** A description of the methods used in the evaluation process.
- **The context of the evaluation.** A brief history of the Dialogue and a short description of dialogue as a process.

³¹ Throughout this report, we have used the term Dialogue (with an upper case “D”) to refer to the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue process, and the term dialogue (with a lower case “d”) to refer to dialogue processes in general.

³² The Terms of Reference of the Evaluation Steering Group can be found in Appendix One.

- ***The Nature of the Dialogue.*** A discussion of the characteristics of this Dialogue, including a typology of consultation and engagement processes and a consideration of the bounded or unbounded nature of the Dialogue.
- ***The Dialogue's Key Players.*** An outline and discussion of the roles of the key players.
- ***The Dialogue's Key Tools.*** A description and discussion of the usefulness of the key tools used.
- ***The Dialogue's Key Issues.*** A discussion of the key issues which emerge from the Dialogue, including legitimacy, time and other barriers to participation, developing trust, communication and feedback, incorporating outputs from other processes, representation, accountability, capacity, expectations and evaluation.
- ***The Dialogue's Impacts.*** An outline of the impacts.

1.3 Aims of the Evaluation

In May 2002, TEC produced an Evidence Report which was an internal investigation into the impacts of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue so far. The Main Group then mandated the Co-ordination Group to develop a framework for an evaluation brief.

The report pointed to some key areas for further exploration. These included:

- demonstration of influence on the Company;
- stakeholder expectations of the dialogue;
- collaborative negotiation;
- engagement of stakeholders outside the dialogue;
- role of Strategic Action Planning; and
- information provision within the dialogue.

The following draft objectives were then developed:

- to assess the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue process to date, including areas such as: process strengths and weaknesses, use of resources, evidence of impact/change, unexpected consequences, key lessons and future applications; and
- to produce a report(s) that enables internal and external audiences to access the learning to be derived from the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue process.

As this is an evaluation of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue, CAG Consultants have not included any information collected during the evaluation process that relates to the separate Magnox Decommissioning Dialogue.

2 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation had three stages, as can be seen from the diagram below. A review of how effective these methods were in evaluating this process can be found in section eight of this report.

Stage One: Design and Development

Set evaluation objectives

Identify evaluation criteria

Examine existing evidence

Stage Two: Delivery

Questionnaires

Observation

Phone interviews

Informal contacts

Discussion groups

Collate Findings

Stage Three: Analyses and Reporting

Analysis

Final Report

Figure One: Evaluation Stages

2.1 Evaluation Stages

2.1.1 Stage 1: Design and Development

The early stages of the evaluation included:

- development and agreement of evaluation objectives (see Appendix 2, for more details of this process);
- Co-ordination Group agreement of the work programme;

- establishment of an Evaluation Steering Group³³, drawn from the Main Group and reflecting all stakeholder constituencies plus facilitators and convenors;
- collation of all reports and paper evidence;
- drawing together of a database of Dialogue participants (current and former) and other interested parties, based on information from TEC;
- development and agreement of resources and proforma to be used within the evaluation; and
- time for CAG Consultants to familiarise themselves with the Dialogue.

This was followed by a scoping period to develop a methodology for the subsequent stages of the evaluation. This included the following range of activities:

- *Main Group Participation*; attendance at a Main Group meeting enabled CAG to present an outline of the evaluation, to observe the group, undertake a 'quick response questionnaire' (see below) and carry out informal interviews with participants. This included four experienced consultants who were able to relate their observations to the evaluation themes of participation, roles, representation, relationships and legitimacy³⁴.
- *Questionnaire*³⁵; this focused on participant's opinions of the main issues and lessons learnt. It also encouraged participants to direct CAG to more concrete information, if appropriate. 54 questionnaires were completed at this Main Group session.

These activities involved a wide range of participants in the initial stages of the evaluation and enabled CAG to draw out a revised list of themes for consideration.

- *Establishment of the Evaluation Steering Group*; during the Main Group meeting of July 2003, an Evaluation Steering Group was formed. The group was actively involved in all subsequent stages of the evaluation (their Terms of Reference and membership are in Appendix Three).
- *Scoping Report*; at the end of this stage a Scoping Report was produced, which outlined the information collected, including identification of key issues/learning points and areas for further exploration. After revision by the Evaluation Steering Group it was presented to the Co-ordination Group in July 2003.

³³ See Appendix one for Evaluation Steering Group's Terms of Reference and membership

³⁴ These themes were identified in the Scoping stage in collaboration with the Co-ordination Group

³⁵ The questionnaire, in common with all materials in the evaluation, used open ended questions (e.g. What have been the barriers to participation?) rather than closed questions (e.g. Have there been barriers to participation?) or questions requiring a specified response (e.g. How long have you been a participant?). At this time the Co-ordination Group took on the role of the Evaluation Steering Group, in the drafting of the questionnaire, as it was not in place until after the Main Group meeting

At this stage it was suggested by the Co-ordination Group and others, that traditional evaluation criteria would not be useful in this case, but that seeking stakeholder views around some key themes would produce more relevant information.

2.1.2 Stage 2: Delivery

The focus of stage two was the collection of further data and the early identification of lessons learnt. This included the following activities:

Observations. The Main Group, SWG, BFWG and the Coordination Group were observed, which enabled consultants to understand and analyse the Dialogue in action. It also provided opportunities to talk informally to participants. In total, seven observations were undertaken.

Discussion Groups. These provided stakeholders with further opportunities to discuss the Dialogue in more detail with their colleagues. Discussion groups have been held with BNFL participants, technical advisors, trade union representatives, convenors, facilitators and Main Group participants. Five discussion groups were facilitated.

Interviews. These have been held with Co-ordination Group members, stakeholders, former participants, BNFL workers, the sponsor, the convenor and facilitators. The interviews enabled information to be gathered on specific perspectives on the key themes. From a reflective sample of 80, 48 individuals were interviewed, some of whom were interviewed on more than one occasion in order to clarify or seek additional information.

Questionnaires. A series of three questionnaires were developed, one for facilitators and convenors, one for current Main Group members and one for a sample of former Main Group members. From a sample of 10, 7 facilitators and convenors completed the questionnaire, from a sample of 12, 4 former members completed the questionnaire, and from a final list of 145, 27 current Main Group members completed the questionnaire. Current main group members also completed Working Group Questionnaires.

Cost definition. CAG established the level of resources from stakeholders input into Dialogue. This enabled some analysis of costs. All current and former Main group participants who completed questionnaires provided cost information.

Collated Findings. This stage concluded with the collation and first analysis of all the evaluation findings.

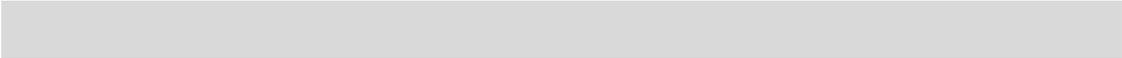
To enable maximum participation and to encourage the contribution of the greatest levels of information CAG Consultants have employed a qualitative approach to this evaluation³⁶. While providing high quality information these methods do not lend themselves to subsequent quantitative collation. Therefore due both to the method and a wish not to distract from the evidence, findings information is not displayed numerically.

³⁶ These methodology choices, in particular not developing specific evaluation indicators were informed and influenced the Co-ordination Group in the development stage of the evaluation process.

Although this range of methods and activities provided different routes for Dialogue participants to contribute to the evaluation, not all participants chose or were able to do so.

2.1.3 Stage 3: Analysis and Reporting

Analysis and reporting were carried out, and the findings were shared with the Evaluation Steering Group.



3 THE CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue process has been ongoing for several years. The Dialogue is open to national organisations and regional groups as well as expert and specialist concerns, including local authorities. The information below provides a brief history of the process. It outlines the inception and evolution of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue as a "process map"³⁷.

3.1 Chronology of the Dialogue

Figure two, below, outlines the chronology of the BNFL Stakeholder Dialogue process.

3.1.1 Aim of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue

The BNFL National 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."

3.1.2 Brief History of Dialogue Groups

Main Group: September 1998

After a preparatory period, a large meeting of stakeholders was first held on 9th September 1998 to discuss the activities of BNFL. This "Main Group" of stakeholders identified and prioritised a list of issues and concerns, headed by "Reprocessing" and "Trust", that could be addressed in further meetings.

Task Group - The Draft Work Programme

In December 1998 a smaller Task Group was formed. Members were drawn from a range of organisations to consider how the Dialogue might progress. Early on it was decided that 'trust' could not be addressed as a separate issue, rather it needed to develop through working together.

Co-ordination Group

The Co-ordination Group is a small group that meets regularly throughout the Dialogue process to discuss management issues with TEC. Its role is as follows:

- foresight and guidance with respect to process management;
- co-ordinating linkages between groups;
- identifying potential problems which may impair the effectiveness of the process;
- interpretation of ground rules;

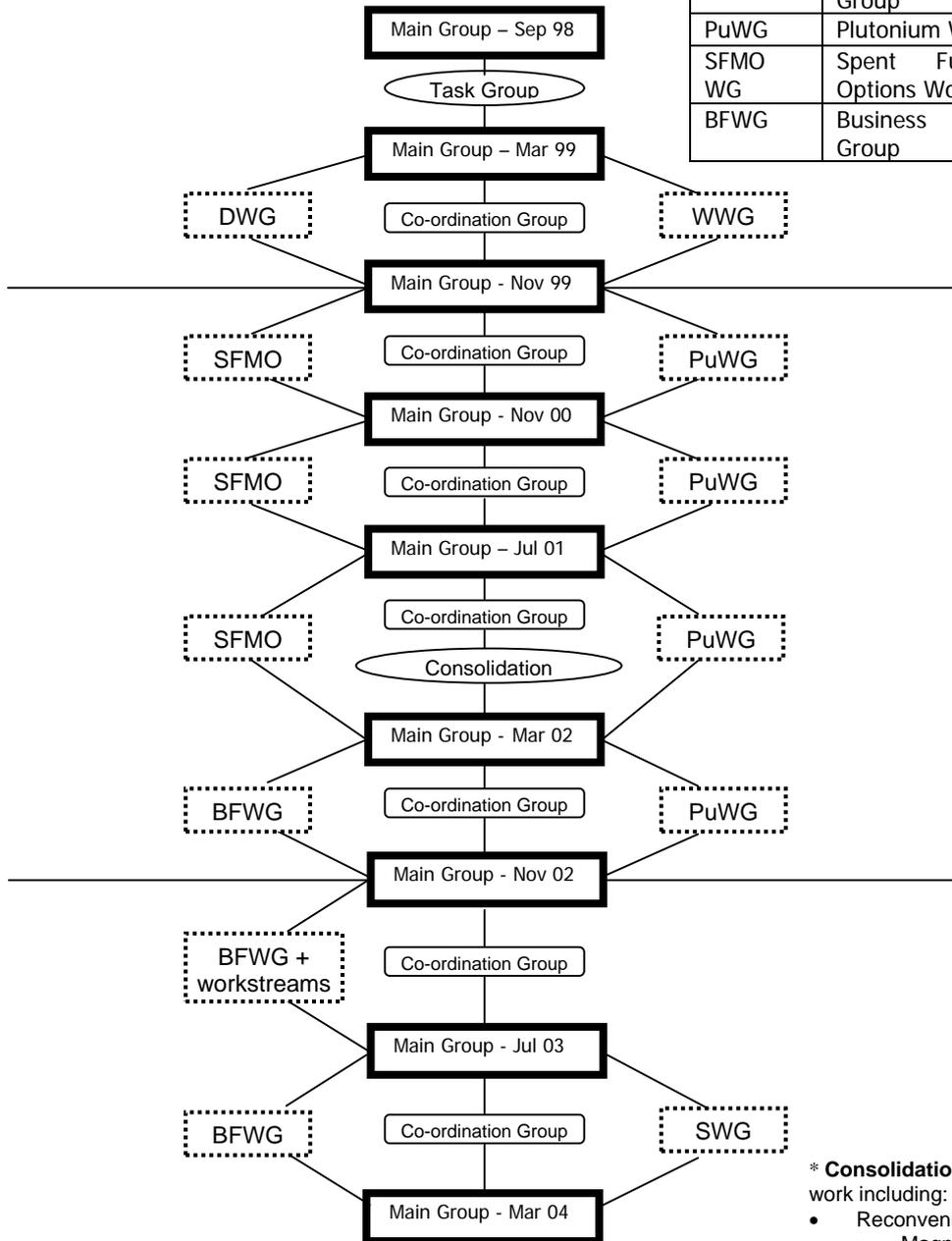
³⁷ This has been drawn from TEC's web site, and updated by TEC staff, defining a history of the Dialogue falls outside the remit of this evaluation.

History of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue

The diagram below outlines the inception and evolution of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue process. A more detailed history and explanation of each of the groups, together with the reports produced and lists of group members is available at www.the-environment-council.org.uk

Key:

WWG	Waste Working Group
DWG	Discharges Working Group
BFWG	Business Futures Working Group
PuWG	Plutonium Working Group
SFMO	Spent Fuel Management Options Working Group
BFWG	Business Futures Working Group



* **Consolidation:** this was a phase of work including:

- Reconvening of:
 - Magnox Task Group
 - WWG & DWG
 - Transport Task Group
- LLR Task Group
- BFWG startup
- Evidence gathering

Figure Two: A History of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue

- preparing stakeholder representatives for linkage with constituents;
- ensuring maximum effectiveness and efficiency of the process;
- overall co-ordination of work, avoiding duplication and ensuring learning (content and process) doesn't get lost;
- managing the effects of external events on the dialogue;
- communications management;
- coordination of projects; and
- 'stabilising wobbles', where necessary and appropriate.

Main Group: March 1999

The Main Group of stakeholders met to revise the Task Group's proposed talks programme. It formed two separate Working Groups, which were to report back to the next Main Group meeting six months later.

Waste Working Group and Discharges Working Group: (WWG and DWG) March - November 2000

The WWG and the DWG reported back to the Main Group in November 1999 and drafts of their interim reports were published in February 2000.

Both groups reconvened in October 2000 to revise their work in the light of BNFL's Magnox station lifetimes announcement, and subsequently published addendums to their initial reports.

Both groups were reconvened again, about 12 months later, to update their recommendations in the light of further developments. The second reconvening of these groups occurred during a 'consolidation' phase of the Dialogue.

Spent Fuel Management Options Working Group: (SFMOWG) November 1999 – March 2002

In November 1999, The Main Group set up the Spent Fuel Management Options Working Group (SFMOWG). The group looked at the options available to BNFL for managing spent fuel. The SFMOWG has been prominent in steering the Socio-Economic study via their representatives on the Socio-Economic Sub-Group (see following section).

The group also used a framework known as Strategic Action Planning (SAP) to explore the uncertainties inherent in managing spent fuel, in order to make recommendations to BNFL.

Socio-Economic Sub-Group: - June 2003

A number of the Working Groups identified a need for further information on the socio-economic impact of BNFL's possible future activities. A sub-group was formed which jointly agreed a research brief, identified and commissioned consultants (ERM) and had an overview of the project. This process is often known as 'Joint Fact Finding'.

ERM published their final report in November 2001, which was further updated approximately 12 months later as further information became available from BNFL.

Plutonium Working Group: (PuWG) November 1999 - 2003

The Plutonium Working Group (PuWG) was formed at the Main Group meeting in November 1999, at the same time as the SFMOWG. One strand of the PuWG's role was to monitor and review an investigation by the Company into plutonium management and disposition options. Their work also utilised SAP.

Dialogue Review Group: November 2000 - July 2001

This group made recommendations on "streamlining" the Dialogue process in terms of the time and commitment, and also assessed concerns voiced by some Main Group members about the influence of the Dialogue on BNFL's activities. In February 2002, the group was reconvened in response to a request from DEFRA to submit a collective submission from the Dialogue to their Managing Radioactive Waste Safely consultation. Due to time constraints, it was agreed that the document be submitted from TEC (i.e. it was not a Dialogue submission).

The Dialogue Review Group later merged with the Co-ordination Group in response to its own recommendation on streamlining and to the shrinking of the Co-ordination Group due to stakeholder withdrawal.

Business Futures Working Group: (BFWG) March 2002 – ongoing

The BFWG was set up as a result of the March 2002 Main Group meeting and constitutes the third stage in the planned programme of the Dialogue.

The aims of the BFWG, as agreed by the Main Group, are to:

- provide analysis and advice to the Company on the impact of the development of the Liabilities Management Agency (now the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority), and inform the Department of Industry's (DTI) development process;
- review/monitor the development of the Company's strategy in respect of providing services to governments and nuclear utilities;
- identify other business futures the Company might adopt, including the examination of non-nuclear business futures; and
- develop guidance to the Company on recommended ways forward, including milestones and targets where appropriate.

The final report of the BFWG is expected to be submitted to the Main Group meeting in October 2004 for agreement and the publication shortly afterwards.

Security Working Group: (SWG) July 2003 - ongoing

The Security Working Group (SWG) was set up as a result of the July 2003 Main Group meeting although there were a couple of exploratory meetings prior to this. It constitutes part of the third stage of the Dialogue. The group aims to identify areas requiring further examination by bodies responsible for the security regime within the nuclear industry, such as BNFL, DTI or OCNS for example.

It is doing this by:

- identifying the attributes of an ideal security system
- understanding the current system

- identifying the gaps between the two and making recommendations about them

The group aims to report their final work to the October 2004 Main Group meeting.

3.2 The Context of dialogue

'In our modern culture men and women are able to interact with one another in many ways: they can sing dance or play together with little difficulty but their ability to talk together about subjects that matter deeply to them seems invariably to lead to dispute, division and often to violence. In our view this condition points to a deep and pervasive defect in the process of human thought'. (Bohm, Factor and Garrett 1991)³⁸

3.2.1 Introduction

Stakeholders in this Dialogue have included NGO Environmental Groups, government regulators, representatives from central and local government and trade unions.

TEC manages the Dialogue. In practice this means it acts as an 'honest broker' between the different groups, ensures that the time spent is constructive and productive, and that meetings are as balanced and even-handed as possible. They have no vested interest in the final outcome and so do not take positions on the substantive issues. The role of TEC and the facilitators is discussed in more detail in section five.

This evaluation has identified a number of issues which can be incorporated back into the process, recognising the short time span remaining within the Dialogue. It is also acknowledged that many stakeholders will continue to be involved in similar processes so that learning can be brought to bear on future dialogues.

3.2.2 Dialogue – a shared focus

Dialogue implies a shared focus. The word derives from two roots: 'dia' which means 'through' and 'logos' which means 'the word' or more particularly, 'the meaning of the word.' One can conjure up an image of meaning flowing around and through the participants involved.

In an 'ideal' dialogue participants would be involved at a level of creativity and insight which leads to a process of finding a common meaning. Dialogue is not just discussion. In an ordinary discussion, people usually hold relatively fixed positions and argue in favour of their views, as they try to convince others to change. A characteristic of many discussions is that they are often, in reality, separate monologues as people present and defend their own ideas.

Bohm has set out three basic conditions for dialogue:

- participants must suspend their assumptions. This means that they must be willing to engage in the process and have the ability to put their points of view in suspension, so that common meanings can be created;

³⁸ Bohm D., Factor D. and Garrett P. (1991) 'Dialogue – a proposal'.

- participants must view each other as colleagues or peers. They need to have a commitment to a mutual quest for understanding and insight; and
- in the early stages there needs to be a facilitator who ‘holds the context’ of dialogue. Their role should be to point out situations that might seem to be presenting sticking points for the group but these interventions should never be manipulative or obtrusive. They should ‘lead from behind’.

3.2.3 Dialogue boundaries

In all cases there exists a set of impactors on any engagement process which set the limits or boundaries to it. These include:

- the length of time that a dialogue can run;
- the participation time available;
- an open table of debate or a range of restriction on content;
- a limit on the cost of all or elements of the process;
- the nature/level of discussion;
- the commitment of stakeholders to the process, in particular the sponsoring organisation; and
- the aim of the dialogue process.

Each one of these elements can, in turn, place restrictions on a dialogue process, changing it from one which is ‘open’ to one which is ‘bounded’ and vice versa. For example, the parameters of a dialogue process can be bounded if a sponsor excludes an area of discussion from the table, or participants lack commitment to the process or methods.

A typology developed by TEC³⁹ (figure four) fits dialogue into a similar analysis, illustrating for us that each level of involvement influences the power balance, in terms of decision making between stakeholders.

Clearly this Dialogue falls to the left of this typology but where? Our findings suggested that stakeholders varied in their understanding of whether this Dialogue was completely open or bounded in part. Our observation and interviews would suggest that this Dialogue has been a continuum, moving between extremes.

³⁹ Initially developed by Richard Harris for TEC, and currently posted on TEC’s web site.

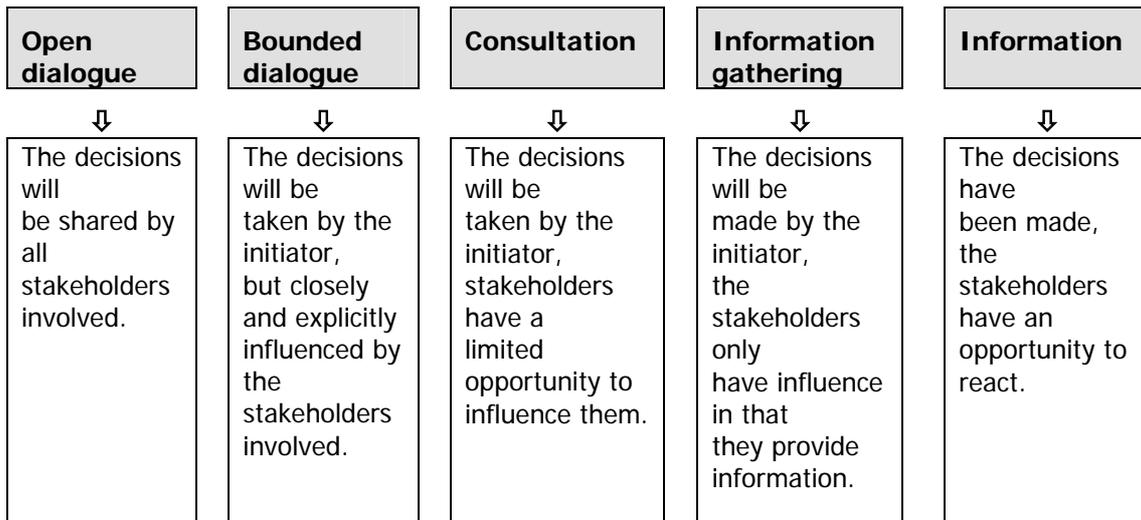


Figure Four: TEC typology of involvement

3.2.4 Dialogue process

Dialogue presupposes listening, thinking and talking. It assumes that participants make an effort to hear what is being said, attempt to understand it and apply their critical faculties before responding. For example, in the case of this Dialogue all participants in interviews identified that the most powerful impact of the Dialogue process was their increased understanding of other stakeholders' views. Many also said that they had learnt that those views could be valid, even though they may be based on differing starting points and philosophies. Dialogue does not necessarily start like this but has to be worked at.

