

# Nuclear Energy and Society

## A Concordat for Public Engagement



December 2015

*..Delivering a successful and sustainable nuclear industry..*



## FORWORD

Earning and sustaining the trust and understanding of people whose livelihoods and interests are affected by your activities is an increasingly important part of corporate responsibility.

The benefits of effective communication, consultation and engagement with the public are now well-recognised by businesses across the economy. This is especially true for those working in sensitive or controversial sectors, such as the nuclear industry, where public concern and mistrust can be most acute.

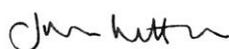
The reputation for secrecy that has been attached to the nuclear industry in the public mind is being replaced by a more open and transparent attitude on the part of companies in the industry, those who work in them and those who represent and support the vital contribution that nuclear power makes to the nation's energy mix.

These people are actively engaging, consulting, listening, debating and informing at all levels; with schoolchildren to pensioners as the best means of increasing public knowledge and understanding, and earning trust through open dialogue. The fruits of these activities are evident in increasing favourable public attitudes towards nuclear measured opinion polls over recent years.

However, public support for nuclear power is fragile and cannot be taken for granted. The industry must therefore continually improve its approach to public engagement not only with the communities most affected by its activities but also with the wider public and their elected representatives.

It must listen to its critics as well as to its friends, and above all it must ensure that all its communications and engagement with the public are underpinned by a dedication to clarity, factual accuracy and honesty.

I warmly welcome this Concordat as evidence of the industry's senior commitment to upholding and practicing the important principles it embodies and the ability of its workforce to engage with the communities in which they work.



*Lord Hutton, Chairman of the Nuclear Industry Association and Co-Chair of the Nuclear Industry Council*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges faced in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the ‘energy trilemma’; ensuring that secure, affordable and low carbon energy is available to a growing world population. In the United Kingdom, our energy infrastructure is ageing and a new, diverse and more distributed electricity infrastructure is emerging. There is a need not only to transform the current generating capacity into a low carbon system, but also to reconfigure the grid to extend more widely and to balance stable baseload and intermittent renewable electricity supplies.

Existing nuclear power stations continue to operate with many extending their operating lives, whilst plans are in place to establish 16GWe of new nuclear power. The UK continues to enrich uranium for nuclear fuel, manufacture fuel assemblies for most of our existing reactors, and examine spent fuel to improve efficiency and reliability. Reprocessing facilities at Sellafield are processing spent fuel for potential future use, and closed nuclear facilities are being decommissioned. The UK continues to manage the legacy wastes arising from early nuclear programmes and the spent fuel from our civil nuclear reactor fleet. All this is made possible by the dedication and skill of the many thousands of people working throughout the UK nuclear industry. In addition, our universities and research laboratories carry out important work to support existing and future nuclear programmes and train the next generation of engineers and scientists.

As the UK energy infrastructure transforms and the nuclear operations, new build, fuel cycle services and decommissioning and waste management programme are delivered, it is not only the political and industrial drivers that will make change possible; wider society has its views and its voice. The industry has made substantial progress over recent years in securing public understanding and support for the role of nuclear power in providing the electricity we need. Maintaining and strengthening this public support is essential for these developments at national and local level. Without it neither the political mandate nor the industrial backing will be sufficiently robust to deliver the transformation in energy infrastructure over the extended timescales required.

Engaging with civil society on nuclear matters is therefore imperative and both Government and the energy sector, including the civil nuclear sector, have an important role to play. The Nuclear Industrial Strategy recognised this responsibility, identifying an action on public engagement and awareness. In delivering this action, the Nuclear Industry Council published their high level strategy<sup>1</sup> in 2014 setting out priorities for Government and Industry to work together with others to enhance public engagement with nuclear energy.

This Concordat for Public Engagement, signed by members of the Nuclear Industry Council and other stakeholders has been developed to demonstrate the sector’s commitment to engaging with society on nuclear energy matters and affirms the sector’s resolve to show leadership, implement best practice, communicate effectively and make a difference.

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<sup>1</sup> “In the Public Eye: Nuclear Energy and Society”, Nuclear Industry Council Report, July 2014

## 2 PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 Principle 1: Leadership Commitment

Companies working in the UK civil nuclear sector recognise the importance of public engagement.

- We take society's attitude to nuclear energy seriously and place high priority on public engagement across our organisation.
- We embed public engagement in our organisations' strategic and operational plans.
- We provide the leadership and resource needed to encourage and enable our people to engage with society.

### 2.2 Principle 2: Best Practice

Our engagement with the public will be characterised by:

- **Dialogue:** We value two-way communication and will listen to the public voice.
- **Trust:** We seek to build public trust by showing respect and being open and transparent about the challenges we face and the actions we are taking to address them.
- **Clarity:** We ensure that public engagement is characterised by clear, consistent and concise information written or spoken in plain language.
- **Consultation:** We listen to communities and actively consult with them, particularly when our activities impact on daily life.

### 2.3 Principle 3: Effective Communicators

We recognise that our people are ambassadors for the sector and that independent experts as well as industry leaders have an important role to play in public communications:

- We promote public engagement within our organisations and it is reflected in staff policies.
- We support our people to engage with the public by providing appropriate training, resource and opportunities.
- We act individually and collectively to build understanding and awareness of the positive impact of our sector on society.

### 2.4 Principle 4: Making a Difference

We recognise the importance of public attitudes to nuclear energy and regularly assess progress in fostering engagement with society:

- We evaluate public opinion surveys relevant to our business and seek to better understand society's attitude to civil nuclear energy.
- We review and continually improve our public engagement programmes, building on successes and learning how we can be more effective.
- We work together to collaborate in public engagement and share good practice.

### 3 SIGNATORIES TO THE CONCORDAT ON PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

