

Session 6 Round Table – Stakeholder issues

A panel of experts was assembled to address four questions related to stakeholders issues. The panel was made up of persons with a variety of life experiences. It was asked to address four questions.

The first was: What symbolism do you associate with spent fuel – what images and what attributes does it promote?

A variety of answers was given and it is clear that much depends on whether people have experience of nuclear matters or not. Those who have no direct nuclear experience may associate spent fuel with ‘menace’ or ‘endless danger’ and would not distinguish spent fuel from radioactive waste. Members of the public in towns where nuclear facilities exist or are planned may have different views mainly because they have been informed about nuclear issues and see a benefit for their communities.

The second question was: How can durable relationships be built with local people living in the vicinity of a planned spent fuel storage facility?

It seems to be generally agreed that this has to be done by building trust through openness, transparency, and respect. The trust building may take some time to achieve. Involvement in decision making related to the facility also helps as well as improvements in the education of local people with regard to understanding the purpose and functioning of the facility.

The third question was: Is spent fuel a national problem or one between the spent fuel owner and the local community?

It was generally agreed that this should be seen as a national problem but it depends on the national situation. In one of the countries represented in the panel it was dealt with entirely at the local level with no national government involvement. In another country, it started as a local issue but is now a national one.

The fourth question was: Timescales for spent fuel management – is it an issue with stakeholders?

Generally the timescale issue is difficult for people to grasp and they are not usually able to distinguish conceptually between 100, 10,000 and one million years. One community was concerned that a storage facility should not be there for more than 50 years and has obtained the agreement of the proponents on this.