In order to listen, and to engage genuinely in dialogue, participants must respect each other. This is not simply the application of a series of technical skills. Participants are involved in an ever-changing and developing pool of common meaning, so stakeholders reported that their expectations had changed during the process. This is brought about because they have learnt more about the Dialogue.

Each stakeholder brings their own views/pre-judgments or 'horizons of understanding'⁴⁰ to the Dialogue. This is 'the range of vision that includes everything that is seen from their particular world view'. It is with these pre-judgments and understandings that stakeholders involve themselves in dialogue. For the dialogue to be successful, stakeholders have to be able to suspend their views and put their own prejudices (pre-judgments) and understandings to the test. One stakeholder illustrated this point, for example, by telling us that when participating in the Dialogue he was able to move away from his usual views (positional statement), but that did not mean that he no longer believed in them.

Participants also have to appreciate the importance of understanding a horizon that is not their own. They have to open themselves to what others are saying. This does not mean that they have to agree with others but rather to be open to different standpoints. By so doing, others' ideas become intelligible, without participants necessarily having to agree with them. This enables them to work together.

⁴⁰ Gadamer, Hans Georg. *The Beginning of Knowledge*. New York: Continuum, 2002

3.2.5 Patterns of communication in Dialogue between disparate views

The Dialogue has set up patterns of communication so that the concern of stakeholders is not to 'win the argument'. The purpose is to advance understanding and help the diverse group of stakeholders to work on issues. It can be argued that this is done by creating a type of social bond that entails interest in, and a commitment to the other participants. Whilst there may be large differences between participants about their views, the Dialogue has built up a kind of mutual regard among stakeholders. This involves the idea that everyone is able in some basic way to take part.

Stakeholders engage in the belief that the Dialogue holds possibilities. Often it is not clear what they will gain or learn, but faith in the inherent value of the process carries them forward. Interestingly, one participant commented *'We own the process, [we] do not feel it is moulding us; there is not any game plan as such, that we are supposed to come up with specific things. We are always critically testing the work against our values.'*

Effective communication needs to have mutual trust, respect, a willingness to listen and risk one's opinions. The communication within a dialogue must allow all to take part. As Freire⁴¹ remarks, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world, and those who do not want this naming; or between those who have been denied the right to speak, and those who deny the right.

Dialogue does not require equality of relationships but does entail some sort of reciprocity and symmetry. Otherwise the responses could be distorted and used by the more powerful 'partner'. A trade union member commented that they had noted that relationships had changed outside the Dialogue and that now, *'We have seen that in our trade union dealings with the Company that all views are equally respected.'*

3.2.6 Dialogue and organisations

However, Factor⁴² argues that no organisations would be involved in a dialogue which would drastically change their nature:

'any change that might threaten the very meaning and therefore the existence of the organization or its power relations would tend to be rejected... because such vulnerability would not only be threatening to those within the group, but almost certainly to those who perceive from without - perhaps from higher up the corporate ladder - what this sub-grouping of their organization is getting up to' (Factor 1994).

This implies that an organisation will only engage in a dialogue with its critics if it expects to gain from the process. In the case of this Dialogue, we received evaluation feedback from BNFL staff on how the Company had benefited retrospectively, but there are no records which outline the Company's starting point in entering dialogue.

⁴¹ Freire, P. *Pedagogy of Hope. Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum, 1995

⁴² Factor, D. (1994) *On Facilitation and Purpose*

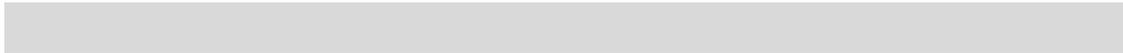
3.2.7 Dialogue and facilitation

Factor also argued that if a designated facilitator takes on the role of moving the process forward then the other participants will expect him or her to do the intervening and keep the dialogue 'on course'. This does happen within the Dialogue, summed up by the following comment '*We trust that the facilitators are going to manage the processes*'.

Within the Dialogue, the facilitator and convenor are independent, so they play roles which are different from that of the rest of the group. Their involvement is about the process of the Dialogue. It can be argued that this enables the other participants to get on with the 'real' work without having to worry about how it is going to happen. It would be difficult for the Dialogue to move forward without someone taking on these roles. And many comments from the evaluation echoed this:

'The key is the facilitation. It draws participants back into the meeting; it also balances out any power which the company might have'.

Indeed there have been times when a facilitator has had to join a small sub-group to ensure it stays focused.



4 THE NATURE OF THE DIALOGUE

In this section we seek to expand on the lessons from the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue about the nature of dialogue. As such, we have drawn together findings and other evidence to discuss and develop learning points for this and future dialogues⁴³ on:

- defining dialogue and the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue;
- how dialogue fits within a typology of consultations;
- stakeholder roles;
- issues of being a bounded or unbounded dialogue.

4.1 The overall nature of a dialogue process

4.1.1 A definition of dialogue within the context of the BNFL national Stakeholder Dialogue.

Further to the discussion in Section 3, we can see that dialogue covers a range of processes that allow parties to come together over a period of time to explore each other's perceptions and priorities and seek out common ground. Dialogues can have a variety of different aims, including identification and exploration of strategic options or collaborative problem solving. Dialogue may be initiated simply to improve the parties' understanding of each other's positions or to 'take the heat out' of a confrontational situation.

In this section we consider the question: what is the nature and potential of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue and what it was able to achieve? TEC describes this Dialogue as follows:

*"The BNFL National Dialogue is a multi-stakeholder, deliberative, dialogue process, managed for and on behalf of stakeholders by an independent convenor, The Environment Council".*⁴⁴

The Dialogue's aim (Section 3) was developed by BNFL, TEC and other key stakeholders in the scoping stages of the programme and later defined in the early meetings of the Main Group.

4.1.2 What the evaluation findings tell us about defining dialogue

We found that understanding about what constituted the nature and potential of the Dialogue and its achievements varied both between and within stakeholder constituencies. The findings therefore do not provide one agreed view. In no area or

⁴³ These are points emerging from this evaluation that inform us about dialogue in general and can be taken forward as learning from this process into other processes. They do not collectively build up a recipe for dialogue.

⁴⁴ Taken from TEC web site.

constituency have we found complete unanimity about the nature and potential of the Dialogue; and in certain areas opposed views are held, especially in relation to meeting expectations about achievements. Understanding of the nature of the Dialogue varied between those groups who remained involved and those Environmental NGOs who left the process. It also varied between Environmental NGOs who stayed in and those who did not.

Although the aim outlined at the Dialogue inception was very clear, by the time of the Evidence Report (June, 2002) concerns about the potential and achievements of the dialogue were being raised. Among these was the view that *“there seemed to be a lack of clarity about what was ‘up for grabs’”; “there was a lack of involvement from Green NGOs”; “the process may have been inclusive in principle but not in practice”;* and there was a *“lack of demonstrable evidence of influence on the company”*.

A key role for this evaluation has been to delve into these basic concerns and identify how far they can be substantiated. In terms of the overall aim, stakeholders reported in both interviews and questionnaire responses that the aim was *“good as a general starting point but should now be reviewed”*. In interviews we found that those who had left the process tended to see the overall Dialogue aim as not being met, while current members were more likely to believe that work towards the aim had occurred (the main aim is discussed further in section six).

For Environmental NGO stakeholders there were also ‘lost’ issues such as transport of waste that had not been followed through and thus the aim was felt to have been only partially met. However, as TEC has pointed out, the issues given priority for consideration within the Dialogue were agreed by all participants according to the ground rules and this was not identified as a priority for discussion.

A 1998 ‘stakeholder workshop’ implicitly identified expectations about the potential of the Dialogue. Implicitly this was asking ‘what can the Dialogue achieve?’ or ‘what should a national Dialogue in this setting work on?’ Potential issues to work on included:

- what to do with plutonium stock pile;
- Nuclear Liabilities Strategy, including disposal;
- internal staff morale and ownership of environmental performance and corporate leadership;
- end reprocessing or not?;
- proactive environmental policy;
- BNFL changing course, a momentum problem;
- BNFL to respond proactively to international pressures and conventions;
- freedom of information;
- local versus global – the impacts and benefits;

- diversification;
- global clean up;
- regulatory pressure;
- the impacts of BNFL's operations on the health and environment of future generations;
- the creation of trust, transparency, understanding and accountability through genuine dialogue, based on mutual respect, comprehensive and clear understanding; and
- BNFL to develop strategies according to its three different businesses and their value sets.

This was an ambitious set of issues and within our sample concerns about unmet expectations were most commonly expressed by groups who had left the process. For example, a former participant from an NGO reported that they were initially hopeful that the Dialogue could bring about change in the industry, but that this expectation was not met, and they had changed back to *"head-on campaigning"* instead. Another participant from a similar constituency stated that they had got involved because *"we had the impression that we were invited to help BNFL with their business case, but it was obvious that was not going to happen."* Likewise, a number of (former) NGO participants reported that they had joined the process with the expectation that the MOX plant would close down as a result. When this did not happen they left.⁴⁵

In relation to trust, perceptions about achievement were more mixed. On the one hand we were told that *"the major benefit was a demonstration that stakeholders were able to resolve differences by dialogue rather than litigation. It demonstrates that we are a mature enough society to take on these issues. The major benefit is not going to courts. This builds confidence and trust"* and *"Some of the issues felt super crucial. I know that BNFL is thinking about them, not just disregarding them altogether. It increases trust"*.

Whereas some felt that there still exists *"massive mistrust in the process"*, a large group felt that the Dialogue had impacted on the Company in certain areas: *"The dialogue has had an impact in some areas. Some of the working groups have been quite productive especially around technical issues i.e. plutonium"*. A few respondents felt that they could not define the impact of the Dialogue on the company in any quantifiable way. One told us *"not in terms of BNFL actually changing its ways. For the first time in its life it made BNFL a bit more honest and truthful but only behind closed doors"*.⁴⁶ For others the impact was primarily perceived to be on individuals: *"On the individual level people from BNFL involved in the dialogue have been affected. Because they're in decision making roles it has affected the company. I can't say if this would have come to the same point without it but it probably has had a measurable effect in subtle ways"*.

⁴⁵ TEC reports that this was not given as a reason for departure at the time.

⁴⁶ This comment needs to be viewed in the context of the confidentiality clause within the Ground Rules.

4.1.3 How does this Dialogue fit into a theoretical basis?

Dialogue is increasingly employed as an approach in areas of potential and actual conflict. TEC has described the purpose of dialogue in the context of its programmes as follows:

- Prevent: identify and avert problems before they arise to build working relationships.
- Manage: collaborate to alleviate sources of dispute.
- Resolve: establish effective communication, clarity and resolve disputes.

TEC further suggests that the overall aim of dialogue *“is not to grind out an unsatisfactory compromise, but rather to seek out common ground and reach a consensus for progress.”* This starts with the process of establishing aims. As Lawrie⁴⁷ points out, clarifying the purpose of a process is about *“ensuring there is a clear sense of direction and agreement about the core values that unite”* the participants. *“The decisions reached at this stage should act as an anchor for the rest of the process”*. How aims and working objectives are developed therefore has a critical impact on successful implementation of a dialogue. It is important to avoid a situation in which *“a few select individuals isolate themselves from others”* to produce aims and objectives for dialogue. The task of agreeing aims and objectives, Lawrie argues, can help to clarify the internal and external reasons why a process is needed and *“create an opportunity to measure its value in time”*.

Dialogue can involve large numbers of sometimes conflicting stakeholders in processes which work towards developing consensus and joint decision-making. A substantial length of time is needed and the process should be well resourced. This enables an agenda and ground rules to be set. This starting point enables concerns to be raised and information exchanged on an equitable footing whilst working towards consensus. Such practice has been adopted within this Dialogue.

Single events or multiple workshops may of course have some of the same objectives as dialogue and can be effective in finding common ground, and there is no absolute dividing line between dialogue and other processes. However, the duration (maybe years) allows participants to build trust, to develop a deeper understanding of the issues, and to facilitate (for example) joint commissioning of research to resolve disagreements.

In the nuclear context, the term ‘stakeholder dialogue’ has become closely associated with the approach pioneered by TEC⁴⁸. TEC’s approach has proved effective in a range of contexts.

4.1.4 The Theoretical basis and the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue

Whatever the aim, participants needs to be clear about that aim and seek to develop a common understanding of it in order to progress a dialogue.

⁴⁷ Lawrie, Alan: *The Complete Guide to Business and Strategic Planning*. London, 1994.

⁴⁸ See www.the-environment-council.org.uk

As noted above, there are many purposes of dialogue but the key to them all is to seek out common ground and reach a consensus for progress. Successful dialogues require time and commitment to the aims of the process from all stakeholders (developing this commitment can be part of the process), exceptional facilitation and management by a trusted and independent body, combined with capacity building and policies to reduce the barriers to stakeholders engaging.

4.1.5 Learning points for continuing application after closure

- Clarity about the original aim and decision making boundaries will need to be maintained

4.1.5 Learning Points for future dialogues

- Understanding about the aim, as a starting point, must be shared by all, in order to ensure effective participation by all stakeholders.
- A shared understanding of what is available for negotiation needs to be established and reviewed. This Dialogue suggests that while stakeholders are currently dissatisfied with a lack of clarity, a broad aim is required as part of the necessary flexibility needed in a dialogue.
- There are process prerequisites (discussed below) to the success of dialogue.

4.2 Stakeholder roles

Stakeholders' roles are set out at length within the ground rules, which define the kinds of stakeholder groups that should be involved in the process.

We have identified four types of stakeholder groups which have a role to play in this Dialogue:

- The Main Group, which consists of all the stakeholders involved and meets on an annual or semi-annual basis.
- A Co-ordinating Group, which is a small, broadly representative sub-group set up to work with the facilitation team and process managers with regard to content aspects and stakeholder concerns in the Dialogue process.
- Working Groups, which are representative sub-groups formed to work together to explore and make recommendations on particular issues, and to report back their findings to the Main Group.
- Task Groups, which are sub-groups set up to perform a single specifically defined task and are likely to meet only once.

This helps to define the structure within which stakeholders will interact (details of these groups are given in Section 3.1.3) but is less helpful in defining stakeholders themselves.

As stated in BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue Groundrules iteration 13:

'People participating in the Working Groups must:

- *represent a particular constituency and/or have relevant experience or expertise relevant to the Working Group;*
- *have been inducted into the process and style of working;*
- *accept and conform to the Ground Rules, and participate in their review and development;*
- *develop, observe and work in a co-operative spirit in the Working Group, while respecting that profound differences of opinion may exist;*
- *be a competent and collaborative negotiator (rather than a positional/competitive bargainer);*
- *be available for the full series of Working Group meetings (which may be 1 to 1.5 days every month or 6 weeks) and Main Group meetings;*
- *be willing to undertake work between meetings, signposting or providing papers; and*
- *review information within the timescales agreed within the Working Group (this may be up to 1 week's work per month).'*

'In addition to the above, the overall group profile will also influence the Co-ordinating Group's choice. Ideally, each working group will need to contain representatives from the following sectors:

- *communities;*
- *company;*
- *customers;*
- *environmental NGOs;*
- *other NGOs;*
- *government;*
- *regulators; and*
- *workforce;*

and will need to be balanced in terms of the necessary skills.'

In considering the nature of the Dialogue we need to be clear about defining the roles in relation to stakeholders. These definitions are based on Bisno⁴⁹ (1988). All of these stakeholders and non-stakeholders were identified by CAG Consultants in at least one of the Dialogue groups and are discussed at greater length in the 'key players' section below:

⁴⁹ Bisno H, *Managing Conflict*, London 1988

- Those individuals who directly participate and the constituencies they represent, who in this Dialogue have been known as stakeholders.
- Other 'non participating stakeholders' not included in the Dialogue but affected by its outcomes, for example, local communities or other settings within the industry whose participation, in this case, falls outside the scope of the Dialogue.
- Stakeholders who attend but choose not to participate.
- Those present within the process who are not stakeholders, for example, facilitators and convenors.

A further category has emerged in this Dialogue; that of 'individual reflectors'. Reflectors are trusted members associated with a particular constituency who do not act as representatives mandated by that constituency but become reflectors of that stakeholder group based on their experience, knowledge and expertise. They act as a conduit to and from the stakeholder constituency and the Dialogue process. Thus, individual reflectors are participating stakeholders who participated in the process in a particular way (the roles and responsibilities of reflectors are discussed in more detail in section 11). This role has recently been defined within this Dialogue as,

"a stakeholder who can input the broad views and concerns of a particular sector as a result of a background [in or] ... involvement with that sector. However, as a reflector does not act as a representative of that sector nor seek to represent its views."

4.2.1 What the findings tell us about the changing roles of stakeholders

During the scoping stage it was identified that many stakeholders had changed the way in which they respond to the Dialogue. This was identified as a key issue in terms of how the Dialogue progressed and how its outputs were achieved. This process is best summarised as stakeholders moving from position statements to negotiated consensus building. This was not an entirely uniform change however. Former participants from Environmental NGOs acknowledged that while participating, their involvement meant less time was spent on traditional campaigning. Some in this group were keen to note that they reverted to this form of work after they left the process. Other stakeholders have suggested that there are difficulties for those who are committed to and skilled in campaigning to adapt to and adopt dialogue methods.

BNFL participants often told us, in both interviews and workshops, that they found the first rounds of the Dialogue to be '*challenging*' as too many people came with predetermined positions and a lack of willingness to explore common ground. They said that *"although the facilitation was excellent it was impossible to prevent some disjointed and argumentative discussions."* Later parts of the process were described as more successful because people appeared more willing to explore this common ground.

A key change that has affected this development of stakeholder roles is the recognition, reported by government and BNFL stakeholders in particular, that views can be legitimate, *"even if not based on technical information."* Linked to this is a recognition of the legitimate role that other stakeholders have in the industry.

We have had no baseline evidence about the characteristics of relationships between the different types of stakeholders and third parties at the start of the process. However, within questionnaires, interviews and discussion groups, participants have illustrated current perceptions of past relationships between stakeholders in a range of ways. Key characteristics include being:

- unwilling to listen;
- hostile;
- confrontational;
- secretive; and
- unmoveable from positions.

To ensure the development of an environment in which dialogue and consensus building can take place, relationships like those characterised above would need to change. All evaluation respondents currently involved, and over 50% of evaluation respondent who were formerly involved, made positive comments about improved relationships between previously adversarial sectors. Stakeholders also recognised the significance to the process of developing these improvements to relationships. For example, a government department representative told us that the *“degree of consensus on the Plutonium Working Group was remarkable.”*

All participants in interviews identified that the most powerful impact of the Dialogue process was their increased understanding of the views of other stakeholders. They had learned those views could be valid, even though they may be based on differing starting points and philosophies. We see this as indicative of the changing roles of stakeholders from polarised positions, as noted above, to a more collaborative stance.

We did note a difference in how stakeholders expressed a change in their role in moving towards collaboration and consensus building. BNFL staff members commonly pointed to their increased levels of understanding and respect for the views of Environmental NGOs and a willingness to look seriously at their views about the industry and how it might work. Environmental NGOs (not individuals) more commonly stated that they continue to influence BNFL, but from a point of greater understanding of the organisation, its starting points and its view of them and how they work.

Non BNFL stakeholders, currently involved, reported a key change in how they work with others, especially those whom they traditionally do not engage with successfully. One government participant told us that they were no longer frightened to ask other peoples' views and engage with people.

We were offered many reported instances of people feeling that they were more able to work with people within BNFL to influence the company both during the Dialogue activities, outside the Dialogue and after leaving the Dialogue. This was noted in both formal and informal settings.

We also noted that all stakeholders (except for Environmental NGOs who left the process) felt that the way they worked within non-dialogue activities had changed

through what they had learned about working with people. Part of this change was about moving to consensus building, reflected in the following comments: *“I am more likely to try to build consensus now”* and *“I am much more likely to now phone than send an angry letter to the director”*.

Although there was a strong feeling that such impacts were related to the Dialogue process, other respondents, in particular local authorities, identified that the Dialogue was itself part of a larger movement within society towards greater openness and transparency in ‘public’ services.

4.2.2 Stakeholder roles and power

As Weidner⁵⁰ points out, traditional, conventional public policy processes are increasingly inadequate to achieving solutions to major environmental disputes in economically and socially viable ways. Alternative methods have begun to fill the gap and this is not just a temporary phenomenon but is a part of the *“new secular trends in advanced industrialised countries”*. Weidner suggests that such processes overcome the self-defeating accusations that the market has failed to effectively self-regulate, the state to protect the environment, and environmental groups to enter into dialogue with others.

Participants in a process in which there is a conflict of values or interests, as in the case of the Dialogue, have a number of resources to call on. Groups have the potential to use influence and power to bring about their desired outcome and these are both dynamic qualities. Power tends to be defined in terms of the stronger, possibly coercive, measures including sanctions that the holder may be prepared to use to attain their ends, whereas influence might be characterised as requiring all parties to come to some level of chosen agreement. The capacity to use coercive force does not mean that it will always be employed as a strategy by the more powerful within a conflict situation. In fact in the Dialogue the emphasis was very much on finding more collaborative methods to move towards consensus building. In any case, power may be masked, as its obvious use can cause more negative responses and engender “costs” in the form of bad feeling than when used more subtly.

These types of power are defined in figure five, drawn from the work of Bisno⁵¹, 1988.

4.2.3 BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue and power

The use of different types of power was clearly perceptible through the Dialogue within specific contexts. For example, there was clearly “rewarding” power as stakeholders did obtain something they needed or wanted in terms of both the process and its products. It could be seen as “coercive” in the Environmental NGO *‘raising the stakes’* by leaving the process; “informational” in the way that access to some documents was restricted by the Company; “expert” in that use of third parties with special skills (expertise); and “personal” in the influence of key people.

