

WM2017 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 112: The Future of Consent Based Disposal Siting and Discussion of the Alternatives

Co-Chairs: Eric Knox, *AECOM*
John Mathieson, *NDA (UK)*

Panel Reporter: John Gregory, *AREVA Federal Services*

Panelists:

1. **Bob Watts**, *Nuclear Waste Management Organization (Canada)*
2. **Stefan Wenzel**, *Lower Saxony Ministry for Environment, Energy, and Climate Protection (Germany)*
3. **Tom Wintle**, *Department of Energy and Climate Change (UK)*
4. **Andrew Griffith**, *Department of Energy*

About 70 people attended this panel session which focused on the consent based siting programs worldwide. The session opened with four panelists presenting their views on consent based siting and stakeholder engagement. This was followed by a question and answer session which included questions on community acceptance, energy choices and renewables, and site geology.

Summary of Presentations

Bob Watts described the Canadian approach to consent based siting. The Canadians want action taken now, it is owed to future generations. He provided an overview of the siting process as it has been executed in Canada. He described the multitude of inputs into the process, including the use of the indigenous people traditional knowledge. The process has progressed from an early assortment of 22 communities that wanted involvement. This has been down selected to 9 communities, with a target of 1 preferred site by 2023. The long range goal is to have a deep geologic repository open by the year 2043. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization is a private organization required by law and funded by the power plants.

Stefan Wenzel provided an overview of the German approach to siting. The country had a nuclear heritage of power production but has shifted away from nuclear based generation. Three previous attempts have been made to identify the long range storage location. These attempts have all failed for various reasons, including public acceptance. A new selection process was in 2013. 254 sites within Germany have been considered. An overview of the rock formation underlying Germany was provided. A Commission of 32 members from science, environmental, trades, industry, church, and Federal background. The basic principles of the process include:

- Science based
- 1 Million year period
- Reversible
- National responsibility
- Exploration of various sites and rock formations
- New safety analysis method
- National supervisory board
- Regional participation

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It is not just a technical challenge to be solved, but a social problem also.

Tom Wintle next provided the history and the current process in the United Kingdom. Historically the UK had done some disposal at sea and in the Dounreay shaft. The 1976 *Nuclear Power and the Environment* report by Sir Brian Flowers (known as the *Flowers Report*) established that a sustainable method to ensure safe containment of radioactive waste was necessary. Three different attempts have been made to establish a permanent site. The first was NIREX (Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive) that ended in 1997. Among the reasons of failure of this approach was it used a behind closed doors approach. It was very apolitical, top down approach to siting. It lasted for 15 years at a cost of 500 Million Pounds. The next attempt was the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management in 2003. This resulted in a 2008 white paper that did not include an aggressive approach for public participation. The third attempt began in 2013 with a revised process incorporating lessons learned from the previous failures. Public participation is a large component. The Policy Document is being approved. The expected duration is 15-20 years to identify a site.

Andrew Griffith closed the presentations with the USA perspective. It was pointed out that with the new administration in Washington just being established, he could not speculate on the future. He described the draft process that was released in January 2017 for a comment period that closes in April 2017. Key components of the process are safety, stakeholder involvement, and adaptability.

Questions and Answer

A question and answer session followed. The session ended promptly at 1200 noon.