

Evaluation of BERR's engagement of the public and other interested parties in the future of civil nuclear power in the UK

Final report

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As always, we welcome feedback on this report, and suggestions for the continuing improvement of evaluation methodologies for engagement processes.

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1. Introduction

In May 2007, the Government launched a major consultation exercise on the future of civil nuclear power in the UK. The consultation was led by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), now the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR); responsibilities for energy and climate change were later passed from BERR to the new Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

The nature of the invitation for the consultation was defined as follows:

- The Government has a preliminary view on the future role of nuclear power within the UK energy mix but has not yet decided; this view is that it would be in the public interest to give private sector energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations.
- The Government wishes to consult citizens and interested parties for their views and concerns relating to the arguments it has presented;
- The Government will consider the views expressed as part of the policy development process and then make a decision.

The consultation ran for 20 weeks from 23 May to 10 October 2007, and the final report of the process was published alongside the White Paper setting out the Government's decision (*Meeting the Energy Challenge. A White Paper on Nuclear Power*) in January 2008.

The consultation was one of the fullest such exercises undertaken in the UK in terms of consultation activities and events. 5,200 copies of a 205-page consultation document were distributed, and 2,728 detailed written responses were received from stakeholders and members of the public (online and in hard copy). Evidence for the consultation was also provided from a significant number of engagement events. There were nine deliberative public engagement events held around the UK, with 956 participants recruited as a demographically representative sample of the UK population. 21 stakeholder events were held around the UK: 12 regional stakeholder events, plus nine events held on or near existing nuclear power stations, to gain input from those living and working there: a total of 625 stakeholders attended these events. Other meetings were also held at the request of particular interest groups (e.g. unions, faith groups). A total of 4,309 individuals contributed to the consultation at the events or in writing.

The consultation was prompted by a Judicial Review brought by Greenpeace following the publication in July 2006 of the Energy Challenge Report. The Judicial Review, the scale of the consultation and the contentious nature of the subject created particular interest in the whole process. An independent evaluation was commissioned and that research continued throughout the consultation process and was completed after the final decision was made and announced by Government.

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the consultation. It summarises the methodology used for the evaluation, the purpose and objectives of the consultation, and describes and assesses all the main activities within the consultation, drawing significantly on feedback from all those involved. It considers the extent to which the objectives have been achieved, identifies the elements of the process that worked particularly well and less well, and identifies some lessons for future practice in the light of these findings.

2. The evaluation study

2.1 Introduction

The Government consults widely on new policies and programmes, but the scale, contentious nature and background to this consultation was unusual. A full independent evaluation was therefore commissioned to assess the effectiveness of the consultation in meeting its objectives, and to identify lessons for the future. The evaluation was commissioned by COI on behalf of the DTI, following submission of a written tender by the evaluator and subsequent interview.

The evaluation process began in May 2007, at the start of the consultation process. Interim reports summarising statistics from questionnaire feedback from public and stakeholder events were presented in November 2007, and the primary research was completed in July 2008. Full qualitative analysis was then undertaken of all data from questionnaires (open questions) and interviews with those involved in the process, followed by overall review, reflection and initial draft reports (August 2008 to April 2009). This final report is being published in autumn 2009. This section summarises the aims and objectives of the evaluation, the overall approach and the detailed methodology.

2.2 Scope, aims and objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation brief (21 May 2007) identified two main objectives for the evaluation:

- To determine whether the objectives that were set for the consultation had been met.
- To generate learning that would help to inform future public consultation programmes.

In addition to these objectives, discussions between the evaluator, DTI and COI suggested four further issues that that needed to be taken into account in designing the evaluation:

- The assessment of the process against the objectives required an analysis of the implications of the objectives in terms of the questions they raised, what criteria and evidence were needed to assess achievement, and how that evidence would be collected. This analysis was undertaken and was used to help structure the questionnaires and other data collection. The results of that analysis are shown in section 9.2 below.
- The brief also required the evaluation to deliver robust evaluation data that is capable of withstanding a high level of public scrutiny. Full details of the evaluation methodology for data collection and analysis are shown in section 2.5 below.
- In aiming to meet the potential high levels of public scrutiny, it was recognised that, in addition to delivering robust evaluation *data*, the evaluation *process* needed to be open and transparent, and to be understood and supported by those involved in the consultation (and others). This was tackled in four ways:

- All participants in the consultation, and other interested parties, were informed that an independent evaluation process had been commissioned, and that they would be given opportunities to contribute to the evaluation research, including announcements at all consultation events.
- An independent informal advisory group was consulted on the evaluation design. The initial design for the evaluation was shared with a small group of relevant experts in the field (see section 2.5 for details). Their advice at this early stage was invaluable and was taken into account in the final design for the evaluation.
- A multi-method approach was undertaken including documentary review, observation, questionnaires at all consultation events, interviews with participants and others, quantitative and qualitative analysis of all findings and reports at various stages. This was designed to ensure a robust methodology that would deliver the appropriate scale and range of valid and reliable data from the widest possible range of sources and perspectives, and that the data and analysis was as accessible and transparent as possible.
- The evaluation aims to adhere to standards of good practice and ethics for evaluation including the principles of good practice outlined in the Cabinet Office guidance on qualitative research and evaluation¹, the Social Research Association's guidelines on ethics and the UK Evaluation Society guidelines.

The research and analysis has separated the description of activities from the assessment in each section of the report. The assessment itself has focused on the extent to which the consultation activities met the objectives set, the effectiveness and quality of the processes, what worked well and less well, and practical lessons for future consultation. It has also addressed impacts and influence, and the extent to which participants were satisfied with the outcomes.

The evaluation does not assess the 'content' of the policy inputs (e.g. information materials and consultation documents) or outputs (policy recommendations) in any detail other than in relation to their use in the consultation. Policy issues are therefore touched on in this report, but only where relevant to assessing the effectiveness of the engagement process.

Overall, the scope of the coverage of the evaluation can be summarised as shown below. All four of these elements are covered in this evaluation report.

Purpose + process + context = results

2.3 Criteria of good practice

The design and delivery of the consultation process needed to be assessed against principles of good practice. The difficulties of finding generic universally agreed criteria for evaluating engagement processes are well known².

¹ *Quality in Qualitative Evaluation. A framework for assessing research evidence.* Cabinet Office, 2003; and *Guidance Notes for Policy Evaluation and Analysis* ('The Magenta Book', especially Chapter 8 on Qualitative research and evaluation), Cabinet Office, 2004.

² For example: 'Difficulties in evaluating engagement initiatives: reflections on an evaluation of the UK GM Nation? public debate about transgenic crops', by Gene Rowe, Tom Horlick-Jones, John Walls and Nick Pidgeon, in *Public Understanding of Science*, vol 14 (2005), 331-352

In this case it was agreed in initial discussions with COI and DTI that the main source of guidance on good practice used to develop the criteria for analysis would be the Cabinet Office Code on Consultation³. This Code has subsequently been revised; this assessment was based on the original code (see section 9.3).

Formal guidance on good practice can provide basic frameworks for analysis, but initial discussions also recognised that it would be essential for the evaluator to have a good theoretical knowledge and practical experience of public and stakeholder engagement to enable evaluation assessments of consultation activities not explicitly covered by the existing good practice guidance being used (which largely focussed on formal written consultations). The lead evaluator in Shared Practice was Diane Warburton who has nearly 30 years of experience in the fields of stakeholder, public and community engagement, with a focus on formal evaluation for over 10 years. She is a member of the UK Evaluation Society, and the author of guidance for Government on evaluating engagement⁴.

Following previous Shared Practice evaluation methods, and those recommended in the evaluation of *GM Nation?*, themes were identified from participants' responses to open questions in questionnaires, and used to establish further criteria that participants themselves found relevant (many of which have also been found to be relevant to previous evaluations). These criteria were used to help structure the analysis in sections 6 and 7 of this report (on public and stakeholder events).

2.4 Approach to the evaluation

Evaluations of engagement can range in approach from a mechanistic 'audit' approach, focusing on quantitative assessment of achievement against formal targets or goals, to approaches that are concerned with 'learning' from the experience, focusing on qualitative description and interpretation of more 'subjective' data (e.g. from interviews, stories, observation etc) to explain why and how certain outcomes were achieved.

The audit approach can be summarised as asking questions such as:

- have we done what we said we were going to do?
- have we met our targets (e.g. numbers of participants; reaching a representative sample of the population)?

The learning approach is more likely to ask questions such as:

- were the methods and design appropriate to the objectives, and were the objectives the right ones?
- what have the impacts been (e.g. on the participants, participant satisfaction, policy outcomes, decision-making processes, etc?)
- what are the lessons for the future?

The approach to this evaluation has used elements of both approaches. It focuses on a learning approach (identifying lessons for future practice), while ensuring that the quantitative and audit elements required are also covered (e.g. that objectives have been met).

³ *Code of Practice on Consultation*. Cabinet Office Better Regulation Executive, London, 2004.

⁴ *Making A Difference. Guide to evaluating public participation in central government*. Department of Constitutional Affairs (now Ministry of Justice) / Involve, 2007; also, *Evaluating Participatory, Deliberative and Co-operative Processes*, published by InterAct in 2001.

Therefore both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed against the agreed frameworks: the stated objectives of the engagement process and the good practice identified in the Cabinet Office Code on Consultation.

In addition, the objectives and criteria of good practice were used to structure the initial data collection, to ensure that the relevant data was available to use in later analysis. Also, lessons have been distilled from the evaluation research, alongside measuring the effectiveness and the overall achievements of the process.

The style adopted for the evaluation was collaborative, with the evaluators working closely with the COI, DTI (and subsequently BERR and DECC) as well as those responsible for delivery and a sample of participants. The aim was to achieve an evaluation methodology that everyone involved would support, even if the findings identified problems.

More practically, evaluators need extensive access to processes, participants and documents, which requires close collaboration and trust with those designing and delivering processes. Evaluation can sometimes be seen as a threat - certainly challenging - by delivery and commissioning teams (and participants, if they think they are being evaluated). Such fears can reduce openness, honesty and co-operation. Evaluators need to work hard to make relationships comfortable enough to allow access and trust, without compromising the independence and rigour of the evaluation process.

The independence and rigour of the evaluation process has been paramount in this instance, including the importance of reporting findings openly and honestly to appropriate audiences at appropriate times. This independence was built in to the design and implementation of the evaluation research, by evaluators undertaking independent primary research throughout, and in the commitment of the DTI and COI to publishing the final evaluation report.

Finally, the approach was designed to provide a very practical evaluation rather than taking an academic approach designed to generate new social or political theory. The evaluation design was therefore based on evaluation theory rather than social or political theory. The evaluation theoretical frameworks used to design the research were:

- **Realistic evaluation**⁵., based on scientific realist principles of objectivity and detachment, and using the formula of context + mechanism = outcome. In evaluating engagement, understanding and describing the wider context for the process is crucial - both the external context (historical, legal, social, political) but also the internal context (such as decision-making processes, time and resource pressures).
- The **theory of change**⁶ approach, which identifies the pathways the project is expected to follow, surfaces theory from that and tests assumptions against practice and outcomes. In practice, these basic principles can be used simply to include questions in the evaluation about the framing of the objectives, and to bring to the surface the assumptions (including theory) that lie behind those

⁵ Based on the realist model which stresses context in understanding social processes, such as that proposed in Pawson, Ray and Tilley, Nick (1997) *Realistic Evaluation*. Sage Publications, London. Developed in Warburton et al (2007) *Making a Difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government*. Involve / DCA (now Ministry of Justice), London.

⁶ Connell, James P. and Kubish, Anne C. (1996) *Applying a Theory of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives. Progress, prospects and problems*. Aspen Institute, New York.

objectives. The evaluation can then assess the extent to which the objectives are being met.

- **Fourth generation evaluation**⁷, which goes beyond simple technical evaluation (first generation), description plus technical evaluation (second), judgement (third) to evaluation that is carried out with the participation of stakeholders. In practice, the concept of fourth generation evaluation can be used to consider the extent to which stakeholders, participants and others should be involved in the evaluation, and how that might best be done.
- **Logical Framework Analysis**⁸, which is a planning and evaluation tool identified originally for the Department for International Development (DfID) for international social and economic development projects. The framework provides a table that has columns for identifying objectives, measurable indicators (e.g. quality, quantity, timing, impacts), means of verification (e.g. data to show progress), and important assumptions (e.g. context, external factors). The table provides a useful template for detailed analysis of the implications of objectives, and how their achievement can be shown.

These theoretical approaches fed into the design of the framework for the approach to this evaluation, which aimed for a design that was robust and rigorous, with clear theoretical underpinnings, to strengthen the validity and reliability of evidence gathered.

It is also important to note that the evaluators fully recognised the strong feelings aroused by debates on nuclear power. Neutrality was therefore as important as independence. The approach taken was therefore to ensure that evaluators followed the example of earlier evaluators of a contentious consultation and to ensure a "resolute commitment to methodological indifference to the outcome of the debate, and to a stance of neutrality with respect to the various interests involved"⁹.

2.5 Methodology for the evaluation

The evaluation used a multi-method approach to ensure that the data could be checked across the various sources, and results could be triangulated to produce a robust body of knowledge that directly addressed the evaluation questions.

There were seven main elements to the evaluation methodology, as described below:

2.5.1 Detailed design and planning of the evaluation

An initial meeting between the evaluators and DTI / COI staff agreed the detailed parameters of the evaluation and the programme of work. This included:

- Confirming the detailed goals and objectives of the consultation, so that the evaluation could later test whether these had been met.

⁷ Guba, Egon G. and Lincoln, Yvonne S. (1989) *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Sage Publications, London.

⁸ BOND (2003) *Logical Framework Analysis*. BOND Guidance Note 4. BOND, London.

⁹ Horlick-Jones, T., Walls, J., Rowe, G., Pidgeon, N., Poortinga, W., Murdock, G. & O'Riordan, T. (2007) *The GM Debate. Risk, politics and public engagement*. Routledge, Oxon.

- Agreeing that the level of participant involvement in the evaluation would focus on asking participants to input their knowledge and views on the process via questionnaires and interviews. It was agreed that all those providing more in depth information to the evaluation (e.g. interviewees) would be sent the summary evaluation report.
- Agreeing the confidentiality of evaluation results and data, and the nature of outputs from the evaluation (reports etc). It was agreed that the identity of interviewees and all research data would remain anonymous and confidential to the evaluation team, but that overall findings would be placed in the public domain in order to conform to good practice on transparency. In practice, this meant that all qualitative and quantitative questionnaire analysis would be made available (see Annexes to this report), but that interview transcripts and analysis would remain confidential to maintain anonymity.
- Agreeing the main themes and questions for the evaluation. These were:
 - **what was the context?** (e.g. a description of why the engagement process was initiated, and what the policy context was);
 - **what happened?** a description of what took place (including coverage of all the main activities as well as an assessment of the 'feel' of events e.g. consensus, conflict, uncertainty);
 - **has it succeeded?** analysis of success (e.g. against targets and objectives, against agreed measures of good practice, and to note if there were unanticipated outcomes);
 - **has it worked?** analysis of what worked (e.g. what worked well and why, what worked less well and why, lessons for the immediate and longer term future);
 - **what impact has it had / what difference did it make?** (e.g. evidence of influence on the policy decision by assessing policy-makers' processes for considering the views of participants, and tangible and intangible impacts on those involved).
- Clarifying and agreeing appropriate success criteria, indicators and measures. The tables in section 9 use the agreed criteria and indicators.
- Testing the proposed evaluation process with the client and other relevant interested parties. This was achieved by sharing the draft evaluation proposal with an informal advisory expert group comprising Professor Tim O'Riordan and Lindsey Colbourne of the Sustainable Development Commission, and Professor Nick Pidgeon of Cardiff University. The Sustainable Development Commission had already been involved as it had issued advice on public engagement on nuclear power to the DTI prior to the design and delivery of the consultation; Professor Pidgeon was one of the key evaluators of the national consultation on GM crops¹⁰.

2.5.2 Documentary review

The evaluation included a review of much of the documentation relevant to the consultation, covering internal planning documents, notes of meetings, information materials for participants and published reports.

¹⁰ See, for example, 'Difficulties in evaluating public engagement initiatives: reflections on an evaluation of the UK GM Nation? public debate about transgenic crops', by Gene Rowe, Tom Horlick-Jones, John Walls and Nick Pidgeon, in *Public Understanding of Science*, vol 14 (2005), 331-352.

The initial documentary review helped provide a 'baseline' for the evaluation, recording what the programme was intended to achieve, the conditions it developed from, how the programme developed, what changes were made and how they were implemented. The review of information materials was part of the wider assessment of the extent to which the stimulus materials were 'fit for purpose', alongside feedback from participants.

2.5.3 Observation

Evaluators observed a sample of events held to involve the main target audiences (the public and interested parties / stakeholders). Observation was undertaken to ensure that evaluators gained a 'feel' for the style and mood of events, could observe first hand the style and quality of the delivery (especially facilitation of discussions), and gain a sense of the levels of interest and commitment from all involved.

Observation was undertaken at the following events:

- All three meetings of the Citizens' Advisory Board, which commented on the accessibility of the 'stimulus materials' for public participants and the proposed structure of the deliberative public events
- The Stakeholder Review Group meeting held on 13 July 2007 to provide comments on the stimulus materials
- The Development Event held on 14 August 2007 to test the proposed structure for the deliberative meetings with public participants, and to further review the stimulus materials
- Three of the nine public deliberative events (in London, Edinburgh and Newcastle)
- Three of the 12 regional stakeholder meetings (Birmingham, Newcastle and Belfast)
- Two of the nine site stakeholder meetings (Sizewell and Dungeness)
- One of the two reconvened stakeholder meetings held to report back to previous participants on the Government decision (London).

Observation activities included taking notes and informal conversations with participants and organisers. The observation at the public deliberative events was guided by a written protocol.

2.5.4 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were devised, circulated and completed in various ways. Each questionnaire was drafted in association with COI / DTI and the contractor running the event, to make sure it was relevant to the planned process and did not duplicate other questions being asked in other ways during the events. Overall, response rates for evaluation questionnaires were very high:

- Questionnaires were distributed at the end of all the nine public deliberative events. A total of 956 people took part, 910 questionnaires were returned, which is a response rate of 95%.
- Also, all 122 of the table facilitators at the public events were invited to complete an online questionnaire after the events; 95 facilitators did so, which is a response rate of 78%.
- Observers at the public events were also invited to complete questionnaires at the end of events (in some cases questionnaires were sent later by post to observers); 28 observers attended and 27 returned questionnaires which is a 96% response rate.
- Questionnaires were distributed at the end of all 12 regional stakeholder events. A total of 360 people attended, 271 questionnaires were returned, which is a response rate of 75%.
- Questionnaires were distributed at the end of all nine site stakeholder meetings. A total of 265 people attended, 200 questionnaires were returned, which is a response rate of 75%.
- Questionnaires were distributed at the end of the two reconvened stakeholder events. A total of 96 people attended these events, 71 questionnaires were returned, which is a response rate of 64%.
- Questionnaires were sent online and by mail to those responding to the consultation document in writing. A total of 2,728 responses were submitted online or by mail to the consultation, and a total of 198 evaluation questionnaires were returned (54 online; 144 by post or fax). This is a response rate of around 7%.
- Questionnaires were distributed at the end of the third of the three Citizens' Advisory Board meetings. 10 people took part, 8 questionnaires were returned, which is a response rate of 80%.
- Questionnaires were distributed at the Stakeholder Review Group meeting held on 13 July 2007 to provide comments on the stimulus materials. 14 people attended, 14 questionnaires returned, which is a response rate of 100%.
- Questionnaires were distributed at the Development Event with public participants held on 14 August 2007. A total of 30 people took part, 30 questionnaires were returned, which is a 100% response rate.

The questionnaires included both quantitative (tick box) and qualitative (open) questions. The high overall response rate provided a wealth of data on which to draw to develop overall findings from the evaluation.

2.5.5 Interviews

Interviews were undertaken with public and stakeholder participants and others, to follow up issues emerging from the questionnaires in more depth.

Interviews were conducted after publication of the final policy decision (the White Paper), so that interviewees could consider the whole consultation process including the level of influence of the consultation on the final policy decision. All questions and sampling proposals were drafted and submitted to COI and BERR on 18 February 2008 (following publication of the White Paper in January 2008), and agreement was reached on 22 April 2008. Interviews were conducted in April and May 2008.

In practice, this meant a gap of about six months in some cases between individuals' practical engagement with the consultation, and the interviews. Ideally, evaluations on engagement cover the entire process, including the results in terms of the final decision and policy statements, and it is therefore essential that feedback is gained on the entire process. In addition, it is important that the immediate feedback gained by 'end of event' questionnaires is supplemented by feedback gained later, to allow time for participant reflection and for the post-event euphoria that often exists to have worn off.

Nevertheless, it is important to note the time lag and to recognise that interview data may therefore be subject to fading memories. However, it is the evaluators' experience that those involved in these sorts of processes retain a remarkably sharp memory of their engagement, and such feedback therefore remains valid. This conclusion is supported by the very detailed points made in comments from interviewees quoted throughout this report.

In an ideal world, it may be desirable to conduct two sets of interviews: one a few weeks after events to gather detailed feedback on that experience, and the second after the final policy decision has been announced. That was not possible in this instance because of resource constraints.

A team of two specialist interviewers undertook the great majority of the interviews; the lead evaluator also undertook some interviews, partly to pilot the schedules.

All interviews were by telephone except for three policy maker and commissioner interviews which were face-to-face. All interviews were recorded in note form, and written up by the interviewer. All interviewers were highly experienced and were briefed to ensure that notes reflected the actual words of the interviewee, so that quotes could be extracted at a later stage. All interview lists and notes have been kept confidential to the evaluation team, to maintain anonymity.

Each set of interviews had a different interview schedule, as the emphasis in questioning was slightly different for each group. The common feature was that all groups of interviewees were asked to identify any lessons for the future that emerged from their experience. Annex 11 has the full list of questions for each group of interviewees.

Overall, the following interviews were completed:

- **Four interviews with policy-makers** / those using the outputs of the process in their decision-making processes in DTI (BERR by then). These interviewees were initially identified by the commissioning team in BERR in response to a brief from the evaluator of who was sought. These interviews aimed to gain data particularly on:
 - the extent to which this process had affected Government's decision and decision-making
 - their views on the value and effectiveness of the consultation process

- any changes in their views as a result of this process (about the issues or about public consultation).
- **Seven interviews with those designing and delivering the process** (the commissioning organisation and the contractors). This covered the DTI and COI teams, and the lead person from all three of the main contractors (Opinion Leader, Dialogue by Design and 3KQ). These interviews aimed to gain data particularly on:
 - their views of the effectiveness of the process design in achieving the objectives of the exercise
 - their views of the effectiveness of the delivery of the process compared to the original objectives
- **30 interviews with public participants:** four interviewees were identified from each of the three biggest regional events (12 interviews in total), and three from each of the remaining six events (18 interviews in total). All questionnaires to public participants asked respondents to indicate whether they were willing to be interviewed and, if so, to provide contact details; 786 out of the total of 910 questionnaire respondents were willing to be interviewed (86%).

Public participants for interview were selected randomly by selecting every tenth person willing to be interviewed; the sample was then adjusted to get roughly equal numbers of men and women, and a range of ages. These interviews aimed to gain data particularly on:

- their experience of the consultation
- their satisfaction with the consultation and how the results had been communicated.
- **Five interviews with observers at the public events.** Interviewees were selected to represent the different interests represented in the group of observers. Interviews were therefore undertaken with one person each from industry, government agency, government, academic and NGO. These interviews aimed to gain data on their views of the design, delivery, impacts and influence of the public deliberative events.
- **39 interviews with stakeholders:** 24 interviewees were selected from the twelve regional stakeholder events, plus nine from the site stakeholder events (one from each of the nine locations), plus six from the reconvened events (three each from the two locations).

As with the public participants, these interviews aimed to gain data on:

- their experience of the consultation
- their satisfaction with the consultation and how the results had been communicated.

The numbers interviewed from the regional stakeholder event were based on the numbers attending. The figures were as shown in the table below:

City	Number of participants	Number of questionnaire respondents	Number of individuals interviewed
Belfast	10	10	1
Birmingham	17	16	2
Bristol	30	26	2
Cambridge	18	15	2
Cardiff	25	14	1
Glasgow	44	22	3
Leeds	30	29	2
London	52	27	2
Manchester	62	54	4
Newcastle	31	31	3
Nottingham	20	14	1
Reading	21	13	1
Total attending	360	271	24

Interviewees were selected randomly from those who had indicated on their questionnaires that they were willing to be interviewed (again, every tenth person initially identified): 81% of questionnaire respondents from the regional stakeholder meetings were willing to be interviewed, and 72% from the site stakeholder events.

Selection was then adjusted to ensure a reasonable balance between NGOs, industry, government agencies, local government and others (e.g. unions, universities). The proportion of interviewees did not reflect the composition of the stakeholders present at the events (for example, there were fewer NGO representatives than industry), but it was important for the coverage of the interviews to ensure that voices from all sectors were covered appropriately.

The full breakdown of types of stakeholder interviewees was as follows:

	Regional events	Site events	Reconvened	TOTAL
Local / regional government	3	1	2	6
Business / industry	5	2	2	9
Government agencies	3	-	-	3
NGOs	6	-	1	7
Others	7	2	1	10
Local community	-	4	-	4
TOTAL	24	9	6	39

In summary, the final stakeholder interview selection included nine people from industry, seven from NGOs (Greenpeace was approached for an interview, but could not offer anyone to participate; the individual who had been most involved had left the organisation), three from government agencies, eight from local and regional government, five from universities and six others (one union, one fire service, three local community, and one consultant).

2.5.6 Analysing data

There were five elements to the data analysis:

- **Quantitative analysis of questionnaires.** An initial quantitative analysis of all questionnaire data was completed (covering tick box answers only), to provide feedback to the design and delivery teams as early as possible. This was undertaken for each major event (public and stakeholder meetings) separately, followed by an analysis for all public events together and all stakeholder events together (separating regional and site stakeholder events), so that the overall feedback from those strands of work could be shared. This was completed in November 2007.

In order to ensure quality control, the analysis was undertaken manually by two people from the evaluation team, followed by cross-checking of figures and at least one set of questionnaires from each strand of consultation was calculated twice to check consistency.

- **Qualitative analysis of questionnaires and interviews.** A qualitative analysis of all questionnaire (covering open questions and comments) and interview data was completed. This was undertaken manually using methods based on the NatCen's Framework method of thematic analysis¹¹.

The analysis for the public event questionnaire qualitative analysis involved identifying initial themes and concepts from the data, devising a coding framework and then coding the data according to those themes to identify patterns and clusters. The data was then synthesised and summarised and used to produce descriptive and explanatory accounts.

All other qualitative data, from questionnaires (from stakeholders, observers and facilitators) and interviews (with public and stakeholder participants, observers and policy makers) was subject to exactly the same process of analysis as above, but without the formal coding.

The analytical approach was designed to allow the evaluation to be guided to some degree by the issues (and therefore the 'criteria') identified by those involved in the process (including participants), as well as the issues relevant to testing the extent to which the objectives and good practice criteria were met.

In order to ensure the maximum reliability and validity of qualitative data, two approaches were used. First, the feedback from questionnaires from different events in the same strand was compared. Second, the data from different sources (interviews, questionnaires) was compared to assess similarity of responses. This checking showed significant similarities which allowed the data to be judged valid and reliable.

¹¹ *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers.* Edited by Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis. NatCen (National Centre for Social Research) / Sage Publications, London, 2003

The dangers of triangulation of results from different sets of data resulting in losing the contextual background were recognised, and summary and synthesis retained clarity about sources throughout. Also, the key terms, phrases and expressions from participants were retained as much as possible to minimise superfluous interpretation and to maximise clean reporting of feedback.

- **Conclusions drawn from qualitative and quantitative analysis.** Conclusions from the analysis of feedback from participants and others were used to draft this report, citing figures and using verbatim quotations to demonstrate the basis for explanation and conclusions.

The themes emerging from the questionnaire and interview feedback were used to help structure the analysis that follows in the remainder of this report (especially sections 5, 6 and 7). This allows the evaluation reports as well as the analysis to reflect the key concerns of participants and to ensure their views helped frame the evaluation criteria and the presentation of findings, as well as the more formal agreed criteria (see section 9 for those).

In overall reporting on the analysis of all quantitative and qualitative data, we have generally used percentages to report on tick box answers (over a minimum of 30 responses), and whole numbers to report on additional comments and answers to open questions (and where there are less than 30 responses). This approach aims to avoid generalisations from small amounts of data, and to avoid suggesting proportions of participants took a view when not all respondents added comments or answered open questions.

- **Analysis against objectives.** An analysis of the extent to which the objectives of the consultation were met was completed. This was undertaken by identifying the individual elements of each objective, and drawing on the evaluation data overall to assess whether the evidence showed that the objective had been met. The results of this analysis are shown in section 9.2.
- **Analysis against criteria of good practice.** An analysis of the extent to which the process met standards of good practice in consultation was completed, using the Cabinet Office Code of Consultation. This was undertaken by considering the individual elements of each criterion in the Code (according to the detailed guidance on the Code), and drawing on the evaluation data overall to assess whether the evidence showed that the criterion had been met. The results of this analysis are shown in section 9.3.

The development of the criteria for measuring achievement of objectives and standards of good practice provided the basic framework to ensure that the evaluation covered both the 'process' (from assessment of good practice) and 'outcomes' (from assessment of achievement of objectives) of the consultation.

2.5.7 Reports and reporting

Evaluation findings need to be reported in ways that capture the spirit of the engagement process as well as describing the practical activities undertaken, distilling the lessons that emerge, and sensitive to potential media interest. In this evaluation, there have been interim reports at various stages of the process, as well as this final report covering all aspects of the process. The main reports have been as follows:

- A report on the evaluation of the Stakeholder Review Group meeting on 13 July 2007 to consider the content of the stimulus materials for the public. This report was completed and circulated to the participants, COI, Opinion Leader and BERR on 27 July 2007.
- A report on the evaluation of the public Development Event on 14 August 2007. This report was completed and circulated to COI, Opinion Leader and BERR on 16 August 2007.
- A summary quantitative analysis of the questionnaires from the public deliberative events on 8 September 2007. This was completed and circulated to COI and BERR in November 2007.
- A summary quantitative analysis of the questionnaires from the stakeholder regional events and site stakeholder events. This was completed and circulated to COI and BERR in November 2007.
- Draft final evaluation reports started to be produced in April and May 2009, with final drafts in September 2009. After initial discussions with COI and DECC, final drafts were shared with the main two contractors to check the accuracy of descriptions of the process. This final report is being published in autumn 2009.

All the questionnaire data used for the evaluation assessments is published in the Annexes to the main evaluation report, to provide maximum transparency. In addition, quotes from questionnaire respondents in answer to open questions, and from interviewees, are used throughout the report to illustrate and provide evidence for explanations and conclusions. Only the names of respondents and interview transcripts have been kept confidential to the evaluation team to ensure anonymity.

2.6 Conclusions

The evaluation study has involved extensive research and analysis, drawing significantly on feedback from all those involved in the consultation. The evaluation has also drawn on evaluation theory and the experience of previous evaluations and evaluators in aiming for the most robust and rigorous evaluation process possible given the available time and resources. No evaluation process can be perfect or fully comprehensive but every effort has been made here to achieve maximum coverage of the issues and maximum collection and use of evidence from across the process.

The multi-method approach, alongside triangulation, helped work towards the aim of robust and rigorous data collection and analysis. This approach showed where consistent messages emerged across various events and locations, which provided additional confidence about the overall validity of the evaluation findings.

In publishing all the questionnaire analysis (including all comments and answers to open questions) we have aimed for maximum transparency and openness.