⁵⁰ Weidner, Helmut: *Alternative dispute resolution in environmental conflicts experiences in 12 countries*, Sigma, Berlin, 1998

⁵¹ Bisno, *Managing Conflict*, Sage, 1988

Types of power
<p>Coercive - the capacity to punish, to deprive, to frustrate, and to raise 'costs' to an unacceptable level;</p>
<p>Reward - the capacity for providing others with something they need or want (i.e. benefits);</p>
<p>Expert - the capacity to provide others with special skills and abilities or to withhold expertise;</p>
<p>Positional - authority derived from filling an official position, giving legitimacy to the role;</p>
<p>Information - the capacity to control (provide, restrict or channel – the flow of information, which could advantage some and disadvantage others;</p>
<p>Exchange - the potential to exact desired behaviours through the creation of an imbalance in exchange relationships (creating a "debt" or unfulfilled obligation and calling this in;</p>
<p>Mobilisation - the capacity to generate and mobilise other people's support for desired goals thus increasing one's own influence;</p>
<p>Moral - the capacity to gain given objectives by invoking moral commitments held by other persons, or creating guilt by making them morally responsible, to provide support or assistance; and</p>
<p>Personal power - personal characteristics that enable people to affect the behaviour of others toward desired outcomes.</p>

Figure Five: Bisno's types of power

Many of those interviewed stated that the power distribution within the Dialogue was along a continuum of unbalanced to very unbalanced. A number of those interviewed perceived most power to be held by BNFL but they also noted that the balance may have shifted over time to become less uneven.

"BNFL held the power".

"It's a David and Goliath thing".

"I suppose BNFL had the balance of power but the fact that we were listened to and at times agreed with was a bonus. Their environmental performance has improved a lot".

Environmental NGOs in particular reported that they felt able to wield influence over the process rather than direct power, although some claimed a degree of "moral power" (Bisno), that is, the capacity to gain objectives by invoking moral commitments on the part of others.

Participants also noted that certain individuals within the process had "charismatic authority" which Weber⁵² distinguished from rational and traditional authority. Within the Dialogue the charismatic leadership qualities displayed at times by certain

⁵² Weber, M: *Essays in Economic Sociology*, Princeton Press, Princeton, 1999.

participants (notably technical experts and some facilitators within certain settings) provided them with the potential to exert influence or power over the process.

Bisno (1988) argues that, if well managed, conflict can have positive outcomes including ushering in necessary social change, increasing solidarity among participants, allowing new ideas to emerge, improving policies and procedures, and the reformation and renewal of organisations. These points seem relevant to this Dialogue, which has resulted in all these elements emerging to a varying extent.

An interesting insight into the changing roles and responsibilities of stakeholders is embedded in the ground rules themselves. In defining stakeholder roles above, we worked from the thirteenth iteration of the ground rules and it is clear that there was an evolution in understanding about what stakeholders' roles should be over the course of the Dialogue. For instance, this version of the ground rules is specific about the importance of collaboration and consensus building in the stakeholders' stance towards the Dialogue, a view that was borne out of experience both of increased trust on the one hand and key NGOs leaving the process to revert to campaigning on the other. The ground rules describe the need for 'active participation' and for stakeholders to be 'collaborative bargainers' rather than 'positional/competitive'.

The stress is on active participation and information flow through stakeholders:

"There should be no casual observers. The act of volunteering for this dialogue implies a commitment to active participation while listening to others' points of view. Participants are encouraged to regularly brief key members of the constituency they represent: both to keep them closely informed of developments in the dialogue and to be able to carry their constituency's concerns/issues back into the dialogue".

4.2.4 Learning points for this Dialogue

- Examine and review why stakeholders attend but choose not to participate.

4.2.5 Learning points for future dialogues

- Embedding roles and behaviours of stakeholders in the ground rules is essential.
- Dialogue depends on collaborative negotiation and active participation and, as such, the processes and structures of the dialogue need to encourage this, including ground rules and other processes. The experience of this Dialogue suggests that this takes time to develop.
- Stakeholders need to develop a respect for the views and the legitimacy of the contributions of other stakeholders before collaboration can take place. This is often described as a major outcome of this Dialogue but is in fact a process within the Dialogue which has taken considerable time to develop.
- Stakeholders will use different types of power. The ground rules and other processes need to recognise this and provide a clear framework for appropriate uses of power.

5 THE DIALOGUE'S KEY PLAYERS

The evaluation looked at and reviewed the influence and importance of the differing players. In this section we discuss the following areas:

- process managers;
- the problem holder; and
- stakeholders.

5.1 Process managers

Process managers can be defined as all those who provided convening, facilitation and secretariat services to the Dialogue. The convening role was played by TEC, which defines itself as servicing the Dialogue process, rather than BNFL. Efforts were made to keep the Company at arms length in the management process, to ensure independence. Contractual and financial arrangements to fund the Dialogue were set up to maintain distance between the problem holder⁵³ and the convenor. Efforts were also made to ensure independence between the convenor and facilitators. Freelance independent facilitators were primarily used, rather than employees of TEC.

Guidelines for facilitators were included in the ground rules, which clarified their independence and circumscribed their role as follows:

“The participants will be responsible for the substantive content of the discussions, while the facilitation team will be responsible only for the Dialogue process”.

It was also noted in the ground rules that:

“The facilitation team conducts the interactive sessions in the Dialogue process. Its members are independent professionals serving the group as a whole - they are concerned primarily with time control, grouping, spatial relationships and the style of interaction, and they only deal with substantive issues as they affect the interactive process”.

The measure of independence between convenor and facilitators is less clear in the ground rules, which acknowledge that their roles may overlap:

“The process managers are responsible for conducting the overall Dialogue process. They also are independent professionals (often sharing the Facilitation Team role) – their concern is for matters such as organisation, time planning, and network management and communication strategy”.

The facilitators' role in induction is also noted:

⁵³ See next section for a detailed discussion of the term 'problem holder'.

“All new participants must attend an induction to the process conducted by the Facilitation Team aided by members of the Co-ordination Group.”

This section covers those areas which relate to independence.

5.1.1 Findings summary

All constituent groups expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the role of the convenor (TEC) in the process. TEC staff were variously described as; *‘consistently good’, ‘brilliant’, ‘empowering’, ‘superb’* and *‘excellent honest brokers’*.

TEC have worked very hard to establish and maintain independence from any of the stakeholder groups (especially BNFL) which as Dialogue funder could have been (and was by some) seen as controlling or influencing the process behind the scenes. The role of independent facilitation and convening were identified as a key contribution to developing trust.

Some Environmental NGOs questioned the independence of the process managers, although a few felt that there was sufficient distance between BNFL and TEC. They took the view that process managers were either unintentionally incorporated or actively in collusion with BNFL. We were told that:

“Good quality facilitation is so important. With something as crucial as this, using that amount of money, you should have well-trained facilitators supported by good quality supervision. There is a difficulty insofar as BNFL pays The Environment Council. You need dislocation between BNFL and The Environment Council. Who knows how much people were leaned on? There was a strong sense of distrust”.

The importance of good record keeping is reflected in very explicit directions in the ground rules; responsibility is defined as being shared by participants rather than solely the responsibility of process managers:

“Progress will be recorded on the wall. This is as an aid to communication in the group and provides a visible record of progress as it is made, the accuracy of which is the responsibility of all participants.

A photo-report will be made of the ‘wall record’ of each event. It acts as an “aide memoir” and provides a basis for interactive follow-up work between sessions.”

To increase the level of independence, the ground rules also included the caveat that Working Group meeting reports should be drawn up by independent advisors. This quotation is taken from the current (thirteenth) iteration:

A written report will be made of Working Group sessions, to be drawn up by the independent advisor(s). These will be relatively conventional documents which, apart from their use within the group, are intended for use in communication with the Co-ordination Group only. In addition each Working Group may appoint a rapporteur to attend the Co-ordination Group meetings.

Some argued that the “third party”, i.e. convenor, may be inherently biased toward the status quo as represented by BNFL as they were paid for their services (by BNFL). Another suggestion was that the facilitators were insufficiently expert in managing their roles to ensure balance (and inclusion of dissenting views) at

meetings and in written reports. Although these were minority views, often put to us by former participants from an Environmental NGO background, they do display a level of mistrust in the process.

5.1.2 Learning Points for this Dialogue

- Describe the checks and balances that maintain independence

5.1.3 Learning points for future dialogues

- Transparency of all activities between the problem holder and convenor is crucial to ensure stakeholder acceptance of independence.
- The use of facilitators from outside TEC has been an important key to success in this Dialogue.
- Challenges to the independence of process managers need to be resolved early and recorded in an ongoing evaluation.
- Well trained and experienced facilitators have assisted in the success of the Dialogue.

5.2 The problem holder

5.2.1 Role in the Dialogue

The role of the problem holder is complex because they are the sponsor, yet they are treated as stakeholders within the Dialogue. Tensions have inevitably arisen from this dual role. Such tensions were highlighted in numerous responses from participants, who suggested that the Company was effectively using the Dialogue for its own ends:

'they're the main beneficiaries. We are a sounding board that helps them find direction'.

'They [two of the working groups] became talking shops for BNFL to suss out our thinking and use that to better define their position/deflect/promote something in a such a way that it took the easiest path.'

One respondent suggested that the Dialogue should have been sponsored by the DTI rather than BNFL, thereby achieving a greater separation between the sponsor, problem holder and convenor. However, as is described below, one of the main roles of the problem holder is to provide information to the process. Taking the 'client' role too far from the Company may have resulted in them being less trusting of it and more reluctant to release information.

5.2.2 Commitment

The commitment of BNFL to the Dialogue process is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in two ways. Firstly, through the amount of funding; figures in the region of £4.5 million have been identified as BNFL's financial contribution so far.

Members of all constituencies, as well as facilitators and convenors, recognised the commitment in terms of the level of financial resourcing from BNFL.

Secondly, commitment was demonstrated through the involvement of senior managers. This was crucial to ensuring that the impacts of the Dialogue were reflected back into, and impacted on the Company. Stakeholders repeatedly cited the role of key directors and managers within the Dialogue as a key to its success. Overall, stakeholders perceived that the Chief Executive Officer backed the process, and that the necessary BNFL decision makers were involved. A few saw the changes in Chief Executive at BNFL (the CE has changed twice since 1999) as detrimental to the Dialogue.

'This produced a little uncertainty about the commitment of BNFL to the process. It slightly unnerves people.'

Some also questioned the extent to which those involved in the Dialogue represented and influenced strategic decision making in BNFL. For example:

'What I saw as being worrying was the information gap between BNFL managers on the Working Group who were all good guys and the hierarchy, the board saying something completely different. BNFL themselves probably didn't know what was happening at board level i.e. we all agreed that reprocessing was a nonsense whereas at board level they didn't. This was a great gap that can't be bridged.'

5.2.3 Information requirements

The provision of information has been crucial. Clearly, the Dialogue could not function without the Company releasing significant amounts of information but this has raised issues for BNFL in terms of the commercial and legal sensitivity of some information.

Whilst the Company have tried to overcome these difficulties, tensions have inevitably arisen.

'On the storage of [Magnox] spent fuel, greens disputed the notion that you can't store this. BNFL had documents showing they had explored this... BNFL were supposed to be trying to get these documents to us, they never did appear.'

This demonstrates the need for openness about what information can and cannot be provided and the reasons behind this.

BNFL recognise that the provision of information helps develop trust and have tried to look at how sensitive information can be incorporated into the Dialogue. An example is the release of a summary of the confidential Life Cycle Base Lines (LCBL) documents to the Business Futures Working Group.

However, a number of respondents suggested that the Company could have been more forthcoming in the release of information. *'It was only given on demand'* was one participant's assessment. Others suggested that the confidentiality attached to some information was unnecessary.

The confidentiality issue is particularly pertinent in the current Securities Working Group where the Company are legally prevented from sharing information. However,

this Working Group has a senior BNFL officer responsible for security, with the result, according to one respondent, that *'ironically, this may be one of the most fruitful areas'*. The commitment of the problem holder to the process is helping to overcome the problems arising from confidentiality issues.

The Dialogue has led to a heightened expectation of BNFL's sharing of information, which took the Company some time to fully appreciate. Consequently, the release of important information by the Company outside the Dialogue resulted in problems, with stakeholders feeling that they should have been informed first. As a result of this, a bridging mechanism was created. Prior to the bridging mechanism, the Company made decisions and announcements without reference to the Dialogue, under the ground rules of 'business as usual'. However, there was an 'early warning' mechanism for other constituencies, such as Unions and Local Authorities whereby they were given 24 hours notice of significant public/press releases. This bridging mechanism was extended to the Environmental NGOs. This enables time for a conference call or face-to-face meeting, during which the issues can be clarified.

The bridging mechanism had a positive impact on trust in the Dialogue. *'The bridging mechanism worked to the extent that it prevented the Dialogue from stalling.'*

However, one respondent suggested that *'the process has become very slap dash and haphazard'* and that sometimes very little notice is given. It was suggested that there needs to be a more detailed set of guidelines regarding the conditions for invoking the mechanism.

5.2.4 Organisational culture change

This is perhaps most significant for BNFL. The evaluation has highlighted the beginnings of culture change within BNFL resulting from the dialogue process. This relates to how the Company works with its stakeholders.

As previously mentioned, all participants in interviews identified that the most powerful impact of the Dialogue process was their increased understanding of other stakeholders' views. This was particularly significant for BNFL. All constituencies of stakeholders felt that the Company now recognises both its responsibility to engage with stakeholder and sees stakeholder views as valid. As one respondent put it *'some Company people have learnt that exposure and scrutiny are not the end of the world'*.

In particular, BNFL members tended to report that they had improved their understanding and respect for the views of Environmental NGOs. This was verified by some of the organisations themselves, who reported that the Company now understood them better. Environmental NGOs, including those who have left the process felt that they could detect a culture change within BNFL, where staff in the Dialogue were now more willing to hear their views. BNFL staff further reported that they seriously considered Environmental NGOs views about the industry and how the industry might work in the future.

Significantly, some trade union respondents, particularly those from Sellafield, were very keen to point to changes in the way the Company worked. One went so far as to say the *'Company has completely changed the way it operates with us'* and another *'the 'us and them' approach which characterised trade union and employer relations has changed since the start of this process.'*

The ability to engage with stakeholders is now part of BNFL's person specifications and management job descriptions, which shows that they value the importance of the Dialogue and recognize staff need specific skills if they are going to get involved.

5.2.5 Learning Points for this Dialogue

- Review the bridging mechanism to improve communication between stakeholders external to the process and the process

5.2.6 Learning points for continuing application after closure

- Involvement of senior decision makers needs to be maintained
- Culture change within BNFL needs to be maintained including;
 - a recognition of its responsibility to engage with stakeholders and that engagement can be a resource for the Company
 - a respect for opposing positions and views; and
 - being a company that continues to learn to present itself in a more accessible way.

5.2.7 Learning points for future dialogues

- There should ideally be a separation between the problem holder and the convenor, although this should not be to the detriment of information-sharing.
- The involvement of senior decision makers from the problem holder is critical.
- Redressing the power balance within the Dialogue is dependent on the problem holder being forthcoming and cooperative in the sharing of information.
- There is a need for clarity and honesty about what information can and cannot be provided.
- Efforts to overcome confidentiality issues build trust and cooperation.
- Dialogue brings a heightened expectation of information-sharing responsibilities outside the Dialogue.
- Mechanisms to share information outside the Dialogue need clear guidelines.
- The Dialogue led to organisational culture changes within BNFL, including:
 - a recognition of its responsibility to engage with stakeholders;
 - appreciation of the value of engagement;
 - a respect for opposing positions and views; and
 - learning to present themselves in a more intelligent and less-technical way.

Some of these are important to a sponsor's participation in dialogue.

5.3 Stakeholders

This section builds upon the classification of different types of stakeholders (Section 4.3) and looks at the following issues:

- What is a stakeholder within the context of this Dialogue?
- How the range of stakeholders was initially defined.
- The mechanisms for reviewing the definition of stakeholders.
- The screening process for new members.
- Representation of groups.
- How the range of stakeholders has impacted on the Dialogue.

5.3.1 What is a stakeholder and what is their role in this Dialogue?

Understanding what or who constitutes a stakeholder is fundamental in any engagement process. The dictionary definition is *'one who has a share or interest'*. As such, stakeholders may hold a wide variety of perspectives and interests. This loose theoretical definition is carried forward into practice, where the term is often casually applied.

Two dimensions of the definition of a stakeholder are particularly pertinent to this evaluation. Firstly, there is the question of what interest a particular organisation or individual is required to have in order to be considered as a stakeholder. Often parameters are not set, with anyone who expresses interest in a particular matter being considered a stakeholder. This is particularly the case in more informal engagement processes where, typically, an identified core group of stakeholders would be approached directly, but other's views accepted. However, in more formal engagement processes (such as dialogue), setting clear parameters to the definition of a stakeholder is critical in determining whether the process meets its objectives. This leads to the question of who and on what basis determines these parameters; a judgement which should be applied in a fair, consistent and transparent way.

Secondly, there is the issue of representation. Stakeholder groups are often treated as single entities, represented by a single or small group of individuals, when in reality they encompass a wide variety of views and interests. The classic example of this is the group normally referred to as 'the community'. This group, although often treated as a single entity is never homogeneous and is often highly diverse and fragmented, meaning that there is very rarely 'the community view'. Representation of the community (and other stakeholder groups) is often one-dimensional and an inclusive process would require this diversity to be recognised and reflected.

5.3.2 How the range of stakeholders was initially defined

In the case of the BNFL stakeholder Dialogue, it is unclear how the original range of stakeholders was defined. Feedback suggests this involved closed discussions

between the convenor, BNFL and others, although there was some discussion of the issue at the first workshop. Given the history of mistrust and hostility between the groups involved, the initial convening of the Dialogue was about making it happen. Efforts were focused on ensuring that stakeholders attended rather than on ensuring maximum inclusivity.

The convenor, in conjunction with BNFL, defined a full range of stakeholder constituencies (described earlier), which are used to ensure that actions and activities involve as many stakeholder groups as possible.

5.3.3 Mechanisms for review

Given the initial absence of an open, criteria-based approach to the selection of stakeholders, the importance of regularly reviewing the membership of the Dialogue is apparent. However, no structured review happened, although informal reviewing activities have taken place, in Working Groups for example. On occasions when individual representatives from organisations have left the Dialogue, the convenor tries to find a replacement. More importantly, there have been times when a group would identify a gap in membership, e.g. the DTI, and the convenor would try to fill the gap. In Dialogue planning meetings, facilitators and convenors consider who else should be involved in the Dialogue, acknowledging specific gaps, and this is also discussed at Main group meetings.

Retaining careful control of the range of stakeholders in the early stages of a dialogue process may often be necessary, particularly where there is a history of hostility. We believe that this makes subsequent open, criteria-based reviews even more important as the process matures, in order to achieve inclusivity.

5.3.4 The nature of the screening process for new members

There are effective methods of testing whether participants are representing a constituency before they join the process. The convenor's role in dealing with this has developed and there have been instances when individuals without a constituency have been excluded from the process, particularly if the convenor, possibly through checking with the Co-ordination Group, felt that an area of expertise was adequately covered in the existing make up of the Main Group. For example, one potential member reported to us that following a series of conversations with the convenor, he was excluded as he had no constituency, although he thought he was an interested, expert individual. In this instance and at the time of his 'application to join', TEC understood that this role was very well covered within the balance of the Dialogue membership.

There have been occasions where people have joined the process and then later left when they recognised they had no constituency. In these instances, both facilitators and convenors work together with the participant. For example, an individual withdrew after it was realised they had no real constituency, although it was initially understood that they represented an Environmental NGO. Up to the point of departure the individual was involved in a working group.

In the current screening process, decisions are based largely on the convenor's judgement rather than it being an open process under the control of the Main Group. The presence in the Dialogue of a small number of people who appear to be unrepresentative of any constituencies shows the dangers inherent in such an

approach. Whilst there is no evidence of the screening being unfair, a more open and transparent process based on more extensively defined stakeholder criteria would mitigate against any personal bias, which might otherwise influence the decision.

The issue of 'representing' a stakeholder organisation within a constituency appears to have been applied inequitably. It seems that some stakeholders were seen as automatically having a constituency, e.g. the Company, while others, mainly Environmental Stakeholders, and most often those perceived not to be attached to NGOs, had their constituency tested before and during the process⁵⁴, while a third group were regarded as not needing a constituency (this dichotomy is discussed further below in the representation section). We believe that this demonstrates an inconsistency which was not openly acknowledged or discussed and one which goes to the root of power within this process.

5.3.5 Groups who have been unrepresented or under-represented

During the evaluation, the following organisations were identified by stakeholders as being unrepresented in the process:

- the Treasury;
- DEFRA;
- ecologists;
- transport engineers;
- Isle of Man Government;
- European perspectives;
- other parts of BNFL, beyond the UK;
- health experts;
- local groups and the community; and
- the general public.

Most of the stakeholder groups on this list were mentioned occasionally by evaluation respondents; however stakeholders took the opportunity presented by the evaluation to frequently discuss the issue of participation from the community and / or general public.

In fact over 50% of stakeholders who responded to questionnaires and interviews thought that '*community and local groups were poorly represented*' although many stakeholders felt that '*this process is not suitable for such involvement*'. Instead, the

⁵⁴ For example, interview evidence demonstrates that facilitators and convenors would develop awareness of whether or not stakeholders had or were representing a constituency, and will take action based on their observations; this might include checking out the stakeholder's status with them directly with their constituency or others. In at least one case a stakeholder has left the Dialogue following such discussions.

local community was represented by officers from local authorities. Specifically, it was suggested that communities around Sellafield were well represented '*at the expense of all others*'. Working Group participants in particular felt that the absence of the general public was a gap in the process.

However, it is important to note that the voices of community members and the general public were never envisaged to be part of this Dialogue. Involving the wider community and general public is a sensitive and important decision. Their non-involvement clearly helped prevent the process from becoming too unwieldy and allowed the Dialogue to be conducted at a more 'technical' level than would have otherwise been possible.

Whilst local authorities are important stakeholders themselves, they work within a highly politicised environment and may struggle to effectively represent the diversity of local community views and interests. Furthermore, although there may have been legitimate reasons for excluding the general public from the Dialogue itself, stakeholders suggested that more could have been done to keep the wider public informed of the process and outcomes, for example, through press releases and presentations in affected local communities. Others suggested that public views could be tested through focus groups or citizens juries.

Many respondents identified the withdrawal of some Environmental NGOs as a '*significant event*' and this inevitably resulted in such groups becoming under-represented. However, a number of respondents suggested that their withdrawal was beneficial. Their *raison d'être* of campaigning against groups like BNFL did not sit easily with the Dialogue, leading many to suggest that their departure was inevitable and beneficial. As one respondent put it '*Dialogue participation presupposes a willingness to compromise and some had an institutional problem with that starting point.*' A further respondent commented '*You can't expect to shoehorn 'positional' campaigners into a stakeholder dialogue.*'⁵⁵

Through our observations, interviews and informal contact with stakeholders currently participating in the Dialogue, we detected a level of negativity about some organisations' capacity to engage in dialogue processes. This negativity was directed towards those organisations that had left the Dialogue. CAG suggests that this negativity has become, to some extent, a cultural norm within the Dialogue, which in turn makes continued input at arms length (below) by previously involved organisations problematic.

