

# RSO Discipline Update: Applied Social Science

Adrian Bull (University of Manchester)  
Steve Brown (RWM)

# Introduction

## Adrian Bull:

- Almost 40 years experience in nuclear industry – 20 in policy, communications and engagement (BNFL, Westinghouse & NNL)
- Currently External Relations Director at NNL – 3 days per week
- Since January 2021– BNFL Chair in Nuclear Energy and Society at Dalton Nuclear Institute (2 days per week)
- Appointed to DL role – March 2021

## Steve Brown:

- 20 years experience of developing and delivering sustainable energy projects and economic development (EST, Yorkshire Forward)
- Community Investment Manager at RWM since Jan 2017
- Took up role of SME in applied social science in summer 2020
- Member of the IET and Fellow of the RSA

# Introduction



Geology

Waste  
Behaviour

Societal  
Acceptance

Engineering

Funding

Political  
Support

If any link in this chain breaks, we won't have a GDF, and all the work we're discussing at this conference will be for nothing.

# Forward vision

We need to ensure that the social and political engagement around the GDF programme is effective and underpins the other workstreams

Need to bring communities with us – not turn them against us

Negative sentiment can be exaggerated and become damaging to the overall programme

We need **all of you** to play a part as ambassadors in this – as well as supporting the social science workstream

# Forward vision

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## Secrecy row over sites told they could house nuclear waste vault

Tommy Greene

The long-running battle to build an underground nuclear waste facility in the north of England has run into fresh problems, as communities reacted with shock to news that they were being considered as locations.

Hartlepool in the north-east is one potential site for a geological disposal facility (GDF), while a former gas terminal at Theddlethorpe, near Mablethorpe on the Lincolnshire coast, is another. Cumbria, where much of the waste is stored above ground, is also being considered.

Victoria Atkins, a government minister and MP for Louth and Horncastle, said she was “stunned” by the prospect of a GDF, claiming the Conservative-controlled Lincolnshire county council’s engagement with the government’s radioactive waste management group (RWM) had been kept from her.

The facility is intended to provide a safe deposit for about 750,000 cubic metres of highly radioactive waste hundreds of metres underground in areas thought to have suitable geological conditions. The waste would be solidified and placed in subterranean vaults.

GDF in the 1980s: the latest attempt requires public consultation plus various approvals and, at the earliest, the facility would open during the 2040s.

It would resolve the radioactive waste storage dilemma “for a generation,” according to Prof Geraldine Thomas, a molecular pathologist at Imperial College London who sits on the government’s radioactive waste management committee. “People sometimes think storage will mean a lot more waste is going to accrue from new nuclear activity. But, actually, new nuclear developments are producing less and less waste. And we’ve got so much legacy waste that we need to get on and do something about it soon.”

Alongside job creation and investment promises, financial incentives that are on offer for communities that sign up to the engagement process, which has led to nominations for two Cumbrian districts. However, the proposals have stirred up strong local feeling, with accusations of secrecy levelled at councils and the RWM. Political fallout over “early stage” discussions about a GDF triggered the resignation of Hartlepool council’s deputy leader, Mike Young, on

bria, we’ve been there before with this. Now people are now trying to get their heads around it again, in the middle of a pandemic.”

**750,000**

Quantity in cubic metres of nuclear waste to be stored at the proposed geological disposal facility

Potential nuclear waste sites

Working groups have been set up in two boroughs to discuss possible disposal facilities





# Forward vision



# Current opportunities

We have a current proposal for a post-doctoral research project in Applied Social Science.

Call to be issued in September 2021:

Focus is “**Citizen Participation**”

- 18 month proposal to investigate latest insights and the most effective approaches to involving and engaging citizens in the development of major projects and the associated decision making
- Particular focus on how things may have changed in recent years due to – for instance – Brexit, COVID-19 or advances in technology.

Please share the call with anyone in your networks you think may be interested?

# Possible future opportunities

- Cultural dynamics, values modelling and their application to evaluation of the Community siting factor
- Expressed and revealed community values – does what people say reflect what they truly feel?
- Collective vs individual psychology and/or values
- Applying Collective Intelligence to solve social problems
- How do we create or enable a social movement in communities that is supportive of GDF?



# Possible future opportunities (2)

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- Research that underpins comparative evaluation of the Community siting factor
- Undertaking joint fact-finding and evaluation with communities
- Social science that supports successful EIA's
- Citizen science as a tool of trust building
- Deliberative democracy, citizen participation and consensus building

# Questions?