However, any evaluation is likely to raise questions about engagement processes as well as answer them, and the debate on this consultation process - and its evaluation - may be expected to continue. As evaluators, we have learnt a lot about effective consultation and effective evaluation of public and stakeholder engagement as a result of this study.

We hope that the level of detail provided in this report and its annexes, on feedback from participants and policy makers (and others) as well as the analysis, conclusions and explicit lessons for the future, will be of some value to future practitioners and evaluators of public and stakeholder engagement.

3. Background and context

3.1 Introduction

All evaluations of public and stakeholder engagement need to consider the context of the engagement processes as part of the assessment (as shown in section 2.2 above). In the case of this evaluation, the context has been so important to the design, delivery and evaluation of the consultation that it could almost be seen as the key defining characteristic of the whole process. The description of the context of this evaluation is therefore much more detailed than is usual in such reports.

This section starts with a very brief history of the debate around nuclear power, to illustrate the central place of these issues for the modern environmental movement and the strength of feeling that surrounds the debate. It then summarises the immediate UK policy and legal context for the consultation, particularly the legal challenge by Greenpeace and the subsequent judgement. It goes on to address the role of green NGOs, the Sustainable Development Commission and others, leading up to and following the consultation. The section concludes with a summary of the implications of all these factors for the consultation, the evaluation and for future consultation practice.

The description of the context that follows is far from comprehensive about the issues surrounding nuclear power in the UK (e.g. planning, transport, legacy waste, the health and safety implications of nuclear reactor designs), some of which were the subjects of consultations running at the same time as this specific consultation on the building of new nuclear power stations.

The description of the context here is intended only to show the extent to which this, of all recent national public consultations, was affected by the events leading up to and surrounding the specific public and stakeholder engagement processes. The detailed results of the evaluation research which follow in subsequent sections can then be seen in this wider context. The overall conclusions of this evaluation take these issues into account.

3.2 Broad historical context

Nuclear power has been surrounded by controversy from its earliest beginnings. One of the defining characteristics of that controversy is that nuclear power has been what the EC Green Paper calls "tainted by the original sin of dual usage (civil and military)"¹². The early connections between nuclear energy and nuclear weapons led to many of the early alliances opposing nuclear power between environmental and peace campaigners.

More specifically, nuclear power has been one of the biggest issues for green political debate for several decades, and an 'emblematic' issue of environmental concern¹³ since the beginning of the modern environmental movement in the late

¹² *Towards a European Strategy for the security of energy supply*. European Commission Green Paper COM (2000) 769 final; page 32.

¹³ 'Environment, Risk and Democracy' by Robin Grove-White in *Greening the Millennium. The New Politics of the Environment*; special issue of *The Political Quarterly* edited by Michael Jacobs, Blackwell Publishers, 1997.

1960s¹⁴. Concerns about the 'state of the planet' were linked by environmentalists to fears of nuclear war and the global ecological crisis that threatened the existence of humanity: "The atomic age had brought home the fragility of planet Earth"¹⁵.

Not all environmentalists have been wholly negative about nuclear power, with 'fast breeder' reactors being categorised by some as a 'renewable' energy source¹⁶. However, after the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island nuclear plant in the US in 1979, and the Chernobyl explosion in the Ukraine in 1986, there was a view that "However much damage the burning of fossil fuels may cause, nuclear power remains the least popular energy technology with environmentalists - and with the public"¹⁷.

The concerns about managing radioactive waste, the safety of reactors and risks of accidents, the costs, and the perceived link to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, all contributed to strong anti-nuclear sentiment among green groups and others. By the late 1990s, most North American and Western European nations had abandoned all plans to build new nuclear power stations¹⁸.

The launch in 2007 of a major public consultation to consider the idea of building new nuclear power stations in the UK, especially after decades of "a de facto nuclear pause"¹⁹, was therefore bound to be extremely contentious - and to provide a battleground for competing ideologies, beliefs and values as much as a forum for debate on a potential energy source.

However, the context for this possible shift in policy did seem to be changing as the 2007 consultation was being launched, to the extent that the overall views of the public seemed to be quite evenly balanced between pro and anti-nuclear power. A Guardian / ICM poll in 2007 (during the consultation but before the public events) found that opponents of nuclear power outnumbered supporters by 49% to 44%²⁰. Although a majority in this poll was still opposed to nuclear power, the gap between them and those who supported it was really quite small given the history.

The closeness of the numbers did not seem to reduce the strength of feelings on both sides, and nuclear power clearly remains a very powerful issue for many people. Feedback to this evaluation has illustrated that 'the public' (as well as green NGOs) had perhaps surprisingly strong feelings on, as well as considerable knowledge of, the issues.

The implications for the consultation of the levels of passion aroused by the subject of nuclear power include that even the most basic 'facts' are contested: such as the % of UK energy currently provided by nuclear power stations. On nuclear power, more than almost any other subject, it is very hard to find any common ground from which to start a dialogue between those strongly against and those in favour.

The wider policy shift to nuclear power even being on the agenda as a potential energy source was perhaps initially signalled in 2000 when the European Commission adopted a Green Paper on energy supply which suggested that

¹⁴ *The Politics of the Environment. Ideas, Activism, Policy*, by Neil Carter. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

¹⁵ Carter, as footnote above, p4.

¹⁶ *Our Common Future. The World Commission on Environment and Development* (the Brundtland report). Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987 / 1991 edition, p168

¹⁷ *The Green Consumer Guide*, by John Elkington and Julia Hailes. Gollancz, London 1988.

¹⁸ Carter, as footnote above, p186

¹⁹ Brundtland report, as above, p186

²⁰ 'All clear for nuclear', leader in *The Guardian*, 24 May 2007

carbon emission targets may only be met by building new nuclear reactors to replace declining stock. That Green Paper stated²¹:

"The absence of nuclear energy would make it even more difficult to tackle climate change in the longer term ... The nuclear option must be examined in terms of its contribution to security of supply and greenhouse gas emission reductions."

That Green Paper was followed by a further EC Green Paper in 2006 and then *An Energy Policy for Europe* was published in January 2007²². That policy's priority objectives were the smooth functioning of the internal market in energy, security of strategic supply, concrete reductions in greenhouse gas emissions caused by the production and consumption of energy and the EU's ability to speak with a single voice on the international stage on these issues.

This 2007 policy strengthened the EC's emphasis on nuclear energy; the EC Summary of that policy document states that "Faced with increasing concerns with regard to the security of supply and CO₂ emissions, nuclear energy has the benefit of being one of the low-carbon energy sources offering the most stable costs and supply".

Clearly EC policy had not been developed in isolation from UK policy thinking, but equally clearly the UK was not the only Western European country to be looking at nuclear power again, and for the stated reasons of energy security and reducing carbon emissions.

3.3 Recent UK context

In 2003, the UK Government published the *Energy White Paper: Our Energy Future - creating a low carbon economy*²³. That White Paper concluded that although "Nuclear power is currently an important source of carbon-free electricity", its current economics made it an "unattractive option for new, carbon-free generating capacity"²⁴. That White Paper also said "we do not rule out the possibility that at some point in the future new nuclear build might be necessary if we are to meet our carbon targets".

It was here that a specific commitment to further public consultation was made. The document went on:

"Before any decision to proceed with the building of new nuclear power stations, there would need to be the fullest public consultation and the publication of a white paper setting out the Government's proposals".

It was two years before the next developments appeared. In November 2005, the then Prime Minister (Tony Blair) announced a review of the UK's progress towards achieving the goals set out in the 2003 Energy White Paper. That review included a public and stakeholder consultation, based around a consultation document published in 2006 entitled *Our Energy Challenge - securing clean, affordable energy for the long term*. That consultation document was issued on 23 January 2006, with responses sought by 14 April that year.

²¹ EC 2000 Green Paper, as above, pages 69 and 73.

²² Reference COM (2007) 1 final

²³ Cm 5761

²⁴ para 1.24, page 12; and para 4.68, page 61

In May 2006, Tony Blair delivered a speech to the Confederation of British Industry's annual dinner, at which he said:

"Yesterday I received the first cut of the [Energy] Review. The facts are stark. By 2025, if current policy is unchanged, there will be a dramatic gap on our targets to reduce CO2 emissions; we will become heavily dependent on gas; and at the same time move from being 80/90% self-reliant in gas to 80/09% dependent on foreign imports, mostly from the Middle East and Africa and Russia.

"These facts put the replacement of nuclear power stations, a big push on renewables and a step-change on energy efficiency, engaging both business and consumers, back on the agenda with a vengeance. If we don't take these long-term decisions now, we will be committing a serious dereliction of our duty to the future of this country."

On 11 July 2006, the Government published *The Energy Challenge*, which reported on the Energy Review. This document included the following statement:

"We have concluded that new nuclear power stations would make a significant contribution to meeting our energy policy goals"²⁵.

The Prime Minister was not the only one to make positive statements about nuclear power during this time. James Lovelock, creator of the Gaia principle, argued that a large-scale switch to nuclear power was vital if electricity supplies were to continue reliably and carbon dioxide emissions were to be brought down²⁶. However, Lovelock's conclusions were challenged by many other environmentalists and were far from the response from many green NGOs.

Greenpeace applied for a judicial review of the Government's decision, as articulated in the Energy Review 2006, to support nuclear new build as part of the UK's future electricity generating mix "on the ground that the consultation was procedurally flawed and that therefore the decision was unlawful"²⁷. Greenpeace's application was heard by Justice Sullivan in the High Court on 7 - 9 February 2007, and the Judgement issued on 15 February 2007.

Greenpeace's challenge was that the 2003 White Paper had promised that there would be 'the fullest public consultation' before the Government reached any decision to change the policy, stated in that document as being 'not to support new nuclear build', and that the Government had failed to live up to that promise of consultation before deciding in the Energy Review of 2006 'that nuclear has a role to play in the future UK generating mix'.

The Greenpeace challenge was based in part on the requirements of the Convention on Access to Justice in Environmental Matters ('the Aarhus Convention'), of which the UK Government is a signatory.

Justice Sullivan's final judgement on the Greenpeace challenge focuses on the specific requirements of the Aarhus Convention; the judgement states that (para 49) "Whatever the position may be in other policy areas, in the development of policy in the environmental field consultation is no longer a privilege to be granted or withheld at will by the executive".

²⁵ page 17.

²⁶ *The Revenge of Gaia*, Basic Books, 2006.

²⁷ Judgement Before Mr Justice Sullivan on the application of Greenpeace Limited v Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. CO/8197/2006; Thursday 15 February 2007.

The judgement also states that, given the importance of the decision under challenge, "it is difficult to see how a promise of anything less than 'the fullest public consultation' would have been consistent with the Government's obligations under the Aarhus Convention" (para 51).

The judgement considers the legal precedents on the nature of consultation (paras 55-64), including what is 'proper' consultation:

"To be proper, consultation must be undertaken at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage; it must include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response; adequate time must be given for this purpose; and the product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when the ultimate decision is taken" (para 55)

It also states that consultation requires the following:

"[The consulting authority's] obligation is to let those who have a potential interest in the subject matter know in clear terms what the proposal is and exactly why it is under positive consideration, telling them enough (which may be a good deal) to enable them to make an intelligent response. The obligation, although it may be quite onerous, goes no further than this." (para 55)

The judgement dwells on the notion of 'fairness', and concludes that there is an "overriding need for fairness in any consultation process" (para 59). The judgement suggests that:

"A consultation exercise which is flawed in one, or even in a number of respects, is not necessarily so procedurally unfair as to be unlawful. With the benefit of hindsight it will almost invariably be possible to suggest ways in which a consultation exercise might have been improved upon. That is most emphatically not the test. It must also be recognised that a decision-maker will usually have a broad discretion as to how a consultation exercise should be carried out. This applies with particular force to a consultation with the whole of the adult population of the United Kingdom. The defendant had a very broad discretion as to how best to carry out such a far-reaching consultation exercise.

"In reality, a conclusion that a consultation exercise was unlawful on the ground of unfairness will be based upon a finding by the court, not merely that something went wrong, but that something went 'clearly and radically' wrong." (paras 62 and 63).

The key elements of the judgement were on the following issues:

- lack of clarity about the status of the consultation document (whether it was an 'issues' paper or an actual policy proposal on the 'in principle' question of whether new nuclear build should now be supported or not), and
- inadequate information (too little and poor quality), and particularly unfairness in relation to information provision in that new information affecting the decision which came in later was not part of the consultation; specifically information on economics, and the conclusions from CORWM - the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management - which published its draft

recommendations on 27 April 2006 (after the consultation period had ended), and final report on 31 July 2006 (after the publication of the report on the Energy Review).

The conclusions of the judgement were (paras 116 - 120):

"For the reasons set out above, the consultation exercise was very seriously flawed. Adopting the test put forward by Mr Drabble, 'something has gone clearly and radically wrong.' The purpose of the 2006 Consultation Document as part of the process of 'the fullest public consultation' was unclear. It gave every appearance of being an issues paper, which was to be followed by a consultation paper containing proposals on which the public would be able to make informed comment. As an issues paper it was perfectly adequate. As the consultation paper on an issue of such importance and complexity it was manifestly inadequate. It contained no proposals as such, and even if it had, the information given to consultees was wholly insufficient to enable them to make 'an intelligent response'. The 2006 Consultation Document contained no information of any substance on the two issues which had been identified in the 2003 White Paper as being of critical importance: the economics of new nuclear build and the disposal of nuclear waste. When dealing with the issue of waste, the information given in the 2006 Consultation Document was not merely wholly inadequate, it was also seriously misleading as to CORWM's position on new nuclear waste.

"On both the economics and the waste issues all, or virtually all, the information of any substance (the cost-benefit analysis and supporting reports, and CORWM's draft and then final recommendations) emerged only after the consultation period had concluded. Elementary fairness required that consultees, who had been given so little information hitherto, should be given a proper opportunity to respond to the substantial amount of new material before any 'in principle' decision as to the role of new nuclear build was taken. There could be no proper consultation, let alone 'the fullest public consultation' as promised in the 2003 White Paper, if the substance of these two issues was not consulted upon before a decision was made. There was therefore procedural unfairness, and a breach of the claimant's legitimate expectation that there would be 'the fullest public consultation' before a decision was taken to support new nuclear build. ... The application for judicial review of the policy decision in the Energy Review that new nuclear build has a role to play in the future UK generating mix therefore succeeds. ...

"Procedurally the better course in the case of a document of this kind is to grant declaratory relief rather than a quashing order. The declaratory relief will be to the effect that there was a breach of the claimant's legitimate expectation to fullest public consultation; that the consultation process was procedurally unfair; and that therefore the decision in the Energy Review that nuclear new build 'has a role to play ...' was unlawful."

Significant attention has been given in this evaluation report to Justice Sullivan's judgement because it was one of the key factors affecting the entire context for the 2007 consultation, which in turn affected the design, delivery, style and mood of that consultation - and its evaluation.

The threat of legal action hung over the entire process, creating much more difficult working conditions than are usual - or desirable - in achieving the flexibility and creativity ideal in designing and delivering effective consultations.

Greenpeace articulated their continuing vigilance:

"When the Government sets out its new consultation plans later this month, they will be subject to close scrutiny, both legally and politically."²⁸

Justice Sullivan's judgement was also, of course, the prompt for the 2007 consultation and that consultation "explicitly took account of the High Court ruling and the Government's commitment in 2003 to the fullest public consultation"²⁹.

The implications for the 2007 consultation continued. There was extensive media coverage of the legal judgement against the Government, including on the front pages of many of the broadsheets (including some very sharp cartoons). Such media coverage is known to affect public perceptions around the issues. For example, a single television documentary claiming there is no evidence that climate change is affected by human behaviour had powerful impacts on public views, far beyond those who had actually seen the programme³⁰.

Even if public and stakeholder participants had not seen the media coverage themselves, it is likely that they heard about it, and their feelings of distrust in Government on this issue seem likely to have been reinforced by the judgement and its reporting. This evaluation has therefore attempted to test some of these public perceptions, and the extent to which this has affected the effectiveness of the consultation process (see section 7).

There is one further development in the UK policy context that needs to be mentioned here. On 4 July 2007, in Gordon Brown's first week as Prime Minister and during his first Prime Minister's Questions, Mr Brown said:

"Surely the events of the past year make it clear to everyone that we cannot rely on an energy policy that makes us wholly dependent on one or two countries or regions across the world. That is why we have made the decision to continue with nuclear power, and why the security of our energy supply is best safeguarded by building a new generation of nuclear power stations."³¹

This statement was attacked by many commentators on the grounds that it appeared to pre-empt the conclusion of the consultation, which was taking place at that time. On 5 July 2007, Greenpeace's lawyers wrote to Gordon Brown, arguing that "A consultation cannot be lawful if the decision which it is intended to inform has already been taken", demanding that the government's decision to support the building of new nuclear power stations be withdrawn, and calling for a new consultation process to be started.

At Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons the following week, Gordon Brown gave the following answer:

"My hon. Friend knows that we put our nuclear proposals out to public consultation on 23 May. The Government's preliminary view is that nuclear has a future role in providing our homes and businesses with the low-carbon energy that we need. Let me emphasise that the Government will make their decision in the autumn, after, and in the light of, the consultation."³²

²⁸ 'Nuclear consultation: fair and full?'. Greenpeace press release, 9 May 2007

²⁹ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, London 2008. para 1.5

³⁰ *Evaluation of Sciencehorizons.* Final report, by Diane Warburton. Forthcoming, from DIUS

³¹ Hansard 4 July 2007, column 954.

³² Hansard 11 July 2007, column 1444

Although this second statement clearly stated that the decision had not been taken, and that a decision would be made after, and in the light of, the consultation, there was significant media coverage to the effect that the decision was nonetheless a foregone conclusion.

This evaluation has therefore looked particularly at the extent to which public participants involved in the deliberative events saw the decision as a foregone conclusion, and the difference that made to the quality and effectiveness of the consultation process (see section 7 below).

3.4 The role of green NGOs in the consultation

The role played by green NGOs more generally was also a key influence on the nature and mood of the consultation, and that role changed over the course of the consultation. More details of the ways in which green groups were involved (or not) in the various consultation activities are described in the relevant sections of this report (see sections 5, 6 and 7). This section focuses on a description of the wider contextual impacts of the role of green NGOs on the consultation as a whole.

Although a range of green groups were involved over the course of the consultation, this section focuses primarily on the role of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, as two of the most active green groups in relation to the consultation.

Before the consultation was launched, BERR (then DTI) held a roundtable meeting in London on 25 April 2007 with various stakeholders including green groups (including Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth) to discuss the overall plans for the consultation.

A further meeting of key national stakeholders (again including Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth as well as industry, universities etc) was held on 13 July 2007 to discuss and give feedback on the stimulus materials drafted for use in the deliberative events with the public - particularly whether the materials were fair and balanced, and whether the range of views on nuclear power was reasonably represented. As with all stakeholder engagement processes, attendance at a meeting does not imply support for the design of the broader consultation process, or the materials that resulted.

The main focus for discussion at this Stakeholder Review Group meeting on 13 July was around four cross cutting themes that the participant stakeholders themselves suggested: facts vs opinions, other policies that would impact (e.g. planning, waste, transport), the 'framing of the problem' that the solution of new nuclear build was intended to address, and the framing of conditionalities (under what conditions a decision in favour of new nuclear build became acceptable - what needed to be in place).

Several other cross-cutting issues identified by the meeting were also discussed although in less detail. These included the need for balance, setting the context, uncertainty, language and wording. This meeting was evaluated, and the evaluation report circulated to all participants (see section 7.4).

In terms of timing, it will be noted that this Stakeholder Review Group meeting was just after the Prime Minister's clarification of the Government position on nuclear power (later the same week), and how the decision would be made (i.e. after, and in the light of, the consultation). Green NGOs also attended some of the regional stakeholder workshops held later in July 2007. However, it should be noted again that, as with all stakeholder engagement, attendance at a meeting does not imply support for the design of the broader consultation process.

As a result of the 13 July Stakeholder Review Group meeting, a revision of the materials for the public was undertaken and circulated back to all stakeholders on 10 August, with a request for feedback by 15 August, so that those comments could be considered alongside the outputs from a Development Event with public participants on 14 August at which it was planned to pilot all materials and the planned agenda for the public deliberative events. The public events were scheduled to be held on 8 September, in nine different locations around the UK, so time was very tight.

Friends of the Earth sent in detailed comments on the redrafted materials with various complaints about the content. The production of all printed and audio-visual materials for the events continued, including a video to be shown in all nine locations. This video included numerous inputs by Greenpeace, with their representative being filmed giving Greenpeace views on the specific issues as they were raised throughout the video. This video was used at the Development Event with the public on 14 August 2007.

On 7 September 2007, the day before the public deliberative events, several green groups (including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, WWF UK and Green Alliance) formally withdrew from the consultation process. Friends of the Earth wrote to the Secretaries of State at BERR and Defra detailing their own reasons for withdrawal.

The withdrawal of the green groups on 7 September had several immediate and tangible impacts on the consultation overall:

- The video to be used at the deliberative public events had to be re-edited as Greenpeace withdrew permission to use their input. The points Greenpeace had made were added in a voice over but not attributed to Greenpeace. The aim was to ensure public participants could still hear opposing and alternative perspectives
- The withdrawal of green NGOs and their criticism of the consultation process was front page news in various broadsheet newspapers on Friday 7th and Saturday 8th September (the actual day of the public deliberative events), and it was also covered in radio and television broadcasts on the Saturday morning
- There were demonstrations at the regional stakeholder events at Nottingham and Glasgow which also attracted media attention; protestors were pictured with their mouths sealed with tape
- None of the green groups that had withdrawn attended any of the second set of stakeholder workshops that were held in September 2007; nor did they provide any response to the written consultation.

The activities of green groups did therefore have a major impact on the consultation overall, both in terms of affecting the trust of public participants in the process (given the very public withdrawal of green groups), and in terms of affecting the quality of debate at the final set of stakeholder workshops - the Government report on the consultation points out "Their absence from some of the meetings meant that a more vigorous opposing view was only present in a very limited form"³³.

However, it is important to note that green groups were far from being the only consultees who were opposed to the building of new nuclear power stations; other public and stakeholder participants were also opposed to the idea and they continued to take part and contribute their views and knowledge.

It is also important to note that not all green groups or environmental interests are anti-nuclear in principle (as noted above). The roles of the various other stakeholders, and the feedback from stakeholders overall on the process, is covered in detail in section 6 below.

However, the role and activities of the key national green NGOs in this consultation do raise more general questions about the role of NGOs in the new context of government decision-making that includes public consultations as an integral element. The current level of public engagement is new and is a significant change to the policy-making landscape that NGOs are used to. This new landscape creates challenges not only for NGOs' own activities in influencing policy decisions, but also for NGOs' perceptions of the changing roles of the public in these new and direct forms of communication with Government.

NGOs clearly have a role as key stakeholders in national policy decisions, and will want to ensure that their views on the issues are influential. However, it is less easy for them to have a role in public consultations. It may be considered essential that the views of NGOs are communicated to the public (in some cases by them directly), as part of ensuring that the public is exposed to a diversity of views on the issues. It may also be considered essential that NGOs support any information provided to the public, and help ensure that information does cover the appropriate range of views. This has worked well in other consultations, even on highly emotive topics such as the use of hybrid embryos for research³⁴.

However, on an issue like nuclear power, even the most basic 'facts' are contested. Understandably, NGOs' priority is to represent their own view and position. However, green NGOs are only one of a range of stakeholders (which may also include unions, regulators, industry, academics) who all have different views and positions, including on the 'facts'. In contentious consultations, there may be complex processes to develop materials for the public involving a range of stakeholders.

In this case, the stimulus materials were developed through consultation with a Citizens Advisory Board (which met and went through draft materials three times), and with a recruited sample of the general public at the Development Event in August 2007, as well as with stakeholders and the commissioning organisation (BERR). Green NGOs were therefore only one of many voices that needed to be taken into account.

³³ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, London 2008. para 1.74

³⁴ HFEA evaluation - add ref

This situation creates challenges for commissioners and designers of public consultations but also for stakeholders, especially green NGOs. The key challenge perhaps is to identify what would be good practice in future in engaging key stakeholders in the development of public consultations (especially around information provision to the public) in ways that enable stakeholders to contribute to creating the best possible public consultation processes without compromising their own needs, priorities and values.

3.5 The role of the Sustainable Development Commission

There were various bodies, beyond green NGOs, voicing concerns about the environmental impacts of nuclear power and the nature of the consultation process. In particular, the Sustainable Development Commission³⁵ played a central role. As an independent advisory body that is nevertheless close to Government, the SDC was involved in the consultation in various ways.

In 2006, the SDC published eight volumes of scientific analysis and its own position paper: *The Role of Nuclear Power in a Low Carbon Economy*³⁶. That report identified three major advantages of nuclear power (climate change benefits, improved energy security, and a good UK safety record), and five significant disadvantages (uncertain economics, intergenerational issues, detracting from efforts to reduce energy demand, technological lock-in and inflexibility, and international safety and security). That SDC paper concluded that "there is no justification for a new nuclear programme, at this time, and that any such proposal would be incompatible with the government's own sustainable development strategy".

In March 2007, before the consultation was launched in May 2007 but during the initial design and development stage, the SDC published a briefing paper on *Public Engagement and Nuclear Power*. That paper supported the need for public engagement because:

"understanding these [public] views and concerns is essential for the development of a truly sustainable energy policy. This can only be achieved through a comprehensive and deliberative engagement process".

The paper also cited an earlier SDC document, that said:

"Truly sustainable energy policies seem likely to benefit from going with the grain of wider public concerns, rather than from rubbing up against them"³⁷

Public engagement and Nuclear Power identified nine possible engagement tools for the consultation, and a set of principles for effective engagement. These principles were:

- **Clarity** about the 'framing' of the consultation in terms of ensuring buy-in to the problem to be addressed, clarity about the aims and parameters of the engagement - what exactly was being sought in terms of achievements, what level of support was being sought and what could and could not be changed as a result of the consultation

³⁵ See www.sd-commission.org.uk

³⁶ Available at www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages//060306.html

³⁷ SDC (2006) *Nuclear Power 7 - Public perceptions and community issues*. Available at www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=342. Cited in SDC (2007) *Public Engagement and Nuclear Power*.

- **Integration** of the debate about new build nuclear in a way that would make sense to the public, and integrated with wider energy policy and the wider climate change debate
- **Independence** in terms of oversight, design and delivery of the engagement process, and a full independent evaluation of the process
- **A layered approach**, ensuring appropriate design to fit the needs of different audiences
- **Feedback**, with follow through to ensure feedback on the way the results were used and to provide opportunities for participants to make changes themselves to participate in being 'part of the solution'.

These principles formed the basis for the ongoing advice from the SDC to BERR about the design and delivery of the consultation. That advice focused around three main issues³⁸:

- The scope, design and timeline of BERR's engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the exercise captures the conditions behind peoples' opinions rather than a yes/no result
- The collection and synthesis of the engagement results[from all strands of engagement, not just public consultation but also the stakeholder workshops and the website] to ensure the relevant details were not lost
- A strong push for BERR to identify and respond to the conditions raised by the consultation process rather than focus on whether it provides them with a green/red light.

Public engagement and Nuclear Power also summarised the view that the consultation should be an "integrated public engagement programme on energy policy and nuclear power". It called for no further decisions to be taken until the public engagement was complete, although it also said:

"Within the constraints of what is legally possible, we believe that it is possible for the Government to begin this [consultation] process from its current position of support towards a new generation of nuclear power plants".

This was a very different view from green NGOs (such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and CPRE) who believed that, given the Government's preference for nuclear power, the consultation was an "empty gesture"³⁹.

After the consultation programme was completed, and the White Paper published (in January 2008), two of the SDC Commissioners criticised the process in the media. The SDC Energy Commissioner, Dr Bernie Bulkin, was concerned that "Some of the most crucial questions around nuclear energy, cited as major concerns by people on all sides in the recent consultation, remain unanswered."⁴⁰ In addition, the SDC economic commissioner, Professor Tim Jackson, said "The government's thinly disguised justification for a decision already made rides roughshod over the concerns of the public and patently ignores the warnings of the government's own advisers"⁴¹ (i.e. the SDC themselves).

³⁸ SDC internal memo 20071228, provided to this evaluation by the SDC

³⁹ CPRE Press release 38/07, 23.5.07

⁴⁰ SDC press statement 10.1.08

⁴¹ 'A blatant failure of moral vision' by Tim Jackson in *The Guardian*, 16 January 2008

These criticisms from SDC commissioners, and from the SDC overall, focused on their view that the Government had failed to address issues raised by the consultation, rather than criticism of the consultation process itself. The SDC concerns were around what they called the Government's "inadequate response to the legitimate concerns expressed by the general public over nuclear power, which echo those identified by the SDC in its 2006 report '*The role of nuclear in a low carbon economy*'".⁴² These issues included "concern over waste and decommissioning arrangements" and "unease over the role of the private sector"⁴³.

This distinction, between criticisms of the *process* of the consultation, and the policy implications arising from the *content* of the consultation, is an important one for this evaluation and its consideration of the quality and effectiveness of the consultation process, as feedback from key stakeholders has been an important element of the evaluation research. There were, however, detailed criticisms of the process itself from other sources, as outlined below.

3.6 After the consultation

Once the consultation was completed, and the Government had taken and announced the decision that nuclear power should have a role in the generation of electricity⁴⁴, the response was mixed. The mainstream media tended to the view that there had been little choice but to opt for nuclear. However, challenges to the consultation process and the decision continued. The responses from two SDC commissioners is outlined above but there were also other challenges.

The two main sources of complaint about the consultation process itself after it was completed were a detailed report by Paul Dorfman on behalf of the Nuclear Consultation Working Group, and a challenge by Greenpeace to the company delivering the deliberative public events (Opinion Leader) in relation to an alleged breach of the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. Each of these challenges have continued to contribute to the context for the way in which the consultation results have been received, including by the media, and within which this evaluation has been completed.

The Dorfman report

The Nuclear Consultation Working Group was part of a project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, called the Nuclear Aspects of the Energy Review. The funding was used to enable Dr Paul Dorfman, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Warwick, to carry out work on the public consultation aspects of the Energy Review, with a focus on the nuclear aspects, as the name suggests.

The Working Group published its report in mid-2008: *Nuclear Consultation: Public Trust in Government*. It is not appropriate for this evaluation to analyse and review this report in detail, but simply to identify the key issues to further illustrate the nature of the criticisms surrounding the consultation process in order to further clarify the context for this evaluation.

⁴² SDC press release, 10 January 2008, provided to this evaluation by the SDC

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. A White Paper on Nuclear Power*. BERR, London, January 2008

The report identifies some of the same areas of concern as the SDC's original guidance (clarity of framing, honesty, quality, neutrality), but takes a very different view on some of the issues. Like the SDC, these authors argue for fully integrating the debate about new nuclear build into the wider context of energy policy overall. Unlike the SDC, these authors do not accept that the clarity of framing was appropriate, calling the final decision a "pre-ordained solution"⁴⁵. The authors also challenge the independence and neutrality of the design and delivery of the public deliberative processes, saying they were "designed to provide particular and limited answers" from the public and complaining that the materials "persisted with the twinning of global warming and nuclear power"⁴⁶.

It should be noted that the bulk of the Dorfman report (53 of the 68 main pages; page 19 - 72) are devoted to challenging the *content* of the debate (e.g. nuclear proliferation, radioactive waste, economics of new build, radiation health effects), with the remaining 15 pages on the consultation *process* itself. However, as it is one of the major critiques of the consultation to date, the key points made about the consultation are important in setting the context for this evaluation, and have fed into the identification of the issues covered in this report.

Greenpeace complaint to the Market Research Society

On 10 October 2007, Greenpeace made a formal complaint to the Market Research Society Standards Board. The complaint was against Opinion Leader, a member of the MRS, and focused on the methodology and information used during the 8 September 2007 deliberative public events that Opinion Leader was contracted by COI on behalf of BERR to design and deliver. The complaint challenged the approach to qualitative research, the objectivity of the facilitators, the video, and (in detail) the handouts and other information materials used at the events⁴⁷.