Following their withdrawal, mechanisms were introduced to consult with former participants and encourage some arms length input. This involved specific reflectors becoming nominated by the working group and/or convenors to keep in touch with Environmental NGOs through asking for comment on reports and emerging issues either by phone or by email. Reflectors reported that they made regular contact so that all organisations were equipped with the information, which allowed some feedback to be incorporated.

Although there is no substitute for direct representation, the use of reflectors has been an important mechanism which has helped maintain the legitimacy of the Dialogue, from the perspective of its participating stakeholders, and mitigated

⁵⁵ See also section three

against the impact of losing highly important stakeholders. However, the level of feedback received via the reflectors appears to be low.

Whilst recognising that the use of reflectors⁵⁶ has helped maintain the legitimacy of the Dialogue, from the point of view of those within it, a number questioned whether they led to much genuine input from the Environmental NGOs who had left. We received a range of evaluation comments which suggest that reflectors used their own extensive experience of the constituency to reflect some views, but were not able to maintain a direct exchange of information between non-participating constituency members and the Dialogue. This may have been due to those organisations wishing to maintain distance, the direct input and a conduit role not being made a part of the reflectors role in this case, or these activities not being adequately resourced.

The use of reflectors evolved in the Dialogue to address a perceived absence within one constituency. However, when absences within other constituencies were identified, the use of reflectors was not considered. For example, with groups such as the Treasury and DEFRA, reflectors may have provided a possible solution to their non-involvement.

5.3.6 How the range of stakeholders impacted on the nature of the Dialogue

A discussion about the range of stakeholders involved leads to a range of (largely hypothetical) questions about the impact on the nature of the Dialogue. For example:

- Would greater central government representation have led to the Dialogue being more informed or influential, as a number of respondents suggested? There was a strong feeling that greater government representation, particularly from DEFRA, the Treasury and the DTI, would have enhanced the Dialogue. The Dialogue has clearly been influential; examples were cited of the Dialogue products impacting the higher levels of government, for example in the case of the Plutonium Working Group. However, greater involvement of senior civil servants and ministers could have led to greater impacts on government thinking and policy.
- How would the ongoing presence of the Environmental NGOs have impacted on the processes and outcomes of the Dialogue? A number of respondents felt that their loss had brought the whole legitimacy of the Dialogue into question, but the majority of stakeholders were less concerned about their loss. And as previously stated, a minority suggested that the Dialogue had improved as a result. This raises the issue of whether dialogue is an appropriate means of engaging such groups.
- Could the Dialogue have functioned successfully with direct representation from local communities and the wider public? A number of barriers would have hindered sustained community involvement, particularly time commitments and the technicality of the issues. If direct representation is not deemed to be appropriate or achievable, then efforts could be made to test public views on key

⁵⁶ Discussed in more detail in section 11

issues, which could then be fed in to the dialogue. In addition findings and recommendations of the Dialogue could be disseminated to a wider audience.

Issues of legitimacy are further discussed in later sections.

5.3.7 Learning points for this Dialogue

- Stakeholder negativity around the capacity to engage in the Dialogue, directed towards organisations previously involved, needs to be addressed.

5.3.8 Learning points for future dialogues

- The need for clear criteria regarding what a ‘stakeholder’ is. Such criteria then need to be applied in a fair, consistent and transparent way.
- If there is a history of hostility, then initially getting different groups to engage may need to take priority over inclusivity.
- There is a need for regular, structured membership reviews involving all stakeholders.
- There should be openness and transparency in the screening of new members.
- The use of reflectors provides a useful means of maintaining the legitimacy of the dialogue when groups withdraw.
- Reflectors could be used more widely with other unrepresented groups, and possibly with greater success where non-involvement was due purely to practical reasons.
- Where the general public are excluded from the process, consideration should be given to mechanisms for testing and incorporating their views.
- Dialogue presupposes a willingness to negotiate collaboratively on the part of stakeholders. This may prove especially difficult for campaigning groups who are defined by their ‘fixed’ position.
- Dialogue also presupposes that there is an interest and commitment from stakeholder groups.

6 THE DIALOGUE'S KEY TOOLS

Securing a successful dialogue is dependent on the appropriate application of a range of key tools. This section briefly describes the key tools used in this Dialogue and assesses how far their use has facilitated the process.

In particular, we refer to the following:

- ground rules;
- aims;
- Working Group objectives and terms of reference;
- scenario development; and
- recording processes.

6.1. Ground rules

Ground rules are the agreement between the parties involved in the Dialogue about how they will conduct themselves. Fundamentally, they are about how people commit to relate to each other. They cover the etiquette and protocols of engagement.

The findings clearly demonstrate that ground rules are essential in providing a context in which trust and confidence between participants can develop. They provide participants with a sense of security, particularly if sanctions for breaking them have been agreed.

During this Dialogue, ground rules have been developed and repeatedly updated to address issues as they emerge. They are a live document which is wholly owned by the participants themselves.

The responses from participants suggest that they are generally very conversant with them. They made frequent reference to them, their use and their importance in making the process work. The ground rules played a crucial part in keeping the Dialogue on track and were a mechanism for agreeing shared understandings about the way the work should be carried out.

However, one person did express some dissatisfaction with one of the ground rules – that participants are not permitted to question another's integrity. Although understanding the reason for it, they felt that it had held up some of the proceedings:

'Sometimes Company people were behaving dishonestly for a period of time. They were holding a line that they knew to be inaccurate. This lost two sessions of our work and came out anyway. It can be uncomfortable to be candid but is essential'

This, and other similar statements, raises a significant tension. Whilst on the one hand being crucial to securing 'safe' discussion, the ground rules may have, at times, prevented positions from being sufficiently challenged.

6.1.1 Learning points for future dialogues

- Ground rules are essential in providing a context in which trust and confidence between participants can develop and are therefore an essential prerequisite to a successful dialogue.
- Dialogue is a dynamic process, which requires regular re-appraisal of the ground rules – the ground rules should be treated as a 'live' document which needs to mature with the Dialogue.
- Ground rules need to be developed and owned by the dialogue participants.

6.2 The Dialogue aim

A significant minority of interviewees demonstrated a lack of clarity about the Dialogue's aim. This was most commonly expressed in informal contact with stakeholders who confused workshop objectives with the overall aim and who also expressed the aim in terms of BNFL engaging with stakeholders on issues relating to all Company business.

However, questionnaire respondents suggested that changes to the aim should be made to make the Dialogue's role/outcomes and/or purpose more specific.

This highlights a tension. On the one hand, the aim needs to be sufficiently broad to attract a wide range of participants but this must not be at the expense of a lack of clarity or focus. The experience of this Dialogue suggests that re-visiting the aim to provide a more specific focus may be necessary as the Dialogue has matured. However, there is a difficult balance to be struck. What emerged was a change in perceptions about what the boundaries were and what could be changed. These changes would not have materialised if stakeholders had left the process early, because the aims excluded them meeting their expectations. What is clear is that there was a high level of satisfaction with the Dialogue process and stakeholders' expectations may have changed through the process itself.

Looking towards the end point of the process, CAG Consultants would suggest that in order to strengthen ownership of the eventual outputs of the Dialogue, it will be helpful to restate the aim, to put these outputs in a clearer and shared context.

6.2.1 Learning Points for this Dialogue

- Restate the aim as the Dialogue draws to its close.
- Describe the decision making boundaries at the close of the Dialogue

6.2.2 Learning points for future dialogues

- Having a broad and neutral aim was important in establishing the Dialogue and attracting a wide range of participants.

- An uncontroversial aim needs to be linked to an understanding of what the Dialogue can achieve and stakeholders roles within it. Also recognising that changes in expectations occur during the Dialogue means that the aims can be re-visited to provide a more specific focus.

6.3 Working Group objectives and terms of reference

Where an engagement process is complex or broad, or where elements of the work require a specialist focus, working groups are a traditional way of approaching the development of specific work streams. Developing the focus of their work can be done formally by the wider group or informally by the working group itself. As the nature of this Dialogue is one of formal mandating, each Working Group's starting point was pre-determined. This gave the Main Group participants a greater sense of ownership of the products of the Working Groups.

The terms of reference determine the boundaries of a process or activity. They are often produced in a standardised format and describe the parameters within which the group may operate.

It is important that what people expect to do, talk about and achieve is realistic. Terms of reference are both a functional tool and a tool to tailor expectations. It is important to be transparent about what can and what cannot be discussed, what areas are out of bounds, i.e. the boundaries of the process, who will make decisions and what the expectations are of the different stakeholders. Terms of reference differ to ground rules in that they are not usually negotiable, although in this Dialogue they are first developed through negotiation in the Main Group and Working Groups. Terms of reference can encapsulate the mandate that stakeholders and the responsible organisation have. For example, it is an expectation that stakeholder representatives report back to their constituents, where they have them, on a regular basis. Participants need the authority to come to agreement and discuss issues.

6.3.1 Learning points for future dialogue

- Working group objectives need to be informed by all participants to achieve a sense of ownership of the products.
- The use of terms of reference to set the framework for the group's progress is essential to the success of a working group.

6.4 Briefings

Briefings are sessions that impart technical knowledge to facilitators and participants to ensure that everyone is up to speed and able to enter discussions in an informed way. Briefings may be written documents, lectures, advice or audio-visual presentations. In this Dialogue they were mainly used for facilitators.

Briefings are important in improving understandings both about the how and the why of doing things. They are a structured way of bringing a group of stakeholders up to speed, particularly with regard to technical issues. Usually, briefings are

employed where this understanding is a necessary prerequisite of informed and meaningful dialogue and to intelligent and informed decision making.

In this Dialogue a specific contractor (content adviser) was employed to develop briefings in the early stages of the Dialogue, as opposed to commissioning specialists at the time of need. After a long period of involvement, the content adviser role was deemed to be no longer necessary.

Some respondents highly valued the briefings. They were particularly praised by facilitators, who were extensively briefed prior to Main Group sessions. Their briefings include a process plan, background information, 'jargon-busting' and 'what happened since we last met'. Our observations and informal contact with stakeholders suggests that there are stakeholders whose views are respected as independent and who have specialist skills to write briefing notes. In this instance, some stakeholders within the process are a resource which could have been utilised more fully to provide information and support the process. For example, some respondents, often those representing smaller environmental organisations, suggested that they appreciated information provided informally within the process by other green stakeholders.

6.4.1 Learning points for future dialogues

- Where, as in this case, content and facilitation are kept separate, the need for up-to-date information briefings is particularly important for process managers.
- The process may have benefited from using a range of specialist advisers rather than a single content adviser.
- Where their views on a particular issue are regarded as independent, participants in the Dialogue can be utilised to develop briefing material.

6.5 Scenario and option planning tools

Scenario planning is the construction of logical scenarios with a view to examining the pros and cons of each. In developing working group activity leading to recommendations, the development of scenarios and option planning has been a key success factor in this Dialogue.

Scenario planning is not about predicting and preparing for the future. In the business world these methods are used as tools to examine strategic options and reduce risk. The tools aid planning for different eventualities as well as helping to assess risk. Scenario planning tools are helpful in examining different options as well as developing strategy where the future is likely to look very different from the present. Fundamentally, it is a way of thinking ahead and anticipating the consequences of change. Scenario planning gives participants 'time out' to examine possible futures, looking at what the consequences would be of a particular event, action or behaviour.

Scenario planning is especially useful in circumstances where it is important to take a long-term view of strategy and where there are a limited number of key factors influencing the success of that strategy. Typical questions used when constructing scenarios are '*what should we do if...?*' and '*what would be the effect of...?*' It is

intended to avoid being caught too late to act and is founded on the idea that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. A common simple approach, for example, is to look at a pessimistic future, an optimistic future and a mainline future. Used within an engagement process, scenario planning can be used to help stakeholders work through the consequences of a course of events or actions.⁵⁷

Option assessment has been a particular focus of activities within working groups and two methods of option assessment have been employed, although there are others available for use within a dialogue setting. To a lesser extent MADA (Multi Attribute Decision Analysis)⁵⁸ and more commonly SAP (Strategic Action Planning).⁵⁹ Participant perceptions of these methods can be broadly summarised as follows:

- MADA was generally not felt to be good for identifying a single preferred option *“where there are contentious issues”*. Some found it over-complicated and there was also concern that the process of listing and scoring options did not encourage people to think beyond their own positions or, at worst, encouraged tactical behaviour. But it was seen to be useful at teasing out perceptions and values as well as establishing a common understanding of the detail behind each option.
- SAP was perceived to *“fit the bill”* and was useful to the process. Stakeholders reported that they felt that SAP *“develops a common understanding of the assumptions on which options are developed and produces practical ways forward on which work programmes can be based.”* Furthermore, *“you have to put aside some of you own views and think through the other options”*. Many participants of the Spent Fuel Working Group were so happy with the SAP process, that they felt it should have been introduced earlier although other evidence would suggest that trust needs to be developed before such decision making frameworks can be introduced.

In this Dialogue, participants are required to set aside their views on particular scenarios and think through the practicalities of each. As one respondent observed:

‘Whilst this may have been difficult for some NGOs, it actually helped their campaigning positions in some cases by enabling them to foresee problems with their own positions’.

The same could equally be said of all participants with strong positions on a particular scenario. Within the Dialogue, SAP has worked very effectively, possibly for the following reasons:

⁵⁷ Johnson and Scholes, *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, London, 1993

⁵⁸ MADA is a decision making technique which involves a staged approach to the context, define ‘options’, agree attributes, assess expected performance, assign weights and then combine weights and scores for each option, leading to the identification of a provisional choice, which is then subject to sensitivity testing

⁵⁹ A structured time and issue based approach to managing decision making. There are two elements in a strategic action plan, around which analysis is framed:

- NOW: Actions and explorations
- FUTURE: Delivery decisions and contingency plans

The aim is to make underlying assumptions explicit, and develop contingency plans for situations where assumptions turn out to be wrong.

- timely introduction, after the development of trust;
- accessibility of method;
- applicability of methods;
- evaluation and review of method;
- willingness to try and fail; and
- training and support in the use of the method.

Option planning and scenario tools have been an important tool in helping stakeholders to understand the practicalities and consequences of taking certain lines of action, as well as understanding the views of others. SAP particularly helped participants develop common understandings and so played a role in supporting collaboration and resolving conflict. However, such methods can only be successful within the context of dialogue if stakeholders are willing to have their beliefs and assumptions challenged.

One common criticism of these processes were that they were time-consuming and laborious. However, most recognised that the end justified the means, i.e. the products of the working groups justified the time and work involved, and that the SAP process was a crucial ingredient in the success of many of the groups.

6.5.1 Learning Points for future dialogues

- Scenario planning is especially useful in circumstances where it is important to take a long-term view of strategy and where there are a limited number of key factors influencing the success of that strategy, but can only be introduced at a point where trust has been developed.
- In this instance, SAP was much more successful than MADA. SAP appears to be particularly well suited to dialogue on contentious issues since it enabled participants to think beyond their own positions and develop common understandings, but other decision making processes may be of equal use.
- The processes are time-consuming, and their success depends on the development of trust within the group before their introduction.

6.6 Recording process

Records are the agreed memory of all engagement processes. They are important to refer back to if there is a dispute about what was said. They are also reference documents for evaluations and study. It is therefore important to develop a recording process in which all parties have confidence, is time efficient, is in an accessible format and is verifiable by all parties. Records also contain an account of who has agreed to carry out what actions and may serve as an aide memoir. Records should be shared with all parties as soon as possible after the event. This is a process which is overseen in this Dialogue by TEC.

The majority of recording is 'live', through the wall report, and observations show that people are reminded that the wall report is the responsibility of the group participants. We observed that in working groups stakeholders engaged very proactively, but less so in the Main Group, as would be expected in such a large group.

High levels of satisfaction with the reporting processes were recorded. Our observations would suggest typed recording of actions and decisions and perhaps verbatim reordering of the most contentious debates would be useful. Occasions were observed when people could not read the photo report or remember what it referred to.

6.6.1 Learning points for future dialogues

- The wall report is a useful live record, which could be complemented by more formal meeting accounts, at least in working groups.
- Specifically, all agreements and actions should be typed and circulated.
- The rigorous time scales of circulation maintained by TEC are a significant contributor to trust and responsibility within the process.

7 KEY ISSUE ONE: LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy is a key concept in relation to this Dialogue. Much of the literature on legitimacy comes from political economy and governance theory. Political economists talk of a 'crisis of legitimacy', often dubbed the 'democratic deficit', occurring at all levels of government, but especially at national government level as nation states find they have less levers over economic, environmental and social aspects of society. Governments are increasingly felt by communities not to represent their interests and falling voting numbers at elections are thought to be a crude indicator of this.

Legitimacy is historically defined as "*that which conforms to the law*". In political theory, legitimacy is defined as the '*right to govern*'⁶⁰. In the context of the Dialogue, legitimacy also relates to the right to take part as a stakeholder. The ground rules do not define what is meant by legitimacy in relation to the process but many of their aspects have a legitimacy implication.

In the early stages of the Dialogue, there was the perception that BNFL would discount other players as not having legitimate voices in the Dialogue and so ignore their views. Consequently, Environmental NGOs views could be marginalised. In the discussions on trust, consensus building and impact of time on the Dialogue we show how these fears were overcome. In fact BNFL encompassed the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders and accepted their views as legitimate.

All constituency groups reported a developing awareness in the Company of both their responsibility to engage with stakeholders and recognition of stakeholder views as valid. It was also noted that the decision makers within the Company needed to be there to ensure legitimacy. "*Senior management from the problem holder must both endorse the process and become involved within it*", was a commonly expressed feeling.

Whilst most stakeholders take a broad view as to which groups and individuals may have a legitimate interest in the Dialogue there were a few caveats. Some stakeholders initially were felt to have an inadequate technical grasp of the issues; but as mentioned previously this changed and views were seen as legitimate, "*even if not based on technical information*." Linked to this is recognition of the legitimate role that other stakeholders have in the industry.

A second caveat expressed about legitimacy was about those who lacked a constituency and thus a legitimate reason for being involved. This is also discussed in Section 6 of the report.

The legitimacy of a process can be seen to diminish if legitimate stakeholders views are not represented and stakeholders did perceive problems of under representation by local groups and the community, as discussed previously. One stakeholder commented that:

⁶⁰ Coicaud, Jean-Marc: *Legitimacy and politics: a contribution to the study of political right and political responsibility*. Cambridge, 2002.

“This question comes up with Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The local community councils [Local Liaison Committees] at power stations that meet every six months basically don’t seem to work in conveying concern from local communities. They tend to just sign up. There is no feedback process. There is a need to find neutral space, and a neutral chair.”

The withdrawal of some Environmental NGOs was seen by stakeholders as the most significant impact on the legitimacy of the process. Some who left felt that there was a perception that their withdrawal not only reduced the legitimacy of the process but was intended to do so. For some their previous involvement was viewed as a form of manipulation in which their participation was used to provide a spurious legitimacy to the process. Moreover, one suggested their involvement was intended to undermine their legitimacy with their own constituency as it would perceive them as both incorporated and discredited by involvement in the process. A few proposed that their involvement was intended to use up valuable time that could have otherwise been spent on campaigning work against the Company. *“I think they saw it as an opportunity possibly to stop us campaigning plus we wouldn’t get any more information”*. We were also told that *“there was no evidence that BNFL was listening”*. The MOX⁶¹ announcement was seen as evidence of this. It was also seen as a data collection exercise by the Company to neuter criticism: a regulatory body stakeholder commented that *“BNFL now know what their enemies think and why”*.

These were minority positions at the end of a continuum of views about legitimacy. On reflection, stakeholders from all constituencies, as well as facilitators and convenors reported that while they were very concerned about the Environmental NGOs withdrawal at the time, the majority were now less concerned. A minority thought that the Dialogue had improved, as *‘real dialogue’* could take place (as opposed to restatement of fixed positions), or that the NGOs had tried to wield inappropriate power by their withdrawal. A commonly held belief among Dialogue stakeholders about the Environmental NGOs was that, *“most Greens have their own agendas, and although they are interested in the information flowing out from the Dialogue they are less keen about information flowing in”*.

One technique to counter the departure was the involvement of ‘reflectors’ to maintain a level of legitimacy in terms of communication channels if not full representation. These became a more structural part of the Dialogue after some Environmental NGOs withdrew from the process. (The roles of reflectors are discussed elsewhere in this report, section 5.3.5.).

As the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology wrote in 2001 in relation to legitimacy:

Debates surrounding the extent to which people engage in national and local political processes have led to concerns about a widening ‘democratic deficit’. ... At the same time, there has been an increase in the activity and influence of single-issue campaigning groups....Concerns have arisen about the relative balance between Parliament, government and the role of special interest groups and that this decreases the legitimacy of democratic administrations and legislatures. ...

⁶¹ We have assumed that this is the announcement that the company had secured permission to commission the Sellafield MOX Plant.

Public authorities are beginning to respond to these trends by seeking greater interaction with citizens. The aims include establishing greater legitimacy and support from the public, Dialogue processes can be seen as a way to increase the range of forums within which it is possible for people to become involved with the process of governance.

7.1 Responses to legitimacy issues

Moves toward political decentralisation and devolution are a response to legitimacy problems, and with it the emergence of more participatory governance processes such as dialogue. Dialogue is thought to increase the level of legitimacy of decisions reached and actions taken by bringing government 'closer to the people'. An example could be that BNFL has tried to involve others in parts of its decision making process.

This relates to a question that emerged about how those who choose not to take part in the Dialogue have their views represented, as this might increase the legitimacy of the Dialogue to those outside of the process. There is a range of possible techniques for feeding outsider views into the process. To an extent the Green 'individual reflectors' took up this role after some NGOs left the Dialogue.

Wilcox's⁶² hierarchy of participation, below, should be kept in mind when considering the most appropriate methods for involving stakeholders outside the Dialogue. For instance, would the purpose be to provide groups with information and feed their views in, or would their involvement be expected to move further up the hierarchy to a more empowered position? How would the collaborative and consensus building aspects of the Dialogue be maintained if the stakeholder was not being exposed to alternative points of view by actively taking part?