The MRS Standards Board (MRSB) published its findings on the complaint and found that, in only one respect, Opinion Leader had breached article B14 of the MRS Code of Conduct which provides amongst other things that: "[MRS Company Partners] must take reasonable steps to ensure that Respondents are not led towards a particular answer"⁴⁸. The MRSB did not accept the other elements of the complaint. The MRSB findings go on to say:

"in order to ensure that respondents would not be led towards a particular answer, the materials needed to be accurate, balanced and comprehensive (i.e. cover or deal with all relevant and salient aspects, in context, sufficient to allow respondents to make an intelligent response)".

The key factor in the MRS conclusions was that it was BERR who reviewed and co-ordinated the stakeholder comments made after the July 2007 Stakeholder Review Group meeting and decided how to respond to them. BERR proposed amendments to the drafts in the light of stakeholder comments, "and Opinion Leader approved the changes having discussed them in team meetings or over the telephone. MRSB was concerned to note that Opinion Leader had done this without having had sight of all of the stakeholder comments that had been sent to BERR".

⁴⁵ page 12 of the report

⁴⁶ page 17 of the report

⁴⁷ Greenpeace complaint, page 1

⁴⁸ MRS judgement, page 2

The MRSB considered that it was reasonable of Opinion Leader to rely on BERR for the technical review of stakeholder comments. However, their view was that Opinion Leader should have reviewed stakeholder comments to check if there were non-technical issues raised that they needed to respond to. The MRSB also concluded that where statements were attributed to third party sources, Opinion Leader should have checked those to satisfy themselves that the facts and statements in the materials were not simply the client's own assertion or interpretation.

The MRSB criticised Opinion Leader for not keeping an 'audit trail' of changes to the materials, so they could identify what changes were made, by whom, when, at whose request and for what reason. The MRS also found that "for Opinion Leader to ensure that respondents were not led towards a particular answer, it needed to have conducted a final review of all materials used at the event to be satisfied that as a whole they were fair, balanced and comprehensive overall. MRSB considered that this was a reasonable step for Opinion Leader to take and was concerned that no final review was carried out."⁴⁹.

Moreover, MRSB concluded that, in their opinion, "there were a number of examples where they considered that objectively viewed, information was inaccurately or misleadingly presented, or was imbalanced, which gave rise to a material risk of respondents being led towards a particular answer."

The MRSB judgement was therefore based both on their conclusions on lack of proper procedures to review the materials to ensure they were fair, balanced and comprehensive, and also that there were examples where the materials were inaccurate or misleading or imbalanced.

The MRSB found Opinion Leader in breach of article B14 of the MRS Code of Conduct. The findings conclude that "MRSB noted that deliberative research is a relatively new technique and there are no current MRS guidelines on preparation or review of research materials specific to deliberative research ... MRSB nonetheless concluded that this was not a minor or trivial breach and it was appropriate therefore that Opinion Leader should be formally advised of the breach ... with a requirement to take corrective action".

Opinion Leader responded on 16 October 2008, as follows:

"We do not accept the MRS ruling, which we believe to be incorrect. We do not believe that the MRS - a market research trade body - is competent to assess these new forms of deliberative engagement. Instead we have been involved in developing new guidelines in collaboration with a team of experienced practitioners, commissioners and evaluators - the MRS has not been involved in this ... We are completely satisfied that the project was sound and fair and are proud of the Opinion Leader team's work on this and more generally in developing these innovative methods."

As is clear from this extract from the Opinion Leader statement, the basis for their rejection of the ruling was that deliberative engagement was a new approach, and could not be assessed by the MRS as a market research body.

This complaint, the body to which it was made (the Market Research Society), and the impact of that body's findings are very important to the context for this evaluation.

⁴⁹ MRS judgement, page 4

It is true, as the MRS states, that there are no comprehensive guidelines on deliberative research. It is also true, as Opinion Leader suggest, that deliberative public engagement is a relatively new field, quite distinct from market research.

There are links between deliberative research, market research and public and stakeholder engagement, not least in some companies delivering all of these. However, the extent to which deliberative public engagement should (or can) be evaluated against market research standards remains highly controversial.

3.7 Conclusions

More than almost any other national public consultation, the context for the 2007 consultation on the building of new nuclear power stations had significant impacts on the consultation itself. The threat of legal action hung over the entire design and delivery of the consultation at every stage, and over this evaluation; as a result lawyers were closely involved in various elements of the design and delivery of the process. An atmosphere of hostility, caution and anxiety is not conducive to the flexible and creative environment that is ideal for the design and delivery of engagement activities.

It is very unusual for the external context to have such a profound influence over a consultation. The issues being considered in consultations are often contentious, but it is rare for the consultation process itself to be under such intense scrutiny and subject to such challenge, both directly and through the media, while the consultation process is actually running. It is for these reasons that this evaluation report deals with contextual issues at such length, both here and throughout the analysis in this report.

More generally, the challenges to the consultation processes have brought to the fore many of the unspoken assumptions, and indeed contradictions and uncertainties, about the whole field of consultation and public engagement in government policy. For example, as the Market Research Society Standards Board pointed out, there are no widely agreed standards for deliberative research. Nor are there any such standards for deliberative public engagement: indeed the questions about the extent to which this type of public consultation is 'research' or 'engagement' is just one of the grey areas. For example, the ways in which discussion stimulus materials are designed, developed and used in deliberative public engagement may be very different from conventional market research.

The problems caused by the lack of widely agreed quality standards or criteria of good practice in public engagement is compounded by a plethora of guidance and principles, all from slightly different perspectives⁵⁰. In addition, in the absence of universally agreed standards for deliberative public and stakeholder engagement, there is a danger that the vacuum is filled through legal precedent, market research standards, and challenges by interest groups. This creates real practical difficulties for the evaluation of public and stakeholder engagement, and for the future development of the field.

⁵⁰ There are now some principles that are being used as standards by some parts of the consultation field, such as the Sciencewise principles (www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk) and the nine principles developed by Involve / NCC (www.involve.org.uk), but these are not yet accepted formally as universal or cross-Government standards.

The methodology for this evaluation is outlined in section 2. In terms of the frameworks for assessing standards of good practice, the evaluators have used the only widely accepted cross-Government guidance available: the Cabinet Office Code of Consultation. Criteria of good practice have been drawn from the Code to provide the framework for assessment (see section 9). This Code is not ideal - not only has the Code used for this analysis now been superseded by a new Code, but it is essentially a set of minimum standards (and largely focused on formal written consultations), rather than good practice in engagement.

The Code provides the basis for assessing the 'quality' standards of the consultation and allows the evaluation to consider the 'process'. In addition, an assessment of the extent to which the consultation met its objectives provides an analysis of 'success', and allows consideration of 'outcomes'.

This basic assessment is supplemented in this evaluation by addressing some of the other issues raised by the contextual factors described in this section, and some of the issues raised by public and stakeholder participants. The issue of the need for standards in future, and the development of future good practice, is returned to in the conclusions of this report.

4. Summary of aims, objectives and activities

4.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary overview of the aims and objectives, and all the activities that took place within the Government consultation on the future of nuclear power. Evaluation of all these elements follows in separate chapters; this section is designed simply to summarise the main activities, where and when they took place, and how many people took part.

4.2 Aims and objectives

The framing for the consultation was as follows:

"The Government has a preliminary view on the future role of nuclear power within the UK energy mix but has not yet decided; this view is that in the context of climate change and ensuring energy security it would be in the public interest to give private sector energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations.⁵¹"

Within this overall framing, the Government set three overarching objectives for the consultation process on nuclear power⁵², which were:

- To enable and facilitate a consultation which meets the commitment of the 2003 Energy White Paper to the fullest public consultation
- The Government wishes to consult citizens and interested parties for their views and concerns relating to the arguments it has presented
- For each strand of activity, to listen to and consider the views of those participating and to be transparent in the reporting back process.

4.3 The main consultation activities

The formal consultation was open for 20 weeks from 23 May to 10 October 2007. Overall, it involved a total of 4,309 individuals: 1,581 members of the public and stakeholders attended face to face meetings across the UK, plus 2,728 members of the public and stakeholders responded in writing (2,043 online and 685 through letters, response forms etc).

The three main sets of activities within the consultation were as follows:

- **A written and online consultation**, focused around the published Consultation Document. The Consultation Document was published on 23 May 2007⁵³. This 205-page document was made up of 13 chapters. The document contained 18 separate questions, which stakeholders and the public were invited to respond to.

⁵¹ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008, para 1.9

⁵² *ibid* para 1.10

⁵³ *The role of nuclear power in a low carbon economy.* Consultation Document. DTI, May 2007

There were also two annexes, providing a partial Regulatory Impact Assessment, and a summary of the principles of the Government Code on Consultation.

The document was published in hard copy and online and 5,200 copies were distributed. A further 29 copies were distributed in Welsh, 8 in Braille, 13 in large print and 3 in audio form. When people requested a hard copy of the document they also received a printed Response Form to enable them to respond in writing; a freepost address was given for participants to return their forms free of charge. There was also a telephone enquiry line, the number for which had been published in the Consultation Document.

The website had a total of 46,000 unique visitors, 3,756 individuals registered and 2,043 organisations and individuals responded online to some or all of the 18 questions. 237 of these participants asked for their submissions to be confidential, and those were not published. In addition, 685 participants responded in writing (by post, email or fax), of which 24 asked for confidentiality.

This is a total of 2,728 participants in the written and online consultation overall, 261 of which asked for confidentiality. A further 129 individuals and organisations participated in associated technical consultations. More details are given on the written and online consultation in section 5 of this report.

The website and written consultation was supported by a programme of marketing and communications designed to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage responses. This programme is described in more detail in section 5.2 below. The main activities were, in summary a national press advertising campaign through national print media, 'paid-for' search marketing on Google, a presence on BERR and DirectGov websites, mailings to about 4,500 local organisations, a mailing via the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority newsletter and mailings to 1,500 UK libraries.

- **Stakeholder engagement events.** There were three main types of stakeholder events that took place around the UK during the course of the consultation: regional, site and reconvened events.

An initial stakeholder analysis was undertaken which identified the key interested parties. Individual organisational contacts were then identified in partnership with Regional Development Agencies and others, and individual invitations were sent out. All those invited were asked to suggest others who might be interested, and those were followed up and sent invitations. Others, who had heard about the consultation in other ways, and requested invitations, were also invited and attended. A total of 625 people attended these events.

The stakeholder events were, in summary, as follows:

- **Twelve regional stakeholder events** were held in July and September 2007 in locations covering each of the English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (see section 6.2 for details).

The numbers of participants attending and locations of events were as follows:

City	Region	Date	Number attending
Belfast	Northern Ireland	17 September 2007	10
Birmingham*	West Midlands	26 July 2007	17
Bristol*	South West	20 July 2007	30
Cambridge*	East of England	27 July 2007	18
Cardiff	Wales	18 September 2007	25
Glasgow	Scotland	21 September 2007	44
Leeds*	Yorkshire	24 July 2007	30
London	London	13 September 2007	52
Manchester*	North West	25 July 2007	62
Newcastle*	North East	23 July 2007	31
Nottingham	East Midlands	12 September 2007	20
Reading	South East	14 September 2007	21
Total attending			360

Half of these regional stakeholder events (those marked with *) were held in July 2007, before the deliberative public events and before the withdrawal of some green NGOs; the other half were held in September 2007, after the withdrawal of those green groups.

- **Nine site stakeholder events** were held in August, September and October 2007 on or near existing nuclear power station sites, as follows (see section 6.3 for details):

Location	Venue	Date	Number attending
Bradwell	Hotel	3 October 2007	10
Dungeness	On site	20 August 2007	27
Hartlepool	On site	30 August 2007	37
Heysham	Hotel	17 August 2007	30
Hinkley	On site	15 August 2007	22
Hunterston	On site	25 September 2007	23
Sizewell	On site	31 August 2007	26
Torness	On site	26 September 2007	24
Wylfa	On site	27 September 2007	66
Total attending			265

- **Two reconvened stakeholder events** were held in February 2008 in London and Manchester to explain the results of the consultation and the content of the White Paper to stakeholders who had attended previous events. A total of 96 people attended these events: 50 in Manchester and 46 in London (see section 6.4 for details).

- **Deliberative public engagement events.** There were nine deliberative public engagement events held around the UK on 8 September 2007 (see section 7 for details).

An extensive design and development process was used to prepare for these events by reviewing and commenting on the proposed programme and stimulus information materials including:

- A Citizens' Advisory Board of 10 specially recruited members of the public, which met three times
- A Stakeholder Review Group of 14 key national stakeholder organisations (including representatives from green groups, unions, industry and regulators) which met once
- A Development Event which piloted the programme and materials for the deliberative public events; this involved 30 specially recruited individuals designed to provide a representative cross-section of the public.

A total of 956 public participants attended the nine deliberative events, recruited as a demographically representative sample of the UK population. The details of locations of events and numbers of participants at each deliberative public engagement event are shown in the table below.

Region	Event location	Number of participants
North East / Yorks & Humber	Newcastle	159
North West	Liverpool	77
East Midlands / West Midlands	Leicester	147
East of England	Norwich	80
London / South East	London	160
South West	Exeter	84
Wales	Cardiff	84
Scotland	Edinburgh	91
Northern Ireland	Belfast	74
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS		956

4.4 Additional consultation activities

In addition to the three main strands of activities, there were also a series of other consultation activities that took place during the consultation period including:

- A major media campaign was launched at the beginning of the consultation (and some activities continued throughout), to raise awareness and encourage people to participate (see section 5.2 for details).
- A series of specific events to meet with specific groups:
 - A special event was held for faith groups in Carlisle on 20 September 2007.

- A Ministerial round table meeting was held in the morning of 17 September 2007 to enable the Secretary of State to hear and directly respond to the view of key stakeholders. 19 organisations attended including energy companies, facilities providers, industry, regulators and unions. Green NGOs (including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and Green Alliance) were invited but declined to attend.
- A presentation was made to the Annual Sitting of the Youth Parliament in Strathclyde.
- A presentation was made to a stakeholder event organised by the Energy Institute.
- A presentation was made to the Prospect trade union.
- A meeting was held in Whitehaven, West Cumbria, with local community representatives.

These additional meetings were either by specific request and/or to widen awareness and encourage people to participate in the consultation. These events informed but did not feed directly into the consultation; they have not been evaluated and are not covered in the remainder of this report.

4.5 Reports and reporting

The outputs from the different strands of activity outlined above are described in more detail within the relevant sections of the report below (sections 5, 6 and 7).

The two main overall final reports of the consultation were published by BERR in January 2008:

- **Meeting the Energy Challenge. A White Paper on Nuclear Power.** This provided a summary of the consultation and the key 18 questions, the key points made in the public and stakeholder responses to the consultation, the Government response to that input and the resulting policy conclusions
- **Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.** This document included full reports on the process and summaries of the results from the written and online consultation, public deliberative events and the stakeholder events.

In addition, a series of other documents was published on the consultation website:

- all the responses submitted in writing and/or online were published in January 2008, with all other major reports on the consultation and alongside the White Paper (see section 5 for details)
- reports of all twelve of the regional stakeholder events, with lists of participants, summaries of the key points made in small group discussions and transcripts of plenary discussions (see section 6.2 for details)
- reports of all nine of the site stakeholder events, with lists of participants, and summaries of the key points made in small groups and in plenary (see section 6.3 for details)

- a summary of the conclusions from the deliberative public events was produced and circulated to all participants the week after the events took place (see section 7 for details).

4.6 Conclusions

This section has provided a brief overview of the consultation, covering the overall framing for the consultation and its objectives, and the main consultation activities (documents, the main engagement events, media campaign and other meetings).

This was one of the fullest consultations undertaken in the UK in terms of the scale of activities. 4,309 individuals contributed their views at events or in writing. 2,728 detailed written responses were received (2,043 online and 685 by post, email or fax). 21 stakeholder events were held: 12 regional events, plus nine events held on or near existing nuclear power stations, to gain input from those living and working there: 625 people attended these events. Nine deliberative public engagement events were held around the UK with 956 participants recruited as a demographically representative sample of the UK population.

This consultation was not the **largest** Government exercise of this type in terms of numbers of responses received (e.g. the Department of Health Your Health, Your Care, Your Say consultation had nearly 30,000 written and online responses). However, it was one of the **fullest** consultations in terms of materials produced and the number of consultation events and opportunities for public and stakeholder input, and particularly in terms of direct engagement between the Government and participants. All these activities, their effectiveness, outputs and influence, are described in detail in the subsequent sections of this report.

5. Written and online consultation

5.1 Introduction

The written and online consultations were closely linked as both were structured around the published Consultation Document and questions. This element of the consultation process also formed the overall structure for the consultation as a whole, with the Consultation Document providing the information that was used for presentations and briefing materials at the public and stakeholder events.

This section focuses on the written and online consultation processes, which ran from the publication of the Consultation Document on 23 May 2007 until the closing date for that part of the consultation on 10 October 2007 (20 weeks). It provides an overview of the publication and dissemination of the Consultation Document and the ways in which people could input their responses. It then evaluates this element of the process including feedback from those involved, and assesses the value and effectiveness of this strand of the consultation.

5.2 The written and online consultation process

The written and online consultation process provided the overarching structure and content for the whole consultation on the future of nuclear power. The framing for the consultation was as follows:

"The Government has a preliminary view on the future role of nuclear power within the UK energy mix but has not yet decided; this view is that in the context of climate change and ensuring energy security it would be in the public interest to give private sector energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations.⁵⁴"

Within this overall framing, the Government set three overarching objectives for the consultation process on nuclear power⁵⁵, which were:

- To enable and facilitate a consultation which meets the commitment of the 2003 Energy White Paper to the fullest public consultation
- The Government wishes to consult citizens and interested parties for their views and concerns relating to the arguments it has presented
- For each strand of activity, to listen to and consider the views of those participating and to be transparent in the reporting back process.

This statement of the framing and objectives for the consultation made it clear that the consultation was to focus specifically on the role of nuclear power and that the consultation was based on the preliminary view that Government had taken; that preliminary view was that it was in the public interest to give private sector energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations. The purpose of the consultation was to test this view, and the reasoning on which it was based, with the public and stakeholders.

⁵⁴ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008, para 1.9

⁵⁵ *ibid* para 1.10

The deliberative public events and the stakeholder events were major elements of this process and those are covered in the following separate sections. However, the public and stakeholders were also invited to respond, as in most formal Government consultations, to a published Consultation Document. The consultation process overall was launched with the publication of the Consultation Document on 23 May 2007⁵⁶. This 205-page document was written by BERR officials (with guidance from others) and had 13 chapters covering:

- 1 How nuclear power works
- 2 Nuclear power and carbon emissions
- 3 Security of supply impacts of nuclear power
- 4 Economics of nuclear power
- 5 The value of having low carbon electricity generation options: nuclear power and the alternatives
- 6 Safety and security of nuclear power
- 7 Transport of nuclear materials
- 8 Waste and decommissioning
- 9 Nuclear power and the environment
- 10 The supply of nuclear fuel
- 11 Supply chain and skills implications
- 12 Reprocessing of spent fuel
- 13 Proposals for Government facilitative action.

The document also contained 18 separate questions, which stakeholders and the public were invited to respond to. There were also two annexes, providing a partial Regulatory Impact Assessment, and a summary of the principles of the Government Code on Consultation.

The Consultation Document was published in hard copy and online and 5,200 copies were distributed. A further 29 copies were distributed in Welsh, 8 in Braille, 13 in large print and 3 in audio form⁵⁷. When people requested a hard copy of the document they also received a printed Response Form to enable them to respond in writing; a freepost address was given for participants to return their forms free of charge. There was also a telephone enquiry line, the number for which had been published in the Consultation Document.

A dedicated website was set up to enable participants to respond online to the same 18 questions as in the Consultation Document. The website and online consultation were managed by Dialogue by Design. On the website, the material in the consultation document was broken down into sections followed by the relevant consultation question(s); all the text was identical to the published version of the Consultation Document. Each question had a text box into which participants could type their responses. The website included a Contact section with an email address and telephone number for enquiries.

Online participants registered with the consultation and were provided with a unique user name and password. The site was designed to allow participants to respond online and also to edit their submission up to the closing date (10 October 2007); at that point all submissions were considered final.

⁵⁶ *The role of nuclear power in a low carbon economy. Consultation Document*. DTI, May 2007

⁵⁷ All figures here from the final report on the consultation: these from *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses*. BERR, January 2008, para 1.29

The website had a total of about 46,000 unique visitors, 3,756 individuals registered and 2,043 organisations and individuals responded online to some or all of the 18 questions⁵⁸. 237 of these participants asked for their submissions to be confidential, and those were not published. In addition, 685 participants responded in writing (by post, email or fax), of which 24 asked for confidentiality. This is a total of 2,728 participants in the written and online consultation overall, 261 of which asked for confidentiality. A further 129 individuals and organisations participated in associated technical consultations.

Dialogue by Design analysed the types of organisations that participated, and produced the statistics used in the following table (percentages calculated to the nearest whole number):

Type of participant	Number of responses
Individuals	1,784 (65%)
Energy industry	306 (11%)
Academic or consultancy	173 (6%)
Local and regional government	112 (4%)
Voluntary or environmental organisation	109 (4%)
Other	109 (4%)
Other business	91 (3%)
Government agency or sponsored body	27 (1%)
Trade union	17 (1%)
TOTAL	2,728 (100%)

All written and online responses were collated by Dialogue by Design. The written submissions were entered on to the same collation database used to group the online responses and then analysed alongside the online responses.

The contractors analysed each response according to one or more theme headings; each answer may have covered a range of issues and this approach was chosen to try to ensure that all these points were covered. This was a qualitative process, although numbers of respondents taking a particular view were also identified for each issue and question.

A summary report was produced, covering all the written and online submissions, structured around the 18 questions. This report summarised the numbers responding to each question, and numbers of comments assigned to the various themes. The remainder of the analysis summarised the main points made by participants. This report was made available to Government policy makers alongside the full set of responses to the written and online consultation.

The table below summarises the key findings covered in that summary report in terms of numbers of responses and levels of agreement and disagreement with the Government propositions in the Consultation Document.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, para 1.33

Government proposition:	Agree with Government proposition	Agree, with qualifications (in addition to 'Agree')	Disagree	Don't know
1. Tackling climate change and security of supply are critical challenges for the UK (total 2,395 respondents) ⁱ	1,222	108	See note ⁱ	
2. Carbon emissions from nuclear power stations (total 1,684 respondents)	854	135	235	
3. Security of supply impact of new power stations (total 1,579 respondents)	654	101	246	
4. The economics of new nuclear power stations (total 1,524 respondents)	405	166	244	58
5. Value of having nuclear power as an option (total 1,481 respondents)	715	159	352	
6. Views on safety, security, health and non-proliferation (total 1,438 respondents)	657	66	373	
7. Views on the transport of nuclear materials (total 1,332 respondents)	702	124	269	
8. Views on waste and decommissioning (total 1,396 respondents)	434	88	210	
9. Implications on managing existing nuclear waste from allowing new nuclear power stations (total 1,119 respondents) ⁱⁱ	n/a	n/a	n/a	
10. What are the ethical considerations related to new nuclear build? (total 1,201 respondents) ⁱⁱⁱ	n/a	n/a	n/a	
11. Views on environmental considerations (total 1,245 respondents)	487	62	196	
12. Views on the supply of nuclear fuel (total 1,231 respondents)	521	128	255	
13. Views on the supply chain and skills capacity (total 1,176 respondents)	378	122	112	
14. Views on reprocessing (total 1,174 respondents)	376	115	216	
15. What other issues need to be considered? (total 1,101 respondents) ^{iv}	n/a	n/a	n/a	
16. In the context of climate change and energy security, would it be in the public interest to give energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations? (total 1,338 respondents)	734	74	424	

17. What conditions should be put in place before new nuclear build? (total 1,119 respondents) ^v	n/a	n/a	n/a	
18. Views of facilitative actions proposed (total 1,101 respondents)	440	76	133	

Notes to table:

- i 1,222 respondents (out of 2,395) felt that both challenges were critical; 150 thought the security of supply challenges were more critical than climate change; 61 thought that the challenge of climate change was more critical than security of supply. 219 respondents agreed with the thrust of the question but specifically said they oppose nuclear power.
- ii The answers to this question were complex, as the biggest single group of respondents (132 out of 1,119) said that they saw few implications beyond those identified in the previous question. The next biggest group (129) said there should be no new nuclear build until existing waste issues have been resolved; and 120 said they did not want to comment, or referred to other answers.
- iii The answers here were also complex as it was an open question. Generally, opponents of nuclear new build identified more ethical issues than supporters, although people in both groups saw the need to tackle climate change as a key ethical issue.
- iv Most of the answers to this question were either that they had nothing to add, or referred to previous points made.
- v 271 said new nuclear build should be restricted to existing sites, and 121 argued against this; 249 said no conditions needed; 113 opposed any cap on capacity and 32 said there should be a cap; 114 opposed giving energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations.

The summary report on the written and online consultation provides much more nuanced detail on these issues, and that report also refers readers to the full responses for a full understanding of the points made - it stresses that the summary report is no substitute for reading the full submissions.

However, the basic summary above does illustrate the level of agreement and disagreement by consultees with the propositions made by Government, and where there is least satisfaction. These issues are picked up in the consideration of influence on policy below.

The summary report on the written and online consultation was published (including a summary of the consultation and analysis *process*) with the White Paper, in January 2008⁵⁹.

All the written responses were published openly on the same website in January 2008, when all the reports on the consultation were published (alongside the White Paper).

⁵⁹ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008

The responses were presented grouped by question and theme as well as by specific submission; respondents' names were published alongside their submission. This did not apply to those who requested confidentiality; those submissions were not published.

As well as the individual responses, other materials received from participants were also published on the website, including articles and other documents.

The website and written consultation was supported by a programme of marketing and communications designed to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage responses. The main activities were, in summary:

- **An initial stakeholder analysis** was undertaken for the whole consultation, to identify key interest groups that needed to be reached and encouraged to participate. This analysis was used to construct the media campaigns, targets for mailings and invitations to stakeholder events (see section 6 for details of these events, who was invited and attended).
- **A national press advertising campaign** through national print media chosen to reach a broad UK audience; 60 adverts were placed in national newspapers encouraging people to share their views; two bi-lingual ads (Welsh / English) were also placed in relevant papers. BERR / COI analysis showed a 72% coverage of the target audience ('all UK adults').
- **Paid-for search marketing on Google**, which directed anyone who used relevant search terms to the consultation website. BERR / COI calculated that this generated 10,572 arrivals at the consultation website.
- **Presence on the BERR and DirectGov websites**, with links on the BERR homepage and on the homepage of DirectGov for the first week of the consultation, and on the DirectGov public consultations page for the rest of the consultation period. 1,099 visitors went to the consultation website from the DirectGov website during the first week of the consultation.
- **Mailings to local organisations.** A posted and email mailing was sent in June 2007 to about 4,500 regional and local organisations to encourage them and their members to take part in the consultation, with details of the website and how to get the Consultation Document. This included 1,400 regional and local umbrella organisations including local authorities, community groups, NGOs and professional institutions; plus 3,100 individual groups including faith groups, youth groups and environmental groups.
- **Mailing via the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.** Information was included in the June 2007 edition of the NDA's regular newsletter, which went to 229 contacts with an interest in decommissioning nuclear power stations and managing radioactive waste.
- **Mailings to 1,500 UK libraries;** this mailing covered all the libraries on the register of libraries willing to display government information. These mailings included a consultation document for reference, 2-3 copies of a poster about the consultation and how people could participate. A second wave of mailings went to Welsh libraries with the Welsh version of the Consultation Document in August 2007

5.3 Evaluation of the written and online consultation process

5.3.1 Introduction

The assessment that follows is based on analysis of the evaluation questionnaires (online and written) returned by participants in the written and online consultations. A full analysis of the questionnaire responses is provided in Annex 1. All percentages given below are based on percentages of respondents.

The response rate for questionnaires was much lower than for any other part of the process: 198 respondents from a total of 2,728 participants which is 7% overall. The response rate from those who had responded in writing was much higher (144 respondents from a total of 685 participants; a 21% response rate) than for those who had responded online (54 respondents from a total of 2,042 respondents; a 3% response rate).

The difference in response rates may have been because it may have been easier for those who responded in writing to respond to the evaluation. All those who responded to the consultation in writing were sent a hard copy questionnaire and provided with a freepost address to return it. Those who responded online were sent an email telling them about the evaluation and inviting them to participate, with a link to an online questionnaire. However, they had to use their user name and password to gain access to, complete and return the questionnaire, which may have been more effort of memory or searching files than they were prepared to give.

However, the total of 198 questionnaires returned overall did provide a good quantity of data to use for this analysis, even if the relatively low response rate means that it cannot be taken to represent the views of all those who participated in this part of the consultation. The assessment in this section also draws on documentary review, and interviews with policy makers and the contractor responsible for the design and delivery of this strand of the consultation (Dialogue by Design).

5.3.2 Representation and diversity

The key issues for the evaluation in terms of representation and diversity are around the extent to which the written and online consultation reached a sufficient number and mix of members of the public as well as stakeholders and their organisations to ensure the necessary diversity of views.

In terms of numbers of responses, the figures provided above summarise the numbers of participants involved through this strand of work: a total of 2,728. No actual target numbers were set for this strand of the consultation, but this was a relatively low overall number of responses to a national consultation: the Your Health Your Care Your Say consultation run by the Department of Health on health and social care in 2005 had nearly 30,000 responses to the core written and online questionnaire (actually 29,808 responses); about 9,000 of these responses were in writing and the remainder online.

This consultation on the future of nuclear power never expected the same level of response as to a consultation on health and social care, as nuclear power tends to be a subject that a relatively small number of people feel very strongly about rather than a large section of the population, including many thousands of employees in health and social care, have a broad knowledge and interest in.

Nevertheless there was some surprise that more people did not send in views, especially given the consultation's own media campaign to increase awareness and encourage input, and also the fairly extensive media coverage of the role of green groups in participating in and then withdrawing from the consultation.

There had been some expectation that some NGOs may mount campaigns to flood the consultation with responses, but that did not happen. The online systems used by Dialogue by Design include mechanisms for testing whether responses are sent as part of a campaign: the system automatically counts the responses that are identical and puts them into one group.

There were no campaigns like this (apart from 100 letters from a group campaigning on a different topic altogether - a proposal for a local airport; and some standard letters from a group in Wales that wanted a new power station).

The feedback from a brief review by evaluators of the submissions to this consultation, interviews with policy makers and with the contractor running this part of the consultation, suggests that the input that was made was thoughtful and of good quality, with a mix of highly knowledgeable technical and scientific experts, those with a general interest in the ethical and environmental issues, and those who felt passionately pro- or anti-nuclear power. General comments on the written and online responses included:

"[The surprise was] The quality of the responses ... A huge number of people really thought about their responses, they took time and thought about their arguments. That meant the report was able to say what people's views were. There were subtle opinions and a finesse you don't get in public meetings." (interview with contractor).

"The quality of the written inputs was staggering. There were only two responses from single issue campaigners. All 2000 were very intelligently written: people had written very thoughtful things." (policy maker interviewee)

"Compared to other consultations, this was a monumental effort to reach as many people and maximise people's realisation that we wanted their views. And in terms of whose views we got back – with the exception of the green groups, it was a very good cross-section." (policy maker interviewee)

This, and evaluator review of the responses, does suggest that the input was higher in quality than in quantity. However, the number of responses was considered by BERR and the contractor to be more than sufficient for the purposes of the consultation and, indeed, provided an enormous amount of data to feed into the policy development process and drafting the White Paper.

Given this relatively low number of responses, however, it is important for the evaluation to assess whether the mix of participants was sufficient for a diversity of views to be covered.