Information
Consultation
Deciding together
Acting together
Supporting individual community initiatives

Figure six: Wilcox's levels of participation

There may be opportunities for more proactive work to involve 'missing groups' carried out by process managers (TEC). One suggestion was for the facilitators to undertake a more 'outreach' style of consultation by visiting stakeholders in person. For instance, it was proposed that facilitators go out to NGOs to discuss issues and ideas before they are finalised in products. If this method is taken up, clear criteria for the different roles would need to be agreed prior to embarking on this task.

Another proposal was to include interested individuals in the Dialogue process who did not necessarily have a constituency behind them. We consider this needs further

⁶² Wilcox, *A to Z of Participation*, 1989

working through to understand the implications, as in the role of reflectors. It was a central assumption underlying the process that involvement was based on representing a constituency. Thus, the idea of involving interested individuals challenges the 'representing constituencies' view in a fundamental way. If it were to be pursued there would need to be protocols developed for interested individuals to attend and/or be consulted.

Thus, while we would argue that active involvement of all legitimate stakeholders can be used as a key indicator of the success of the process, we might broaden out the notion of legitimacy to cover interested individuals.

The discussion of legitimacy needs to be set within the context of the 'democratic deficit' suffered by traditional political processes in Western democracies. Processes like the Dialogue have an enhanced capacity to achieve legitimacy in comparison with traditional techniques of political representation that find it increasingly difficult to deal with key environmental and other problems.

Our conclusion is that the Dialogue has maintained a high level of legitimacy due to its inclusiveness and careful process. Stakeholders and process managers dealt in a mature way with the potentially serious setback to legitimacy of the departure of Environmental NGOs.

7.2 Learning Points for this Dialogue

- Effective techniques are required to feed in the views of identified stakeholders who cannot or choose not to become involved in the process and such alternatives would need to consider a typology of methods and how information should be fed into the Dialogue (see below).
- Methods to enable interested individuals to feed in to the process from an arms length could be improved and become more proactive.
- The Dialogue needs to recognise that some organisations are not able to engage in this way.

8 KEY ISSUE TWO: TIME

The issue of time has a number of facets reflected in the findings; including the role of time in increasing trust, implications for resources of stakeholders, and gaining technical competence. Across the board, stakeholders expressed a concern that the process had taken up too much time and was too long (the implications of this are discussed in the Capacity section below). However, all but one respondent qualified their statements by saying that it could not have been done any more quickly given the lack of trust and/or contentiousness of the issues.

For example one respondent told us, *“I would change the process, within the context of facilitated meetings to make the process slicker somehow. But an appropriate amount of time had been spent on relationship building and it is important to spend some time team building and doing social things together. This is where you get to know people’s values.”* Another summed up the problem by saying that *“people need to grow with the process.”*

We noted that the time needed was seen as a severe barrier. One stakeholder reported that *“we do not have the resources to commit the amount of time needed to the process; therefore it is not a level playing field”*. Another commented that *“It got to the point when enough was enough”*. Another noted:

“It did take time away from campaigning. I suspect the stakeholder Dialogue in terms of the anti-nuclear campaign may have been set up to do just that. Because it was so time consuming I found it stopped us doing what we are supposed to be doing. That is one of the reasons we pulled out. At the time too there was a bit of a concern about what it was costing financially. It took time out of the office, maybe 2 weekdays a week. As a small group we cannot afford this”.⁶³

Another finding was that not all stakeholders could easily engage with technical information. Time was needed to learn about and understand it. For some, their input and confidence was thus reduced. The Dialogue was deliberately pitched to *“the man who knows something about the issues”* rather than to *“the man in the street”*. At the same time it was acknowledged that BNFL sought to find ways to make technical information more accessible.

There were also time issues in the run up to producing key documents. We were told frequently that too much rushed work was crammed into the end to get reports out.

Time can be seen as having a variety of roles in the Dialogue. One of these was to reduce imbalances of power. Giving sufficient time to the process acted to reduce the barriers which would otherwise prevent groups or organisations from participating. It is very difficult, especially for smaller groups, to respond to information and documents. The Dialogue established realistic timescales for processes to include consultation and engagement, but the downside was that the time needed to take part became onerous.

Perhaps the issue is resourcing participation in such a way as to deal with the problem of time. All participants, but in particular former participants from

⁶³ The time quoted here would appear to be unusually high.

Environmental NGOs, thought that the time commitment demanded by the Dialogue contributed to both poor representation and the limited use of external mandating processes. Informal evidence from the evaluation processes suggests that constituencies are poorly briefed and have only limited buy in to the process. This limited buy in and low level conversation between participants and their constituencies impacts on the quality of 'representation' within the Dialogue.

The differences between voluntary time and paid representatives' time were raised frequently. Less frequently raised, but still an issue, was that of payments made to participants (for more discussion see the representation section below).

Time also relates to the 'what' and the 'who'. For example, a dialogue with people who are highly 'process literate' and who already have built up some trust, clearly would not need to take six years to run. On the other hand a clearly 'bounded' dialogue would essentially be shorter too.

This Dialogue began against a backdrop of conflict and campaigning. At the outset, there was little trust and variable levels of technical competence among stakeholders. There were a range of complex disputed issues at stake. It is therefore not at all surprising that a significant time was needed

Time has had both positive and negative connotations. On the one hand it has allowed for the growth of trust, gaining technical competence, undertaking collaboration and entering into consensus building. On the other hand it has acted as a barrier to participation, in part because of resourcing implications for stakeholder groups (see capacity section below). Now that participants have a relatively high level of trust and technical knowledge, as well as being literate about process, we argue that time in this sense has diminished as an issue.

8.1 Learning Points for this Dialogue

- Maintain appropriate levels of technical information and support

8.2 Learning Points for future dialogues

- An appropriate amount of time is needed to develop capacity. This could be informed by an initial assessment of capacity and provision of technical supporters.
- In developing a dialogue it is necessary to acknowledge the amount of time needed and whether this has implications for making the process more bounded and therefore less time consuming.
- The role of reflectors and other non-representative types of stakeholders could be explored further to address issues of time.
- Recognition of the time involved for mandating and representing activities is important.

9 KEY ISSUE THREE: DEVELOPING TRUST

9.1 Processes in Developing Trust between Traditionally Untrusting Organisations

The Dialogue proves that developing trust between traditionally untrusting organisations is possible. The process has developed unevenly and has at times been contentious. In this section we consider those elements of the Dialogue that have shaped the way trust has had to be negotiated including:

- The antecedents – the history of stakeholder relations and the broader policy agendas.
- Components of mistrust – uncertainty, language, experience, attitudes and behaviour.
- Organisational culture – styles, structures and functions which can militate against trusting relationships.
- Differentials of power – being effective and making a difference.
- The process of building trust.

9.2 The antecedents – why mistrust?

Fixing the antecedents of mistrust to a specific period is bound to be contestable. For us, the 1980's seems particularly relevant because so many parallel events appeared to converge. Prior to the decommissioning phase, the points of contention were fairly stark. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was based on a principled opposition to the nuclear industry and its associated links with the defence industry. At its height, CND had an estimated membership of over 1 million people, with branches in every city and most main towns of the UK. By the end of 1982, over 150 local authorities had declared their areas Nuclear Free. During the 1980's the Green movement developed a critique of the nuclear industry based on principles of environmental pollution and sustainability.

Against this backdrop there was a tangible sense of 'us and them' – us being the communities, the organisations and interests who were perceived to be on the receiving end of policy decisions made behind closed doors.

The legacy of the events of the 1980's persists and has informed some if not all of the stakeholders involved in the Dialogue, as demonstrated by the following comment:

"Before the Dialogue we viewed the Company [BNFL] with suspicion and some hostility. Statements made by the Company were assumed to be hiding more than they revealed. I think the feelings of mistrust were mutual".

9.3 Components of mistrust

A significant number of respondents admit to coming to the Dialogue from a position of suspicion and mistrust. When asked to expound on the causes, a range of concerns emerged.

Uncertainty

For some, relations with the Company had been based on conflict through challenging national policies, questioning decision making procedures and contesting assertions made in the media and elsewhere. Expectations were generally negative and there was considerable uncertainty about the motivations of the Company in initiating the Dialogue.

For a significant number of stakeholders, 'obscurantism' and 'spin' characterised relations with the Company before the Dialogue and, for some, there remains a suspicion that the Dialogue itself is a sophisticated public relations exercise. A key outcome of the Dialogue has been the production of a language of discourse that has built confidence in the process.

Experience

Organisations that have experienced disappointing outcomes from their engagement with other stakeholders come to expect this as the 'norm'. One member commented that, before the Dialogue relations with BNFL were based on "*broken promises*" and:

"We have been let down so many times in the past, promises made and not delivered, I'm not surprised that some of us remain sceptical".

This highlights the importance of admitting to past mistakes as a means of restoring confidence in the process.

Inconsistency

Saying one thing and doing another is bound to undermine trust. One stakeholder who was involved in the first rounds of the Dialogue commented that the Company failed to deliver on promises to provide further information or that the information provided was not what was asked for.

Attitudes and behaviour

To paraphrase one comment about the Company: "*their attitude was arrogant and dismissive, it was as if they tolerated us but would prefer it if we went away*". Modes of behaviour and attitude set the tone for exchanges between people and, irrespective of the content being discussed, can, if badly managed, create the conditions for mistrust.

Secrecy

Before the Dialogue, the nuclear industry could be caricatured as operating within a 'closed system', where privileged access to knowledge and information and a highly secretive process of decision making and management was the norm. This lack of transparency inevitably led to mistrust and suspicion. Although considerable progress towards openness was widely recognised, some stakeholders expressed a desire for a greater readiness in the Company's release of information to the Dialogue. Inconsistency in this area appears to have undermined trust in some cases.

Elites and cliques

While the nuclear industry is a highly complex collective of organisations, it has traditionally operated on the basis of some core beliefs and assumptions that might be termed 'scientific rationalism'⁶⁴. There is an important ongoing debate within the Dialogue about the nature of 'evidence', 'proof' and 'reasonable certainty', about systems of belief and how individuals from differing belief structures can engage.

What is clear from the Dialogue is that the era of mistrust was characterised by more or less self-contained cliques and elite groups that operated with a specific system of beliefs to the exclusion of others, on both sides of the debate. The Dialogue has started to open debate across belief systems and has helped to break down the 'comfort' zones of the elites and cliques to create a more open and accessible forum for debate and constructive argument.

Organising principles

The culture and frames of reference of organisations influences the way that individuals perceive the world and understand their place within it. A scientist nurtured within a culture where the scientific method of hypothesis, experimentation and verification provides access to 'truths', may struggle to understand the community activist whose sense of 'truth' may be more intuitive.

Some of the organising principles that will inevitably impact on the Dialogue are illustrated in the figure below.

To be effective and for trust to be built, the Dialogue has had to adopt measures and actions that work within these constraints yet encourage stakeholders to move beyond them, so the scientist has to work with non-scientific interpretations, the planner has to think beyond the legislation.

Differentials of Power

Within the Dialogue there has been an understandable concern about differentials of power and this has also impacted on levels of trust. Who sets the agenda? What is not discussed? Who finally determines the policy?

Such differentials exist between and within organisations. Within the Dialogue those with statutory responsibility (and budgets) tended to be generally regarded as more 'important'. Those that 'represented' local communities were generally perceived to have 'moral' authority. Government departments were naturally assumed to carry political authority.

The different sources of authority (statutory, political, resource and moral) suggest different types of power and, by inference, an association with how they influence the Dialogue and relationships within the Dialogue.

⁶⁴ This is not to say that scientific rationalism is the only or predominant paradigm within industry. We did witness exchanges where confidence in the 'science' that formed the basis of a discussion about the origins and properties of high level waste appeared to reflect a scientific rational perspective, while some 'doubts' about the 'evidence' came from non-scientific beliefs – at times it appeared that the interlocutors were talking past each other.

Constituency	Organising Principles
Nuclear Industry	Commercial confidentiality Technical know how Hierarchical decision making
Local Authority	Regulatory Accountable Democratic principles Governance
Community	Locality Voluntarism
Government Departments	UK & EU legislation Electoral cycle Parliamentary accountability
NGO	Sectoral Interests Advocacy Voluntarism
Experts	Track record and credibility
Workforce	Terms and conditions of service Employment contracts Performance targets

Figure Seven: Organising principles of stakeholder constituencies

There is also a concern with individual power 'relations', where an individual may operate within specified boundaries that may act as a constraint or barrier to engagement. The 'worker' may be inhibited from speaking his/her mind in front of the line manager; the council officer may defer to the Council Member. In these circumstances the nature of the relationship established outside of the Dialogue has repercussions within the Dialogue.

Although there is a significant literature that theorises power relations within an institutional or organisations context⁶⁵, as far as the Dialogue is concerned power has a very concrete application. Stakeholders come to the Dialogue with a differing sense of whether they, as individuals, can make a difference or whether real power lies beyond the process itself. Where stakeholders have felt unable to make a difference, trust in the process has been undermined.

9.4 The process of building trust

Informal processes

Many respondents commented on the benefits of the informal aspects of the Dialogue. Some even felt that the social exchanges around meetings were more

⁶⁵ For example; Power (Steven Lukes); The Power Elite (C. Wright Mills); Corporatism (Saunders & Cawson)

important than the structured events. While this may have been expected from people who felt inhibited in formal settings or large groups, we found that this view was reflected across the board.

It was outside the formal meetings that a different kind of dialogue took place, where defences were let down and barriers overcome. Thus the overall environment of the Dialogue, the spaces and opportunities created for discussion, in bars, coffee lounges, at dinner or lunch, worked alongside the formal meetings to develop and build relationships.

In spite of the identified benefits, we have found no evidence of a systematic approach to building social relations that fully captures the potential depth and extent of connections⁶⁶.

Modus vivendi – the compromise

Some stakeholders were clear that while strong elements of mistrust persist, they were prepared to compromise or establish a 'modus vivendi' that allowed them to put to one side their concerns and focus on elements of the Dialogue where they felt there might be a constructive engagement.

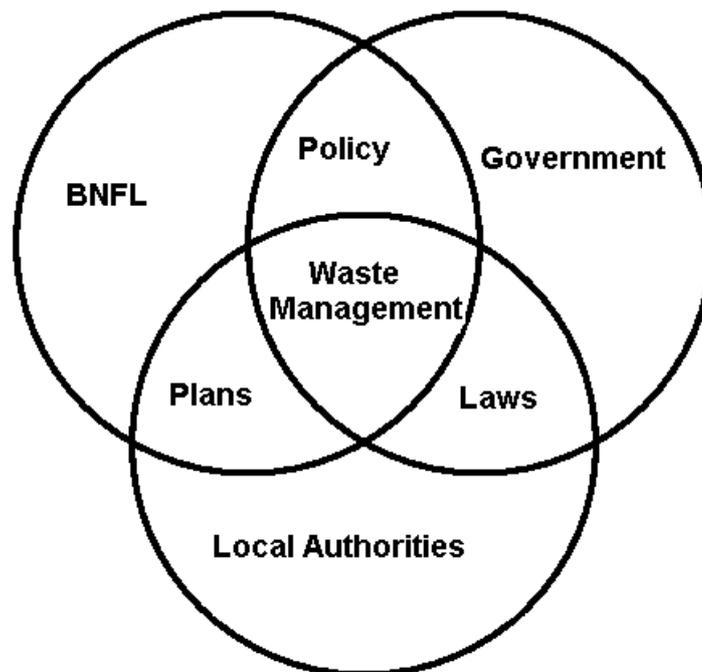


Figure Eight: An example of bi-lateral interests within the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue

For example, while some stakeholders expressed concern over the way national policy might change, or with aspects of the industry's commercial remit, or with the 'secrecy' that applies to the decision making process, they were still able to value input into the whole issue of waste management. In other words, the Dialogue established 'arenas' for discussion and debate but at the same time recognised some

⁶⁶ This could be done through a 'social audit' that identifies the range and types of activities that people are involved in, what their interests are, where they go for information and support. Dialogue days could have specific events designed to strengthen social relationships.

unavoidable 'no go areas'. Within the context of a constrained policy debate, commercial confidentiality and secrecy, key areas were opened up for debate. This ability to engage constructively is illustrated in figures seven and eight.

In the illustration above, three stakeholders may have formal interests between them that are bilateral in nature. The Dialogue has established where collective interests converge.

Again, different stakeholders may have non-formal but bilateral relations 'outside' of the Dialogue but find common points of concern (policy areas, research findings) that overlap.

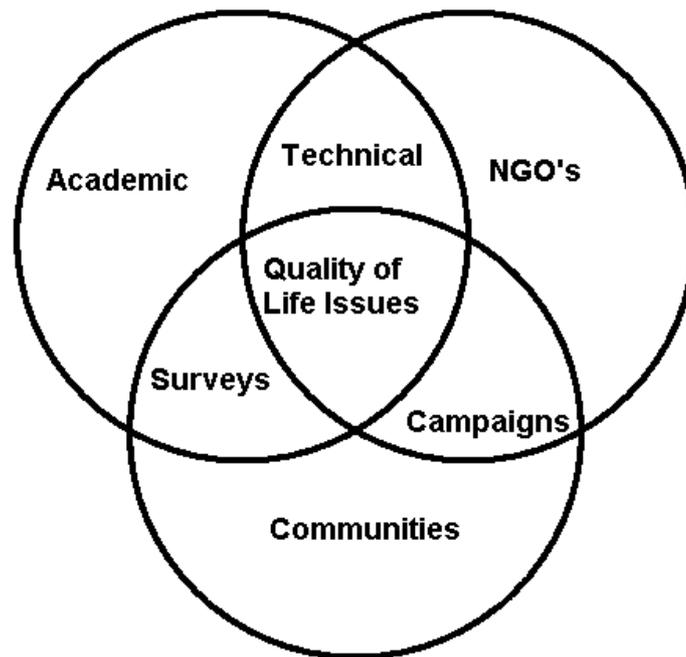


Figure Nine: An example of converging bi-lateral interests in the BNFL Stakeholder Dialogue.

One account of the very first meeting of the Dialogue further illustrates the point:

"The first meeting was very difficult. People had entrenched positions and a lot of time was spent with BNFL people being put on the defensive. Gradually we began to arrive at a point where we could agree to disagree over key issues and then move on to areas where we had some common ground. It took a lot of movement from all sides before we could start to talk constructively".

Information and education

For many stakeholders, the wealth and quality of information within the Dialogue was itself a justification for involvement. Many attested to the 'learning curve' of a gradual assimilation of facts and explanations that moved them from 'entrenched' or fixed positions, towards a greater understanding of the issues, gaining more confidence in their own knowledge and with it a readiness to engage in further

debate in some less familiar areas. As one person commented "*We have moved from being just reactive, to being engaged*".

Team building

Although not articulated or formalised as such, the process effectively created 'teams' of individuals whose trust was built through the process itself. The team building elements included getting to know people personally, finding points of common interest that were not necessarily anything to do with the Dialogue, developing an understanding of the constraints placed on others and developing respect based on an appreciation of people's different experiences and knowledge.

Influencing

The process was keen to demonstrate that views and opinions were taken seriously and had an impact on the development of concrete proposals. Being seen to influence the process and decision making is an important part of building the credibility of the Dialogue and trust between stakeholders.

"I've seen the Dialogue influence not just how we do things but also what needs to be done".

Training

The Dialogue has brought to the fore the extent to which stakeholders have had to acquire new skills, though this may have happened through expediency rather than by design, demonstrated by the following comment:

"Learning to listen, learning to make criticism positive rather than negative has required new skills".

Listening skills, negotiation skills, skills at 'letting go' of preconceived ideas, an element of risk taking or trying out new ways of working, have evolved through the process and have contributed to the growth in trust.

Rules of engagement

Clarity about what is or is not up for discussion and how matters can be addressed is crucial for building trust. As one respondent put it: "*The Company is not a democratic organisation and some decisions will always be subject to commercial considerations*". The openness with which these boundaries of engagement are established and reviewed is crucial for establishing and maintaining trust, and for avoiding the mistrust bred by unrealised expectations.

Reciprocity and exchanges

Reciprocity and exchanges also increase trust. Putnam⁶⁷ identifies that there are two types of reciprocity. Specific reciprocity refers to simultaneous exchanges of items of roughly equal value; and diffuse reciprocity refers to a continuing relationship of exchange that at any given time may be unrequited, but over time is repaid and balanced. Within the Dialogue this may have contributed to the development of long-term obligations between people, which can be an important part of achieving positive outcomes. The idea of reciprocity is to answer the somewhat crude question

⁶⁷ Putnam, R. 'The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life'. The American Prospect No.13 1993

of 'what is in it for me', that will inevitably have some bearing on how far people recognise the Dialogue as a two way process.

For the Dialogue, reciprocity may not have been explicit. The notion of an 'exchange' between stakeholders is perhaps something that can be developed further, in subsequent dialogue.

9.5 Risk factors

Most stakeholders would agree that the Dialogue has gone a long way to overcoming historical suspicions and feelings of mistrust. This outcome should not be taken for granted or assumed to endure. Whilst it is unlikely that the industry will ever return to the polarised position of the 1980's, there are a number of 'crunch issues' that may undermine the progress made to date including:

- **Delivery.** As one respondent noted "*We need more concrete evidence that the Dialogue is having an effect*".
- **Complexity.** There is a concern that the process is becoming unmanageable: "*There are too many working groups, too many reports and too many participants. Maybe more should be done to focus priorities*".
- **Discontinuity.** Building trust takes time. A high turnover of those involved in the Dialogue could fracture lines of communication.

9.6 Learning points for future dialogue

The antecedents

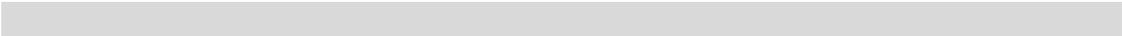
- Openness about the antecedents (the causes of mistrust) allows participants to move on and provides a foundation upon which trust can be built.

Components of mistrust

- Inconsistency and a failure to deliver on promises severely damages trust, particularly in the early stages of dialogue.
- Attitudes and behaviour are as important as content in developing trust, and need to be carefully controlled.
- Effective dialogue requires measures and actions that work within the constraints of the differing belief systems and organising principles of stakeholders, and encourages stakeholders to move beyond them.
- Recognising 'cultural' differences helps to open up decision making processes and identify points of common interest and convergence.

The process of building trust

- Informal processes are as important, if not more important, in developing trust between formerly hostile stakeholders, especially those designed around the cultures of those involved and which include an environment of confidentiality.

- The early focus of dialogue should be on identifying bi-lateral interests between stakeholders, as well as an openness about 'no-go' areas and the reasons for such constraints, in particular what role confidentiality plays within dialogue.
 - Team building activities could be integrated into Dialogue events.
 - Dialogue needs to foster an atmosphere of learning – both in terms of information and in the skills of engagement. Training in skills that are relevant to listening, negotiating, thinking and acting outside the 'box' could form part of an 'induction' programme.
 - Continuity of involvement in the process builds relationships.
 - Dialogue is founded on reciprocity and exchange, and may benefit from this being explicitly recognised and formalised.
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10 KEY ISSUE FOUR: COMMUNICATION

Communication within the Dialogue is more than a tool used but can be seen as an essential part of the process. Patterns of communication have been set up so that the methods discussed above are put into practice. The effectiveness of the communication systems within the Dialogue has enabled participants to:

- shape and develop work by identifying and defining critical issues;
- gain a wider perspective by providing the ability to see a topic from various points of view and to understand a range of interests and perspectives;
- deepen understanding and develop shared principles by resolving issues and moderating conflict by focusing on shared values;
- build networks by providing opportunities to meet interested groups and individuals in a neutral arena; and
- anticipate future conflict by identifying problems before they arise.

Within the Dialogue there are many different types of communication which take place in different settings. The first distinction is between the different groups, such as the Main Group and the Working Groups. The second type of communication is within the Dialogue meetings; the third is external communication and the fourth is communication outside of the process but which impacts upon it.

10.1 Communication between the different groups

It is worth recalling the history and structure of the Dialogue, although this has been discussed in more detail earlier.

A large meeting of stakeholders was held in September 1998 to discuss the activities of BNFL. This became the "Main Group" of stakeholders who identified and prioritised a list of issues and concerns to be addressed in further meetings. The Main Group has continued to meet every 8 to 12 months throughout the Dialogue.

Following on from the initial Task Group⁶⁸ a Co-ordination Group was formed. This is a smaller group of ten or so stakeholders, which meets regularly to oversee the various aspects of the Dialogue, ensure its smooth running and deal with major issues.

One output from the Main Group is the formulation of Working Groups' briefs. These Working Groups carry forward more detailed elements of the work and report back to the Main Group. Working Group reports do not list specific objectives, but they do list areas of work undertaken by them. These are usually produced at the end of their life and reflect the essential flexibility within the process.

The following shows some of the Working Groups which have been formed and when:

⁶⁸ See history within the context section

- Waste (March 1999)
- Discharges (March 1999)
- Spent Fuel Management Options (November 1999)
- Plutonium (November 1999)
- Business Futures (March 2002)
- Security (September 2003)

Working Groups often set up sub-groups to look at a particular work stream if it was felt that there was too much work to be covered within a meeting or that extra information was needed. Volunteers for the sub-groups were requested and meetings arranged. Each Working Group also has a drafting group, which is responsible for writing up the discussions of the meetings.

The Dialogue has a very complex structure so communication between the different groups is crucial for effective working. Reports and updates, both verbal and written, from the different groups are presented to the Main Group but this can be quite daunting and unwieldy. Can the Main Group, which meets so infrequently, come to grips with all the work it mandates? Is it necessary to look at how the Main Group is structured so it can better comment and feed into the other work? Does it in fact retain much impetus or has this been delegated to the Co-ordination and the Working Groups? And does this matter? Can its members be up to speed with all that is happening, or do those who want to be get more involved in certain aspects and the others simply feel confident in the process?

10.2 Communication within the Dialogue meetings

It can be argued that knowledge of the issues within the Dialogue are not fixed things or commodities waiting to be grasped or discovered. This understanding of fluidity is built into the Dialogue with the Joint Fact Finding. This enables different participants to engage on a quest for more information on specific topics. They agree on what information is needed and how it will be gleaned. It is felt that this fact finding *"is related to power, as neither group can control the output – writing up the work is done through the team, there is no one biased opinion"*.

However, some information is specifically about BNFL's business. The ability of the Company to effectively nurture, capture, leverage, and share its knowledge resources is key. However, for stakeholders to be effectively engaged with the complex issues they need to have knowledge of specific areas. Some of this may be sensitive or confidential and has given rise to problems. On one occasion BNFL was perceived to be *"scared of releasing facts because of impending litigation, so the consultants (who did the report) received information, which the participants did not have, which did cause some tensions"*. However, this is not always the case and a respondent felt that *"Green groups have asked for information which we have given them; we would not have given them this prior to the Dialogue"*.

In the Dialogue meetings we can also differentiate between verbal and non-verbal communication. The two main type types of verbal communication which relate to the Dialogue are:

- **Fact-oriented.** The stress is on information considered to be factual.
- **Affect-oriented.** Here the stress is on the expression of emotions concerning the different facts. This may be related to the participant's beliefs and position.

This difference has been evident in a number of comments stakeholders have made about the Dialogue. For example:

"The rules of engagement mean we exchange facts, there might be a difference of opinion about the implication of the fact but we all agree the fact" and "power lies with the fact".

Those who participate in the Dialogue in a personal capacity may have stronger feelings which are 'affect-orientated'. It could be argued that these stakeholders have more emotions about issues being discussed. Those who participate as employees may be more able to distance themselves from emotions. However, it is important for those who feel 'emotional' or strongly about issues to have the opportunity to express their feelings and for other participants to acknowledge and recognise this.

Non-verbal communication relevant to the Dialogue can be seen as one of three types:

- **Physical and emotional sharing.** Such as having meals, drinking together, staying in the same accommodation.
- **Intellectual sharing.** Feeling on the same wavelength as others, having a shared belief in wider doctrines and cultures.
- **Status affirming.** Actions which reinforce the importance of a participant.

It is not uncommon for members of similar stakeholder backgrounds to sit with each other, thus reinforcing their shared viewpoint about the Dialogue (intellectual meaning). Interestingly, members of BNFL are very conscious of not sitting together and thus not seen as being a sub-group within the meetings.

It could be said that participants have more in common with each other than they have differences. They tend to be of a certain gender, age, class and education, thus sharing a common cultural heritage. All stakeholder constituencies recognised the importance of informal and social occasions in the building of relationships and trust. The Trade Union members also saw these sessions as important for people who do not want to speak up in meetings. Observations revealed that the nature of the social events had developed in accordance with the tastes and cultures of the participating stakeholders. If there were participants from different cultural backgrounds then specific aspects of the Dialogue would need to be assessed for appropriateness.

Within the meetings there are a number of channels of communication; these include:

- updates;
- 'minutes';
- written reports;
- presentations;
- action sheets; and
- feedback.

The Dialogue has to address a wide range of issues. In one meeting these can range from waste disposal to long-term economic planning, from re-structuring of management systems to issues of ethics. Stakeholders come from a broad range of fields and cannot be expected to understand all of these complex issues. If the stakeholders do not understand the issues then discussion is not going to be effective. It is estimated, based on CAG's observations, that about 30% of the stakeholders engage with an active discussion for any one item although those participating will change as different issues are discussed. This figure most probably relates to those who are specifically interested in the area under discussion, although there may be others who would want to contribute but do not feel competent. On some occasions, the complexity of issues has been addressed by a group asking an 'expert' to examine a paper and report back. For this to be effective the 'expert' has to be recognised as such by all within the group.

During the Dialogue meetings, the room is arranged in a semi-circle around a wall where all the discussions and agreements are written up. It means it is easier to engage with the facilitator than someone at the other end of the room. The layout puts the focus of the meetings on getting through the agenda. This is reinforced, as every time an agenda item has been discussed it receives a tick. This gives participants a sense of achievement as they work through the agenda.

All records of discussions are placed on flip charts around the room. A member of TEC ensures that all agreements and actions are recorded on these. All participants receive a photo report of these complete contemporaneous written records. In addition there is a recorder contracted by TEC who writes up the meeting and distributes it for wider circulation. These tend to be fairly brief and do not usually contain contentious issues. At the end of one working group participants agreed what was going to be formally recorded and distributed to others who were not present. This is very important for participants to feel confident that much of what is discussed is confidential.

During Dialogue meetings an action sheet is drawn up and dates added at the end of the meeting. This is reviewed at the beginning of the following meeting, when participants have the opportunity to feedback on the designated work.

Presentations by 'experts' are another tool used. They arise because participants feel they need more information about specific aspects of their work. At the meeting, 'experts' with this knowledge are identified and some participants agree to see if they are willing to 'present' and if so brief them. The group often has a list of issues it wants clarifying from the presentation and the facilitator has on occasion ensured all these have been covered.

For the presentation to be effective participants need to be:

- clear about its purpose;
- have an idea of how they are going to use the information; and
- understand how the presentation relates to areas of their work.

In the communication between the different aspects of the Dialogue it is important that feedback and knowledge are able to flow freely to create opportunities to progress the work. Feedback inputs are increasingly important. There are two main kinds of feedback. Firstly, work which participants have agreed to undertake following a meeting. As these are quite specific it is easy to track them and it is a demonstration of participants' commitment that most action is followed through. The other type of feedback is BNFL's comments regarding the recommendations from the Dialogue. It is an essential part of the process to provide stakeholders with feedback about their outputs.

Recommendations to BNFL need to be clear. As the process has evolved the recommendations have become 'smarter' as the Dialogue has developed. Initially the statements of principle were difficult for BNFL to act upon, but these have now become more practical. This change could be attributed to the development of relationships, the use of skilled facilitation, the introduction of systematic decision-making processes, such as MADA and SAP, and the learning within the process.

SMART is a useful acronym for ensuring a set of criteria for assessment. By SMART we mean specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed. A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal it is useful to answer the following questions: 'who is involved', 'what needs to be accomplished' and 'where it should happen'.

Goals need to be attainable so at the beginning of the Dialogue it was decided to focus on waste and discharges, as agreement was more likely. It was hoped that these might influence external developments like reduction of discharges of radioactivity to the sea, and management of nuclear waste, and thus demonstrate the potential of the Dialogue. As a nuclear dialogue was unprecedented in the UK, waste and discharges offered the best opportunity for learning about the strengths and pitfalls of working together before attempting to address even more contentious issues such as reprocessing. This is important, as unachievable goals can lead to negative feelings. Goals also need to be realistic; a goal must represent an objective toward which all are both willing and able to work. Finally, they need to be time bound, so we know when the goal will be achieved. The implications of being time bound and goal orientated have not been well incorporated into working group recommendations to date.

Some stakeholders feel that the Dialogue needs to be quite broad so that it links into their agenda. It is often useful to break down long term or complex goals into smaller ones, which can then be managed more effectively. This helps determine the most appropriate starting point and which decision to focus on. It is also more likely to lead to success. Although this Dialogue has also needed a period of relationship building, developing more clarity around working group recommendations could have provided a more useful framework.

Feedback needs to be done quickly so that results are recognised and valued, so BNFL have tried to map the recommendations from the Dialogue. However, the list of recommendations and BNFL's responses to the different groups has become unavoidably repetitive and confusing. The Business Futures Working Groups is trying to consolidate this work and track progress.

Senior managers within BNFL demonstrate their commitment to stakeholder communication through their attendance at meetings and responses to the work. The Dialogue is also embedded within the company. However, there are a number of BNFL workers present at the different meetings and other stakeholders may not be clear about their specific roles, both within the company and within the Dialogue. This may not be such an issue in other constituencies, where stakeholder roles are clearer.

BNFL representatives in the Dialogue are at a level where they can make change happen. The involvement of senior BNFL managers in the process has helped ensure that the impacts of the Dialogue are reflected back into the Company and so are more likely to affect the inner workings. Also, as previously mentioned the role of key directors and managers within the Dialogue was repeatedly cited as a key to success by stakeholders.

BNFL has been able to give formal information and feedback into the process through:

- presentations to the Main Group;
- written reports to the Main Group;
- having informed people present in the Main Group;
- feedback direct to working groups; and
- BNFL Directors and Chief Executives have given keynote update presentations to the Main Group.

10.3 External communication

Although those involved in the Dialogue feel it has an important message to communicate, over the last few years it has maintained a low media profile and been reactive rather than proactive. When the Plutonium Working Group report was finalised in May 2003, it sought more publicity and a number of newspapers and magazines ran articles.

This work is usually undertaken by the Communications Group, a sub group of the Co-ordination Group who work around issues of promotional and external communication from the Dialogue.

10.4 Communication outside the Dialogue which impacts upon it

Communication and stakeholder involvement are complex processes since there may be a wide variety of organisations, people, perspectives, and concerns involved. BNFL has put in place a number of ways it considers stakeholder input when making its decisions, not just in the Dialogue. Other considerations BNFL uses are:

- surveys/deliberative evidence of public perceptions;
- community consultation;
- the scientific/technical community;
- web-site;
- visits to the sites and feedback;
- focus groups; and
- publications.

All the different methods help identify key issues and may relate to different groups that BNFL wishes to engage with and are adapted to the needs of the audience. Clarity is needed about how information gleaned from these processes is used; so for example a public relations campaign is more appropriate if stakeholder feedback will not be used. If stakeholders feel that their suggestions are ignored or dismissed, the process can be undermined and future communications can be unproductive.

There is a risk that the emphasis on stakeholders input could lead to an imbalance in the process, with insufficient weight given to representative democracy, scientific and professional policy input. BNFL needs to see how it can incorporate all the diverse views from the different channels, and to clarify whether views gleaned from specific mediums or from different groups have more weight than others. If this is the case then this also needs to be communicated to those involved in the different channels.

10.5 Learning points for this Dialogue

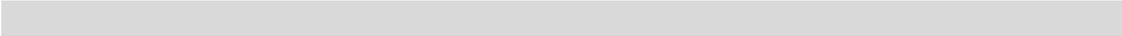
- A more proactive approach to external communication could be adopted, which is styled according to the audience, especially in relation to the Dialogue products at its close.
- Review external communication systems
- Feedback on progress should be given to all stakeholders both within the process and beyond the physical life of the Dialogue. Evidence from various parts of the report would suggest that this feedback would be most effective if it were two-way.

10.7 Learning points for continuing application after closure

- Feedback beyond the life of the Dialogue, should incorporate ways in which the general public and communities can also input their views on progress

10.7 Learning points for future dialogues

- The Joint Fact Finding approach is important to achieving a balance of power and influence.

- Providing the means for appropriate expressions of strong feeling on issues is important and could be reflected within the ground rules of dialogue processes.
 - The importance of non-verbal communication to the success of dialogue processes should not be underestimated.
 - The use of SMART recommendations enhances the impact of dialogue and the ability to measure that impact.
 - Feedback on progress is essential to maintaining trust and momentum.
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11 KEY ISSUE FIVE: REPRESENTATION

Representation has been a key point on which this dialogue has rested. Stakeholders generally describe their role in terms of some form of representation or reflector. The dictionary definition of representative is *'someone who speaks or does something officially for another person or group of people'*. Within the context of engagement it is seen as a proactive process which requires active feedback to the group (*'the giving of official permission for something to happen, or to act'*).

In this section we discuss some of the lessons around representation, which have emerged during this Dialogue.

11.1 *Constituencies*

Processes have been employed to ensure that constituencies were represented within the Dialogue. This allowed many more individuals to feed into the process than were actually present in the room.

This use of constituency representation leads to two important understandings. Firstly, that each stakeholder needs to feed back and seek a mandate; and secondly, as representation becomes more concentrated in Working Groups, stakeholders need to understand the full range of views of their constituency and be whole constituency reflectors and not constituency organisation representatives. In the evaluation we found very little evidence of stakeholders understanding this aspect of their role.

11.2 *Feedback and mandating*

Each representative has the responsibility to feed information from and into the process. However, it is questionable how well this activity has been undertaken. In interview and questionnaire responses, while some stakeholders, notably trade unions, had clear and effective ways of feeding back and seeking mandate, others found difficulty in feeding back information from the process, while still others did not recognise themselves as representatives and fed in their *'personal views'*. This questions the exact 'representativeness' of these stakeholders. However, one must not become too rigid, and thereby apply higher standards in the Dialogue than elsewhere. Perhaps it is adequate for stakeholders to feed in generally the interests of their stakeholder constituencies as they see them. This is what has been happening in many cases within this Dialogue.

A draw back to this approach to feedback and mandating is its impact on other structures within the Dialogue, not least entry structures.

11.3 *Representatives and reflectors*

Challenges to the legitimacy of the Dialogue, following the departure of some Environmental NGOs, led to the rise in the use of reflectors as a structural tool to address the Dialogue's 'representation' need of absent organisations. This is a complex and challenging role. The views and attitudes of Environmental NGOs to the industry are not a coherent whole and relationships between different parts of

the sector are not always easy. As this is the case it would need a number of individuals to reflect this complex tapestry.

CAG would further suggest that while reflectors have been a successful tool, those outside the process still tend to question its legitimacy. CAG suggest that other engagement/consultation methods could have been explored at different points within the Dialogue, to find ways to feed in the views of a wider range of stakeholders.

In fact there are a greater range of participants acting as reflectors, than the structures would suggest. Some constituency groups rest entirely on reflectors, some who have only a partial view of the constituency, and in these sectors this lack of 'representativeness' is not seen as an issue by convenors, stakeholders or facilitators.

11.4 Resourcing representation.

Currently paper (electronic and literal) information is made available for stakeholders to feed back to their constituent organisations. We were told that the biggest barriers to effective representation were lack of time and a lack of understanding of the process, as well as financial and other resources.

This implies that if the Dialogue is to be representative, it needs effective resourcing, in particular some representatives need support in building the capacity of their organisations. This is in line with current thinking around participation. For example, Chanan⁶⁹ points out that *"there has to be some form of communication and accountability between the representatives and the constituency"*.

11.5 The Consultation Elite

'Consultation elites' is used to describe those stakeholders who are called upon most to participate in consultation and/or engagement processes, and who therefore become 'other' than members of the constituency, having access to information, contacts and influence, not experienced elsewhere.

Stakeholders did say that *"you see the same old faces all the time"* or that *"there is a problem of getting new people involved"*. These comments, combined with observations, suggest that a consultation elite has emerged, within most of the sectors. These highly process and content literate individuals participate or lead activities on the subject. While their contribution is valid and extremely useful, caution is needed if the same people are always called upon to participate.

The 'consultation elite' impacts on perceptions of legitimacy. On the one hand their absence can bring in to question the legitimacy of the process (as with the NGO withdrawal in this Dialogue), but on the other their presence leads inevitably to the development of relationships with stakeholders in other constituencies and the development of familiar relationships, which can affect how they are seen to those outside the process.

⁶⁹ Chanan G. et al *'Regeneration and Sustainable Communities'*, London, 1999

One way to combat this is to address capacity issues within the sector, thereby ensuring the elite's contribution is maintained, but tested and enhanced by less commonly engaged parts of the sector.

11.6 Over burdened organisations

Former participating NGO stakeholders suggested that the number of requests for them to participate in nuclear-related dialogues and/or consultations meant that they did not have the time to be involved in all of them.

Often these organisations are membership-based, so developing the capacity of the organisation to participate may help address this, as would exploring alternative ways for organisations outside the Main Group to contribute. In this case the dialogue would be the core engagement process with other processes around it, which feed in to it and are better suited to those who cannot or choose not to participate.

11.7 Payment of representatives

Financial issues were another significant element in the varying levels of stakeholder capacity. In the evaluation, 36% of stakeholders interviewed suggested that funding was either a problem for them or may be for others. Stakeholders have received payment or reimbursement for participating in this Dialogue in five ways:

1. stakeholders are enabled by their employers to participate during work time as the role is seen as part of their work;
2. through a Stakeholder Support Fund administered by TEC (see below);
3. Until recently TEC paid one stakeholder directly for work around the Dialogue, but not for their participation in Main Group or Working Group meetings (see below);
4. BNFL pays stakeholders directly for their participation; and
5. an organisation or group of organisations who are unable to participate, pays for an individual reflector to be engaged in the Dialogue.

The Stakeholder Support Fund was set up and administered by TEC to cover some of the costs of participating. However, there appears to be little information available about this fund. In the evaluation, only one participant acknowledged its use.

In addition to the Stakeholder Support Fund, TEC is currently considering making payment available to stakeholders for participating in subgroup meetings and drafting work, to ensure that, if appropriate, all constituencies are represented on these groups. This is because TEC has recognised that the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue has developed so that subgroup working has become a more common way of achieving the workload of Working Groups. Likewise, drafting of the reports and interim pieces of work has become a more onerous and skilled task as the Dialogue has progressed. The remit for this work would be agreed by the stakeholder group and then managed by TEC. Funds would come out of the project budget.

Some stakeholders have been paid for their contribution to Dialogue activities. In other settings, payment has become commonplace, for example in the Health Service Patient Involvement activities and in the context of regeneration. However, in this context there has been an assumption that stakeholders, in particular Environmental NGOs, would not accept payment because of the source of the money. As one respondent suggested "*If we were paid we would be seen to be paid by BNFL. There would be a problem with accountability to our own groups. It would compromise our position*". This person went on to suggest that a fund administered independently by TEC may be a solution, clearly ignorant of the fact that such a fund was already in place. However, evidence does not back this up entirely, in fact Environmental NGOs, including those who had left the process, were far more mixed on this point, with some happy to be paid.

Discussion gives rise to the following considerations:

- **The transparency of payments.** Payments made to stakeholders within the Dialogue should be open to scrutiny and all stakeholders should have access to the information. In this setting the opposite appears to have been true, with a leaning towards secrecy about payment.
- **The purpose of payments.** There needs to be clarity around what people are being paid to do. If stakeholders are to be paid, there needs to be a clear, shared understanding of what the payment is for, in this setting evaluators were unable to establish such clarity.
- **The source of the payment.** Payment does not have to come directly from the problem holder or sponsor. For example, would it not be possible for some organisations to pay a 'reflector', perhaps in turn funded to do so by the sponsor or problem holder?
- **The control of 'appointments'.** If individuals are to be paid for specific roles as needed within the Dialogue, the Co-ordination Group or a mandated group could make these 'appointments'.

11.8 Learning points for this Dialogue

- TEC, together with BNFL, needs to rationalise payments to stakeholders to achieve clarity and openness around the issue.
- TEC's review of the stakeholder support fund should continue.
- The Dialogue would benefit from a transparent restating of which organisations stakeholders represent, if any.

11.9 Learning points for continuing after closure

- Effective methods are needed to gather and input views of those who have not been able or have chosen not to be involved in the Dialogue process to date in ongoing activity and / or information sharing arising from the Dialogue.