The analysis above by Dialogue by Design shows the types of organisations and interests that responded to the written and online consultation. This analysis does demonstrate a good mix of public, private and voluntary sector interests with some unions and government bodies as well as the expected energy companies, businesses and NGOs (voluntary and environmental organisations). This mix does cover the key interested parties on these issues.

It is interesting to note that by far the largest group of participants were individuals (65%). Statistics from the contractors show that 2,413 participants made their response as an individual, and 315 responded on behalf of an organisation.

However, it may be that many of the 'individuals' responding were also members of voluntary and environmental organisations. The contractors believe that this was likely, given the formal withdrawal of the green groups; there may well have been individual members of those groups that still wanted to give their views, but without clear affiliation. In addition, many of the individuals responding may have had links with any of the other categories listed.

This split in types of respondents was reflected in the responses to the evaluation questionnaire. By far the biggest group of evaluation responses was from participants responding 'as a private individual' - 88% of evaluation respondents were from that group. The next biggest category of evaluation respondents was from the academic / consultant group (which was the third largest group in terms of response to the consultation overall). This was not surprising given that the nuclear power field does include a wide number of consultancies providing research, scientific and technical, financial, legal and other services, and they seem to have been fully represented in the respondents.

There were also significant numbers of university academics taking part throughout the consultation - in the regional and site stakeholder meetings as well as this written and online part of the consultation. From analysis of the participants, it is clear that there has been considerable academic interest in the consultation both in terms of the issues (with numerous scientific and engineering academics) and in terms of the consultation process (with several social scientists).

The second largest group of responses to the consultation itself came from the energy industry (11%), which was almost twice the size of the next largest categories of participants: academic or consultancy (6%), local and regional government (4%) and voluntary or green organisations (4%).

Overall, the publicity campaigns seem to have worked to get a good mix of participants that covered all interested parties. There is some feedback from some evaluation questionnaire respondents who felt that there was too little public awareness of the consultation and that more should have been done to publicise the issues and the opportunities to take part. However, as evaluators, we concluded that there was significant media coverage of the consultation (although more can always be done to generate public awareness).

Interviews with participants in all parts of the process included questions about whether they had seen media coverage of the consultation and the response was mixed. Quite a few public and stakeholder participants had seen media coverage, although almost all said that their views on the consultation and the issues had not been affected by that: there seems to have been a significant level of distrust of what was reported by the media.

However, it may be that some of this negative coverage did serve to reduce the numbers of participants in the written and online consultation. This was the main open channel for anyone interested to take part; there were no special invitations, incentives or personal benefits for those contributing in this way - other than the opportunity to offer their views and experience.

If there was a sense that the decision had already been made, or that there may be limits to the likely impacts of the consultation, as was certainly suggested in the media, that may have reduced interest in contributing among some potential participants with less passion and direct involvement in the issues than those that

did take part. The contractors reported that they received "a small number of letters from groups who actively declared their intention not to participate in the consultation because they were critical of the process."⁶⁰

It is not possible to force people to contribute to a consultation; those running these activities can do no more than let people know that the consultation is taking place, provide specific opportunities for participation, make it as easy as possible for people to give their view, and use those views in policy making. All these issues are covered below.

From a relatively limited evaluation review of the planning and delivery of the publicity campaign, we have concluded that the approach taken by BERR conformed to good practice particularly through mailings to specific organisations (especially at local and regional levels) and working through libraries.

The internal BERR research on reach confirmed that the advertisements did reach a good proportion of the population (see above). However, it is beginning to be accepted by engagement practitioners that it is very difficult to get media coverage for consultations in any way that will link to specific opportunities for participation: it seems in many cases that the media do not want to be seen to working with Government. More generally, media coverage can in practice be a mixed blessing: positive or negative coverage can influence potential participants' views on the issues, and may discourage as much as encourage participation.

One approach to increasing public awareness may be to distribute more targeted invitations, to a wider range of local and regional (as well as national) organisations. That approach may have resulted in more voluntary and environmental organisations taking part in this consultation (this is also discussed in the section below on stakeholder events). Invitations were sent to a range of local and environmental groups but, having briefly reviewed these mailing lists, there is always room for extension. In this case, the formal withdrawal of green groups immediately before the deliberative public engagement events may also have affected levels of participation and no amount of invitations can overcome those sorts of actions. It is nevertheless an area for potential future development.

In future, it may therefore be useful to develop internal government department databases of regional and local organisations that may have an interest in subjects of departmental responsibility. Even if the actual addresses go out of date (which they will) this approach that would at least be a starting point for contacting a wider range of potential participants in future.

In terms of numbers responding, it is also worth noting that the numbers of participants does reduce as they go through the questions in the Consultation Document. 2,395 respondents answered Question 1, then there was an immediate drop to 1,684 answering Question 2 and then a slowly reducing total to 1,101 answering Question 18; there were slight upturns in numbers on Questions 10, 11 and 12 on ethics, environmental issues and fuel supply.

This drop in numbers as participants go through questions is usual in online engagement exercises. Often respondents will put a detailed answer, covering all the issues they want to make, after the first question, whatever it is. In this case, the substantive question, about whether it would be in the public interest to give

⁶⁰ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008, page 37

energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations, is Question 16. That question received 1,338 responses.

One suggestion from several questionnaire respondents was that they wanted to see all the questions at the beginning, and to be able to see where they were in going through them, so they could get a better sense of the overall structure. Improving the mechanism for providing this sort of 'overview' of the questions and issues may be worth considering in future online consultations.

In addition, it may be useful in future to structure the online consultation so that the substantive question comes first, in the hope that the largest possible response is gained for that question. The remaining questions can then explore points of detail. In addition, keeping the substantive question till later created some problems for analysis because quite a few participants gave general comments in answer to Question 1, rather than waiting until Question 16.

This re-ordering was considered in this case, but it was agreed to have the contextual questions first in order to take participants through a logical thought process - a 'journey'. However, this approach can *feel* manipulative, and there is the danger of losing quite large numbers of respondents (about 1,000 in this case) by the time they do get to the substantive question. It may also be worth considering reducing the number of questions. This can be difficult when there are so many issues to cover and it is important to ensure that questions are focused on single, not multiple issues. Aiming for the minimum number of questions will always be the preferred option although not always possible.

5.3.3 Overall feedback on the written and online consultation

The key points for the evaluation here were whether the participants were satisfied with the way the consultation was structured, whether the purpose of the consultation had been clear and whether they felt it was important for the Government to consult the public and stakeholders on these types of issues.

The summary of feedback provided here is based on participant feedback in written and online evaluation questionnaires. A total of 198 completed questionnaires were returned; a response rate of 7% of the total 2,728 participants in this strand of the consultation.

In reading the findings that follow, it is also worth noting that all percentages are based on percentages of evaluation respondents (rounded to the nearest whole number), and that not all respondents answered all questions, so the feedback percentages do not always add up to exactly 100%.

The feedback from questionnaire respondents was as follows:

- **68% of evaluation questionnaire respondents were satisfied with the way the consultation was structured** overall (135 of the total 198 respondents); 32% of these were very satisfied. 10% were not very satisfied and 14% were not at all satisfied.

This is a positive response, with over two-thirds satisfied with the process overall. The comments from questionnaire respondents on this issue were as follows, although there were in fact very few comments on this issue:

- 4 out of the total of 198 questionnaire respondents mentioned problems arising from the sense that the decision had been made and that the consultation would make no difference (about 2% of respondents)
- 3 out of 198 respondents said they could not access the website

Other comments (by 2 respondents on each point) were that the decision should have been made sooner and that consultation only causes delay, that the questions and consultation generally were biased, that they would have liked to know who had been involved, and that the information was too 'wordy' and confusing.

Given that the people most likely to respond to an evaluation questionnaire of this sort will not necessarily be the most satisfied, this is quite a positive response. Certainly informal feedback to the evaluation from a range of participants and observers has been around this level of satisfaction: two thirds satisfied.

There were clearly some problems for some respondents, but generally the written and online consultation was considered by these respondents to have had a good structure and to have been carried out well.

- **91% of evaluation questionnaire respondents said the purpose of the consultation was clear;** 5% said it was not clear and 2% did not know.

The few comments on this question suggested that, although the purpose was clear, it was not what these respondents would have wanted.

11 respondents (out of 198 - about 6% of respondents) said that the Government had already made up its mind, that the consultation was just rubber stamping and that the consultation would make no difference.

Other comments included that the exercise was just about justifying nuclear (3 out of the total of 198 respondents), that there were actually hidden objectives (3 out of 198), and that it was good overall (3). 2 respondents each mentioned some other points: that action was needed now to start building nuclear power stations, that the consultation showed that the Government was anti-nuclear and that the process was to get the answer that Government wanted.

For the evaluators, it is good practice that there was clarity about the purpose of the consultation. As mentioned elsewhere, the problem here was that there was a subtle distinction between the Government having 'taken a preliminary view' and the Government having 'made up its mind'. Given the levels of distrust generally with Government and politicians, this sort of subtle distinction can appear confusing and can therefore create suspicion.

In this case, those running the consultation had no choice but to frame the consultation in this way. There were public statements about the Government's preliminary view, including from two Prime Ministers over the course of the previous year (see section 3 on context). The consultation was therefore framed around that preliminary view, and designed to test that view and the evidence on which it was based.

The framing of the consultation was therefore inevitable and it was carefully structured to enable the Government view to be presented, and then to give stakeholders and the public opportunities to challenge that view with evidence

and strength of feeling. That was the process and all the elements of the process necessary to achieve that were in place and were carried out fully and professionally.

- **72% of questionnaire respondents felt it was very important that Government did consult stakeholders and the public on these sorts of issues**, plus another 7% thought it was fairly important. Only 3% thought it was not very important. Not all respondents answered this question.

Again, the comments on questionnaires illuminated these statistics. The feedback here was that:

- 12 out of the total of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents (about 6% of respondents) mentioned that it was pointless if the decision had been made
- 10 thought that the public did not have enough (particularly technical) knowledge to be able to take part effectively in these sorts of consultations
- 10 thought consultation was only useful if government listened to, took account of and/or acted on the responses they received
- 8 thought that Government should just decide / lead on these sorts of issues
- 8 thought consultation was vital; not least because of the public education benefits
- 7 said that consultation had been used as a delaying tactic, and that government should get on and make a decision.

Others mentioned the need for the public to have more information on all these issues, and the need for there to be sources of information and means of public participation as alternatives to pressure groups.

Overall, however, it was clear from this feedback that respondents did feel it was very important to consult, with caveats around ensuring that such consultation did not take too much time and delay action too much, and that the results of any such consultation were taken into account.

Overall on these overarching issues, the feedback was positive; comments were made with some force by a few respondents but the overall feedback suggested that the written and online consultation overall had worked effectively as far as questionnaire respondents were concerned.

5.3.4 Design and delivery of the written and online consultation

The issues for the evaluation in terms of overall design and delivery are around the extent to which the design was appropriate to the objectives and that the delivery was undertaken competently and professionally.

Although only one strand of the consultation, the objectives for the written and online consultation were the same as the three overarching objectives for the consultation process as a whole⁶¹, which were:

- To enable and facilitate a consultation which meets the commitment of the 2003 Energy White Paper to the fullest public consultation
- The Government wishes to consult citizens and interested parties for their views and concerns relating to the arguments it has presented
- For each strand of activity, to listen to and consider the views of those participating and to be transparent in the reporting back process.

For the written and online consultation, these objectives relate in practice to reach of the consultation and coverage of relevant stakeholder interests (which has been covered above under Representation and diversity), the information provided and the extent to which there was sufficient relevant information provided to enable participants to contribute fully, the extent to which participants felt they could express their views fully, whether the questions were clear, and how easy it was for participants to input their views.

In terms of information provision, the key issues for the evaluation were around whether enough information had been provided, whether the information was relevant to the questions participants were asked to address, and whether there was information that was missing.

The findings were as shown in the following table (full details in Annex 1). These are percentages of evaluation questionnaire respondents; there were 198 respondents in total.

	Yes	No	Don't know
Did the Consultation Document provide enough information for you to contribute fully to the consultation?	74%	18%	4%
Did the Consultation Document provide the relevant information for you to contribute fully to the consultation?	70%	21%	5%
Was there anything missing from the information provided?	34%	36%	20%

This shows that there was good positive feedback that there had been enough information (74% agreed), and that the relevant information had been provided (70% agreed), although less positive on what was missing (see below). The main qualitative comments on questionnaires, following the tick box answers were as follows:

⁶¹ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008, para 1.10

- 16 out of the total of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents said that they thought the information had been good and that there had been plenty available (about 8% of respondents)
- 10 out of 198 thought the information had been biased towards nuclear, was misleading and/or inaccurate (about 5% of respondents)
- 7 said there was too much information, it was daunting and technical.

There was rather less positive feedback on whether there was information missing (34% thought there was information missing and 36% said there had not). Numerous points were made about there not being enough information on certain issues; this was not necessarily information missing but that respondents wanted more on the following topics:

- 17 mentions of waste - storage, processing and sites
- 10 mentions of costs and economics
- 10 mentions of alternatives to nuclear
- 9 for more on health hazards, radiation, accidents, emissions
- 7 for more on disadvantages of nuclear
- 7 for more on renewables
- 6 for more on risks, especially of terrorism
- 4 for more on uranium supplies
- 4 for more on CO2 implications of uranium mining and processing
- 3 for more on nuclear power would help combat climate change
- 3 for more on proliferation
- 3 for more on international experience
- 3 for more on planning issues

There were also numerous other individual suggestions for where more information was needed, all of which are shown in Annex 1.

The overall feedback here is that there was probably the right balance between too much and too little information. The evaluators recognise the need for extensive information, both for clarity and to ensure that all issues were covered. We also recognise the need to make the Consultation Document manageable so that lay people can use it as well as technical experts.

As part of the evaluation review, we have checked whether all the issues identified above as needing more information were actually covered in the Consultation Document. We found that all were covered (with the possible exception of some comparisons with international experience). It seems, therefore, that respondents were seeking *more* on those issues, or had not found the relevant information, rather than that it was actually missing.

Overall, it seems clear that (including for evaluation questionnaire respondents), there was enough information and that the relevant information was provided. Although there were quite a few comments about where participants would have liked more information, it is clear that the Consultation Document does cover the vast majority of the issues relevant to building new nuclear power stations in the UK, which is the focus of this consultation. It is important for any consultation process to balance the need for full coverage of all issues related to the subject, and the need for a Document that is fit for purpose and not too long to be practical for participants. In this case, we can conclude that the Consultation Document did cover all the key issues and was fit for this purpose.

In terms of the extent to which participants could express their views fully, whether the questions for the consultation were clear and how easy it was for them to input their views, the feedback from questionnaire respondents was as follows. Again, figures given are for percentages of the total of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents; 5% of respondents did not answer this question.

	Yes	No	Don't know
Were you able to express your views fully in the consultation?	79%	13%	3%
Were the questions in the consultation clear?	85%	7%	2%

This feedback suggests strongly that there were very few problems with respondents feeling they could express their views (79% agreed), and that the questions in the consultation were clear (85% agreed).

In terms of the ease with which participants could input their views the feedback was as follows. Again, 5% of evaluation questionnaire respondents did not answer this question.

	Very easy	Fairly easy	Not very easy	Not at all easy
How easy was it to input your views to the consultation?	36%	43%	9%	7%

Again, this feedback suggests there were very few problems for respondent in giving their views to the consultation: 79% said it was easy and 16% disagreed. Comments from questionnaire respondents on these issues were as follows:

- 12 out of the total of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents felt the questions were leading or biased (about 6% of respondents); a further three felt the questions were limiting and/or too narrow
- 7 out of 198 said they had written a letter to supplement the answers they gave to the 18 questions, to be able to say what they wanted to; another 3 said they had gone outside the wording of the question and said what they wanted anyway
- 4 felt there was not enough space on the response form / text box to answer fully
- 4 felt that whatever they said, it would be ignored.

Other comments included that it was a very time consuming exercise, to work through all the questions, and that the deadline had been tight.

The relatively small number of the concerns about the questions and the ease of inputting views, and the otherwise positive feedback from respondents, suggests that the overall design and structure of the online and written consultation did work well, and did enable participants to express and input their views, and that the questions worked well to structure that process.

5.3.5 Recording and reporting

The issues for the evaluation in terms of recording and reporting are around the extent to which the process of recording and reporting were transparent, accessible and comprehensive.

In terms of recording, all the online submissions were captured on a unique database created for the purpose. The written submissions sent by post, fax and email were added to the same database. Where participants had used the response form to make their submission, this was just a case of copy typing from the written version to the database.

Of the responses received by post, email and fax, about 400 did not or only partially followed the formal structure of the consultation questions. These responses were analysed outside of the analysis database. Findings were then integrated into the summary report by adding the specific points wherever seemed most appropriate. As the analysis process covered all specific points, wherever they happened to be placed (e.g. under whatever specific question, or not), this did not cause any difficulties with ensuring that all points were captured and added to the overall analysis.

In terms of reporting, activities started before the consultation closed. As participants could edit their submissions throughout the consultation (up to the closing date), none of the submissions could be considered final until the consultation formally closed. That approach created time pressures on the contractors to produce a final report in a short time (after the consultation closed), and on policy makers to incorporate all these comments in drafts of the White Paper to meet internal departmental deadlines.

In order to minimise these problems, it was agreed that policy makers would be given sight of data as it was added to the website. This was so that they could see the sorts of issues emerging and could start to think about the implications and what they would do about them. There were discussions between BERR and the contractors to adapt the way data was presented, and new ways discovered that could meet policy makers needs more effectively. In addition, a system was introduced that flagged up those submissions that had been changed after the initial posting, and the findings from those were checked and reanalysed.

As the consultation progressed, analysis of the data began and input was grouped into themes so that answers on an issue that were in questions on a different issue were not lost. That collation of data continued throughout, until the consultation closed and the final analysis and report writing began.

The final report on the results from the written and online consultation was produced at the end of November 2007 (drafts on 23 November; final versions on 30 November). That report was prepared by Dialogue by Design (the contractor that ran the online element of the consultation) and summarised all the results from the written and online consultation.

In the first instance, that report was provided to BERR policy makers, alongside the full set of consultation responses. That report was then formally published in January 2008 as part of the full report of consultation responses⁶².

⁶² *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008.

All the written and online submissions to the consultation were published in full on the website once the consultation had closed. No registration was needed to access these results, so they were open for anyone to view (not just those who had made the comments). The published comments were grouped under the specific question, by themes, and by contributor.

This approach to publication raised a number of issues:

- Some green groups said that they wanted to see comments during the consultation, as this had happened in some previous consultations. In this case, the decision was taken to enable participants to edit their submissions as long as the consultation continued. Feedback from some questionnaire respondents suggested that participants valued the opportunity to do this.
- There were some discussions about whether submissions should show who had made them, or whether they should all be anonymous. In this case, all contributors were named alongside their submissions, unless they specifically requested confidentiality (261 of the total 2,728 did this).

There are different perspectives on this. It can be seen as more open and transparent to publish names alongside submissions to consultations; alternatively it could be seen as reducing the number of participants as some will not want even the expectation that they will be named. This is an issue that may need further consideration in future. Both have positive and negative implications and the way it was done in this case was as much good practice as keeping all submissions anonymous.

Once the consultation was closed, participants and anyone else interested could view the results on the same consultation website. There was feedback from questionnaire respondents on how easy it was for them view the results of the consultation online. The feedback from evaluation questionnaire respondents was as follows (figures shown as percentage of respondents; only 58% of the total of 198 respondents answered this question).

How easy was it to view the results of the consultation online?	Written evaluation respondents	Online evaluation respondents	Combined result
Very easy	29 (20%)	17 (31%)	46 (23%)
Fairly easy	24 (17%)	29 (54%)	53 (27%)
Not very easy	3 (2%)	2 (4%)	5 (3%)
Not at all easy	7 (5%)	2 (4%)	9 (5%)

This analysis shows, in summary, that 50% of evaluation questionnaire respondents overall found it was easy to view the results of the consultation online. However, there are subtleties within these overall figures:

- Although 50% does not seem to suggest it was particularly easy to view the results online, only 8% of respondents overall said it was not easy. Actually only 58% of the total 198 respondents to the evaluation overall answered this question. 99 out of the 113 who answered the question found it easy, which is about 88% of respondents to this actual question that found viewing the results easy.
- There are some differences between the feedback from evaluation respondents who answered online or in writing:

- 46 of the total of 50 evaluation respondents who answered this question and had responded to the evaluation online found it was easy to view the results online, which is about 92% of those respondents
- 53 of the 63 evaluation respondents who answered this question and had responded to the evaluation in writing found it was easy to view the results online, which is about 84% of those respondents

Although these are not major differences, it does draw attention to the greater difficulties found by those responding in writing to viewing the results online.

The comments following the tick box answers reveal what some of the problems may have been: 25 out of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents said that they had no access to a computer, broadband and/or online facilities. A further 7 said they had not viewed them a further 6 said they had not tried to view them - possibly for the same reason.

This is a rather higher figure of respondents than might have been expected not to have access to these sorts of online facilities and may be worth bearing in mind in planning future online consultation exercises, and particularly the reporting back procedures.

The process used here of providing access to all the results of the written and online consultation, and publishing the summary report for policy makers, is good practice in terms of transparency, openness and accessibility. Feedback from participants and policy makers shows that few had complaints or difficulties accessing the results, other than those that did not have access to computers and/or online facilities. In future, a different approach to publishing the results could be considered so that those without access to computers are also fully informed. Overall, however, the approach to recording and reporting in the written and online strand of the consultation did work well.

5.3.6 Influence on policy

The key issues for the evaluation in terms of influence on policy are around both the *process* through which data from participants is used to develop policy, and the extent to which the *content* of the comments from participants has influenced the final policy decisions.

For this assessment, the evaluation draws on documentary analysis and interviews with policy makers and others from BERR.

In terms of the *process* of using the data from consultation participants in developing policy, feedback from policy makers suggests that the data from the written and online consultation provided the backbone to the whole process of integrating participant input to the drafting of the White Paper.

Overall, the policy development process worked by drawing on data from all strands of the consultation in parallel, in order to draft the White Paper. This overall policy development *process*, and the influence of the participant input from all strands, is described in section 8.4 below.

In terms of *content*, the results of the written and online consultation (summarised in the table above) show that, on all 18 questions asked, more respondents agreed with the Government propositions than disagreed; in nine of the 18 questions, more than twice as many respondents agreed with the Government propositions than disagreed.

A brief analysis of the summary report produced by Dialogue by Design shows there were five areas where the most questions and negative comments arose (although overall responses still showed a clear majority supporting the Government's propositions):

- **The economics of building new nuclear power stations.** In terms of simple numbers, 405 agreed with the Government's propositions, and 244 disagreed (out of 1,524 total responses to this question). A key issue here was the degree of subsidy by the taxpayer; another was around nuclear power being controlled by private sector companies.
- **Issues of safety, security, health and non-proliferation.** Here, 657 agreed with the Government propositions, 373 disagreed (out of 1,438 total responses to this question). Issues here were largely to do with risk and regulation.
- **Supply of nuclear fuel.** 521 agreed with the Government propositions, 255 disagreed (out of 1,231 total responses to this question). Issues here were around price, which countries were able and willing to supply fuel, and concerns about a finite supply of uranium. There were also comments about reprocessing spent fuel here.
- **Reprocessing spent fuel.** 376 agreed, 216 disagreed (out of 1,174 total responses to this question). There were links here to problems of managing waste, and to potentially limited access to uranium; as well as to safety and proliferation.
- **Whether energy companies should be given the option to invest in new nuclear power stations.** 734 agreed with the Government propositions on this, the substantive question for the consultation (Question 16); 424 disagreed (out of 1,338 total responses to this question). Comments here focused partly on the view that the decision had already been taken, economics and ownership, demand reduction and decentralisation of power generation, the need for the Government to take action more quickly, and wider issues of energy supply and the energy mix.

Although there was clear support from the majority of participants here for the Government propositions in the Consultation Document overall, the issues above (and a wealth of other points from participants providing detailed and nuanced input) were among the main messages for Government from the consultation.

These issues were slightly different from the hierarchy of priorities from the public deliberative events (see section 7), and from the stakeholder events (see section 6), although many of the same issues arose in all three strands.

It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to undertake a full documentary review and analysis to check whether all the many detailed points raised by individual respondents to the written and online consultation were reviewed and responded to by Government policy makers.

However, as mentioned above, feedback from BERR policy makers suggests a thorough and robust *process* for reviewing and considering the input from participants across the consultation, as part of the policy development activities leading to the publication of the White Paper, and the extent to which these issues were addressed in that White Paper, are covered in section 8.4.

In addition, the written and online consultation process included full publication of all the points made by participants (except those that specifically requested privacy), which is an open and transparent approach and allows for external scrutiny, by stakeholders, of the extent to which their own points have been addressed.

This evaluation has received no feedback that this has not happened and, although that does not provide a definitive answer as some participants may have become so disillusioned with the process that they no longer responded, there was at least every opportunity for them to do so.

No system of measuring the influence of participant input is comprehensive and without flaws and limitations. However, the process used here by BERR for reviewing and taking into account participant input, and publishing that input and the responses to it openly (including in the White Paper) seems highly robust by any norms of consultation practice.

In terms of content, it is possible to see that from the analysis of key issues above, and a comparison to the issues addressed explicitly in the White Paper (see section 8.4 for more details), that almost all were covered. The one issue that is not explicitly addressed is that of ownership by the private sector, and the role of that sector in the future development of nuclear power; the implications of that issue are also addressed in section 8.4.

5.4 Overall findings, conclusions and lessons for the future

This section provides an overview of what worked best and least well in the written and online consultation, and identifies some lessons for future consultations.

As before, the summary of feedback provided here is based on participant feedback in written and online evaluation questionnaires. A total of 198 completed questionnaires were returned; a response rate of 7% of the total 2,728 participants in this strand of the consultation.

5.4.1 What worked well and less well

There is feedback from questionnaire respondents, in answer to open questions, about what they felt **worked best** overall in the consultation. Although the feedback was limited in terms of quantity, there were some fairly clear messages, including:

- 15 out of the total of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents specifically identified the Consultation Document as the element that worked best in the consultation (about 8% of respondents), and another 12 respondents said the best aspects were the amount and quality of the information provided

- 10 respondents said the website had been the best aspect; a further 3 specifically mentioned it had been good to be able to edit input over time
- 9 respondents said the best aspect had been that the consultation had happened at all
- 8 said the format and structure overall worked well, with the information presented followed by specific questions, and a further 3 said the structure had allowed them to expand on the issues
- 5 said the best aspect had been just being invited and being able to take part
- 4 said that the best aspect had been the report back / being able to view all the comments at the end

This is fairly positive feedback overall. There were also some negative comments, as shown in the answers to the open question about what **worked least well**, on which the feedback was as follows:

- 11 out of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents said the worst aspect was that the questions and process overall was biased and/or leading (about 6% of respondents)
- 6 said the questions had been limiting
- 6 said the worst thing was that the decision had already been made
- 5 said that the Consultation Document was too long, detailed and complicated
- 3 said that the worst thing had been the lack of any debate about alternatives
- 3 said that the worst thing was that the Government was still talking, and should have decided and taken action sooner.

Although some respondents clearly felt very strongly about some of these, and other, negative issues, there are relatively few complaints overall. This does not mean there were no problems with the consultation but rather that relatively few problems were raised by many people. They are serious issues, however, and it is important to consider these in planning future consultations.

Questionnaire respondents were also asked if there were any specific **lessons they would like Government to take from this consultation**. The responses to this open question were:

- 12 out of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents (about 6% of respondents) said there should be more publicity and advertising, especially at local level, to aim for a bigger and wider response and to try to encourage more people to take part; several mentioned that none of the people they knew had heard of the consultation
- 8 out of 198 respondents said that the public did not always know enough to participate fully, and 3 said the Government should focus on listening to expert views
- 6 out of 198 said Government should listen more to the public, including as a way of getting beyond green groups

- 5 said there needs to be simpler information provided for some stakeholders
- 5 said it was important that consultations should be genuine, open and honest
- 4 said it was important that the Government continued to engage and consult with the public and stakeholders
- 4 said that the crucial thing was to tackle the problem of nuclear waste
- 3 said it was important to consult earlier, and certainly before decisions were made
- 3 out of 198 evaluation questionnaire respondents suggested that future consultations should be run by independent bodies, on behalf of Government.

There were various other comments here, and in a final question asking for any further points, with a fairly balanced split between those in favour of getting on quickly now with building new nuclear power stations and those who wanted to see an immediate stop to any further development of nuclear power. All these comments made on evaluation questionnaires are shown in Annex 1.

5.4.2 Conclusions and lessons for the future

Drawing on all the feedback, observation, interviews and documentary review, as evaluators we would suggest that the written and online element of the consultation did work well overall. From the discipline and work required to produce a comprehensive Consultation Document to the production of a White Paper that explicitly responds to issues raised in the consultation before articulating policy conclusions, this has been an open, transparent and effective process.

The influence on policy is clear, and much clearer than in many consultations, and policy makers have been very open about the process they went through to reach policy conclusions (full details in section 8.4).

Evaluators must always be sceptical about what they are told, especially as those running consultations better understand what is required by good practice.

However, in this case the spread of policy maker interviews that were carried out for the evaluation, and the consistency of the descriptions of the process and the key issues identified (alongside observation, informal discussions and interviews with others in the process) lead us to conclude that, in this case, participant input was listened to, considered and taken account of in the policy conclusions that emerged in the White Paper.

The lessons we would propose for the future are based on what worked well as well as what worked less well:

- **Publicise the results.** In future, it would be very valuable for policy makers to publicise the results and the impacts of participant input on policy conclusions much more widely.

There has been considerable scepticism throughout this process about whether Government would, or had, taken any notice of what the public and stakeholder participants had said. When, as here, there is clear evidence available about what has and has not changed, a simple statement about both the process and content of influence on policy may help build wider trust in consultation process, and in Government decision and policy making.

- **Team work.** The team work in this part of the process was obviously a major strength, both within BERR and between BERR and the contractors. This was not just a gloss added to the process after the event. As evaluators we were aware of the constant meetings to ensure the data could be easily collected, analysed and assimilated by policy leads at the right time and as early as possible. This was a demanding workload but clearly essential and worth the effort given by all involved.
- **Transparency of reporting.** The publication on the website of all the results of the written and online consultation, as well as the summary report produced for policy makers from that raw data, is a model of good practice in openness and transparency.

The only additional activity that would enhance this approach in future is to consider those that do not have online access, and consider some way to provide them with easy access to the results.

A summary of the overall results of the consultation, and how they were used to draft the White Paper (as in the first point above) may answer this problem. This summary would, of course, need to be printed and sent by post as well as being available online.

- **Extending the numbers and mix of participants.** The open access of this strand of the consultation, so that anyone who wanted to could participate, allowed for a good mix of participants in the written and online consultation that was entirely adequate for the purposes; and policy makers felt that the quality and quantity of information they dealt with was more than sufficient. Policy makers did comment that, after a certain number, the issues were being repeated and that more would have been unlikely to have produced anything new or different.

However, it would be good practice to continually develop the range of participants so that there could be an even wider mix of views and perspectives available to policy makers in future.

The development of better lists of national, regional and local stakeholders would help achieve that. Direct invitations will always be more effective than advertisements in terms of gaining more participants, although advertisements can be valuable in simply spreading awareness that the consultation is happening, and interest in taking part.

One problem with direct invitations to potential participants is that it is likely to take much more time for messages to spread about how people can get involved. Voluntary and community organisations communicate with their members at regular but not frequent intervals, and this will have implications for the speed of spreading messages about opportunities for involvement.