11.10 Learning points for future dialogues

- Where constituency representation is incorporated into the dialogue, communication from the dialogue to constituencies should be supported and resourced.
 - The use of structural reflectors could be extended to constituencies other than Environmental NGOs.
 - How reflectors feed in the full range of views from the constituencies needs greater consideration.
 - More clarity is needed about the role of stakeholders who do not represent or reflect constituencies, in particular within working groups.
 - Thought needs to be given to the dialogue's responsibility to develop the capacity of organisations to participate.
 - Financial support is necessary for those participating in their own time, and this could be provided on an opt-out basis.
 - Financial support should be administered by an independent convenor and be widely publicised.
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12 KEY ISSUE SIX: CAPACITY

In the Dialogue, the capacity of different stakeholders to be involved and contribute varies enormously. A number of issues are significant in affecting the capacity of stakeholders to effectively engage. These include the induction process, the financial support given to stakeholders, time constraints and the levels of technical understanding of the issues. Each of these issues is explored in this section

12.1 *The induction process*

The induction given to new stakeholders produced most criticism. Induction aimed to reduce the disruption caused by new entrants, unfamiliar with the developments to date. It incorporates a one hour session on the first day of involvement and includes information on:

- the ground rules;
- the principles of dialogue; and
- the history of the Dialogue.

Potential stakeholders also have conversations with facilitators and convenors before attending the Main Group.

The process was seen as inadequate by a number of respondents: *"It isn't easy to replace 2 years of being in the Dialogue with a 1 hour session"*.

That the induction process did not meet its objectives is shown by a significant minority of interviewees demonstrating a lack of clarity about the aim of the Dialogue.

Suggestions for changes generated by stakeholders and some facilitators included:

- factual briefings/teaching sessions for participants who feel less up to speed;
- the need to be clearer about what the Dialogue can and cannot do;
- discussions of methods and behaviour;
- making inductions compulsory for all⁷⁰;
- enabling more time to be given to induction; and
- linking theory and practice more clearly.

The induction could also have been used to assess and address capacity issues. One respondent highlighted an example of a stakeholder involvement process in Sweden. This includes an assessment of 'capacity' which identifies where there are 'gaps' in knowledge or in the ability to fully commit to the process, and then funds measures

⁷⁰ Stakeholders made this suggestion, despite the fact that inductions are compulsory for all.

that help build capacity so that all parties are seen to be equally capable of engaging with the process. This increases the organisations ability to effectively take part.

12.2 Technical understanding of the issues

The Dialogue involved stakeholders grappling with highly technical and specialist information and issues. Some were better equipped to do so than others. This had to be addressed in the Dialogue process to ensure that the capacity and confidence of less technically-equipped stakeholders was not unduly affected.

Two types of technical advisers were used, from BNFL and from a Green perspective. They were very different in their role and position. The BNFL technical advisers held a wide range of technical information, some of which was confidential and could not be provided to the Dialogue. Their role seems to have been taking recommendations to the Company and feeding back Company responses to the Dialogue or providing data to inform the Working Group. The Green technical advisers, only used within the SFMOWG, seem to have been in a less privileged position and some respondents suggested that BNFL could have been more cooperative in providing information to them. As one respondent suggested *"BNFL agreed to resource green advisors and engage technical consultants for economic report. The Company made information available to technical consultants on their side but not to the green advisors. There was not equality or respect for their professional integrity."*

12.3 Learning points for this Dialogue

- Deliberate, ongoing effort is needed to keep the Dialogue at an appropriate technical level, as well as for the Dialogue outputs, to enable wider participation.
- The induction process would benefit from a review to include the suggestions outlined above.

12.4 Learning points for future dialogues

- An adequate induction process is crucial for new members and requires significant time and resources.
- Consideration should be given to using the induction process as a means of assessing capacity issues and identifying means of addressing them.
- There is a need for significant independent technical support for facilitators and participants.
- The appointment of technical advisers should be open and transparent and carried out in response to specific requests by the Co-ordination Group.

13 KEY ISSUE SEVEN: EVALAUTION

Evaluation usually has a number of elements; an assessment of the baseline information; 'monitoring', that is a formal process of measurement; and a final evaluation at the end. All these process involve the maintaining of consistent records.

Monitoring and evaluation processes involve the development of measurements or criteria against which formalised judgements of progress or action can be made. In a general sense there are two types of judgements - explanations and assessment; which lead to an exploration of the following areas:

- an explanation of the nature of the problem, i.e. what the activity is going to address;
- an explanation of what actually happened and what people think or feel happened;
- an outline of the success of the activity, in terms of both effectiveness and impact; and
- an assessment of how efficient the programme has been in terms of costs and other inputs.

Monitoring and evaluation are an integral, but independent process of most programmes. Experience within CAG Consultants based on evaluation and delivery of engagement programmes suggests that monitoring and evaluation is also contentious. Most often, programmes report that no baseline has been gathered to enable a comparison and/or that the demands of process management prevent effective monitoring systems.

In this section we look at some of the frameworks used to evaluate elements of engagement programmes which have applicability to the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue. We discuss techniques used during the programme (including this evaluation), and we relate this information to evaluation practice and draw out some key lessons.

13.1 Findings Information

There have been five methods employed to monitor and/or evaluate the Dialogue during its life so far. These include:

- evaluation at the end of Main Group meetings, known as 'the dots', plus evaluation questions;
- the production of the Evidence Report in 2002 following the Main Group asking the Co-ordination Group to gather evidence of impact;
- ongoing reflection and informal evaluation by facilitators, both with stakeholders and through their own observations;
- evaluations at the end of working group lifetimes; and

- this final participant evaluation programme.

Evaluation at the end of Main Group meetings, known as ‘the dots’, plus evaluation questions

Evaluations at the end of the Main Group sessions involved participants posting dots on question response scales, displayed on flip charts, and then completing a written questionnaire asking for comments on the same and other points. The questions tend to be around the same issues, but with variations between meetings.

These questions generally aimed to seek stakeholders views about the Dialogue's progress and the particular group session. They produced useful stakeholder satisfaction information, which was used by facilitators and convenors in planning. They are also a record of process satisfaction levels over the life of the programme.

The production of the Evidence Report following the Main Group asking the Co-ordination Group to gather evidence of impact, in June 2002.

During 2001/2 (over three years into the life of the Dialogue), in response to concern about the impact of the Dialogue, the Main Group mandated the Coordination Group to gather evidence of the Dialogue's influence, productivity and impact.

This produced an Evidence Report, which looked at the following areas:

- *“Ensuring that those relevant aspects of the Company's forthcoming strategy are scrutinised to gauge the influence of the Dialogue*
- *Separately, asking the company to provide a point by point report describing their reactions and responses to working group recommendations*
- *Asking current and past working groups to scrutinise their work (especially their recommendations) and comment on the Company's responses to date*
- *An internal company survey of staff involved in the Dialogue which seeks their personal feedback*
- *A survey of all stakeholders involved in the Dialogue seeking their personal feedback, via a questionnaire”.*

This work brought up a number of issues including that of stakeholders participating in evaluation and the problems of tracking impacts within the Company.

Ongoing reflection and informal evaluation by facilitators with stakeholders and through their own observations

As reflective practitioners and experienced facilitators, the process managers undertake ongoing monitoring of process elements of the Dialogue and their observations inform their planning. All facilitators and convenors interviewed reported undertaking this kind of activity, and illustrated examples of how the process had changed or developed based on their observations. However, no records of these had been kept.

Evaluations at the end of working group lifetimes

At the end of working group life times, facilitators undertake a review of the working group with its members and these evaluations are recorded in photo reports and inform future process practice.

This final participant evaluation programme

This evaluation comes as the Dialogue is drawing to a close, it is based on the overarching principle that those who have the most important comment to make about the success or otherwise of the programme are the stakeholders. Participatory methods were developed which focused on learning.

13.2 Evaluation Measures

We have outlined the evaluation activity undertaken to date within this Dialogue, but what does evaluation need to measure? Within evaluation practice there are some standard measurements, which have been successfully applied within the context of engagement.

An in-depth evaluation of cost effectiveness will look at the activities of the project and what it is producing. This process is often demonstrated through reviewing:

- inputs - the finance, time and other resources put into a project;
- outputs - the 'hard' project products, sometimes called deliverables, which are usually quantifiable; and
- outcomes, which look at the longer term impact or effect of the activities.

This distinction is well defined in the Groundwork and NEF publication, 'Prove it'⁷¹.

	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes
Definition	Resources (finance, time) Used for achieving particular aims	Project activities (deliverables) carried out in order to achieve aims	The effect or impact of the project activities
Measuring	How much resource has been spent on activities aimed at achieving this goal?	What activities have been carried out in order to achieve aims?	What has been the impact of the project? How far have the aims been achieved?
Features	* Easy to measure, can be measured early in project life * Less meaningful in terms of project aims.	* Easy to measure, especially late in project * Fairly meaningful in terms of project aims.	* Mostly relate directly to the aims * Impacts on people takes time. Lots of them tend to happen after the life time of the project * The impact of a local project can be influenced by external factors.

Figure Ten: Inputs, outputs and outcomes

An evaluation framework may use other elements to help measure progress. Project success can be measured by qualitative information relating to the outcomes and how far aims have been achieved. However, outcomes are long term and are

⁷¹ Prove It!, New Economics Foundation, 2000

influenced by external factors; some are not achieved until after the end of the project. Consequently, proxies, outcomes and milestones can be used. Milestones are actions towards achieving the outcome and are usually timed so that a project can work out if it is being effective and carrying out the work to meet its goals. Whereas proxies are points along the road that demonstrate work undertaken towards an outcome. For example, the first recommendation of the Plutonium Group is:

“We note that the current storage arrangements for separated plutonium are long established and are considered to be adequately safe and secure for the short and medium term - that is, for about the next 25 years. Most of the group shares this view. This is of course conditional on the maintenance of robust security and safeguards arrangements, and also on the maintenance to a high standard of the storage facilities, the repackaging facilities, and all the associated operational procedures. Some of the group considers that safety and security arrangements can never be made sufficiently robust. Notwithstanding these mixed views about short term safety and security, most of the Group consider that storage of plutonium as plutonium dioxide powder in its present form does not meet the standards of ‘passive safety’ which would be required for long term storage. Therefore, an alternative approach to the management of plutonium stocks needs to be developed.”

The development of this outcome may fall outside the life of the Dialogue, but the following can be seen as a proxy indicator, measuring progress towards meeting the outcome: *“the Company has initiated a programme of work to examine alternative approaches to the management of the plutonium stocks”*.⁷² BNFL has demonstrated a commitment to research and development on immobilisation. This does not fully meet the outcome implied in the recommendation, but demonstrates progress towards achieving it.

Within engagement programmes, monitoring and evaluation needs to take place on two levels; on the processes that govern the Dialogue as well as the content of the Dialogue.

Many evaluation systems put in place indicators which help explain what is happening in all spheres of evaluation. Indicators are *“tools which measure, simplify and communicate important issues and trends.”*⁷³ Indicators can quantify an element of evaluation. Through breaking down complex issues, indicators can simplify the process and help to prove the impact of a project. Thorough measurement and simplification indicators are helpful communication tools about the impact of an engagement process.

Evaluation programmes have some key elements:

- monitoring takes place followed by an evaluation;
- baseline formation is collected at the beginning of a project to measure outcomes against;

⁷² Feek W. *‘Working Effectively’*, London, 1988

⁷³ Feek W. *‘Working Effectively’*, London, 1988

- systems are set up for the recording of inputs, throughputs, outputs and outcomes (impacts); and
- a process is developed so that the evaluation can inform ongoing activity.

Monitoring takes place followed by evaluation

Three of the four elements of monitoring that have taken place during the course of the Dialogue have focussed mainly on the process and were fed back into the Dialogue. In one instance, the Evidence Report, evaluation focussed on content and impact, but it is unclear whether this had any process impact. Monitoring records are incomplete and inconsistent.

Monitoring of impacts has been patchy and stakeholders felt unsure of what happened to recommendations from working groups. BFWG have now taken this on as a work stream.

Baseline information

Most evaluations demonstrate the progress of projects against benchmarks set at the beginning of the projects. These measure the position at the start. Some working groups have recorded, 'the current position' of content as part of their work leading to recommendations; this means impact and changes can be measured against this baseline. If this had been incorporated into the process element as well it would have aided evaluation.

However, no base line information about process or pre recommendation positions has been recorded, which constitutes a significant loss to the Dialogue. It can be reconstructed from memory but memory can be flawed. Although participants say relationships have improved, there are no process records to measure against, which may reduce the quality of learning.

Recording of inputs and throughputs

The input records are of high quality, but have been developed for non-Dialogue monitoring purposes and are not very useful in producing input information. It has not been possible to clearly identify the time/cost input from stakeholders and/or the input/throughput costs of the sponsor either as an entity or via TEC. This may not be an issue in this Dialogue but costs are a key consideration for those wanting to plan future dialogues.

Recording of outputs and outcomes (impacts)

The outputs or products of the Dialogue are well recorded. TEC's web site displays information clearly and the products are of high quality, wholly owned by the stakeholders.

The outcomes of the Dialogue, both content and process categories, have not been recorded and monitored as well, making future assessment of impact very difficult. Process outcomes, such as meeting stakeholder expectations, have been monitored in part, through 'the dots', whereas others, such as improved relationships, have not been formally monitored, despite frequent discussion of its impact.

How evaluation informs ongoing activity

Both formal and informal monitoring has changed the process management, although these changes have not always been recorded, and it is less clear whether these changes have always been shared with stakeholders.

13.3 Choices for future Evaluations

Agree what is to be evaluated and when

The evaluation needs to be an integral part of the Dialogue and not an added extra. In addition, all stakeholders need to agree on its value and recognise it as an important learning tool. A specific focus for both content and process monitoring and evaluation is also needed.

Within this Dialogue detailed evaluation at the start of the process may have been difficult due to the nature of mistrust between parties and the need to focus on the development of relationships, however, CAG Consultants suggest that in order to monitor impact and effectiveness, regular and systematic evaluation processes should have been introduced into the Dialogue process at the start. In such a circumstance evaluation activity would be increased as participant commitment and the process allowed.

Developing indicators, including proxy indicators

Process indicators review what is actually happening in all Dialogue groups, and could include indicators in the following areas:

- task related – acts of initiation, seeking and giving information and opinions, clarifying or elaborating, consensus testing;
- maintenance of the group – including harmonising, entry systems, tasking;
- self-orientated behaviour – including blocking, changes to negotiated collaboration;
- internal accountability;
- external accountability;
- changes to groups; and
- Internal and external representation.

Benchmarks could be related to expectations and recorded in the ground rules. Working groups would need to develop more effective recommendations, as discussed elsewhere, and develop potential proxy indicators, as well as encourage the Company to develop milestones in achieving accepted recommendations.

If such indicators had been used within this Dialogue participants would be able to clearly plot activity against the Company recommendations and scrutinise Company reports to the Dialogue.

Methods of gathering data

Adequate support and resources should be provided for gathering data, which fit with the needs of stakeholders. We have found that stakeholders are often unhappy with spending more than 30 minutes on an evaluation task. This may be specific to this Dialogue where stakeholders have already committed significant amounts of their time, and where evaluation has not been incorporated from the start.

Different approaches are needed and group sessions can be used, although flexibility and responding to stakeholders' wishes is paramount.

Review of the data

Summary evaluation data should be presented regularly to all stakeholders, or a representative steering group for review. The group should include facilitator and convenor input as evaluation stakeholders.

What happens following review of the data?

All recommendations that emerge from a monitoring and evaluation process need to be regularly communicated to the Main Group so that they are clear about what is happening with the recommendations. This feedback may include proxy or other indicators.

Incorporation

Should another dialogue or engagement process be developed after the current BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue, monitoring and evaluation needs to be incorporated from the start, in line with best practice.

Management

To manage this ongoing process, we would strongly recommend that an evaluation working group be established, with the responsibility of ensuring that facilitators and working groups carry out relevant functions and to ensure that evaluation processes are in place.

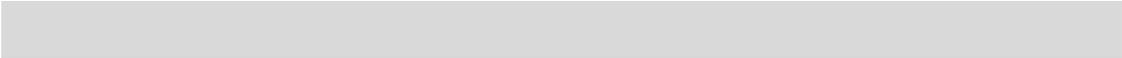
This group would be the key starting point for the analysis of data, development of recommendations and presentation to the Main Group. We would see this group receiving monitoring information from a variety of sources, including the Company, in relation to working group recommendations.

13.4 Learning points for this Dialogue

- The final Dialogue outputs would benefit from a comprehensive review of the external impacts during the life of the Dialogue.
- The Working Group Report recommendations need extending to include milestones and proxies, to enable judgements of progress to be made.
- Methods to feed back outcomes to stakeholders beyond the life of the Dialogue need to be incorporated in to BNFL's ongoing work programme.

13.5 Learning points for future dialogues

- Monitoring and evaluation need to be integral to dialogue processes.
- The value of monitoring needs to be accepted by all participants to ensure it is effective.
- Baseline process and content information needs to be recorded and updated consistently.
- External impacts on the process and content need to be recorded at the time.

- Evaluation management structures need to be incorporated into dialogue.
 - Stakeholder, working groups and facilitator monitoring and recording responsibilities would benefit from recording in contracts and/or ground rules.
 - Indicators, proxies and benchmarks need to be developed to effectively monitor and demonstrate impact.
 - Evaluation data gathering methods need to be flexible and responsive.
 - Evaluation data should be reviewed by as wide a stakeholder group as possible.
 - Impact information needs to be shared with the Main Group regularly.
- 

14. THE DIALOGUE'S IMPACTS

This section explores the impact of the Dialogue process and stakeholders' perceptions of impact. In assessing this we will look at outputs and outcomes. Firstly we will discuss the following issues:

- what the programme aimed to achieve; and
- how impacts and changes were recorded and communicated, and how they informed the programme.

14.1 Achieving the aims of the Dialogue

In the case of an engagement process there tends to be two types of impact. Firstly, 'unintentional' impacts of the process and secondly, structural or intended content impacts, as described in an aim or a set of objectives. In the case of the Dialogue, process impacts tend to be enhanced as participants and participating organisations learn from the process and apply this learning.

To re-cap, the stated aim of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue is:

"to inform BNFL's decision-making process about the improvement of their environmental performance in the context of their overall development".

As discussed, stakeholders shared a lack of clarity about the aim of the Dialogue and in common with other such engagement programmes, brought their own aims and expectations to the Dialogue. So, when asked about how well the Dialogue had met its aims, they appeared to be responding in terms of these individual or constituency aims, rather than the Dialogue aim.

However, this aim is a tool to enable traditionally conflicting organisations to come into the Dialogue, and is sufficiently bland to enable that to happen. Outputs demonstrate that progress has been made in achieving this aim.

The two key phrases of the aim are '*to inform the decision making process*' and '*improvement of environmental performance*'. Implicit is the Company's aim that they are seeking views to inform the environmental performance. On this superficial level it is very easy to track a number Dialogue outputs, such as reports and recommendations, which are designed to do both. Each Working group has produced a report at its close and all have included recommendations to the Company, endorsed by the Main Group,.

The reports produced within the Dialogue to date include;

- **West Cumbria: Socio Economic Study - 2003 Update**
 - Release date: 7th August 2003
 - Sets out the economic and social impacts of future business scenarios for BNFL's Sellafield site on the economy of West Cumbria.
- **Plutonium Working Group Report**

- Release date: 31 March 2003
- The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue identifies key recommendations to BNFL and the Government on management options for plutonium.
- **Principles for Liability Management - Nov 2002**
 - Release date: Nov 2002
 - A Response to the DTI's White Paper *'Managing the Nuclear Legacy'*⁷⁴
- **Spent Fuel Management Options Working Group Report**
 - Release date: July 2002
 - An examination of the options available to BNFL within the context of advising the Company on how to improve environmental performance.
- **Evidence Report - Influence, Productivity and Impact of the Dialogue**
 - Release date: May 2002
 - An examination of progress within the Dialogue led by the Co-ordination Group and carried out by TEC
- **Waste Working Group Combined Report**
 - Release date: November 2002
 - A combined report comprising; the Interim Report of 28 February 2000, the First Update 31 October 2000 and the Second Update 31 January 2002
 - This report and updates review possible strategies and recommend strategies to guide BNFL's management of radioactive waste.
- **Discharges Working Group Combined Report**
 - Release date: November 2002
 - A combined report comprising; the Interim Report of 28 February 2000, a First Update of 31 October 2000 and a Second Update of 31 January 2002
 - This report and updates have the aim of recommending a framework for BNFL's management of radioactive discharges.

The process impacts also include some quantifiable outputs. These include Main Group Meetings, Working Group meetings, stakeholder constituencies, those maintaining involvement, balance of representation at meetings, etc.

⁷⁴ For more information see the DTI web site www.dti.gov.uk

Further examination of quantifiable impact can only be limited due to the lack of a base line, negligible monitoring of progress against recommendations and unsystematic reporting.

The range of impacts identified by participants was very wide. The list below is in order of frequency of comment. However, it is significant that stakeholders had very differing perceptions of impact.

Plutonium.

The following quotation from a stakeholder discusses plutonium: *“If you trace the chronology of the development of the Plutonium Report, the initial position of the Company was not to discuss controversial MOX exports because of the high profile controversy. BNFL were committed to recycling fuel and their strategy to continue reprocessing was central to their business. We [local greens and others] argued the case to look at other options as a fall back option if they did not get permission to open a new plant. The stockpile was too big to use anyway. They must have realised this. They weren't looking at other options as they did not want to publicly address this, as it would undermine their strategy. They were encouraged to look at alternative ways to manage the fuel. It emerged that they had done some earlier work. We got them to get information from their American subsidiary that had done some of this work. The Company then did their own study and the Plutonium Working Group critiqued it. This was real progress. This meant convincing some of the more sceptical managers' views. We will now have to see if they invest in the process. The Dialogue was pushing at what may have been a slowly opening door.”*

Although this summarises a commonly held view, others felt that there were external influences, not least the proposed introduction of the NDA. As one member put it, *“the proposed introduction of NDA will mean that Plutonium stocks are owned by the country, rather than BNFL - so the government will have to fund whatever option(s) are chosen. This takes the heat out of things for BNFL, allowing them to look at a wider range of options that they might previously have dismissed as unprofitable.”* However, Company staff are also happy to point out that the Plutonium Working Group were *‘influential’* and that the report is *‘excellent’*.

There are also specific indicators of change. For example, when sponsoring research, BNFL now ensures that Plutonium considerations are built in.

Photo and meeting reports of the November 2003 BFWG meeting suggest more concrete evidence of the impact of the Plutonium Report on the Company.⁷⁵ This will be reported on as part of the BFWG Working Group report to the Main Group in the March 2004 meeting.

However, not all participants found that they could identify impact of this work on the Company. For example, one respondent told us that he was aware that the Company thought the report was a *“smashing piece of work”*, but that he could not see any impact of the recommendations, although he did see that some of the information would be useful to the Company.