- The mix of participants in the written and online consultation provided a very good complement to the public and stakeholder participants in the various meetings, and provided information in a different form. Consultations that use all these methods, and ensure that policy makers attend meetings to hear views in person as well as reading written submissions, will have access to the richest sources of evidence. The approach used here was good practice that could be followed by others.
- **Providing sufficient relevant information.** It is always difficult to get the information for consultations right, and this one was under particular pressure to provide comprehensive yet accessible information. The feedback from evaluation questionnaire respondents was that it did largely work, although the long list of issues that respondents felt were missing, but which were in fact covered in the Consultation Document, suggested that not all had read the entire document, or had forgotten, or that they wanted more information on specific subjects.

Providing sufficient relevant information that covers all the issues of interest to all potential participants will always be a challenge. In this case, the balance was about right. All the key issues were covered, to different degrees, so there was sufficient relevant information for participants to contribute to the consultation.

- **Structuring the consultation questions.** The questions provided to structure participants' feedback worked well to provide that overall framework. There were some complaints that the questions were too limiting or too narrow, but also significant evidence that those who wanted to make points outside the scope of the questions found ways to do so - either by sending in an additional document, or by simply giving their views on the issue they were concerned about within a question that was on something like the same point.

The point was also made in some feedback that there were a lot of questions overall (18). Certainly numbers of responses reduced as people worked their way through, with about 1,000 fewer responses to the last question than to the first. The lessons here apply really only to the online process and seem to be:

- provide an overview of the questions so that people can see the whole picture of the issues they will be asked about, and can see where they have got to as they go through the process of giving their views in answer to specific questions
- make the first question the substantive question, so that if people just want to give overall views they can do so easily - and to ensure that as many participants as possible do actually answer the substantive question
- allowing people to go back and edit their contributions over the course of the consultation seems to work well for participants, although it seems this has the potential to cause problems for those reading the responses as they come in as the issues raised by participants may change over time as they edit their input; it may be that a 'parking lot' system could be used so that people who are not sure they have finalised their submission can leave it there and come back to it, and those reading responses will know that the ones they are seeing are final versions.

Overall, the *quality* of participants' responses to the written and online consultations seems to have exceeded expectation. The *quantity* of input here was not enormous compared to some other national consultations. However, more importantly, the mix of views and the quantity were quite appropriate and sufficient for a thorough picture of public and stakeholder views to be achieved by policy makers, particularly as these were supported by input from public and stakeholder events. The recording, reporting and feedback worked well and was open and transparent. In addition, there is evidence that the input did influence policy (see section 8.4). Overall, the written and online element of the consultation achieved all it set out to do and to high standards of good practice.

6. Stakeholder events

6.1 Introduction

Stakeholder engagement took place throughout the whole consultation, including stakeholder participation in developing materials for the public events (see section 7) and opportunities to participate in the online and written consultation (see section 5). There were some other ad hoc events, attended by various stakeholders (see section 4).

This section focuses on the three main types of stakeholder events that took place around the UK during the course of the consultation which involved a total of 625 stakeholders overall:

- Twelve regional stakeholder events were held in July and September 2007 in locations covering each of the English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Nine site stakeholder events were held in August, September and October 2007 on or near existing nuclear power station sites.
- Two reconvened meetings were held in February 2008 in London and Manchester to explain the results of the consultation and the content of the White Paper to stakeholders who had attended previous events.

The focus of these events was to provide participants with opportunities to hear more about the consultation and give their views.

This section presents an overview of the planning, design and delivery of the stakeholder events, summarises and evaluates each part of the process, including feedback from those involved, and assesses the value and effectiveness of this strand of the consultation.

6.2 The regional stakeholder events

6.2.1 The regional stakeholder events process

The twelve regional stakeholder events were held around the UK during July and September 2007. The purpose of the twelve regional stakeholder events was to give:

"representatives of organisations and groups the opportunity to hear more about the consultation and to voice their views or use the meetings to help them draft their written response"⁶³.

The locations were chosen to cover all nine of the English regions, plus Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as summarised in the following table.

⁶³ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.62.

City	Region	Date	Number attending
Belfast	Northern Ireland	17 September 2007	10
Birmingham	West Midlands	26 July 2007	17
Bristol	South West	20 July 2007	30
Cambridge	East of England	27 July 2007	18
Cardiff	Wales	18 September 2007	25
Glasgow	Scotland	21 September 2007	44
Leeds	Yorkshire	24 July 2007	30
London	London	13 September 2007	52
Manchester	North West	25 July 2007	62
Newcastle	North East	23 July 2007	31
Nottingham	East Midlands	12 September 2007	20
Reading	South East	14 September 2007	21
Total attending			360

BERR staff co-ordinated all the events, with the support of the COI and M (a logistics company). The invitations policy was stated as being "to enable as many representatives from a wide range of organisations to attend and where groups recommend additional participants, they were invited and encouraged to attend"⁶⁴.

The total number of stakeholders attending these regional events was 360, as shown in the table above, with individual events attracting between 10 and 62 participants. Initial invitations were followed up with a reminder email and a phone call. Once people registered to attend, they were sent a registration pack which included details about the venue, timing, summary agenda etc, and a copy of the Consultation Document.

The covering letter also encouraged these participants to let others know; it said "If you know additional people representing a group or organisation (these meetings are not intended for private members of the public) that would like to attend, then they should contact [email and phone number given]. Admittance to this event will be subject to pre-registration." From this source and others, some participants did request invitations, which were provided.

Each event lasted half a day; the July events ran from 10am to 12.30pm; the September events were extended by half an hour and ran from 10am to 1pm.

The events were usually held in a city centre hotel, and lunch was provided for all participants. Each participant was given a pack with an attendance list, copies of the presentations, a summary agenda and an evaluation form (to be completed at the end). The pack also included details of how to respond to the consultation online, and order printed copies of the Consultation Document and response form. Copies of the Consultation Document were also available at the events.

All the events were designed and delivered by BERR officials, with support from COI. Senior BERR staff took the lead facilitator role and made all the presentations using a common set of Powerpoint slides; in Newcastle, Malcolm Wicks MP, Minister for Energy, made the presentation.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, para 1.64

Participants were seated in table groups, each with a facilitator and sometimes also a separate note taker. Again, BERR staff facilitated some of the table groups; some tables were facilitated by COI staff and some by additional specially recruited facilitators. The logistics were managed by M, who were also responsible for all the audio-visual equipment including recording the plenary discussions.

The overall agenda was as follows, structured around six key questions:

- Welcome and introductions by lead facilitator (10 minutes)
- Presentation by lead facilitator of overview of the consultation process, followed by questions and answers (15 minutes)
- Presentation by BERR officials on whether new nuclear build should be an option as part of the energy mix (10 minutes). This was followed by discussions in small groups at tables, to consider three questions (25 minutes):
 - Q1 Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view on carbon emissions from nuclear power stations? Are there any other aspects of carbon emissions associated with nuclear power that should be considered?
 - Q2 Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view on the security of supply impact of nuclear power stations? Why do you say that?
 - Q3 Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view on the value of having nuclear power as an option? Why do you say that? Are there any other considerations that we have not discussed?
- Plenary feedback of key points and discussion, facilitated by lead facilitator (20 minutes).
- Presentation by BERR officials on nuclear safety and waste (10 minutes). This was followed by further discussions in small groups at tables, to consider two further questions (25 minutes):
 - Q4 Do you agree or disagree with the Government's views on safety, health, transport and security issues? Why do you say that?
 - Q5 What do you think are the ethical considerations related to a decision to allow new nuclear power stations to be built?
- Plenary feedback of key points and discussion, facilitated by lead facilitator (20 minutes).
- Table discussions again, followed by plenary session on whether the Government should take its preliminary view forward, based around the question:
 - Q6 Having considered all the issues, and in the context of tackling climate change and energy security, do you agree or disagree that it would be in the public interest to give energy companies the option of investing in

new nuclear power stations? What conditions would you like to be in place (e.g. yes ... if; or no ... unless).

- Participants were thanked for attending, asked to complete the evaluation questionnaire, and directed to lunch.

These timings varied slightly with an extra half an hour added at the September events.

In terms of recording and reporting, the outputs from the regional stakeholder events were captured as follows:

- Notes of table discussions were taken on laptops by the table facilitator and/or separate note taker using a proforma.
- Transcriptions were made of the recordings of plenary discussions. At those locations where recording facilities were not available, those main points were captured by facilitators on laptops.

Detailed reports were produced of all twelve stakeholder events, and published on the consultation website. These reports summarised the background to the consultation (including the Government's preliminary view that "it is in the public interest to allow energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations"). These reports also included a list of participants, a summary of the main points from the table discussion groups, and a transcript of the points made, questions and answers from the plenary sessions. The slides from the presentations were also published on the website.

After the last of the stakeholder events, Henley Centre HeadlightVision were commissioned to undertake an independent review of the outputs from all the stakeholder meetings (regional and site meetings). The report of that review was provided to BERR policy makers as part of the material they considered in coming to the conclusions that were published in the White Paper reporting the Government's decision - to go ahead with giving private companies the option of building new nuclear power stations - which was published in January 2008⁶⁵. The Henley Centre report was also published on the consultation website, as part of the set of reports on the consultation responses⁶⁶.

As the events had been facilitated by BERR officials, including several senior policy makers, they were able to hear (and respond to) stakeholder views and questions first hand.

6.2.2 Evaluation of the regional stakeholder events

This section covers the evaluation of the 12 regional stakeholder events. The assessment that follows is based on analysis of the questionnaires returned by stakeholder participants at the end of the events: 271 from the total of 360 participants returned questionnaires: a 75% return rate overall. Full analyses of the questionnaires is provided in Annex 2, which covers all twelve events. All the percentages given below are based on percentage of respondents; figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

⁶⁵ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. A White Paper on Nuclear Power.* BERR, London, January 2008

⁶⁶ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses.* BERR, London, January 2008

In addition to questionnaire feedback, 24 formal telephone interviews were carried out with a sample of participants from each event. The sample covered all twelve events, with slightly more interviewees from those events with the largest numbers of participants: there was one interviewee each from Belfast, Cardiff, Nottingham and Reading; two from Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Leeds, London; three from Glasgow and Newcastle; and four from Manchester. The interviews with policy makers attending the events, BERR and the COI also provided feedback on these events.

The regional stakeholder event participants interviewed covered the following categories:

- 6 from NGOs
- 5 from business and industry
- 3 from local / regional government
- 3 from government agencies
- 7 others (academics, unions etc)

This sample was selected partly to ensure a reasonably balanced coverage of the three main sectors represented at the stakeholder events (the private, public and NGO / voluntary sectors), and others.

The sample was also selected to balance the feedback on questionnaires; as there were sometimes more business and industry representatives attending the regional stakeholder events than other types of stakeholders, their views are strongly represented in the questionnaires. It therefore seemed appropriate to counterbalance that feedback with interviews that covered the range of types of stakeholders more fully.

The final selection of interviewees also depended to some extent on availability and willingness to take part. Overall, a good coverage of all events and types of stakeholders was achieved in the final sample for evaluation interview.

The interviews with stakeholders were conducted in April and May 2008. It had been decided early in the planning for the evaluation that interviews with participants would be undertaken after the final decision was announced, and the White Paper had been published. However, the fact that there was a time lag of some months between attendance at a stakeholder event and interview should be noted.

In addition, evaluators attended three of the twelve stakeholder events (Birmingham, Newcastle and Belfast) to observe and talk informally with those involved in the meeting. Some documentary review has also been undertaken. The assessment that follows also draws on the evaluator's previous experience of national stakeholder engagement exercises.

Representation and diversity

The key issues for the evaluation of the regional stakeholder events in terms of representation and diversity are around the extent to which each event provided a mix of types of stakeholders and their organisations to ensure the necessary diversity of views.

It should be noted that the type of stakeholder organisation is no guarantee of a particular view of the consultation or of the desirability or otherwise of building new nuclear power stations.

However, it remains important for the evaluation to consider the numbers and types of stakeholder organisations invited and attending the different events. We have therefore completed a summary analysis for this evaluation of the numbers and types of stakeholders invited, and those that participated (see below).

BERR managed all the invitations to the stakeholder events internally, using an initial overall stakeholder analysis developed with advice from 3KQ, a consultancy specialising in stakeholder engagement. From this analysis, an invitation list for stakeholder events was constructed. That list included suggestions from Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices and the devolved administrations.

The final invitation list included local authorities, businesses, NGOs, unions and other organisations (see below). In addition, some umbrella organisations were asked to disseminate invitations to their regional people. Further internal research was undertaken to identify faith based organisations and other community organisations in each region.

Information provided by BERR and COI to the evaluation states that about 3,350 invitations were sent out to about 2,000 organisations. The full list of organisations invited was published on the consultation website (www.direct.gov.uk/nuclearpower2007). A review of this list of organisations suggests the following were invited:

- all Government Offices, Regional Development Agencies, regional economic and energy partnerships and other formal regional bodies
- all district, borough, unitary and county councils; also local economic partnerships, local strategic partnerships, environment forums, energy and environment networks, learning and skills councils; also town councils, community councils and associations of local councils
- some other public bodies including some health trusts, police, fire and rescue services
- about 150 national NGOs including the major environmental organisations as well as think tanks and social welfare charities
- about 80 local and regional voluntary and community organisations including some rural community councils, faith groups and inter-faith networks, housing associations, local environmental groups, Women's Institute and others
- about 45 government agencies, including quangos and regulators
- about 70 academic contacts including in universities, research institutes and learned societies
- about 20 union representatives
- about 150 business and industry organisations including industry associations, local chambers of commerce and local economic development initiatives
- about 20 energy companies

- about 40 other professional bodies including individual companies and professional bodies for architecture, law, finance, planning, insurance
- all formal stakeholder groups associated with existing nuclear power stations (site stakeholder groups).

From this invitation list, a total of 360 people took part in the stakeholder events. The numbers of participants at each regional event are given in 6.2.1 above; the table below summarises the types of stakeholders at the different events as well as total numbers.

The analysis of numbers at each event has been based on the attendance lists published in the reports of the regional stakeholder event, and then cross-checking again with the number of evaluation questionnaires returned.

In some cases, there were more questionnaires returned than participants shown in the other lists and, where that is the case, we have taken the number of questionnaires as the true figure. This approach has been taken because we know from observation that there was one more person in attendance at one event than was shown on the attendance list (a Greenpeace representative). Given these uncertainties, the figures shown cannot be guaranteed to be completely accurate but can be expected to be reasonably so as the anomalies are very minor (1-2 people at 3-4 events).

The analysis of categories of stakeholders is based on the same sources. In some cases the 'type' of stakeholder is not apparent from the name given. In those cases, that individual has been added to the 'unknown' category. In other cases, the individual has given no organisation at all. Again, these have been added to the 'unknown' category.

The 'other' category covers those organisations that are identified but do not fit into the main categories. These include professional bodies (such as institutes of engineers, planners), consultancies and LLPs (usually solicitors or accountants), energy networks and forums, public bodies such as ports authorities and nuclear site stakeholder groups.

The inclusions in other categories that may need explanation are as follows:

- the business category includes construction companies, engineers, business networks and chambers of commerce
- the local and regional government category includes an association of local councils
- the NGO category includes green groups, faith groups, parish and community councils
- the academic category includes universities, learned societies and laboratories
- the Government department category includes devolved administrations and assemblies, regional development agencies and regional government offices.

The summary analysis of all participants at each stakeholder event is as follows:

	Total attended	Regional / local government	Energy companies	Other business / industry	NGOs	Unions	Government agencies	Government departments	Academic	Other	Unknown
Belfast	10	3			4		1	1	1		
Birmingham*	17	1	6	1	2			2	4	1	
Bristol*	30	2	4		5	1		3	2	4	9
Cambridge*	18	3	3	1	5				2	1	3
Cardiff	25	4	2	6	3		1			4	5
Glasgow	44	5	9	3	3	4	1	2	1	5	11
Leeds*	30	3		4	4		1	4	2	7	5
London	52	4	5	3	6	1	1	3	6	10	13
Manchester*	62	6	8	4	9	6		3	3	6	17
Newcastle*	31		3	4	5	4		2	2	2	9
Nottingham	20	3	4	2	3			2	2	2	2
Reading	21	2	7	2	1				1	4	4
Total	360	36	51	30	50	16	5	22	26	46	78

Half of these regional stakeholder events (those marked *) were held in July 2007, before the deliberative public engagement events and before the withdrawal of some green NGOs; the other half were held in September 2007 after the withdrawal of those green groups.

The analysis of the types of stakeholders attending the regional events in the table above shows that:

- 36 stakeholders from local and regional government attended overall, with representation of this stakeholder group at all regional events except Newcastle
- 50 stakeholders from NGOs attended overall, with representation at all 12 events; this includes organisations such as Friends of the Earth local and regional groups (at Birmingham, Cambridge, Cardiff, Glasgow, Manchester and Newcastle), CND (at Leeds, London, Manchester and Nottingham) and CPRE (at Cambridge and Leeds). As noted above, this representation changed after some green NGOs withdrew on 7 September 2007.
- 51 stakeholders from energy and/or nuclear industry companies attended, with representation at 10 of the 12 events.
- 30 stakeholders from other business and industry interests attended, at 10 of the 12 events.
- 26 stakeholders from academic institutions attended, at 11 of the 12 events.

This range of types of stakeholders in attendance does demonstrate a good range of representation of the different interests overall. However, there is clearly a greater number of business and industry, and energy company, representatives (81) in total than any other grouping. This is reflected in comments from participants (see below).

There was quite strong feedback from some stakeholder participants and BERR that NGOs were not represented as fully as they had hoped or wanted (see below). However, NGOs were in fact represented at almost all the events. The feedback therefore seems to suggest disappointment at the smaller numbers of green NGOs at each event than had been hoped, rather than lack of NGO representation at all.

More noticeable from this analysis is that some events attracted a lot more stakeholders in total than others: the lowest being Belfast with only 10 participants but also fairly low numbers at Birmingham (17), Cambridge (18), Nottingham (20) and Reading (21).

Although no formal target figures had been set for these events, an informal expectation had been that around 50 - 60 participants would attend each. Glasgow (44), London (52) and Manchester (62) were the only ones that reached that expectation. Although clearly rather fewer participants overall than had been hoped, the analysis above does show a good mix of types of participants at all events, enabling a reasonable spread of views to be represented and points to be made and recorded.

The feedback from stakeholder participants about whether they felt that the relevant stakeholders were represented at the meeting was as follows:

- 47% of regional stakeholder event questionnaire respondents said they thought the relevant stakeholders were represented; 20% said they thought the relevant stakeholders were NOT represented; 21% said they did not know.
- From those stakeholder questionnaire responses, the Bristol event was seen to be the most satisfactory in terms of representation (69% said yes, the relevant stakeholder interests were represented; 8% said no), and Glasgow the least so (27% said yes; 41% said no).
- By far the biggest gap identified by stakeholder questionnaire respondents was that there were not enough greens / NGOs (26 out of the total of 271 respondents mentioned this); a further 13 said specifically that it was a shame that green groups had pulled out / absented themselves, and a further 7 said there needed to be more anti-nuclear / opposing views. Comments on questionnaires included:

"[Needed] More scientists and Green activists" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"Anti-nuclear lobby (or at least any vocal representation/input by it) [missing]" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"No significantly anti views expressed. This may be a fair representation but some would have sharpened the debate" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Green representation was not represented by their own action. However, does this add weight to their challenge on the effective consultation process?" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

“There was no significant input from the Green / Environmental interest group” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

“I am a supporter of nuclear power, but note that few opponents were represented” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)

“Frustrating that green groups have pulled out” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

“NGO withdrawal means narrower range” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

“Hardly anyone from community/voluntary sector of NGOs” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

“Disappointing that green groups felt unable to participate in this meeting” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

“Greenpeace and FOE boycott is simply unhelpful. Rather undemocratic of them” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

“Pity FOE and Greenpeace chose not to come” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

As can be seen from these comments, there was disappointment across almost all regional events that green / environmental NGOs had not attended at all, and/or in the numbers that other participants would have liked. There was also significant regret that there had not been a stronger anti-nuclear voice in these events.

As can also be seen, there was feedback that the lack of a voice from this sector was seen by some respondents to be the decision of the green / environmental NGOs themselves, rather than purely a failure on behalf of BERR to invite them or support their involvement. In addition, the analysis above shows that there was at least some NGO representation at all events, and some green NGO representation at most.

- 10 regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 271) said there should have been more local government representatives. This was raised by respondents from Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham. Comments included:

“Some more local authority and environmental/civic groups could have attended” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

“Not much representation from local or devolved government, trades unions or environmental groups” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

- 6 questionnaire respondents (out of 271) suggested that there was an over-representation of participants from the nuclear industry. Comments included:

“Seemed to be strong over representation of nuclear interests” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

“The meeting was weighted with representatives from the industry” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

“All stakeholders were represented but numbers were skewed towards nuclear industry organisations” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

“I think that the industry already has a strong access route in the consultation and care should have been taken to fill this event with organisations without an obvious vested interest” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

"Far too many reps from nuclear industry" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

The issue here seems to be about balance rather than exclusion of certain stakeholder interests; no-one suggested any deliberate exclusion - rather the opposite. It was clear that efforts had been made to invite a range of people and some attended and some did not. This resulted in more participants from certain sectors, and with certain views, than others. Several interviewees also raised this point.

Comments from stakeholder interviewees included:

"It was quite heavily supported by the pro nuclear people. I have my views on this but basically if people had felt strongly against they would have turned up" (stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Element of self-selection. Some decided to attend and some didn't. This may have influenced the balance. There was a fair range. No-one was missing except for those who deliberately absented themselves ... Impression I got was that those involved with the industry took an interest in being there. Those objectors and interveners decided to come or not ... While it may be beneficial to have a range of stakeholders it may be useful to encourage their involvement by emphasising why they are considered important stakeholders. Government did not necessarily get the stakeholder range they planned" (stakeholder interviewee, London)

"The range of stakeholders probably was reflected but skewed in terms of numbers. 3-5 individuals who weren't supporters of nuclear power and the rest were supporters. On my table there were 5 pro-nuclear and me who wasn't." (stakeholder interviewee, Bristol).

"My impression was that it was very much packed with representatives from the nuclear industry, but it was very interesting. I learnt a lot. But it was dominated by industry." (stakeholder interviewee, Manchester).

- 5 (out of 271) regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents said they did not know who the participants were, so could not judge if the relevant interests were represented. This was a reflection of comments made throughout the feedback on this issue: that participants were not clear who had been invited and who attended their event. Similar issues were raised by interviewees.

Comments included:

"Didn't know names or organisations of the speakers – nothing in packs or in slides – or organisations that facilitators represented. Participants badges were unreadable – even round the tables. Many floor speakers didn't identify themselves" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"It would have been useful to have a list of who had been specifically invited whether they chose to come or not." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"I don't know what the criteria for invitations was. If they had invited people from Soil Association and CES etc maybe you would have had a different representation. If you hand select people then it is not a meaningful exercise." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol).

An attendance list had been part of the packs given to all participants when they arrived but these comments seem more a reflection of not having a full sense of who was in the room. Introductions among participants were done at tables in some cases but may not have been universal.

This could be addressed in future in several ways: quickly go round the room at the start and ask each individual to give their name and organisation; attendance lists provided could show category of stakeholder alongside names and organisations (e.g. industry, NGO, local government); and there could be a summary from the lead facilitator of who had been invited

(including approximate numbers), and who had accepted and this could be repeated on the information in the packs to introduce the attendance list.

Similar feedback on the mix of participants was received from the interviews undertaken later with stakeholder participants. 17 interviewees (out of the total of 24) said the relevant stakeholder interests had been represented; 7 said they had not. 6 mentioned the lack of opposing views; 3 said that all interests had been represented but that there had been more pro- than anti-nuclear participants. Comments from stakeholder interviewees included:

"On table majority were from the nuclear sector. But fair mix in the room and good balance between pro-con which was the important issue" (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"Broadly [there was a good mix], in terms of the fact that it was a diagonal slice. People had gone out of their way to make sure there was this representation" (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Good representation of stakeholders opposed as well as those in the business ... I know there were people who weren't asked to attend and requested to do so and were allowed to do so" (industry stakeholder interviewee, London)

"Reasonable cross section in terms of people from environmental side as well as those associated with nuclear industry and scientific community. Less obvious people from more a community perspective." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Skewed by the absence of the antis apart from demonstrations. So did not have their views. But there were a few people inside who gave opposing views." (business stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow).

"There was strong representation from engineering and nuclear experts and there were a few obviously anti-nuclear voluntary sector types there but didn't seem to be a middle sort of contingent of experts who were anti. They do exist but they are individuals and so not sure how you get them to come." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Nottingham).

"There were different interests on my table. There was one from the steel industry and one from anti-nuclear. So on our particular table that had a mix" (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds).

"Could have more objectors to nuclear power e.g. Greenpeace ... It limited the discussion. But I would absolutely object to the ability of NGOs and other interest groups to stymie public consultation by refusing to take part in it" (other professional stakeholder interviewee, Cardiff).

"Did feel there was a range but there were more people there naturally for than against. So felt the relevant stakeholders were there but it was one-sided." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle).

These comments from stakeholder interviewees point to some deep problems for any stakeholder engagement, which are not unique to this consultation process. These issues are returned to at the end of this section.

In terms of representation and diversity of stakeholders, however, it is clear that these stakeholders would have found the process more satisfying if there had been more opposing views, but recognised that efforts had been made to include these voices.

Overall feedback on the regional stakeholder events

The satisfaction of participants is an important criterion for assessing the quality of any engagement process. Their feedback is an essential element of any evaluation analysis. This section focuses on participant satisfaction with the regional stakeholder events and also covers feedback from policy makers on the overall quality of the process.

In this evaluation research, stakeholder participant satisfaction was tested in a number of ways: questions on the questionnaire asking directly about whether the process was useful and worthwhile. Interviewees were also asked whether they were satisfied with their involvement in the consultation. The findings are summarised below (full details of all statistics and comments in Annex 2).

The feedback from stakeholder questionnaire respondents was as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The meeting was useful and worthwhile	42%	51%	6%	-	-

This feedback shows that, overall, **93% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that the meeting had been useful and worthwhile**. None disagreed.

These are high levels of satisfaction. Stakeholders are often critical of engagement processes and to have not one respondent disagreeing that the meeting was useful and worthwhile is unusually positive feedback.

Comments from stakeholder questionnaire respondents included:

“A very good, if belated, attempt to cover the issue. The structure and conduct of the seminar was good and encouraged comment” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)

“A thorough consultation – well done” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

“Consultation process has been very thorough” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

“I was pleased to be involved and found the session interesting and informative” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

“Found it useful and constructive and informative” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

“A very valid attempt as part of a very difficult objective” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)

“On balance a worthwhile exercise from the point of view of attendees” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

“Excellent workshop” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

“Excellent!” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

“Good, interesting and well run event” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

“Useful, open exercise” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

“Well organised, informative and useful event” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

“Worthwhile effort and could consult fully and engage” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

There were some significant variations in levels of satisfaction with the process overall, depending on the event attended. Glasgow had the highest number of respondents agreeing 'strongly' that the meeting had been useful and worthwhile (68%). London, Reading and Cambridge also had high levels of positive feedback with over half the respondents 'strongly' agreeing: 56% of respondents from London 'strongly' agreed, 54% from Reading, and 53% from Cambridge.

The least satisfied respondents were from Cardiff: 21% 'strongly' agreed that the meeting was useful and worthwhile, which was far lower than anywhere else - although overall 100% of Cardiff respondents agreed it had been worthwhile (and none were in the 'neither agree nor disagree category'). This suggests a good level of satisfaction without the enthusiasm of Glasgow, London, Reading and Cambridge respondents. Bristol and Newcastle were also relatively unenthusiastic: in both places, 31% 'strongly' agreed the meeting had been useful and worthwhile.

Reviewing the comments that followed the tick box answers, the reasons for these regional variations are not at all obvious. Nor were there any common factors in terms of size or mix of stakeholders among the events with the most and least satisfied respondents.

There was also a high level of overall satisfaction expressed by **stakeholder participant interviewees**, when they gave their views later. Comments included:

"Very good meeting. This is one of the better ones ... Encouraged about how much better it was than previous events. A benchmark for the future ... I think they consult a wide variety of stakeholders and they always have and of late they have been better at listening properly." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"Was quite an eye opener when you think this was going on across the country. A significant commitment to meet with real people. It marks a very different attitude." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester).

"I think it is something of a flagship consultation exercise." (other professional stakeholder interviewee, Cardiff)

"Impressed with the way it was run and impressed with the effort from everyone at BERR" (energy company interviewee, Cambridge)

This was not universal. Although the majority of feedback was positive, there were some negative comments from stakeholder interviewees about the process, including:

"I left feeling pretty depressed. It reinforced my belief that once the government has made up its mind consultation won't change anything." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"Everyone was very pleasant and it was well managed [but it was] farcical in brief." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

These final comments were not reflective of the general feedback, although there were other negative comments about specific aspects of the process, as covered below. Overall, the feedback about the process as a whole was very positive. This was supported by observation. The events did feel positive and productive, and stakeholders did discuss issues openly and easily with each other, even when they disagreed. This helped confirm that participants did find the events worthwhile and useful overall.

Clarity and transparency of objectives and process

The key issues for the evaluation of the regional stakeholder events around the clarity and transparency of objectives and process are on the extent to which it was clear to participants what the objectives of the events were, how the results would be used, and how the event fitted into the wider consultation and policy process.

Specific questions on the participant questionnaires addressed these issues. Additional questions were asked of interviewees including the extent to which they were clear about the Government's preliminary view on the future of nuclear power and about what the stakeholder involvement was expected to achieve. The findings were as follows.

Feedback from regional stakeholder evaluation questionnaire respondents was as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The objectives of the meeting were clear and transparent	24%	61%	11%	4%	1%
The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders at the meeting were clear	13%	51%	24%	10%	1%
The way the outputs from the meeting would be used was clear and transparent	13%	58%	20%	7%	1%
The level of influence of the stakeholders at this meeting on Government policy was clear and transparent	8%	51%	25%	12%	4%

This is quite positive feedback overall, particularly around the clarity of the objectives of the meeting. The analysis shows, in summary:

- 85% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that the objectives of the meeting were clear and transparent
- 64% agreed that the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders at this meeting were clear
- 71% agreed that the way the outputs from the meeting would be used was clear and transparent
- 59% agreed that the level of influence of the stakeholders at this meeting on Government policy was clear and transparent.

However, the numbers of those strongly agreeing are quite small, suggesting no great strength of feeling that these issues were clear. In particular, there was a lack of strong agreement on the clarity of the level of influence of stakeholders: only 8% agreed strongly that this was clear. This issue is covered in more detail below under the section on Influence. There was also some lack of clarity about how the outputs of the events would be used, with only 13% agreeing strongly.

The feedback on levels of clarity was more positive from stakeholder interviewees when they were asked similar questions later. These findings were as follows (not all interviewees answered all questions):

- 19 stakeholder interviewees (out of 24) said they were clear about why the Government was consulting stakeholders on the future of nuclear power; 1 was not clear. Here, the largest group of comments (6 out of 24) was that the consultation was taking place as a result of the pressure on the Government to do this because of the legal challenge by Greenpeace on the previous consultation.
- 10 interviewees (out of 24) said they were clear how the consultation fitted within the wider context of UK energy policy; 4 were not clear.
- 14 interviewees (out of 24) said they were clear about the purpose of the event they attended; none said they were not clear although 2 suggested they were not entirely clear. In some cases here, the clarity was quite cynical, with 4 interviewees saying that the purpose of the event was 'to be seen to do it'.
- 8 interviewees (out of 24) said they were clear what the stakeholder involvement was expected to achieve; 1 was not clear and another 2 were not entirely clear. Here too there was a sense that stakeholder engagement was expected to affirm the Government view - although not all respondents thought that a bad thing.
- 10 interviewees (out of 24) were clear how the information collected at the event would be used; 4 said they were not clear and 2 were not entirely clear. This response links to the feedback on the extent to which interviewees had seen feedback about the results from the consultation overall; this point is returned to below.
- 14 interviewees said they did not really know the results of the consultation, and from comments from others (e.g. that they had only seen something in the media); that seems to have been a fairly widespread view.

These findings suggest a good level of clarity about the purpose of the consultation with stakeholders and of the specific event that people took part in, but much less clarity about what the engagement was expected to achieve. Comments from stakeholder interviewees included:

"Think they said that all the responses would be looked at and everything would be taken into account. On face value that was OK, and I believed them." (NGO stakeholder, London)

"To go through a consultation process so that it could be demonstrated that they had done a consultation." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Essentially I guess because there had been criticism about previous consultation and this was an attempt to re-consult and get to a happier position." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"They had to re-run the consultation following the judicial review. So they had a discrete consultation on nuclear power ... I think the purpose was to gather in a wider range of stakeholders views who wouldn't necessarily respond to consultation people." (energy company stakeholder interviewee, Reading)

"To basically make sure the govt wasn't open to challenge in terms of not having consulted the public properly. Covering their tails on potential legal challenge." NGO stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Clear about why they said they were consulting. But from the format of the consultation and the information it was a rubber stamping exercise ... So clear yes, but sceptical about how people got there. Were they saying one thing and doing another. It may have been a completely open call and it may have just been poor response on anti-nuclear people." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"Yes, so that the government could say they had carried out consultation." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"I understood why the govt wanted to have consultation on it because it was of national importance, and also there had been the legal challenge." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Cynical view is it was because they were challenged in the high court and had to re-run the process." (business stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"Impression at the time was they were trying to gauge the views of different stakeholders and take those on board." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"The crucial issue was to raise awareness about the issues around nuclear power. And the challenges e.g. waste management, transmission and policy." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Belfast)

There also seems to have been a significant lack of clarity about the results of the consultation, and how participant input had been used (although some were clearer about this latter point). Comments from stakeholder interviewees on these issues included:

"I'm not sure I saw anything that made the connection between feedback from previous event to the conclusion of that consultation and how that fed into the whole decision making ... It would be interesting to see were there anything that was changed as a result of the stakeholders gathering." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"I think so [am clear]. I assume that BERR would have analysed it [outputs from the meeting] as part of the responses." (energy company stakeholder interviewee, Reading)

"They went to great pains to show that they were taking note. It is difficult to show that [whether Government listened to stakeholders] because the Government will have got a range of views and it is quite difficult from that range to distil down any clear theme." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"I think that the way the White Paper has been produced and Government comments since then have reflected both the concerns and reflected the public support, acceptance and concerns, about nuclear. There was analysis done including of the submissions which again have tried to crystallise whether there was agreement or not." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Assuming it was all just collated and catalogued. With other consultations it was accessible. I am assuming it was." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Nottingham).

"I'm not entirely [clear]. I don't know what happened. I don't know whether the ministers got the big transcript. I am sceptical that it was show not a real consultation." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

"Felt the result of the consultation was generally positive with concerns about the waste issue and the management of decommissioning in the long term and potential for being a process separated from politics ... Not satisfied probably with what [I have] been told. Do not remember receiving a summary of the report. Feel that a printed version should have been posted ... the size of the decision justified the printing of a report" (academic stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"I haven't been told anything about it. Received emails inviting me a follow up but too far away to attend. It was just to give the results out to people. I don't think I received anything that told me where to find the results ... Not read the white paper just what heard on news about the fact that the government has decided to go ahead with it." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"I know it went round different cities and comments were pooled. I don't know what the final outcome was. I haven't received anything." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Belfast)

"Not aware [of results of meeting]. Don't recall seeing a summary of findings or how they were transmitted to government. As far as I'm aware this telephone call is the first follow up to the day since it happened. Haven't seen any response." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"It was used in the context of preparing for the secondary event but how it was used by Government in department structure was unclear ... New white paper came out and presume the consultation event would have provided some information for that." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds).

It is clear from the comments from stakeholder interviewees, including those quoted above, that they knew very little about the outputs of the stakeholder meetings, or how they were used by Government, or even that they were used to produce the White Paper. This is surprising given the expected levels of knowledge among stakeholders with an interest in this subject.

However, it does raise a number of issues. Even though at least some of the participants were invited to a reconvened meeting in February 2008, after the publication of the White Paper (and six of the interviewees had actually attended these meetings), to see a presentation of the results of the consultation exercise and the resulting White Paper, few seem to have a clear understanding of how the results of the consultation were used in practice.

Also, although participants were informed in the stakeholder events that reports of the meetings would be put on the website, almost none remembered that and only one interviewee said they had seen that report. One mentioned that he had looked for the report a month or so after the event he attended and it had not yet been published, and he then forgot about it.

Although it is not unusual for participants to have forgotten that they were sent an email some months previously, informing them of the results, the lack of memory here is surprising, especially given the detailed recall most of them had of the actual stakeholder events.

In future, it would be valuable for more robust methods to be used to communicate with stakeholders after the actual engagement event. It would be useful to inform them in the meeting, in summary, how the results of the meeting would be published, how it would go to policy makers and that it would feed into the development of the White Paper.

Afterwards, a follow-up email can be used to inform participants when the report of their event is published and available on the website; and a further email sent when the White Paper is published. Ideally, at that stage, some sort of summary of how the stakeholder input had influenced the final policy decisions would also be made available to stakeholders.

In this case, as described in detail in section 8.4, policy makers painstakingly went through the input from stakeholders (and the public) to develop the final policy ideas that formed the White Paper, but none of the respondents to this evaluation seem to have been aware of that. Better communications of these issues could significantly increase participants' trust in the process and in Government.

Overall design and delivery of the regional stakeholder engagement events

The issues for the evaluation of the regional stakeholder events in terms of overall design and delivery are around the extent to which the design was appropriate to the objectives and that the delivery was undertaken competently and professionally.

As outlined above, the purpose of the twelve regional stakeholder events was to give "representatives of organisations and groups the opportunity to hear more about the consultation and to voice their views or use the meetings to help them draft their written response"⁶⁷.

The issue of representation has already been covered above, as have issues of transparency and clarity. This section therefore focuses on tackling the issues of the extent to which the overall design and delivery enabled participants to hear more about the consultation, to voice their views and to prepare other inputs to the consultation. It concentrates on issues of timing, information provision, the extent to which participants felt the way the event was conducted was fair and not biased, whether they could contribute effectively, the recording and reporting of participants' views, and whether the event facilitation was well-managed.

Various evaluation questions covered these points in stakeholder participant questionnaires and interviews. The summary findings are given below (full details in Annex 2).

Feedback from regional stakeholder event evaluation questionnaire respondents was as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All participants were treated equally and respectfully	53%	46%	1%	-	-
I was able to raise the issues I wanted to	35%	60%	3%	1%	-
The facilitation of the meeting was fair and balanced	40%	54%	5%	1%	-
No single view was allowed to dominate unfairly	39%	51%	6%	4%	-
The structure of the meeting enabled us to discuss the issues properly	22%	61%	8%	8%	1%
There was enough time at the meeting to discuss the issues properly	10%	62%	8%	17%	3%
There was enough information provided in advance to enable informed input	21%	48%	14%	14%	3%
All the main issues were covered in the meeting	14%	54%	16%	13%	1%

In summary, this feedback is very positive overall:

⁶⁷ The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.62.

- 99% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that all participants were treated equally and respectfully
- 95% agreed that they had been able to raise the issues they wanted to
- 94% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that the facilitation of the meeting was fair and balanced
- 90% agreed that no single view was allowed to dominate unfairly
- 83% agreed that the structure of the meeting enabled participants to discuss the issues properly
- 72% agreed that there was enough time at the meeting to discuss the issues properly
- 69% agreed there was enough information provided in advance to enable informed input
- 69% agreed that all the main issues were covered in the meeting.

The comments on the questionnaires following the tick box answers showed that the main concerns about these issues were:

- did not receive the briefing papers / Consultation Document early enough to read it (6 respondents out of 271)
- not enough on specific issues (e.g. safety, costs, transport) (5 respondents out of 271)
- the event was too short / could have been a whole day (4 respondents)
- there were not enough opposing views (3 respondents)
- it was a good, well managed process (3 respondents)

Comments from regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents overall on these issues included:

“Even if we were given full week to discuss we still would have been able to discuss further. The issues are so complex and arguments are never as clear cut as they seem” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

“Would have been useful to have more background information in advance of the event” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

“Difficult to fit in all issues in time available. Have reservations about the quality/bias of the provided information” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

“Could always have longer time for discussions, but was probably about right and was well facilitated and managed” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

“Full information on the safety and costs (especially) of nuclear not provided.” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

“It is farcical to organise a consultation and then control the presentations/ input. Why not invite Greenpeace to give some other views ... There was insufficient information on different perspectives” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Should / could have been a whole day!" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Time – it was kept short and to the point, but as ever some of the discussions had to be cut short. Overall, very well managed by our table facilitator" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle).

Similar feedback came from stakeholder participant interviewees later. For example:

- **All 24 stakeholder interviewees felt that the structure and delivery of the event enabled them to have their say** on the issues, although there were also some criticisms of the consultation overall. Comments included:

"Presentations were good and round tables were good ... Everyone had an opportunity to have their say. Obviously some people have more to say. But overall good" (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"Generally I felt there was almost a need to prove that there was an open consultation which made you feel slightly rail-roaded. People were trying to be open but they were being open against very set parameters. Flavour throughout both events was people were being directed by the questions asked. My perception is that the process was in a difficult position because there was a statement of where the government wanted to be and then there was the consultation" (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Structure was fine. Bits of presentations were well done. Well structured and plenty of opportunity to speak." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"What is the point of having a consultation exercise without having anyone there to put the opposing views? It was wholly controlled and run by one side." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"It went very well. Not attended anything like this before. Small tables and scribes and realised that local person was taking notes. Points were able to be made in public. I didn't have to fight to make my point. All went smoothly." (business stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

In summary, the feedback on this issue suggests that the structure and delivery worked very well to enable participants to have their say, although some felt that the consultation itself was leading. From observation, this there was no evidence that this was intended or happened to any degree. The programme was explicitly geared to putting the Government's preliminary view and seeking comments and views on that, as well as the specific issues, using the same approach taken in the Consultation Document. That was the central framing of the consultation. Opposing views were in fact expressed, discussed by participants and noted as part of the outputs of the event.

- **21 (out of total of 24) stakeholder interviewees felt that everyone there had an equal chance to have their say and that no single view was allowed to dominate the discussion;** 1 disagreed with this. Comments included:

"Thought it allowed me to have my say really well. Nothing wrong with the way the meeting was run." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"Moderators did attempt to avoid a single view dominating. There were certain contributors who were very keen to get their view in at all times. Moderators were partially successful at stopping this." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"I was impressed with the amount of effort and the number of people to facilitate it and the break up into tables worked very well. The facilitator made sure everyone had expressed a view. They played a useful role in the plenary feedback sessions if there was a specific view that had come from their table they made sure this was factored in." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"I felt here was an opportunity for people to make their comments known and they did that. It was a fairly frank exchange." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Event made me quite nervous about speaking out as it was an unknown group of people. I felt a bit of a lone voice and that was agreed on by the chap from the regional assembly. I put forward 2 comments in the main session. I was shot down on both occasions. By a university rep ... rather than an industry rep. Not very friendly. Nothing to do with organisation of it, but the mix of stakeholders. Chair couldn't have done anything more." (government body stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Did not help that Greenpeace rep turned up in sandals. But he wasn't allowed to get his views across ... This was the same for all the campaign groups there. So there was not an opportunity for them to voice their opinion ... It wasn't to do with the chair so much ... It wasn't about the management of the event but the thinking before the event. You go to have your opinion valued. It was clear that it was heading towards a certain conclusion. The questions and the consultation document itself were quite loaded." (government body stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Both events were particularly well chaired and so everyone had an opportunity to speak. No-one was allowed to keep reiterating the same point." (energy company stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Everyone had an equal chance and most of the tables were the same. Most people were for rather than against. So it was an unbalanced argument." (NGO stakeholder interviewee Newcastle)

"For and against each of them had an opportunity in the smaller groups to have their say." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Belfast)

"Layout and small presentations and discussions gave everyone the chance." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"Other people made comments I had not thought of. It encouraged people to think." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"There was thorough discussion. It was good mixture of short presentations and discussion around tables. Having small table discussions meant people had a good opportunity to speak." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

From observation at some of the specific events cited above, in practice participants were encouraged to express their views, whatever position they were taking. Not all participants were sympathetic to views different from their own (from all sides of the argument) but, as identified above, the lead facilitator made every effort to enable a full expression of views in the room.

- **20 (out of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees felt they were able to make the points they wanted;** no-one disagreed.
- **15 (of 24) stakeholder interviewees said they were able to ask questions;** no-one disagreed with this. Almost all were happy with answers provided. Comments included:

"Yes no problem in asking questions and the guy who was running it was trying to enable everyone to have the opportunity." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"Able to ask questions. They gave honest answers and when did not know the answers said not sure." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

- **19 (of 24) stakeholder interviewees thought there was enough time;** 2 disagreed and wanted more time. Comments included:

"Any longer and people would have got bored. It was just right." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"Lot of discussion about whether all the costs were fully included. Frustration because time ran out. If more time had been allowed it would have been clearer about the assumptions on which the evidence was based and what lay behind those assumptions." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

This was slightly different from the feedback provided by participant questionnaire respondents, only 10% of whom agreed strongly that there had been enough time, and 20% disagreed. In addition, 34 questionnaire respondents (13%) identified the length of the event as the worst aspect of the meeting, which was the largest single group of comments by far on this open question (more details below).

From the questionnaire responses it seems there was quite a few respondents who felt the event could have gone on longer; possibly lasting a whole day. It is possible that, on reflection, interviewees were less inclined to think there had not been sufficient time, and that half a day had been enough, than those responding immediately after the event.

Alternatively, the length of the event could have been one of the issues that had simply faded from their minds since the events took place. If so, it still suggests that the issue of insufficient time was perhaps not as important an issue after a few months as it had been immediately after the event.

- **23 (of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees agreed that the comments and views from stakeholders were recorded appropriately** by people running the meeting; no-one disagreed. However, 5 added that they did not know what happened to those notes (see above for more on this). Comments included:

"The facilitators were extremely helpful on the table. Not convinced when I first saw them as they were just more men in suits. But they weren't biased. They were very helpful and did record things very well. In some cases they made what people said sound better than when they put it. And they were nice – this was important. A meeting like that can be hostile. It was better than that." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"It was appropriate. Each table had a recorder and it seemed to me they were doing a good job ... Because I don't think I know what the output was I don't know whether it was effective and I do wonder whether you needed a technical background to make sense of what people were saying some of the time." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"On the table yes that seemed to be done [recorded appropriately] and they took great pains to clarify. That worked well." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"Recording worked well in having a note taker and comments and points of view being recorded." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Probably quite expensive but I think that was a way you were guaranteed to get something properly recorded and if this was the name of the game that was important. An individual person at an individual table can then influence the overall decision." (business stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"I don't know how much of what was recorded got translated ... Its as good as it could have been. Don't know what happened to it." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

"Yes it was and gave you confidence that there was going to be some take up of your point of view." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

On this issue, the feedback is again that there was strong satisfaction with the way the comments were recorded, but less clarity and satisfaction with what happened to those notes and recordings afterwards (see above under Clarity and transparency).

This has implications for assessing the effectiveness of the recording: there is no feedback from participants on the extent to which the published notes reflect their views of the conclusions of the meeting. This is not to suggest that the written notes do not reflect those conclusions, just that there is no feedback from participants to support or challenge that.

From observation, the recording was carried out conscientiously and thoroughly. However, the published reports are fairly short summaries of key points made into the plenary feedback sessions, rather than detailed transcripts of all points made during the table discussions; most of the plenary sessions, on the other hand, were fully recorded and transcribed.

This approach is certainly sufficient in this case, and did provide a great deal of information from a good range of stakeholder interests to be taken into the policy development processes. However, in future, it may be useful to also do audio recordings of table discussions for those who are willing and able to review the many specific points in more detail (e.g. academic researchers).

- **23 (of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees said that there was enough information provided to enable them to take part fully in the discussions.** Comments included:

"Initial presentation was excellent and set the right tone. People attending would know a lot about the issues. But the information and presentations catered well for everyone. Colleague who joined me and did not know so much got up to speed quickly." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"Enough in advance. A lot of information. The video presentation material I felt didn't add very much. It came across as rather simplistic ... Reasonably good summary of detailed information sent out beforehand. But it was only a summary." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"There was enough info provided to enable you to take part in the discussions on the grounds that government wanted you to discuss. I examined the sources of information that the government used beforehand so as to challenge that data. The government picked the most pro-nuclear info that it could ... In my view all information presented to the public was inaccurate ... Information in the meeting was only a summary of what was circulated in the consultation document and so was one sided as well ... It was presenting not false information but one sided." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"I was quite impressed by the big document. It's the imponderables that weren't really covered. I felt like it was a government case for going more nuclear rather than a fact finding mission. A consultation but I felt that the decision had already been made." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

"Good [information]. Found a couple of inaccuracies and reported them. It was a good balanced document it was not taking sides." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"It was comprehensive and thorough and every chapter was pretty good." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Belfast)

In summary the feedback on this issue from stakeholder interviewees suggests that there was enough information to enable participants to take part effectively in the discussions; that was confirmed by observation at events.

Again, criticisms of one-sidedness and lack of accuracy seem to be largely about the overall framing of the consultation and the fact that all the information was based on the Government's preliminary view, and testing that with stakeholders, rather than broad coverage of a wide range of energy issues.

It is possible that the complexity and subtlety of the framing of the consultation was not clear to (or appropriate) for all stakeholders, as with many of the public participants (see section 7), especially those who were most inclined to disagree with the proposition and to distrust Government. The fact that Government had taken an 'preliminary view' was understood to mean that the Government had 'made up its mind'.

These are subtle distinctions that are likely to create suspicions and distrust among the stakeholders who do not support that 'preliminary view'. Future consultations may wish to avoid such suspicions by framing the consultation and identifying objectives differently.

- **20 (of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees said that the information at the meeting was clear and reliable;** another 3 said it was mostly clear and reliable. Several differentiated between clear and reliable, with all agreeing on 'clear' and fewer on 'reliable'. Three mentioned that they felt the materials was "biased". Comments included:

"Clear yes. Reliable is always difficult. I was there as an opponent of nuclear power so I am always suspicious of the information in terms of bias. It didn't appear to be blatantly made up." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"Pretty sure that the data presented was accurate but the choice of data would possibly emphasise the need for more power generation rather than highlight demand reduction." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"It was clear about pointing out different aspects. It did talk about security of supply, storage of radioactive waste. A slight worry was it being too favourable in one direction rather than evidence. Many were concerned that it was just one interpretation of available evidence." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Consultation documents were fairly comprehensive and gave the background. I didn't detect any significant bias – always suspicious of info when it is highly biased – this seemed reasonably neutral." (business stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"I felt it was clear but biased. It gave a lot of the positive points of nuclear power but not so many negative points that you would find on websites such as Greenpeace and FOE. One side of the argument." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"It was clear. Reliable – I don't know. The danger with consultation is that it is hard to keep a neutral perspective. The presentations did attempt to steer that neutral course but you could accuse them of being a little biased towards support for new build. Factually reliable." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

Comments from stakeholder interviewees, and the evaluation conclusions from reviewing all the evidence including observation at events is the same as that under the point above about there being 'enough' information.

Overall, therefore, we can conclude that, although the 'framing' of the information was somewhat problematic, the information provided for the event seems to have been clear and largely reliable in terms of accuracy and to have been sufficient to enable those participants to do so fully and effectively.

- **16 (of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees felt that the important issues around nuclear power were covered;** 5 did not agree. The issues on which those who disagreed felt there was not enough information and discussion were security, centralised / decentralised supply, energy efficiency, some renewables (wind covered but not solar), safety, waste and the Government view. Comments included:

"It was clear that there were certain people present who didn't feel they were getting the issues covered. Particularly in terms of security aspects." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"As far as it was practical to do so in half a day. The event concentrated on those issues that were emerging for people as the most important issues." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"It's a very sensitive issue and you can spend weeks but within the time it was covered." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"All main issues covered quite systematically" (academic stakeholder interviewee, Belfast)

"Yes proliferation, security, waste were all covered." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

In terms of the extent to which the design and delivery met the objectives of the stakeholder engagement events in relation to stakeholders using them to help them draft their written response, there is some information on the extent to which this happened.

- 75% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents said that they would also be participating in this consultation in other ways. This suggests that BERR was correct in their assumption that many attending the consultation planned to use it to help make other inputs to the consultation (on paper or online).
- 11 (out of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees said they did go on to make input to the consultation in other ways; 7 specified that they had submitted a written response, 1 went to a site stakeholder meeting as well as this regional event, 5 attended a reconvened event; 1 attended more than 1 regional event. One mentioned that, after the meeting, she gave the printed response forms to fellow NGO group members. Several did make the point that they decided that they did not want to make a further response as they had given their views at the meeting.

In practice, therefore, only 7 of 24 interviewees actually went on to make a written response (29%), compared to 75% expecting to when they completed their questionnaires at the end of stakeholder events. Comments from stakeholder interviews suggest two causes for this:

- some stakeholders felt they had made sufficient input through attending the stakeholder events; it may be that the positive reactions above to the extent that comments were recorded encouraged them to feel that this was enough for them
- some stakeholders had intended to make a written response but did not have time in practice.

This suggests two conclusions:

- the participants at the stakeholder events may have been sufficiently satisfied with those events to use that as their primary input to the consultation
- the stakeholder events may have reached a whole range of stakeholders who would not otherwise have contributed to the consultation at all.

Both these conclusions suggest that, overall, the design and delivery of the events did meet the stated objectives, as outlined above. In addition, given the evidence and assessment above, we can also conclude that the events were delivered professionally and competently in terms of timing, information provision, being conducted in a way that was fair and balanced, being well-managed, that participants could contribute effectively and their views were recorded. There was, however, less satisfaction with the report back to participants (as also shown in the section above on Clarity and transparency).

Learning and changes in participants' views

The issues for the evaluation of the regional stakeholder events in terms of learning and shifts in views are around the extent to which those involved felt they learned something as a result of taking part in the process, and how that affected their views. The evaluation tested these issues with specific questions to stakeholder participants in interviews.

The feedback was in summary:

- **15 (of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees said they had learnt something new** by taking part in this consultation that informed their understanding of nuclear power; 7 said they had not learnt anything new and 2 said their understanding had been updated rather than learning anything new.

The main source of learning was hearing the views and opinions of others; there was a lot of positive feedback about the benefits of hearing others' views, especially the views of those other participants who disagreed with the respondent. These issues are also covered below, under the section on Costs and benefits.

Comments from stakeholder interviewees on learning and changes of views included:

"Nothing new but refreshed my knowledge." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Yes in terms of technology and processes involved. Also about the range of issues that need to be taken into account." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"It taught me a lot of lessons. It taught me how to do things better in my own organisation. The way that government consults is often seen as Whitehall coming along and preaching to individuals. A head teacherly way that Whitehall departments talk to industry and regions. Something is missing. Government communicates to rather than engages with." (government office stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"There were people from different backgrounds and listening to them was interesting." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"It helped provide a means of seeing a wide range of different considerations and how they interacted with each other." (other professional stakeholder interviewee, Cardiff)

"Just learnt more about the different factions." (academic stakeholder interviewee Manchester)

"I did learn quite a lot about nuclear power and the waste involved." (NGO stakeholder interviewee Newcastle)

"Yes you always learn something new. I thought the meeting was very good mix and had all sides of the argument." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

This feedback is unusually positive. Evaluations sometimes show that stakeholders attend to give their views and not to engage so much with other participants. This feedback suggests that this process genuinely provided an opportunity for listening and discussion which provided value, in terms of learning and sharing views, for participants.

- **5 (of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees said that being involved in the consultation had made a difference to what they think about nuclear power; 13 said it had not made any difference.**

This is not surprising, as stakeholders are much more likely to come to such events with existing strong views and positions, personal and organisational, than public participants (see section 7 for more on this). However, some had shifted their views. Differences reported included being more ambivalent, less anti and more anti. From this feedback on views, it seems that the stakeholder events had quite a balanced impact on views overall. Comments included

"Made me slightly less anti. Some of the professionals had their hearts in the right place. Made me think a bit." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"It was a good thing to do because it got me to think about things ... Having thought about it more I wasn't convinced by it. I was more sceptical." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

- **9 (of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees said that being involved had made a difference to what they thought about Government consulting** stakeholders on these sorts of issues; 4 said it had made no difference (including that they still thought it was important).

Within these figures, 2 interviewees were more positive about consultation, and 2 felt that the consultation was not genuine and were disappointed, so again there was a fairly balanced positive and negative impact on their views on these sorts of consultations. Comments included:

"Came away positive about it. Positive about consultation. It is an opportunity for public to have their say." (academic stakeholder interviewee Manchester)

"I almost certainly won't respond to a UK Government consultation because of this and the Energy White Paper ... It has cemented my view that responses to UK Government are a waste of time" (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

Overall, this feedback suggests that a few participants did learn something new, including about some of the technical issues. More generally, the learning for participants from these events seems to have focused on listening to and understanding the views of other stakeholders and that seems to have stimulated thinking and influenced their own views.

The events clearly provided opportunities for some productive dialogue between stakeholders from different backgrounds and with different views and, as a result, reduced hostility and challenged (and possibly loosened in some cases) entrenched positions. Although far from creating a consensus, these processes did seem to some extent to have broken down some barriers and preconceptions between the various stakeholder interests in the field.

Influence on policy decisions

The issues for this evaluation to consider in terms of influence on policy decisions are around the perceptions of expected influence among participants, the knowledge and perceptions of participants of actual influence, and consideration of the evidence on influence based on feedback from policy makers and documentary review.

Considering feedback on levels of influence on policy decisions is essential for gaining understanding of the level of trust in the process and the extent to which participants and others believe that Government will listen to and take account of public views.

This does relate to judgements about the value of participatory processes overall; as shown in the section on Costs and benefits below, the extent to which participants value the process they have been involved in depends on the extent to which they feel they have been listened to and have been able to make a difference. Equally, there is little point in Government funding stakeholder engagement exercises if no notice is taken of the conclusions of those exercises (even in the complex context surrounding this particular consultation).

Feedback from stakeholders on the issues around influence was, in summary, as follows:

- **72% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that BERR would listen to and consider the stakeholder views given at the event;** 16% agreed strongly. 56% agreed; 3% did not agree (of which 1% strongly disagreed); 25% neither agreed nor disagreed.

This is actually quite a positive response to this question; stakeholders are often very sceptical about the level of influence their input has. Although only 16% agree strongly, the overall figure of 72% believing that BERR would consider the stakeholder views given shows a good degree of trust in the process, and in BERR. The positive feedback on the structure and delivery of the events, and particularly on the very obvious recording of comments, may have contributed to this positive view.

- **11 (of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees thought that the Government had listened to and considered what stakeholders had said** when they decided their policy on nuclear power. 2 thought they had not, and 2 were not sure.

This is not particularly positive feedback, with less than half the interviewees believing that Government had listened to stakeholders. The detail of this feedback is even less positive. There was a view from some interviewees that Government / BERR had listened but that they had listened to some stakeholders and not others, and some said that they had listened but it had made no difference to the Government view.

Not all stakeholders felt that Government should have listened; a few saw the exercise as more about awareness raising and PR than consultation and a few also thought that was right as Government had to lead on these issues. However, overall, this was not a positive view of the Government's response to stakeholder input. Comments from stakeholder interviewees included:

"I didn't come away frustrated. You feel you have had your say as far as consultation was concerned. I trust they write up what people say. But they won't act on it." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"Policy was decided before stakeholders meeting and I am not aware that the decision changed at all. I don't know if it would have made any difference at all." (business stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"I just have this notion on consultation. I think government and responsible bodies are there to make decisions ... At best the consultation will influence fringe things but not policy ... It would be interesting to see were there anything that was changed as a result of the stakeholders gathering." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"White Paper shows they addressed all the issues raised and dealt with them." (energy company stakeholder interviewee, Reading)

"Yes I think they did [listen to and consider stakeholder input]. They went to great pains to show that they were taking note. It is difficult to show that because the government will have got a range of views and it is quite difficult from that range to distil down any clear theme." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"They did yes. There isn't a huge opposition to nuclear power so when they listened to stakeholders it didn't make any difference." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"They certainly listened to the stakeholders but by framing the debate the way they did it would not have been suitable for everyone and the numbers would have meant it was skewed in one direction. So a very qualified yes." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"They would have listened to those stakeholders who attended who said yes to nuclear." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Nottingham)

"I do and I think that the way the White Paper has been produced and government comments since then have reflected both the concerns and reflected the public support, acceptance and concerns, about nuclear." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Not sure. They may have listened to some of the stakeholders but not all. In particular those who are some of the environmental and community lobby who are not entirely convinced about security and safety. Not listened to as much as might have done." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Even if you see the results document but you think to yourself what difference does it make? They could have sent a summary – may have done – that pulled together the general sense of feedback with the ability to say hang on a minute you didn't get my point on x, y, z. Then explain how the amended version would feed into the general picture ... But its not just about a process. You need to provide evidence of how this consultation impacted on the policy decision. Just need something to assure people that the Minister saw the consultation. I appreciate it is impossible to do but need to do something to make people feel valued. If someone asked me do I feel I was listened I would have to say no." (government office stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"It made a difference. The difference was that Government policy issued in January had taken account of a wide spread of public and industry opinion in reaching that policy decision ... The government have published in addition to the policy document the analysis of the consultation. So if you are of a mind you can look at these very extensive publications and you can track what you said and others said. They ensured that a proper records was made of all competing views and this is a big step to making it a valid exercise." (other professional stakeholder interviewee, Cardiff)

"I think so simply because of the time, effort and resources that went into the consultation. The government were clear at the start that they had a view and were looking for people to dissuade them from that by putting different views forward." (energy company stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Maybe they did [listen] but perhaps more people who were for than against took part in the consultation." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"An audit line would have been useful. At least I would have felt that someone had read it. Maybe someone had read it but having no feedback – it was a complete waste of time." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"I think they were prepared to listen. But my own impression was that they listened too much to the anti-nuclear lobby and were not sufficiently robust about saying exactly what they are going to do". (local government stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"When and if government does this it gives stakeholders some ownership but they have to feel their time is not wasted. That is the gap that is still there." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds).

The comments from stakeholder interviewees, illustrated by those quoted above, suggest a fairly widespread view that Government listened to stakeholders, and that the Government was taking the consultation seriously. There was a less strong belief that stakeholder input had made any difference, partly because of the sense that the majority view was in support of the Government's initial view.

There were, however, a few respondents who would have felt reassured if there had been more feedback, an 'audit line' of some sort, as one put it, to show how the results of the stakeholder engagement events had been used.

From observation, all views were listened to and noted carefully, and there was no bias in managing the debate or recording points made. The key point is perhaps that from one of the NGO stakeholders, who said

"Maybe they did [listen] but perhaps more people who were for than against took part in the consultation." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

This may have been the case, in which case the general direction of policy was not changed by the stakeholder input. However, as another stakeholder interviewee said:

"If there had been tremendous opposition to nuclear power then I am sure it would have determined the outcome ... The government would have adhered to that." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

This reflects the view of the evaluators overall. The stakeholder debate throughout was open and inclusive and, although it may have been a more robust conclusion if more anti-nuclear stakeholders had been involved directly, there was still an overall sense from stakeholder participants (however reluctantly in some cases) that new build nuclear power stations should proceed.

There is more on this issue at the end of this section (section 6.5), summarising the issues that emerged from this strand of the process.