Spent Fuel

Most respondents, except those from the Company, perceived that the work of the Spent Fuel Group had influenced the way in which waste was treated within BNFL. BNFL respondents were less willing to attribute this to the Dialogue, citing many

⁷⁵ We have been requested not to quote specifics at this time, from presentations given at this meeting of BFWG.

other influences on the change that has taken place. Other members of the Dialogue also acknowledged these external influences.

Some respondents felt the Spent Fuel Management Options Working Group had contributed to the subsequent research and technical evaluations undertaken by BNFL in managing used nuclear fuel. Again, other external influences were also reported as being contributory factors.

Some Environmental NGOs highlighted that the changes in Company approach were not as visible as they could have been. In line with the Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) from the Spent Fuel Group⁷⁶, BNFL has begun to investigate contingency options for dealing with Magnox fuel through encapsulation or dry storage. Progress on this research and other technical engineering assessments are reported back to the Main Group.

Magnox Closures

On 22nd May 2000 the then Chief Executive of BNFL, announced a Magnox closure programme. This announcement was followed in June by a Main Group meeting, parts of which were dominated by reactions to this announcement. Some members in particular suggested that the Dialogue influenced the Magnox Station closures.

Diversification

BNFL have announced that there will be a diversification fact-finding study – this had been taken off the Company's agenda, but stakeholders perceive that this has now started to happen again as a direct result of the Dialogue.

It is significant that stakeholders disagreed about the impacts of the Dialogue and it was much more common for stakeholders to focus on the process impacts of the work.

Outcomes linked to the stated and unstated aims of the Dialogue are more complex to trace. At one level the Dialogue has been able to inform the Company's thinking by the reports. However, if an engagement process is truly going '*to inform*', then the Company must be receptive to the process. Consequently, we see that the unintentional aims could include the following:

- improved communication between stakeholders and the Company;
- cultural change in the Company;
- penetration of the 'ethos' into the company; and
- development of process aims.

Improved Communication

Through entering into the Dialogue, the Company demonstrated that communicating with stakeholders is a corporate priority. This activity is not embodied in the aim of the Dialogue, but is clearly a sub aim, and not just for the Company. The findings suggest that stakeholders currently participating in the process believe that this has been achieved. The process brings together participants who previously experienced negative, combative communication, and now find communication in the Dialogue

⁷⁶ Based on earlier scenario development

more effective. However, those Environmental NGOs who had left the process did not note such improved communication.

Examples include one stakeholder saying that the process cannot *“affect government policy (my constituency) but can inform strategic thinking, and now I can understand how others view the issue of spent fuel”*. A common reference to a practical output was that *“the Plutonium Working Group was really useful in understanding the different positions for Plutonium within constituencies whom I am normally in conflict with”*.

Cultural change within the Company

The Company has to be willing to adapt to the Dialogue and general changes reported include:

- being more open and less secretive;
- respecting the right of non industry stakeholders to have a say; and
- some managers are more likely to build consensus in other areas of their work.

These changes have been supported at strategic level, in particular around Corporate Social Responsibility, transparency and supporting engagement. Although there were changes at the start of the Dialogue, others have developed over time. BNFL have structurally developed their approach to stakeholder engagement, including it in job descriptions and person specifications.

Penetration

The focus of this evaluation was current and former participants of the Dialogue, those outside the process were excluded. However most participants felt that the intensive nature of the Dialogue meant that penetration beyond participants was not possible.

Process aims

As discussed in other sections all participants noted that relationships had improved although we have no baseline evidence to support this.

14.2 Monitoring and communicating changes within the process

Section 10 discussed the importance of communicating changes resulting from the Dialogue and how this is being dealt with. We suggest that difficulties are caused by:

- the effectiveness of the recommendations;
- the internal reporting systems of the Company;
- the lack of milestones or proxies built into recommendations;
- the extreme long term nature of some recommendations; and
- the dependence on the Main Group presentations for reporting any changes.

14.3 Structures needed within the Dialogue to ensure changes and impacts can be tracked

The Dialogue does have some inherent weaknesses, which have become established in the process, through the early focus on bringing people to the table. The evaluation could have been improved if, when relationships were stronger and the Dialogue reached a 'performing' stage, the following three key structural measures had been incorporated:

The baseline

As the Dialogue is made up of diverging views, differing perspectives on issues make the retrospective reconstruction of a baseline difficult. There were a wide number of views about where the Dialogue came from, all legitimate within the context, but with very different histories. In order to record an impact or change, some baseline data would need to be recorded. For example, a process impact around relationship building may record interviews with all constituencies within phase one of a dialogue. Or a working group could outline the current position and this used in updates.

Formulation of objectives/milestones and proxies

The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue has examined long term issues and controversies. In working group reports, stakeholders have made recommendations to the Company. These recommendations have not always been well formulated and have not included time scales or milestones⁷⁷ and/or proxy⁷⁸ information. These two drafting issues have made it difficult to demonstrate or report Company responses, and may have led to some stakeholders' dissatisfaction.

Variables

In all cases it is very difficult to demonstrate a causal link between an output or outcome and an engagement process. To attain an accurate assessment of cause, variables need to be built in, monitored and assessed.

This work has been done in part within the BNFL Corporate Social Responsibility process, but a variable graph needs to be developed, and be wholly owned by the Main Group.

14.4 Learning Points for this Dialogue

- Recommendations need to incorporate milestones and proxies.

14.5 Learning points for future dialogues

- A baseline needs to be developed for both process and content outcomes⁷⁹
- Recommendations need to be formulated in a SMARTer way
- Monitoring systems need to record variables at the time of activity⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Milestones, the stages of an impact or change within the life of a process

⁷⁸ Proxy, an 'along the way' outcome leading to the achievement of an outcome beyond the life of a process, the proxy being achievable within the process.

⁷⁹ Reconstructing the baseline falls outside the terms of reference of this evaluation

15. CONCLUSIONS

The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue has been successful in using dialogue processes to bring together and develop trust between organisations and individuals who were previously in conflict. It has facilitated a process in which a wide range of views have been brought to a range of key issues, from which, through collaborative negotiation, solutions have been developed in a systematic way and recommendations made to the Company.

The process has used some key tools which have emerged as prerequisites for success, as does the clear and shared understanding of the roles of the key players within the process.

A further key to the success of the Dialogue's processes has been the willingness of stakeholders and facilitators to learn and respond to learning. The Dialogue has therefore inevitably been a flexible one, evolving in response to the emerging needs of both the industry and the Dialogue itself.

The Dialogue has been least successful in incorporating the views of other stakeholders previously involved (or not involved in the process at all), feeding back Company responses to recommendations, and evaluating and therefore demonstrating the impact of the process.

Learning points emerging from the evaluation process have been developed for application both now and beyond the life of the current Dialogue.

⁸⁰ Developing a historic time line for the dialogue falls outside the terms of reference of this evaluation.

16. GLOSSARY

Company	British Nuclear Fuels Ltd
convenor	The role, usually taken by TEC, of administrating Dialogue activities
DEFRA	Department of Food and Rural Affairs
dialogue	<i>(With a lower case d)</i> dialogue as a process of engagement
Dialogue	<i>(With a capital D)</i> The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue
Dialogue stakeholder	A participant in the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue
discussion groups	Groups of evaluation stakeholders who come together to discuss evaluation issues in a facilitated, recorded discussion
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
evaluation	A systematic process which reviews the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of an activity or programme
evaluation stakeholder	All participants in the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue, including conveners, stakeholders and others who might fall outside the Dialogue
facilitators	Independent individuals employed by TEC to guide activities during the Dialogue
interviews	Face to face or telephone recorded conversations between an evaluator and stakeholder, based on an interview schedule
joint fact finding	<p>The purpose of joint fact-finding is to develop shared knowledge about a problem. It is a tool that can be use to guide the process of gathering information, analyzing facts, and collectively making informed decisions.</p> <p>Typically joint fact-finding will occur in two ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts who are seen as unbiased are used in the process to gather and analyze data • Each party uses their own expert, they then gather and analyse data as a group
MADA	<p>Multi Attribute Decision Analysis</p> <p>MADA is a decision making technique which involves a staged approach to the context, defines 'options', agrees attributes, assesses expected performance, assigns weights and then combines weights and scores for each option, leading to the identification of a provisional choice, which is then subject to sensitivity testing</p>
MOX	Mixed Oxide Fuel

	A type of fuel using a mixture of plutonium and uranium oxides
Magnox	A nuclear fuel used in the first generation of nuclear reactors used for electricity production in the UK. Magnox fuel consists of a uranium metal bar encased in cladding made from a magnesium alloy. Both are susceptible to corrosion and storage of the fuel for any period of more than a few years requires great care
main facilitator	The person who is or has been responsible for the design and leading the facilitation of the process
NDA	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
observations	Opportunities in which an evaluator will watch Dialogue activities and record issues emerging from their observations. Records are then collated
participative evaluation	Evaluation as described above which involves process participants in its management and delivery
reflector	A term commonly used in participative processes, which in this context refers to a Dialogue stakeholder who participates in the Dialogue without a clear mandate or association in order to present the general views of a sector
representative	A Dialogue stakeholder who participates on behalf of a group or organisation with a clear mandate and systems by which they feed information back to their mandating body and through which members of their mandating body can feed into the Dialogue
SAP	Strategic Action Planning A structured time and issue based approach to managing decision making. There are two elements in a strategic action plan, around which analysis is framed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now: actions and explorations • Future: delivery decisions and contingency plans The aim is to make underlying assumptions explicit, and develop contingency plans for situations where assumptions turn out to be wrong
Spent Fuel	Fuel rods in a state of depletion after irradiation in a reactor.

17. APPENDIX 1

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation Steering Group



Evaluation Steering Group – Terms of Reference (*status – final*)
1st October 2003

Introduction

These Terms of Reference have been drafted to support and inform the activities of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue Evaluation Workstream Steering Group. As such the document seeks to clarify:

- The boundaries of the project
- Issues of Project administration

Definitions

Within this document the following definitions apply:

Evaluation Steering Group: The group mandated by the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue to oversee the work of the evaluation workstream. This group is made up of individuals who broadly reflect the make up of the dialogue.

Project Team: The members of CAG Consultants staff and associate bought together to undertake the work of the evaluation workstream

Convener: A nominated Environment Council, TEC, staff member undertaking convening activities for the group. TEC will also hold the contract with CAG Consultants and manage that contract.

The Boundaries of the Project

The Mission of the Evaluation Steering Group

The Main Group of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue has mandated the Evaluation Steering Group:

- To inform the evaluation process as Dialogue stakeholders
- To oversee the management of the evaluation process
- To assist the Project Team in providing information and advice as requested for use in the evaluation process

The Aim of the Evaluation.

The consultation brief stated the objectives of the evaluation to be:

- To assess the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue process to date, including areas such as: process strengths and weaknesses, use of resources, evidence of impact/change, unexpected consequences, key lessons and future applications.
- To produce a report(s) that enables internal and external audiences to access the learning to be derived from the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue process.

Boundaries of the Evaluation Steering Group

The Evaluation Steering Group

- is mandated by and reports to the Main Group
- will liaise with the Co-ordination Group
- will provide the Co-ordination Group with updates on progress
- will oversee the progress of the evaluation process
- will provide information as required for the evaluation process
- will review drafts of resources to be used in the course of the evaluation process
- will review drafts of reports to be used within the evaluation process
- will not directly manage the contract with the project team
- will not hold the contract for the evaluation work

Desired Outcomes

- A evaluation process which is participatory
- Learning points to feed into the future activity of the BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue process
- Learning points to feed in to future dialogues.
- Evaluation report(s) for presentation at the Main Group meeting in February 2004.

Persons Involved

Evaluation Steering Group:

Helen Ashley, Fred Barker, Richard Evans, Val Mainwood, Grace McGlynn.

CAG Consultants Project Team:

Emma Cranidge (Project Manager), Susan Parham (Project Supporter), Mary Anderson, Sheila Colman, Tim Maiden, Valerie Smith, David Stone.

Convener:

Rhuari Bennett

Project Administration:

Time frames.

The Evaluation Steering Group was convened at the Main Group meeting of 8th and 9th July 2003, with its inaugural meeting being held on 18th August 2003. The group will aim to meeting monthly, with meetings as follows:

29 th September 2003	Manchester	11.00am to 4.00pm
28 th October 2003	York	11.00am to 4.00pm
27 th November 2003	Manchester	11.00am to 4.00pm
December 2003	York	11.00am to 4.00pm
January 2003	Manchester	11.00am to 4.00pm

The final report must be drafted and agreed for presentation at the Main Group meeting of March 2004.

Process for meetings

- All preparations regarding venue will be undertaken by the Convener
- Joining instructions will be circulated by the Convener
- Draft agendas will be prepared by the Project Manager and circulated by the Convener and agreed at the beginning of the meeting.
- Meetings will be facilitated by members of the Project Team, usually the Project Manager.
- Members of the project team will take notes during meetings, write them up as draft meeting notes and circulate them to members of the Evaluation Steering Group for ratification or otherwise at the following meeting.



18 APPENDIX 2

An Expanded Typology of Consultation and Engagement Processes

Method	Characteristics	Level of Engagement	Advantages	Disadvantages
Marketing / selling methods, can include audio visual techniques such as TV advertising, billboard posters, advertising campaigns. May use Public Relations expertise to determine what will have maximum influence	Seeks to convince people of the rightness or benefits of products or services. One way Process. May involve some market research or follow on from a method used with a higher level of engagement or feedback. Audio visual methods are more effective than written formats but the target population needs to be considered. E.g. some social groups are more likely to read a newspaper than watch television. Use where wanting to make information available to a large number of people.	Low, Manipulation, Therapy	Suited to situations where there is no leeway or advantage in changing the product or services. May be used following a participative process where a solution that will work has already been found. Is relatively quick although the making of promotional videos and adverts can take time. Timescales reasonably predictable.	Used on their own they are not interactive. Gives no feedback on customer perceptions. Does not develop any customer “buy in” where the customer is an informed stakeholder or will be strongly affected by the product or service or already has a view. Does not contribute to quality improvement of products or services. Audio visual techniques that have impact and are more likely to influence can be expensive. Intensity of coverage has to be increased where the message is an unpopular one increasing the expense.
Press / media releases. Notices, bus and billboard posters, directories, newsletters, exhibitions, events, publicity	This is a neutral level. Methods are not used to get people to change their minds. The method used can be targeted at the appropriate geographical level, e.g. national regional to very local. Use where wanting to make information available to a large number of people.	Low, Informing	Suited to situations where decisions have already been made. Used to increase access to services or products and inform stakeholders how to use them or what they are for. Formats such as directories can be perceived as being a useful service. Maybe used to inform people of previous consultation results.	As for manipulation / therapy. These methods are notorious for not reaching some of the stakeholders that may need to be targeted. It is important to be aware of how target populations access information.

Method	Characteristics	Level of Engagement	Advantages	Disadvantages
Focus groups,	Market research technique that seeks to uncover the users' spontaneous reactions and ideas. Small groups of 6 to 8 people are best. Require expert facilitation.	Medium. "Consultation". Is interactive although there is no obligation to implement what is learnt. Particularly useful to gain information to be used to improve quality of services or products.	Provides information that can be used to improve quality of products or services. Responsible agent can pick and chose what information to use and retains control. Customers / stakeholders may perceive the action as caring or showing an interest in them. Fairly quick and reasonably inexpensive. There are field experts who can deliver this service at reasonable cost.	If stakeholders are made aware of the results of the consultation disillusionment and resentment will result if the responsible organisation appears to take no notice of stakeholder views. The process produces a snapshot in time and does nothing to change stakeholders knowledge or perceptions of the product or services. Stakeholders may have strong views based on poor information or lack of knowledge. Views and expectations may not be realistic.
market research, surveys, quantitative and qualitative research, interviews, questionnaires,	Uses formal research methods sampling the views of statistically representative populations. Require expert design. Questionnaires should be piloted first to iron out any problems.	As above	As above	As above

Method	Characteristics	Level of Engagement	Advantages	Disadvantages
public meetings	Usually only used where an issue has an impact on a particular locality	As above	Can be used to reverse misconceptions and to introduce key people to a population. Relatively inexpensive.	The people most likely to turn up are those with the strongest views. Public meetings are notorious for becoming adversarial. The voices of only a few outspoken people likely to be heard. Public meetings should be avoided unless there is a clear benefit to using this method.
“planning for real” Visual and model based consultation methods.	A planning consultation tool developed and copyright owned by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation. To use the process properly and to use their tools requires accredited trained facilitators. Similar methods using drawings plans and models can be used without accreditation.	Medium, as above but more likely to be used where there is a serious intention to implement the findings.	A good method of finding out people’s views in a neighbourhood type locality. Is very user friendly and fun.	See above regarding expectations.

Method	Characteristics	Level of Engagement	Advantages	Disadvantages
citizens juries	A typical or representative population is brought together over a period of time to consider an issue. They are able to question expert witnesses. Views and opinions have been shown to change over the period of the process. This method is usually used to find solutions to a problem. (There were strong elements of this approach in the BNFL process).	Medium, slightly higher than above as this is a dynamic interactive process designed to find solutions. The responsible organisation is still under no obligation to use the findings. There is no sharing of power as such.	Rational and informed decisions can be made. This method has the advantage of enabling people to make informed choices as it is an interactive learning process.	Takes longer than other market research methods.
Incorporation of leaders, movers and shakers, influencers by various means. May be a "consultation forum" or advisory committee. Neither will be a decision making body.	Where there is no scope to change products or services these approaches can be used to compensate those that are disadvantaged by the products or services. Some methods can be seen as an honest direct exchange or compensation but this level can also be manipulation. Promoting challenging union representatives into management has been a common method of reducing dissent.	"Placation", medium. The level of genuine dialogue can vary considerably but the expectation is that the stakeholder representatives will change their stance the most.	Where there is little or no scope for change these methods can reduce resistance. Can develop some stakeholder "buy in". Can be relatively cheap unless high levels of compensation are provided. Targets key influencers or disadvantaged groups.	Best not used where stakeholder views would benefit quality. Can be a temporary solution if new resistors emerge. My fail to achieve "buy in" by the wider stakeholder group.

Method	Characteristics	Level of Engagement	Advantages	Disadvantages
Partnership boards, joint committees	<p>Useful where there is a reason to invest power in stakeholder group and where an ongoing dialogue will produce results. Genuine partnerships share power although this is not necessarily done evenly. Dialogue and developing shared understandings are key characteristics. Requires transparency. Adapting to this way of working can be difficult for organisations that have no tradition of high engagement dialogue. This may affect the culture of the responsible organisation.</p> <p>This is a method that is favoured by government policy at the moment. Examples include Local Strategic Partnerships.</p>	<p>Medium high, "partnership". There is genuine power / decision making sharing.</p> <p>The process can result in a high level of engagement for a small number of people if adequate safeguards are not built in.</p> <p>N.B. face to face contact is the most effective form of communication.</p>	<p>Can deliver strong stakeholder "buy in" and ownership of change. Is excellent change management method whether used with internal or external stakeholders. Particularly useful in developing shared understandings and developing products and services where stakeholder knowledge may lead to improved sensitivity or appropriateness. Capacity that is built among stakeholders can be used for future dialogue. Where change or improvement cannot be delivered stakeholders will understand why.</p>	<p>Not appropriate where there are hidden agendas or lack of flexibility. Is a lengthy process as it takes time to build effective relationships and share knowledge. Leads to heightened expectations of change that may not always be delivered. Stakeholders have to be resourced adequately to facilitate their involvement in dialogue. Not suitable where short deadlines have to be met. Sometime it is worth evaluating the disadvantages of short deadlines against the advantages that this process brings.</p>

Method	Characteristics	Level of Engagement	Advantages	Disadvantages
Steering groups and management groups with stakeholder majorities	Stakeholders have higher level of decision making power and responsibility than the original responsible agent after agreed boundaries, objectives and terms of reference are set. The responsible organisation may still deliver the service or product. The process is accountable to the stakeholders	"Delegated Powers". High, balance of power now with the stakeholders.	High level of buy in and ownership by stakeholders. High level of responsibility by stakeholders that may change the way that they think about things. Stakeholders can no longer "blame" others. Efficient and competent delivery mechanisms can be maintained.	Requires high level of competence on the part of stakeholders. Stakeholders need to be well resourced to ensure thorough representation of stakeholder constituency. May not be suited to high risk products and services or where a great deal of plant or technical expertise is required.
Resourcing of citizen organisation to deliver goods or services. Citizens will have major decision making role.	Stakeholders responsible for full management of programme. This may extend to subcontracting the stakeholders to deliver products or services. Difference between this and previous level can be small or large. Best seen as a continuum rather than a clear divide. The important characteristic is that "Citizens" or stakeholders have very high level of decision making and responsibility.	"Citizens Control", Highest level of engagement.	As for above but stakeholders may also be able to determine or improve delivery mechanisms. Consequences of stakeholders representatives decisions are experienced by those who make the decisions.	Loss of control on part of responsible / funding agency can be problematic if clear boundaries and contracts are not set up to start with. The citizen organisation needs to be fully competent and accountable. Accountability may be a problem if citizens are volunteers. Citizens organisations need to be resourced to deliver. Less control by responsible body may mean that poor or no results are delivered.

19. APPENDIX 3

Main Group Evaluations Summary

Collated Evaluation Information from Main Group Meetings						
Date	Breakdown, on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being least satisfied	How do you rate the results of the workshop	How confident are you the dialogue will proceed effectively	Mutual Understanding	Effective use of time	How do you feel about the format of the Main group Meeting
17 th March 1999	0.5 – 3.5 4 – 6.5 7 -10	11 36 22	10 34 22	9 30 25	7 23 53	-
25 th and 26 th November 1999	0.5 – 3.5 4 – 6.5 7 -10	1 3 25	3 12 16	2 18 11	2 6 18	
		How do you rate the value of the dialogue since the last Main group meeting				
23 rd and 24 th November 2000	0.5 – 3.5 4 – 6.5 7 -10	2 20 33	4 32 18	-	-	-
18 th – 19 th July 2001	0.5 – 3.5 4 – 6.5 7 -10	1 18 23	5 26 10	-	-	-
7 th – 8 th March 2002	0.5 – 3.5 4 – 6.5 7 -10	0 4 32	0 20 25	-	-	1 32 13
28 th – 29 th November 2002	0.5 – 3.5 4 – 6.5 7 -10	1 6 32	1 14 25	-	-	-
8 th – 9 th July 2003	0.5 – 3.5 4 – 6.5 7 -10	0 6 28	0 6 28	-	-	-