Costs and benefits

The issues for this evaluation on costs and benefits focus on a qualitative and descriptive approach to considering the *perceived* costs and benefits of the regional stakeholder events for the participants and policy makers. There was no formal consideration as part of this evaluation of the balance of costs and benefits. However, it is a useful indicator of the 'value' of the exercise to ask those involved about perceived costs and benefits.

Participant interviewees were asked a specific question on this topic, which was:

"Stakeholder engagement obviously has financial costs. Do you think it is money well spent or not?"

Some were asked a supplementary question on what would make it more likely that they felt it was money well spent, which provided additional information on caveats.

This evaluation has not sought details of the costs (financial, staff etc) of the stakeholder engagement events (or any other elements) in this consultation process. The only information on costs sought or provided was that a total budget of £2.4 million was allocated by the department "for the implementation and running of the consultation and subsequent collation and analysis of consultation responses"⁶⁸.

Although consideration of the costs is becoming increasingly important in evaluations of engagement processes, at the time this evaluation research was carried out, no data was collected on detailed costs during the evaluation and it was not possible, in retrospect, to gather any meaningful data later.

The focus on consideration of costs is therefore based on feedback from participants, specifically in participant interviews, and from policy makers. The actual costs (the total budget identified above) was not discussed with respondents, although that information was by that time in the public domain.

The majority of stakeholder participant interviewees felt that the process was money well spent but with various caveats. Comments included:

"For an issue of such magnitude definitely [money well spent]". (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"The amount of money is a drop in the ocean compared with energy generation. The few thousand quid spent on the consultation is irrelevant." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"It was a necessary expenditure and I don't think it was overboard. Certainly the Bristol one was a reasonable size and reasonable time scale so appropriate." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"Our view on nuclear power is that it is very important to have a strong political and public consensus. If government is in favour then this needs to be backed up by a durable support over long period of time. So to run events like this can only help develop that consensus. When the decision is made you point to events like this that the government has consulted as widely as possible. It is money well spent in the long run." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Reading)

"It depends on how much you are talking about ... This sort of consultation is well worthwhile if it effectively enables the decisions to be taken to be implemented both effectively and efficiently. There is a balance to be struck. Better to go through with the exercise at policy end rather than implementation." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"If done correctly and it is an important issue you need to consult and these are matters where people should have a significant interest. There are philosophical and practical questions to be considered as well. If the consultation isn't set up right in the first place then you are aiming for a particular response ... Then consultation is a waste of money." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"I think it was [money well spent]. It is important that when there are these very emotive issues government don't just take the fact that they won an election to carry issues through. It is important to go out and prepare to listen to what people have to say. It gives an extra level of credibility to overall outcome." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

⁶⁸The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.16.

"Yes money well spent because there is a value to seek views on a way forward and any form of consultation has a cost. This appeared to be well resourced consultation e.g. website and evidence based material backed up with a lot of technical information. But again no similar depth of materials gone into the other parts of the energy mix. If there had been it would have been more balanced. In general a good thing." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"The cost was totally trivial in the grand scheme of things." (business stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"The hotel used in both events looked horrendously expensive and the food was second to none. That is great but the civil servant in me wondered how much it would cost." (government office stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"I think it is. I would say I am sort of a greenish persuasion. I think its a bit more razzamatazz than was necessary. The principle of inviting people and getting them to talk about things was pretty good. Don't know how much it cost and what the benefits are and basically yes [money well spent]." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)

"I think it is something of a flagship consultation exercise. In part the breadth and depth of it was the result of the High Court judgement. One wouldn't expect that extensive consultation over every policy statement. But the decision to support nuclear power as part of the energy mix would feature as one of the highest public interest policy decisions made in the last 20-30 years. So it is justified. Money well spent. Frankly the government had no option but to spend that amount." (other professional, stakeholder interviewee, Cardiff)

"Money spent in terms of size of industry and importance of debate was pretty small really. Very important for government to demonstrate they are consulting and being open and listening to all views." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"Yes. I've taken part in online consultations and that is cheaper but when you get someone out to your local area with a hat on saying I work with BERR then I think it brings you closer to government." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds).

The comments from stakeholder interviewees, illustrated by those quoted above, and the results of observation and informal interviews, suggest that this particular consultation was money well spent.

More generally, the findings suggest that, for stakeholders, defining 'money well spent' depends on certain principles: the first is that money is not wasted on what one interviewee called razzamatazz and unnecessary lavishness; the second is that the consultation makes a difference and improves the final policy decision (and that the decision has not already been made and there is no room for change); the third is that the issue is one of significant public and political significance. In these circumstances, there is little dissent from the overall view of this feedback that investment in this type of consultation is money well spent.

Any assessment of the level of resourcing clearly requires a parallel consideration of the benefits that were achieved for the investment. Again there is feedback on this from all those involved.

Feedback from stakeholder questionnaire respondents on the most important benefits to them personally in taking part in the event were, in summary, as follows:

- 79 stakeholder questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 271 respondents) said that the most important benefit to them had been hearing and understanding the wide range of views and concerns (and knowledge) from other stakeholders

- 38 respondents (out of 271) identified increased knowledge of the subject, being better informed and clarifying thinking as the most important benefit to them
- 33 identified the opportunity to give their own / their organisation's views, and being heard as the most important benefit
- 19 specifically identified sharing views, talking to others, dialogue, discussions as the main benefit
- 15 identified the participation itself, engaging in the consultation, and making a difference
- 12 mentioned understanding the Government's position
- 11 said the main benefit had been networking, contacts, meeting people.
- 7 mentioned that it had been a benefit to have the briefing for their formal (written) response to the consultation
- 7 said they found out about the consultation process.

From this, it is clear that stakeholder questionnaire respondents gained most from the interaction with, listening to and talking with others stakeholders. This links to the earlier feedback on learning and shifts in views, which seems to have resulted primarily from this dialogue. Detailed comments from questionnaire respondents on the most important benefits for them include:

"Gaining an insight into the views of others" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)
"Informing opinion to guide council's response to the consultation" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)
"Becoming aware of the big picture and seeing both sides" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"Obtain a more rounded view from the stakeholder groups not normally encountered in my professional life / environment" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)
"To hear the arguments posed by energy companies and universities. It gave a different perspective other than the public sector view, e.g. safety issues" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

"To understand in more detail the respective views" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)
"Opportunity to hear the views of others which differed from mine" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

"To state our views and listen to the concerns of others" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)
"I have gained knowledge from listening to those with a far better understanding than myself" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)

"To note the main issues in the overall discussion on energy" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)
"Opportunity to contribute to consultation from a Welsh perspective on the UK wide issue" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Opportunity to listen to wide range of arguments" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)
"Gaining a deeper understanding of all the issues/perspectives offered by all those taking part" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

"Chance to hear views / meet interested parties" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)

"Able to discuss and consider complex issues in depth" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)

"Sense of the argument on both sides" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

"Talking to other interested parties" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

"Networking, maintaining our current knowledge of the debate" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Ability to exchange views with contributors with a wide diversity of views" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Opportunity to participate in raising and discussing the key issues" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Understanding government proposals and future policy" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"To be able to input our view into the consultation" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"Having some input in what we believe is one of the most important issues of our time" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"Identifying what support / concerns are part of the debate" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"First hand observation of widely varying opinions, perspectives" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"Listening and talking with a wide group" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

"To raise the issues and gain others' views" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

"Chance to put point of view and respond to other views" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

"Opportunity to hear other views to test arguments" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

"Becoming aware of the big picture and seeing both sides" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading).

Very similar feedback came from stakeholder interviewees, even though they were asked some months later. In answer to a question asking about the main things that they got out of being involved in the consultation, again the largest number (10 stakeholder interviewees, out of the total of 24) said it was sharing views and hearing other stakeholder views. Comments included:

"Its always nice to feel wanted and your views to be appreciated. Normally we just give written evidence. It was good to be invited and feel more part of the process and to hear the views of others." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"Enjoy meeting different sorts of people. I have never met anyone who worked in a nuclear power station before. Also meeting some of the antis." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"The main thing is that I was able to talk to people whose views were different. They had strongly held views." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Very good for me. It provided me an update of current position and thinking. Also understanding what other stakeholders' current views are." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"Interesting to meet other people. And to hear other points of views." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Useful to hear different views and useful to meet people in and out the industry. Useful contacts for and against." (energy company stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Knowledge of what is going on and listening to other people. The table I was on was very good mix including anti nuclear and industry people. ... Quite a successful day. Been at events before where the floor is hogged by people with a particular view. There was a very good balance of views and everyone was listened to fairly." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

*"Interaction with broad spectrum of background viewpoints that broadened my viewpoint."
(academic stakeholder interviewee, Leeds)*

These comments from stakeholders in both questionnaire responses and interviews illustrate how strongly and widespread the view was that the sharing of opinions from all sides took place, and was highly valued by participants.

These stakeholders clearly relished the opportunity to engage with people from backgrounds and with views different from their own. There were no indications on questionnaires, or from observation at events, that anyone resented alternative or opposing views being presented. Quite the opposite: stakeholder comment suggests that it is precisely the diversity of opinions, and the opportunities to explore those, that provided the greatest value for them. Certainly no one felt that they could not express their opinions (see feedback above), and that opportunity was clearly taken and valued by many of those involved.

What worked best and least well

The sections above have provided detailed analysis of the different elements of the stakeholder engagement events. This section considers feedback from participants and policy makers about the aspects of the process that worked most effectively ('best') and least effectively ('worst') for them.

The feedback from stakeholder questionnaire respondents was largely positive. This feedback was, in summary as below.

The best aspects for stakeholder questionnaire respondents, identified in answer to an open question, were:

- 59 stakeholder questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 271) said the best aspect of the meeting were the open, useful, dynamic discussions
- 57 (out of 271) identified the opportunity to hear and share views with a range of stakeholders
- 45 specifically mentioned the small group table discussions
- 19 said the best aspect had been how well structured, conducted and facilitated the event was
- 12 mentioned good presentations
- 11 said it was a good change to contribute views
- 10 identified the good mix and quality of stakeholders as the best aspect

Comments from stakeholder questionnaire respondents on what were the best aspects of the meeting included:

"Broad range of contributions drawn from good selection of organisations" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"Giving stakeholders the opportunity to make their views known" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"The presentations. Ability to hear both strong pro and anti views on nuclear, which was valuable to provide wide perspective" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)
"The wider discussion sessions were particularly useful. Also finding out about the consultation process to date and next steps was very useful" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

"Outlining the key issues for debate between the nuclear and non nuclear communities" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)
"Well presented and facilitated. Nice approach to both sides of the argument" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)
"Good coverage of all issues and good opportunity to discuss and raise issues in public forum" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

"Well conducted and facilitated – but a huge subject to tackle. The lack of trust in government's motive and intentions is difficult to overcome" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)
"Tolerance of views. Opportunity to have one's views recorded" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)

"Ability to comment in a way that was being directly recorded" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)
"Opportunity to hear different viewpoints and explore various aspects of the topics" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Opinions of delegates and the debate. Clear respect for opinions" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)
"Open dialogue with interested parties" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

"Raised my awareness of nuclear issues/waste and disposal. Excellent facilitator – inclusive" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)
"Listening to other people. Lots of very intelligent people so I now know more about nuclear power" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)

"Different views and expertises were exchanged" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)
"A very open discussion, with some lively debate" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)
"Hearing a broad spectrum of views and opinions addressing the wider debate" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

"Opportunity for round table discussion" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)
"Dynamic forum, people wanted to contribute" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)
"Concentrated. Table discussions very useful and clear presentations" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)
"Intelligent debate and views on all sides. Little dogma" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Meeting people with the different respective traditional opinions e.g. pro nuclear union reps, concerned NGO reps etc." (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)
"Being able to hold discussions in small groups meant that quality information was forthcoming" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)
"The table consultations were also recorded" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)
"Table discussions mixing with plenary" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"Very relaxed and small discussion groups meant people were free to talk" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)
"Meeting and hearing people with different views" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

"Being able to discuss the issues with representatives both of industry and the community" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)
"Open debate / open forum" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

Many of these points are reflected in the **feedback from stakeholder interviewees on what they thought worked best**. Their feedback was that:

- 9 (out of the total of 24) stakeholder interviewees identified table discussions, table facilitators and small groups as the element of the process that worked best
- 4 (out of 24) said it was the mix of table discussions and plenary sessions
- 3 said it was well constructed and delivered overall
- 2 said it was that everyone could give their views
- 2 mentioned good presentations
- 2 mentioned the lead facilitator.

Comments from stakeholder interviewees about the **best aspects** of the process included:

"The on the table facilitators. It was a very good way of doing it. ... As a member of the [green NGO] you go to these sort of things. It was more fun and better organised than I expected." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"There was no direct manipulation. I tend to think it was a desire to get to an answer. It was about 'we have 5 minutes to do this' and write into the box the view of the table. This is the statement and we have to say yes or no." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"It worked well. The actual moderation of the event at individual tables and the way it was organised and summarised from each of the sessions." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"I suppose the thing that worked best and it depended on a personality it was the person who conducted the event – he was a very good example of how you should run a meeting ... I think anyone who has an interest had ample opportunity to put an input in at all stages of the process. Whether pro or anti they weren't excluded." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Well constructed, very timely, people who presented did a good job, no-one was bored, everything was kept going, logistics of the event were good e.g. table etc." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"I found best the discussions around the table and lengthy Q&A at the end which was very open." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Went well - having the discussions on the table so people didn't feel they had to fight off 80 people to get their views heard. Facilitators were doing their job to make sure points being fed into the wider discussion. Voice of every individual would be heard." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Combination of plenary presentation and opportunity for some questions and answers plus round tables were helpful and feedback. In broad terms went well and helped facilitate transfer of information and knowledge and feedback." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Splitting into small group sessions so you could make a point and then get support to make the point in open session. That format was very good. If you go to a single meeting with a panel on the top table sometimes with 100 people attending it is very difficult to make a point." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"It was good in terms of keeping us all in the loop in terms of what the government is doing. In terms of information upload it was good and useful – though not new. Also good to be able to engage with industry in that area." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"The group work was good. What would have been more useful was to try to go into different groups. Tea and coffee allowed some networking but it would have been more informative if we had moved between groups for different sessions." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"I liked the table discussion. It was well structured for getting opinions." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Nottingham)

"The presentations were short and had only limited factual evidence to back up the key points. But this illustrated both pros and cons of the argument. That was very important ... The group sessions with a facilitator were good. The facilitator was unjudgemental, listened, and noted down comments. This was huge assistance in encouraging people and allowing them to make their point." (other professional stakeholder interviewee, Cardiff)

"The best and the key was the spokesman and chair. He was clearly well practised and able to move discussion on without getting bogged down." (energy company stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Quality of facilitators. Clear they were not secondees from industry or just people who had been co-opted from admin roles. They had insight and skills in facilitation." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"The presentations were very good and sufficiently long to get the information required without being too long. Event very well managed." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

For Government policy makers and other BERR officials, the best aspects of the public engagement activities were described rather differently. These comments cover both the regional and site stakeholder events, as they were closely linked in terms of benefits for Government.

For these respondents, as for the participants, the elements that worked best were the overall design and delivery of the events worked well, and the opportunity for direct engagement with the stakeholders so they could hear the debate and points made first hand. Policy makers also felt that it worked well that they had delivered the regional (and site) stakeholder events themselves.

Comments from policy makers in interview on the best aspects of the regional (and site) stakeholder events included:

"Stakeholder events went very well. Size fine. Tables with table facilitators worked well [and mix of] Q & A in whole group and table discussions good ... To outsource [this type of event] is a lot of work to brief and all the BERR people still need to be there. Team neutral enough to facilitate ... team really started to get it [by running it themselves]" (BERR interviewee)

"Hearing it is completely different so good [BERR policy makers] were involved ... [about] understanding strength of feeling" (BERR interviewee)

"Staff really enjoyed them - reminds you of the strong feelings people have about these things, how important, how relevant. Challenges you [to be] outside normal environment talking to local councillors, voluntary groups, civic groups [that] you would not necessarily meet in normal role. Very worthwhile and very interesting" (BERR interviewee)

"Hergen Hays [senior BERR official] really had the skills to stand up and lead a meeting. Quite special." (BERR interviewee)

"[BERR staff] wrote all the presentations although delivered by different [BERR] people to ensure everyone had the same information." (BERR interviewee)

"No substitute for hearing directly and seeing an event going on - helps understanding in a quite different way - understand with heart and not just head." (BERR interviewee)

"Very lucky to have Hergen Hays to facilitate [these meetings]. Excellent. Delivered more than would have expected." (BERR interviewee)

"The amount of effort to go out to ask people and listen to their views was more than in other consultation. This was very thorough ... Compared to other consultations, this was a monumental effort to reach as many people and maximise people's realisation that we wanted their views. And in terms of whose views we got back - with the exception of the green groups, it was a good cross section ... The higher quality of responses was probably informed by the effort we put in." (BERR interviewee)

"Going round the country was resource-intensive but useful to 'show willing', not just expect people to come to London. Having a standard presentation gave consistency across events." (BERR interviewee).

The questionnaire to stakeholder participants also asked for views on the **worst aspects** of the meeting. For stakeholder questionnaire respondents, the worst aspects, identified in answer to an open question, were:

- 34 (of the total of 271 respondents) said the event was too short, and some said it could have been a full day
- 8 (of 271) said the information / presentations was biased (the video was mentioned specifically by a few)
- 8 said that a few individuals pushed their views rather than debating
- 8 said there no worst aspects, it was all good
- 6 said there was not enough information on specific issues (waste, economics, proliferation, other sources of energy, international experience, uncertainty)
- 5 said there was a general lack of information / unanswered questions / poor/unclear information
- 5 said there were not enough anti-nuclear / opposing stakeholders / views
- 5 said the questions were too simplistic / leading / tight
- 5 said the discussions were rushed
- 5 said it would have been better if the tables had been more mixed with pro- and anti-nuclear views

This feedback shows that the issue for by far the biggest group of respondents was that they would have liked the event to be longer; almost three times as many respondents mentioned this compared to any other problems identified. Specific comments from stakeholder questionnaire respondents on what were the worst aspects of the meeting also covered a whole range of other issues, and included the following (without repeating comments about wanting more time):

"Views have to be objective. Inherent suspicion of science does not help. We all want to make the world a 'better place to live'." (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"Framing of the consultation in that government has clearly already made a decision on nuclear" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"All questions were worded far too simplistically, too black and white. It is not just a case of agree or disagree as there are far too many dependencies." (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

"Groups round the tables were uneven – one table mainly pro; other mainly anti. Perhaps organising the allocation to tables could be considered" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

"Little rushed, antis and pros were not in mixed groups" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

"The presentations were a little simplified, however I understand time restricted much detail" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

"Length of the meeting was never going to be enough for such a complex issue but was still reasonable" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)

"That the planning of the consultation is so unfair and presumptuous – thus undermining and threatening ones' input" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)

"Perhaps the tight boundary of some questions didn't allow some issues to emerge" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Possibly the lack of attendance of nuclear opponent groups" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Not enough anti nuclear representation" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

"The sadness of FOE demonstrators outside the meeting place" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

"There is enough to debate for a full day. It would allow the issues to be fleshed out more" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)

"Some data provided was unclear on assumptions made" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)

"Video presentation (superficial, and sometimes misleading) (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

"Certain individuals dominating discussion" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

"Delegates pushing their personal interests rather than addressing the wider debate" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

"Leading questions. Tight agenda. Presentations which never even mentioned security. No sense that our views will be considered" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Not enough time to debate (but it was important to keep the meeting to 1/2 a day)" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Seemed dominated by pro nuclear" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

"Should allocate people to tables to get a more rounded discussion" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"The paper should have been sent round earlier" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"Didn't get to meet/learn who else was participating, my table only" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"Delegates with preconceived thoughts" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

"Format too restricted and time too short" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

"Small group / lack of Green reps" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

"Too much emphasis on securing a yes/no to the questions" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

"The pull out of green groups. Open and face to face dialogue would highlight areas of agreement and further the consultation process" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

These comments illustrate that some participants felt strongly that there were serious problems with the stakeholder events, particularly about leading and limited questions, and the lack of opposing views especially from green groups.

However, although a few felt strongly it can be noted that the majority of comments about the failings of the process are simply around it not being long enough, and are fairly mild, so the strength of feeling of a few does need to be kept in proportion. Some of the comments are critical of the design and delivery of the process, while some are critical of the behaviour of other stakeholders including particularly the lack of representation / withdrawal of green groups.

From observation and having reviewed all the feedback from participants, the powerful feelings of those who felt the process had failed seems to reflect the passion that the subject of nuclear power arouses; the dissatisfaction is narrow and deep rather than a reflection of wider dissatisfaction with the process.

The views of stakeholder interviewees were also collected on what they felt were **the worst aspects** of the events. They had fewer negative comments about the process than positive feedback. The feedback from stakeholder interviewees was:

- 5 (of the total 24) stakeholder interviewees said that nothing was wrong or 'worst'
- 5 (of 24) identified the lack of follow up after the meeting as the worst aspect
- 5 commented on the mix of stakeholders present including (only one person each identified each of the following points) that they would have liked to know who was invited and who attended, that there should have been a wider group of stakeholders and that there was a need to bring in groups who are opposed. One pointed out that all the pro-nuclear people present were paid to be there (it was part of their day job), whereas the anti-nuclear people were often voluntary.
- 3 said the whole framing of the consultation had been the worst problem.

Other stakeholder interviewees made comments on different issues, although not more than one respondent identified each, including wanting more notice of the meeting, too much documentation and the need to mix the tables so each contained pro- and anti- views (an issue which has been mentioned above).

The key issues for stakeholder interviewees on the worst aspects overall were also about lack of opposing views but, differently from questionnaire respondents (unsurprisingly given that these comments were given much later), there was dissatisfaction with reporting back to them about what happened as a result of the consultation. Specific comments from stakeholder interviewees on the worst aspects of the meeting included:

"Maybe the people who weren't there. It would have been useful to have a list of who had been specifically invited whether they chose to come or not." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"It all worked well. The only thing perhaps seemed over the top was the documentation. It was very heavy. It had to be. But if you are really going to make it accessible you wouldn't have a document that size. It was size rather than the complexity." (NGO Manchester)

"I can't identify anything I was not unhappy with. I felt very unhappy with the whole event ... There are so many better ways of doing things ..." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"The atmosphere wasn't intimidatory or unintelligent and the officials were perfectly pleasant. But you need to give people two sides of the argument. If you just come and hear what the government thinks this is a briefing not a consultation." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Negative is the bias towards [nuclear] if you don't have a fair reflection of stakeholders. May just need to increase the number." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"It wasn't the process on the day, it was the starting point and knowing the whole result before the consultation started." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Nottingham)

"Only thing that did not work well was the table placements. Review that so there is more mixed group on each table." (energy company stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Information follow up. To start with such a good document and then not get something as good seemed to be how it is often done. Put as much effort in at the end as at the front end." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"If running a consultation invite stakeholders from both sides of the argument obviously one side was under represented." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"A bit more notice would have been helpful and would have allowed more people to come. Anything that is a government body should have been represented." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Belfast)

For Government policy makers and other BERR interviewees, the single biggest **worst aspect** of the stakeholder engagement events was that some green groups withdrew; this echoes the views of many stakeholders. This withdrawal caused real disappointment (a word that recurs in these interviews), especially as the green groups had been involved in the early stages of the consultation. Comments from policy makers interviewed include:

"Wished green NGOs more willing to participate - sometimes no green voice and [lead facilitator] had to [make some of those points]" (BERR interviewee)

"Green groups pulling out [was one of the worst aspects]. Did engage at the beginning and attended meetings and on the stimulus materials [for the public events and early regional stakeholder events]. Really disappointed." (BERR interviewee)

"Great disappointment that NGOs pulled out. Was surprised NGOs participated up to the point they did. But it is disappointing - debate all around the process not the content." (BERR interviewee)

"At the stakeholder events you tended to get a very vocal group who dominated ... But when there was a single issue group like that, other members of the audience stood up and shut them up." (BERR interviewee).

"The regional and site stakeholder events were variable; at some there were not that many people and they were variable in terms of interest." (BERR interviewee)

"The disappointment was that the NGOs pulled out. There was a failure to keep them engaged. It would have been a richer debate if they'd been involved. But we didn't fail to note what the NGOs were thinking." (BERR interviewee)

"An issue that was noted by participants at the stakeholder meetings and by BERR was that while a number of anti-nuclear groups did participate - e.g. CND - in a sense there would have been a more robust debate if the environmental NGOs had participated." (BERR interviewee)

"It would have made for a more interesting debate if the NGOs had been there; they were in Cambridge and there were some in Bristol. They made the events more useful and lively. Otherwise it was OK; we had regulators, industry, academics." (BERR interviewee)

"Making sure that all the right people were invited was difficult (I'm not saying that it didn't work). We tried to get the RDAs to help, but they didn't always have up to date comprehensive lists of stakeholders ... there would have been wider representation with the green groups, but we did have anti-views ... so it was legitimate. The debate was well-informed." (BERR interviewee)

As illustrated by these comments, there is feedback that there could have been more effective recruitment of stakeholders, both in numbers and range of views. This, alongside the withdrawal of some green groups, was one of the key issues for BERR interviewees, along with timescales and some short notice for the first few meetings: Invitations for those were only sent about two weeks beforehand (later meetings gave more notice). These issues are covered in more detail below under Lessons.

In addition to the specific issues raised in all the feedback above, there are five other specific issues that are mentioned by respondents but which, from observation and overview of all the comments, seem more important than they emerge from the quantitative data, summaries and quotes shown above. These are:

- The word 'open' was used often in the full comments from stakeholder questionnaire respondents to describe the discussions (see Annex 2). This suggests two things: neither the style of the discussions nor the content was tightly controlled. Although there were one or two stakeholders who fed back that they felt that the questions and the framing of the debate were limited, this was very much a minority view. The openness was commented on and clearly valued by participants.
- The respondents noticed and appreciated that comments were overtly recorded. From the comments, this seems to have encouraged them to take the discussions seriously and to believe that Government would listen to their comments.
- A few stakeholder questionnaire comments mentioned it explicitly, but it seems to have been a fairly widespread view (and clear from observation) that the particular mix of table discussions and plenary feedback and then continuing questions and debate in an open forum worked particularly well. This was also mentioned by some stakeholder interviewees (see below). From observation, this approach allows those who are less confident to express (and refine) their views in small groups before speaking in the usually more daunting full plenary session.
- The relaxed informal atmosphere. From observation, this seems linked to the sense of an 'open' debate overall. Participants felt they could say what they wanted, ask questions and make their points, without feeling intimidated or anxious. This is very important in achieving the best possible participation in discussions. In this case, it was achieved by the style and quality of the facilitators.

The lead facilitator, a senior official from BERR had a very open, confident, professional, welcoming and relaxed style. In addition, the table facilitators worked hard to make all participants feel that their contribution was important and that they would be listened to and taken seriously, but without individual pressure. This facilitation style worked well and achieved a largely positive and productive atmosphere in what could have been a highly charged and conflictual situation.

- The fact that BERR themselves ran these stakeholder events was also commented on by some respondents. Although the general view of good practice in stakeholder engagement is that such events should be designed and delivered by independent facilitators, to demonstrate the independence and neutrality of the process, in this case it worked very well for BERR to act as lead facilitators.

Participants clearly responded positively to being able to talk directly to those who would actually be using the results of the consultation and writing the final policy documents.

However, it is important to note that the stakeholder trust and confidence in this way of running the process resulted from the delivery of a highly competent process, delivered by senior civil servants with particular skills and experience in facilitation, and with the personality, to successfully manage the highly charged and volatile atmosphere at some of the events. These skills and characteristics may not always be available in Government departments, so this approach would need to be used with caution by others.

Lessons for the future

Finally, all respondents were asked to suggest any specific lessons that Government should take from these events.

For stakeholder questionnaire respondents, responses relevant to lessons for the future were only those given in answer to an open question at the end asking if they had 'any other comments'. Here the comments were largely very positive:

- 23 (out of the total of 271 respondents) said it had been good, excellent, they had enjoyed it and they said 'thanks'
- 19 (out of 271) said it had been a well-organised, well-facilitated debate
- 4 said that there needed to be a wider debate about these issues (not just focused on nuclear power)
- 4 said they wanted more details about who had been invited and involved in the events
- 3 said they wanted to get involved again and continue the debate.

Comments from stakeholder questionnaire respondents to this open final question included:

"Exceptionally well facilitated. Very impressed with the commitment to even handedness" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"Would like to be informed about the progress of the consultation and policy decision" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"Basic document was flawed in particular in not recognising [?the] urgency of international action. No economic data deserving the name. No level playing field for alternatives such as coal CCS" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

"Possibly a more up to date delegate list as not all attendees were recorded" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

"I was pleased to be involved and found the session interesting and informative" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Birmingham)

"Very professionally organised and facilitated stakeholder meeting." (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

"Found it useful and constructive and informative" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bristol)

"A very valid attempt as part of a very difficult objective" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)

"Well run meeting but discussion questions did not tackle real issues" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cambridge)

"A genuine hope that government will listen to responses from consultation" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"On balance a worthwhile exercise from the point of view of attendees" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"The meeting was conducted professionally, openly and fairly. Discussions and debate was informed and relevant" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

"Very well organised and prepared. Hergen Hays [lead facilitator] was very good – clearly spoken and well informed" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Glasgow)

"Excellent facilitation by Hergen [lead facilitator]" (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)

"The briefing was very poor. The underlying assumption (e.g. economic, demand growth, energy conservation etc) were not stated. No attempt was made to show, in a factual and

measured way, what the alternatives were” [lead facilitator]” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Leeds)

“Thought event logistics done well and facilitation was very balanced, open and professional” [lead facilitator]” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, London)

“Useful, open exercise” [lead facilitator]” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

“Very professional and well done. Could have been all day event” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

“My feeling is that the decision has already been made and new build nuclear is going ahead. The debate has been set up in such a way that the result was almost pre ordained” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Manchester)

“Other voluntary/statutory groups would have been interested in attending” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

“Excellent facilitator” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Newcastle)

“Well organised, informative and useful event” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

“Underlying assumptions of the government’s paper distort the discussion – no opportunity to challenge assumptions” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Nottingham)

“Worthwhile effort and could consult fully and engage” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

“Meeting very well facilitated” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

“Well facilitated, really glad I came” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

“It was a pity that more anti’s were not able to attend” (stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Reading)

As with previous comments quoted, the selection of comments above has been chosen to reflect the range of views, rather than the quantity of views on any subject. They are purely illustrative rather than representative of the breadth of feeling on any single issue.

Stakeholder interviewees were similarly positive. Interviewees were asked two general questions at the end of interviews: whether they could suggest any lessons for Government about involving stakeholders in future, and whether there was anything else they wanted to say about their involvement in the consultation.

Overall, again, the comments that were made more than once were that the process had been good. However, not everyone agreed: one said it had been 'farcical'. However, the positive feedback was far more extensive than criticisms and complaints.

Specific suggestions for lessons for the future from stakeholder interviewees included:

- the need for follow up information to be sent to stakeholders so they know how their input has been used
- that these debates need to ensure there are sufficient opposing views present and that there needs to be a wider range of stakeholders involved generally
- that consultations like this can give disproportionate leverage to a small minority
- again a suggestion that it would be useful to place people on tables to ensure a mix there of pro- and anti- views.

Comments from **stakeholder interviewees** shine further light on these potential lessons for future stakeholder engagement, and included:

"No [lessons to suggest] I think they have got the hang of it." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"I don't know the answer. But ... all those people who work in the nuclear industry are paid to be here but a lot of anti people are there in their own time and at their own expense." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"This was funding for a good model of consultation but to be effective need to invest similar amounts in looking at energy efficiency and renewable energy." (local government stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"A specific lesson to learn is about value. People who turn up for it is an opportunity cost i.e. it costs you £300 worth of time and expenses. If you add up this time spend in the consultation is that value? It's a hidden cost of consultation ... The cost to the tax payer has been valued but not the cost to the community." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"Have to consider the self selection. Government did not necessarily get the stakeholder range they planned." (NGO stakeholder interviewee, London)

"You could ask people to put questions in advance because the questions were fairly predictable. Certainly I asked 2-3 things and I could have submitted them previously." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Bristol)

"BERR to engage with regional bodies ... RDAs and government offices would have signposted to stakeholders and add value including industry." (government agency stakeholder interviewee, Birmingham)

"Need to think about how to bring in minority groups who are opposed. They didn't want to be seen supporting the process so they may have cut their own throats by not attending. Ideally you should get all points of view. If the audience is small enough you might have rational argument rather than rhetoric. It would allow for intelligent discussion ... Make sure anti nuclear groups are there." (business stakeholder interviewee, Glasgow)

"The people who challenge consultation need to challenge with solutions. Consultations give a long lever to small arguments. Consultations can give a huge amount of leverage to a small vocal minority ... no risk assessment has been done about how the influence of that small vocal minority affects the community" (industry stakeholder interviewee, Cambridge)

"It should have been one [whole] day. It would have been more fruitful and allow for mixing with others and sharing ideas and more discussion and feedback. Especially with a subject as strategic as this." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Newcastle)

"More communication would help about what happened next ... for an exercise that was about reassuring the public if someone makes a point like that it would be good to answer and clearly say how that information was to be used." (other professional stakeholder interviewee, Cardiff)

"Myself and others believe govt should lead and so consultation for big questions but the government must lead on these. Ultimate consultation is the election." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

"Would have welcomed a follow up e.g. copy of White Paper. This follow-up would have been courteous." (academic stakeholder interviewee, Belfast)

Several stakeholder interviewees also said that they were pleased to have been interviewed for the evaluation (some said it was the only communication they had had since the stakeholder events). However, several commented that they would have preferred the interviews to have been done sooner after the event. The timing of interviews had been decided partly to ensure that people knew the final Government decision, so they could comment on the whole process including that decision. However, in future, every effort should be made to complete the interviews within a month or two of the announcement of a final decision on the matter under consultation, rather than the three or four months here.

Depending on resources, it may be that future evaluations could do a two-stage interview in which the details of the process are covered relatively soon (a few weeks) after the event, and a follow up interview covers views taking into account the final decision. In spite of these comments from a few respondents, there was a very high level of recall of most interviewees of the details of the events. This reflects previous evaluation experience; at the start of interviews, respondents are slightly vague but, as long as the questions are structured well, most soon remember the process very clearly.

Lessons for the future from policy maker respondents, others from BERR and COI included that the design and delivery worked well, but that more and a wider mix of stakeholders could have been invited and encouraged to attend - particularly the green and/or anti voice. There were also lessons around timing and ensuring invitations to stakeholders go out in good time. Comments from BERR and COI on lessons for the future include:

"Would have secured an anti-voice who had been paid so sure that voice was there" (BERR interviewee)

"Realised had not communicated these types of policy well [e.g. emphasis on renewables]. [Now] new communications strategy with elements of engagement" (BERR interviewee)

"[For others running engagement] Don't copy BERR. Set clear objectives and find the right process. It is worth doing - different voices brought together" (BERR interviewee)

"Would have liked longer. Really tight lead up to the launch of the Consultation Document [then short time before stakeholder events]. (BERR interviewee)

"Timescales were really ambitious on this project. Worked closely with RDAs [Regional Development Agencies] and umbrella organisations to get contact lists of people. It was a big piece of work. [Learnt that] need to get invitations out really early to people coming to events. Would have liked to have given people more notice of events. [Did] invitations, follow-up email and phone calls, and took ideas for more contacts and invited them." (BERR interviewee)

"At the start of the cycle of regional meetings, some stakeholders may have received invitations too close to the events (two weeks before). We should have emails everyone right at the start about all the events and allowed them to choose which ones they wanted to attend. In general you need to leave at least one month between sending the invitation and the event." (COI interviewee)

"NGO participation throughout would have increased [the consultation's] value. The NGOs are a constituency you have to listen to " (BERR interviewee)

"People would have liked more time because the issues are complex. They had concerns about waste management and security issues and wanted more time to discuss them than was available ... perhaps we could have given more time for discussion during the stakeholder meetings (e.g. continue in the afternoon). (BERR interviewee)

"I keep coming back to the need to effectively engage the environmental NGOs." (BERR interviewee)

"More needs to be done to get comprehensive lists of stakeholders in the regions." (BERR interviewee)

"There is nothing quite like the personal exposure, so it was important that the team went to the stakeholder and public events: it gives you an idea of what people are thinking and why. It is important to have a summary of other events, to compare one's own experience and see if what you heard is representative and reflects others." (BERR interviewee)

These lessons are carried through into the end of this section, which covers lessons from the stakeholder events as a whole, as so many of the issues are the same from the regional and site stakeholder events.

6.3 The site stakeholder events

6.3.1 The site stakeholder events process

The nine site stakeholder events were held around the UK, on or close to existing nuclear power stations, as summarised in the following table:

Location	Venue	Date	Number attending
Bradwell	Hotel	3 October 2007	10
Dungeness	On site	20 August 2007	27
Hartlepool	On site	30 August 2007	37
Heysham	Hotel	17 August 2007	30
Hinkley	On site	15 August 2007	22
Hunterston	On site	25 September 2007	23
Sizewell	On site	31 August 2007	26
Torness	On site	26 September 2007	24
Wylfa	On site	27 September 2007	66
Total attending			265

The purpose of the nine site stakeholder events was to "help understand the views of those who live near nuclear facilities"⁶⁹.

These events were again co-ordinated by BERR in close collaboration with the operators of the sites: British Energy and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The operators have formal liaison arrangements with local communities around the sites through site stakeholder groups (SSGs) and community liaison councils (CLCs). BE was responsible for invitations to these events, using the SSGs and CLCs as the primary source of invitations but also, at BERR's request, extending the invitations to other interested parties as well. In addition, the Heysham, Torness and Wylfa events were advertised in the local press (as the operators would normally do in those locations before a community meeting).

Information from BERR states that 528 invitations were sent out, and the total number of stakeholders attending these events was 265, as shown in the table above. Individual events attracted between 10 and 66 participants. There were no restrictions on attendance, although participants had to register in advance for those events held on nuclear power station sites for security reasons. The venues were those usually used by the SSGs or CLCs for their meetings.

Once people registered to attend, they were sent a registration pack which included details about the venue and a summary of the agenda. Those attending the five meetings in August (Dungeness, Hartlepool, Heysham, Hinkley and Sizewell) were not sent a copy of the Consultation Document in the post prior to the meeting but, following feedback at those events, the document was sent to participants in advance of the other four meetings.

⁶⁹ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.76.

Each event lasted two to two and a half hours, followed by refreshments. Some were in the morning, started at 10am or 10.30am and finished with lunch (e.g. Hinkley, Heysham, Hartlepool, Sizewell); some were in the afternoon, from 2pm (e.g. Dungeness) and some were late afternoon, starting at 4pm (e.g. Hartlepool).

Each participant, on arrival, was given a pack with copies of the attendance list, a summary agenda and an evaluation form (to be completed at the end). Copies of the Consultation Document were also available at the events.

As with the regional stakeholder events, all the events were designed and delivered by BERR officials, with support from COI. Senior BERR staff took the lead facilitator role and made all the presentations using a common set of Powerpoint slides.

Participants were seated in table groups, each with a facilitator. Again, BERR staff facilitated some of the table groups; some tables were facilitated by COI staff and some by additional specially recruited facilitators.

The overall agenda was the same as the regional stakeholder events (see above) covering the same six key questions:

- Q1 Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view on carbon emissions from nuclear power stations? Are there any other aspects of carbon emissions associated with nuclear power that should be considered?
- Q2 Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view on the security of supply impact of nuclear power stations? Why do you say that?
- Q3 Do you agree or disagree with the Government's view on the value of having nuclear power as an option? Why do you say that? Are there any other considerations that we have not discussed?
- Q4 Do you agree or disagree with the Government's views on safety, health, transport and security issues? Why do you say that?
- Q5 What do you think are the ethical considerations related to a decision to allow new nuclear power stations to be built?
- Q6 Having considered all the issues, and in the context of tackling climate change and energy security, do you agree or disagree that it would be in the public interest to give energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations? What conditions would you like to be in place (e.g. yes ... if; or no ... unless).

As with the regional stakeholder events, there were opportunities for table discussions on the questions, and then plenary feedback, Q & A and wider discussions throughout.

The points made during the table and plenary discussions were recorded on laptops by the table facilitator using a proforma.

Detailed reports were produced of all nine site stakeholder events, and published on the consultation website. These reports summarised the background to the

consultation (including the Government's preliminary view that "it is in the public interest to allow energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations").

These reports also included a list of participants, a summary of the main points from the table discussion groups, and a summary of the points made, questions and answers from the plenary sessions. The slides from the presentations were also published on the website.

After the last of the regional and site stakeholder events, Henley Centre HeadlightVision were commissioned to undertake an independent review of the outputs from all the stakeholder meetings (regional and site meetings). That report was provided to BERR policy makers as part of the material they considered in coming to the conclusions that were published in the White Paper reporting the Government's decision - to go ahead with giving private companies the option of building new nuclear power stations - which was published in January 2008⁷⁰. The Henley Centre report was published on the consultation website, and as part of the report on the consultation responses⁷¹.

As the events had been facilitated by BERR officials, including several senior policy makers, they were able to hear (and respond to) stakeholder views and questions first hand.

6.3.2 Evaluation of the site stakeholder events

The assessment that follows is based on analysis of the questionnaires returned by stakeholder participants at the end of the events: 200 out of the total of 265 participants in the site stakeholder events returned evaluation questionnaires; a 75% return rate overall. Full analyses of the questionnaires is provided in Annex 3 which covers all nine events. All the percentages given below are based on percentage of respondents.

In addition to questionnaire feedback, nine formal telephone interviews were carried out with one participant from each site stakeholder event. The interviews with BERR staff and policy makers, and the COI covered these events as well as the regional stakeholder events and their comments are covered in the section on the regional stakeholder events above.

The site stakeholder event participants interviewed covered the following categories:

- 4 from the local community
- 2 industry / power station staff
- 1 local government
- 1 fire service
- 1 other (consultant / researcher)

This sample was selected partly to ensure a reasonably balanced coverage of the three main sectors represented at the stakeholder events: the local community, the power station staff and the public sector.

⁷⁰ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. A White Paper on Nuclear Power.* BERR, London, January 2008

⁷¹ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses.* BERR, London, January 2008

The final selection of interviewees also depended to some extent on availability and willingness to take part; interviewees were conducted in April and May 2008. Overall, a good coverage of all events and types of stakeholders was achieved.

In addition, evaluators attended two of the nine stakeholder events (Dungeness and Sizewell) to observe and talk informally with those involved in the meeting. Some documentary review has also been undertaken. The assessment also draws on the evaluator's previous experience of local and regional community and stakeholder engagement exercises.

Representation and diversity

The key issues for the evaluation in terms of representation and diversity are around the extent to which each event provided a mix of types of stakeholders and their organisations to ensure the necessary diversity of views.

As mentioned above, the invitations were managed by British Energy on behalf of the NDA and BERR. Information from BERR states that 528 invitations were distributed, although no information is available on who was invited. A total of 265 participants attended these site stakeholder meetings as shown in 6.3.1 above. The table below summarises the types of stakeholders at the different events.

The analysis of numbers of stakeholders has been based on the attendance lists in the site stakeholder events published on the consultation website, and then checked against the numbers of questionnaires returned. The analysis of categories of stakeholders is based on the same sources.

There is no analysis of stakeholder categories for Hartlepool, as the participant list is not included in the site stakeholder event report published on the website; the total figure of attendance was provided to the evaluation team by COI but no more details are available.

	Total attended	British Energy / site staff	Regional / Local gov officers	Councillors	Business / industry	NGOs	Unions	Community orgs / public	Academic	SSG members	Other	Unknown
Bradwell	10	-	1	3	1	-	-	1	1	-	2	1
Dungeness	27	2	3	10	-	1	-	3	-	2	5	1
Hartlepool	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
Heysham	30	4	6	3	-	-	-	4	2	-	9	2
Hinkley	22	3	-	3	1	1	1	8	1	1	3	-
Hunterston	23	9	-	1	-	-	-	7	-	3	2	1
Sizewell	26	1	5	-	1	2	-	3	-	1	1	12
Torness	24	-	2	-	4	-	1	7	-	-	3	7
Wylfa	66	4	9	-	3	-	1	29	-	-	5	15
Total	265	23	26	20	10	4	3	62	4	7	30	76

From the table above, the main groups of participants attending the site stakeholder groups can be seen to have been:

- 62 stakeholders from community groups and/or members of the public (about 24% of the total participants). This category includes parish councils, Communities First (in Wales), residents associations, community groups, local voluntary groups and the general public. We have not differentiated between individual members of the public and community group members as it is always difficult to make this distinction.
- 46 stakeholders from regional and local government (district, county, unitary and town councils): 26 officers and 20 councillors (about 18% of the total)
- 23 stakeholders from British Energy or other nuclear power station staff; about 9% of total participants
- 4 stakeholders from NGOs: these include representatives from Friends of the Earth and a local Wildlife Trust
- 30 'other' stakeholders; this category includes fire and rescue services, the police, regional development agencies, vicars, local economic partnerships, members and officers of national and devolved governments, and government agencies (e.g. Environment Agency)
- 76 unknown, which includes all 37 participants from Hartlepool. It also includes all those whose 'type' is not apparent from the organisation name given in the attendance lists, and all those with no organisation name given (some of whom may be members of the public).
- 10 stakeholders from business / industry; this includes chambers of commerce
- 4 academic, mainly from universities.

As can be seen from this analysis, the site stakeholder events did seem quite successful in reaching local communities: especially community groups, local government (including quite a lot of elected councillors), and the general public. This is precisely the type of audience being sought for these events and this coverage does seem to have been successful.

The feedback from stakeholder participants in these events about whether they felt the relevant stakeholders were present at the meetings was as follows:

- **56% of site stakeholder questionnaire respondents said they thought the relevant stakeholders were represented at the meeting;** 10% said they thought the relevant stakeholders were NOT represented; 22% did not know.
- From stakeholder questionnaire responses, the Sizewell event was seen to be the most satisfactory in terms of representation (80% said yes, the relevant stakeholder interests were represented; none said no), and Hinkley the least so (22% said yes, 28% said no and 22% said they did not know).
- The largest gap in representation identified by questionnaire respondents was that there were not enough greens / NGOs: 9 out of the total of 200 respondents mentioned this; 7 said there not enough community / residents / public there. 2 said there needed to be more anti-nuclear / opposing views and 2 thought it too pro-nuclear. Comments on questionnaires included:

"Limited attendees from local community" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bradwell)

"More NGOs / interest groups would be welcome" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)

"Too few local residents present to forward views adequately" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

"Probably too many people with a vested interest in nuclear" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hinkley)

"The public at large" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)

"More public, more opposition, simpler data and questions" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

"Not enough green groups" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)

"More local people and those whose future on Anglesey is important" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

As can be seen from these quotes, the same issues came up at all nine site stakeholder events; this was not a concern limited to one location. However, the analysis of the types of stakeholders at each event shows that local community groups were present; the feedback from questionnaire respondents may therefore reflect that they would have liked more, rather than that these voices were not represented. The analysis does show that there were only very few representatives of national green NGOs (Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace), which seems to be what other stakeholders wanted.

Feedback from site stakeholder interviewees on the representation and diversity of these events was similar: 6 of the total of 9 site stakeholder interviewees said the relevant stakeholder interests had been represented; 3 thought they had not. Comments included:

"I know people in the community who were involved. Everyone was welcome to attend. There is quite a strong anti-nuclear group. Their representative didn't feel there were enough anti-nuclear interests there." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"The group was not representative. They were very much pro-nuclear energy and the power station. In my group I was the only dissenting voice. At the end in the general discussion there were also no other opponents. The report back from my group gave the majority opinion, which was pro-nuclear, which was fair enough, but not representative of wider opinion in Hartlepool." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"I was there representing xx Community Council. The meeting was held at Hunterston Power Station. Everybody was there." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"If I'd been organising, there'd have been a lot more invitations ... The workshop would have been really welcomed, there would have been lots of interest, but the organisers thought too small." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"There was a fair cross-section of people at the event. The people there were representative of various interest groups" (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"Yes: there were members of the public, emergency services, businesses. It was a wide mix. Not everyone who had been invited turned up though ... There were people who were pro- and anti- nuclear power" (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"Certainly a cross-section, from pro- to anti-nuclear. They accurately reflected local opinion." (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

These comments illustrate the feedback that there was some disappointment that there had not been more participants overall, and that there had not been more local people, but also views that the representation was appropriate. There is here, as with the regional stakeholder event feedback, a clear desire among respondents to ensure that there is a strong anti-voice present in these debates. Although that voice was clearly present, there is a sense that participants would have liked *more* anti-nuclear voices.

This is interesting and slightly contradictory feedback. From analysis of who actually attended, reviews of the reports of meetings and from observation, there were strong debates and anti-nuclear voices were part of those. This feedback suggests something else: that there is a desire for balance among participants. This is always difficult. There may simply be an imbalance of views among local people and, therefore, however many people attend there will always be an imbalance of views in the room.

The analysis of who actually attended suggest that the mix of views was present so this feedback may therefore be less about dissatisfaction with representation than about dissatisfaction with the lack of anti-nuclear views.

This is as likely to be the view of pro-nuclear participants as anti; the sense that to have a good debate there need to be equal sides. However, that is difficult to achieve with a meeting which is designed to offer an open invitation. Participants will always self select. The alternative, to construct a meeting with equal numbers on each sides, may create more problems than it would solve.

The approach taken here, and with the other stakeholder events, to undertake a basic stakeholder analysis to identify key interests, ensure they are invited and then manage the debate so everyone has a chance to have their say (and that was achieved, see below) probably remains the best and fairest approach.

On a slightly different issue, here, as with the feedback from the regional stakeholder events, quite a large proportion of evaluation respondents said they did not know whether the relevant stakeholder interests were there. An attendance list and other mechanisms outlined above in the regional stakeholder analysis would help address this, and potentially overcome people's natural distrust of these events by giving them the information they need about participants.

Overall feedback on the site stakeholder events

The satisfaction of participants is an important criterion for assessing the quality of any engagement process. Their feedback is an essential element of any evaluation analysis. This section focuses on participant satisfaction with the site stakeholder events; feedback from policy makers on the overall quality of the process is covered in section 6.2.2, under the review of the regional stakeholder events.

As with the regional stakeholder events, site stakeholder participant satisfaction was tested in a number of ways: questions on the questionnaire asking directly about whether the process was useful and worthwhile. Interviewees were also asked whether they were satisfied with their involvement in the consultation.

The findings are summarised below (full details of all statistics and comments from questionnaires in Annex 3). All percentages given below are based on percentage of respondents, with numbers rounded to the nearest whole number; as shown above, there was a 75% evaluation questionnaire return rate (200 out of the total of 265 participants).

Feedback from site stakeholder evaluation questionnaire respondents was as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The meeting was useful and worthwhile	40%	51%	6%	1%	-

This feedback shows that, overall, **91% of site stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that the meeting had been useful and worthwhile.**

These are very similar results to those from regional stakeholder events and show high levels of satisfaction; stakeholders are often critical of engagement processes and to have only 2 respondents (out of 200) disagreeing that the meeting was useful and worthwhile is very positive feedback.

There were some significant variations in levels of satisfaction with the process overall, depending on the event attended. Bradwell had the highest number of respondents agreeing 'strongly' that the meeting had been useful and worthwhile (70%); 90% of these respondents agreed overall. Torness and Dungeness also had high levels of positive feedback: 57% in Torness 'strongly' agreed, and 55% in Dungeness - and 100% of respondents in these two locations agreed overall that the meeting had been useful and worthwhile.

The least satisfied respondents were from Hunterston, where 19% agreed 'strongly' (and 69% agreed overall), and Sizewell, where 24% agreed 'strongly' (and 88% agreed overall). Again in these places, not one respondent disagreed that it had been useful and worthwhile (the remaining respondents were unsure).

Reviewing the comments that followed the tick box answers, the reasons for these disparities are not obvious. However, as the overall agreement was fairly universal, these differences seem to be about level of enthusiasm rather than fundamental problems and dissatisfactions.

There was also a high level of satisfaction expressed by stakeholder participant interviewees when they were asked similar questions some months later. **7 of the 9 site stakeholder interviewees were satisfied with their involvement in the consultation**; 2 were not. The lack of satisfaction here was largely about the range of stakeholder interests represented at the meeting (or not), and lack of feedback afterwards (a point returned to below).

In addition, **all 9 interviewees said they were more likely to want to get involved in this type of consultation in future**, as a result of being involved here. This is a strong endorsement of the approach and the way the process was carried out.

Comments from site stakeholder interviewees included:

"I would be quite happy to participate again." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"Straight afterwards I found out about the WAG [Welsh Assembly Government] consultation and I also contacted my local MP, and I hadn't done that before." (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

"Yes, I'm happy with the Heysham event because of those next stage benefits. I didn't have expectations about the consultation on nuclear power because of the separation of nuclear power from energy policy ... Yes [more likely to get involved in future], for networking." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"Yes, it was a worthwhile exercise. I'm happy to have participated ... I'd be happy to help if I can [in future] ...I want to continue to make a contribution." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"I'm satisfied with my participation in the context of what the meeting was about. My disappointment was that the breadth of opinion about nuclear power in Hartlepool was not represented in the meeting. So the discussion was not as open as it could have been." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"I'm satisfied – there weren't any disappointments ... I would like to be involved in this kind of thing in the future." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

Overall, the feedback about the process was very positive. This was supported by observation. The events did feel open and challenging but also productive, and stakeholders did discuss issues openly with each other, even when they disagreed. Informal feedback was that participants were pleased to have the opportunity to take part in this debate and found the event useful and worthwhile.

Clarity and transparency of objectives and process

The key issues for the evaluation of the site stakeholder events around the clarity and transparency of objectives and process are on the extent to which it was clear to participants what the objectives of the events were, how the results would be used, and how the event fitted into the wider consultation and policy process.

Specific questions on the participant questionnaires addressed these issues. Additional questions were asked of interviewees including the extent to which they were clear about the Government's preliminary view on the future of nuclear power and about what the stakeholder involvement was expected to achieve.

Feedback from site stakeholder evaluation questionnaire respondents was:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The objectives of the meeting were clear and transparent	33%	55%	8%	3%	-
The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders at the meeting were clear	20%	50%	18%	10%	-
The way the outputs from the meeting would be used was clear and transparent	22%	60%	13%	4%	-
The level of influence of the stakeholders at this meeting on Government policy was clear and transparent	20%	51%	20%	7%	1%

This analysis shows that, in summary:

- 88% of site stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that the objectives of the meeting were clear and transparent
- 70% agreed that the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders at this meeting were clear
- 82% agreed that the way the outputs from the meeting would be used was clear and transparent
- 71% agreed that the level of influence of the stakeholders at this meeting on Government policy was clear and transparent.

This is also quite positive feedback, particularly around the clarity of the objectives of the meeting. However, the numbers of those 'strongly' agreeing are quite small across all these questions, suggesting no great strength of feeling that these issues were clear.

The feedback is more positive on these issues than from the regional stakeholder events, particularly around clarity on the level of influence of stakeholders (only 8% of regional stakeholder respondents agreed strongly that this was clear, compared to 20% here). This issue is covered in more detail below under the section below on Influence. There was also more positive feedback on the clarity about how the outputs would be used, with only 13% of regional stakeholder respondents agreeing strongly compared to 22% here.

The comments from site stakeholder questionnaire respondents do not clarify why there is more positive feedback on these issues at these site stakeholder events than at the regional events. There may be a number of reasons. It may be because these events were later in the sequence and the presentations about these issues had become clearer; it may be that these stakeholders understood the processes more clearly already; or it may be that these stakeholders were more trusting.

The feedback on levels of clarity was even more positive from site stakeholder interviewees. These findings were as follows (not all interviewees answered all questions):

- All 9 site stakeholder interviewees said they were clear about why the Government was consulting stakeholders on the future of nuclear power.
- 6 interviewees (out of the total of 9) said they were clear how the consultation fitted within the wider context of UK energy policy; 3 were not clear.
- 7 Interviewees (out of 9) said they were clear about the purpose of the event they attended; one was not clear. The clarity (as with the regional stakeholders) was slightly cynical, with a reason given by 2 interviewees for the event being that it was a tick box exercise.
- 8 interviewees said they were clear what the stakeholder involvement was expected to achieve; 1 was not clear and another 2 were not entirely clear. Here too there was a sense that it was expected to affirm the Government view - not all respondents thought that a bad thing.

- 6 interviewees were clear how the information collected at the event would be used; 3 said they were not clear. This response links to the feedback on the extent to which interviewees had seen feedback from the consultation overall; this point is returned to below.
- 2 interviewees said they knew the results of the consultation, 5 said they did not, and from comments from others that lack of knowledge seems to have been widespread. 4 specifically said they had received nothing afterwards (although 2 said they had seen the notes of the meeting). In addition, 4 said they knew the Government's final decision but 4 said they did not.

These findings suggest a good level of clarity about the purpose of the consultation with stakeholders and of the specific event that people took part in.

However, there was much less clarity about what the what the engagement was expected to and did achieve (the results of the consultation), and what the final decision by the Government was. Comments from site stakeholder interviewees included:

"Absolutely [clear about why the Government was consulting stakeholders]. It came from the challenge from Greenpeace ... I felt that the purpose [of the event] was to get our views. That was how the BERR guy ran it – he didn't put his own views across ... I hoped that it would help and influence the Government to continue with its policy. It's hard to get a balance when there are such opposing views ... I can't remember reading the consultation conclusions" (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

" Yes [clear about why consultation happening]. At the meeting the organisers went through the whole process and why this was happening ... The document gave an overview of the options available to the Government: they said that no decision had been made yet. There were rumours that the decision had been made, that was the local opinion. People raised the issue at the meeting ... They also went through the process and what would happen: we'd give our opinions, in other meetings people would give their opinions, they'd put together the opinions from different meetings ... My voice is just one of many. The general consensus at that meeting was taken forward to the hub of all the meetings. However, only a small part of the community was there, so I don't know if that was representative ... people didn't turn up – but they're the worst criticsers after the event ... They said it [the information from the meeting] would be collated and used by the people writing the policy ... No, I haven't been told anything. It would be nice to hear ... It would be nice to know the effect public views had ... I haven't heard anything since the meeting. I would like to see what was said and whether or not it affected the outcome. It would answer the question, does democracy work? ... we need to see how and whether what was said has affected the decision." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"Yes [clear], but I don't agree with the scope of the consultation ... I was clear about the purpose but not about how the outputs would be used in decision making ... I was not clear on how the output would be used: were they just canvassing for a balance of opinions or would information be extracted from it, with different policy positions being drawn out and policy tested against it? The meetings didn't encourage the latter." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

" Yes [clear], both from the invitation and from the information provided on the day ... My understanding of why the Government was consulting stakeholders is that it was because Greenpeace or one of the environmental groups had taken the Government to court ... arguing that the Government had not done enough consulting. The Court found in Greenpeace's favour and therefore instructed the Government to carry out a further review of public opinion. The meeting I attended was part of the Government's action to comply with the Court's requirements ... The Judicial Review had highlighted a weakness in policy development, so it's possible that Greenpeace did us a favour by bringing the case! That made the consultation necessary ... The consultation results were being fed into the Government. We were told that something would emerge by the end of the year. The Torness meeting was held quite late, near the end of the process. I don't know whether the consultation made a difference: I was only at one meeting, so that's all I can judge by ... The people who spoke were supportive ... I know about the decision ... I have no recollection of receiving anything after the consultation. I was content with what happened. I didn't see the document that was produced but I hadn't asked for a copy of the White Paper. I saw an announcement about it and some discussion of the issues." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"I don't think that it was made clear. They said that they were 'feeling the water' – the questions reflected this. The Government was using the answers to formulate a response ... The questions were quite specific, not 'o you want nuclear power?'. But I felt it was merely lip-service – they wanted to be seen to be consulting ... I've no idea what the consensus was at the end of the day ... There was no follow up or feedback on outcomes ... I would have expected feedback on what were the overall views: the balance of views, some comment, a sample of quotes ... I'm not satisfied. It went into a black hole ... I haven't read the White Paper. I've seen extracts but nobody has said how "we" contributed. There was no clear reference to the consultation. It may be in there but there is no feedback from the meetings or input on what has happened and what will happen to the information and how it will be used." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"Yes, I was clear about it ... It was not clear what weight might be given to a response from the Community Council in relation to a response from the nuclear industry. We felt that what we said would have relatively small importance relative to that of others ... I know that it [the information from the meeting] was recorded. One of the buzzwords now is 'consultation' ... I'm not sure whether the Government expects the community to respond ... I haven't been sent anything subsequent to my participation. I feel this is an exercise rather than a real consultation, so I didn't really expect to hear anything ... I can't say [what the impact was] because I don't know the final result." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"No, it was not made clear how this fits with decisions on overall energy policy. A lot of things were not discussed ... I know there were some other events held in other areas of the country. It was mentioned at the meeting that this was part of a larger process ... If the meeting at Hartlepool was representative of what happened elsewhere, the outcome was supposed to be to show that there was wide support for the Government ... I had the impression that the information would be collated and used. The Chair was very good [at explaining these aspects] ... I don't know anything specific about the results of the consultation. I may have been told that there was information available on a website. If this was the case, I think that is fair enough – you can't expect them to send information to everyone who took part in meetings." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"I was clear that the Government had a view and I was clear about how it was consulting ... For goodness sake, I hope there is someone who knows what they are doing and can give a solution. Consultation is about whether those solutions are acceptable ... I'm a cynic. The point of the meeting was to tick a box and say they'd had the meeting. But it's very important to go to meetings and challenge the point of view of others: it's not just a waste of time ... It can make a difference if the right people are listening. They may not have realised some implication [of their proposal], for example a local slant. People in power need to hear and take account of viewpoints: maybe something new will be said." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"Yes [clear]. The organisers explained at the meeting ... The Government was hoping to get a wider view from people who aren't on the inside (in the nuclear industry); they wanted to hear from people who live in the environment of nuclear sites, people who live locally ... We were told that anything published as a result of the consultation would be available on the website ... The organisers collated information from participants in all the site meetings and put this together to give them a view ... I wasn't satisfied with what I was told [about the results of the consultation], but recently there has been a lot of information in the media, that the Government is going for nuclear power, that more power stations will be built ... I would have liked to know more about the decisions." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

It is clear from the comments from interviewees (illustrated by those above) that they knew very little about the outputs of the meeting, or how they were used by Government, or even that they were used to produce the White Paper. This is surprising given the expected levels of knowledge among stakeholders with an interest in this subject and, with some site stakeholders, quite a personal interest in the decisions.

However, it does raise a number of issues. Very few site stakeholder respondents seem to have a clear understanding of how the results of the consultation were used in practice. Also, although participants were informed in the stakeholder events that reports of the meetings would be put on the website, only two interviewees said they had seen that report.

As outlined above in the review of regional stakeholder event feedback, in future it would be valuable for more robust methods to be used to communicate with stakeholders after the actual engagement event. It would be useful to inform them in the meeting, in summary, how the results of the meeting would be published, how it would go to policy makers and that it would feed into the development of the White Paper.

Afterwards, a follow-up email can be used to inform them when the report is published and available on the website; and a further email sent when the White Paper is published. Ideally, at that stage, some sort of summary of how the stakeholder input had influenced the final policy decisions would also be made available to stakeholders.

In this case, as described in detail in section 8.4, policy makers painstakingly went through the input from stakeholders (and the public) to develop the final policy ideas that formed the White Paper, although none of the participants seem to have been aware of that. Better communications of those issues could significantly increase participants' trust in the process and in Government.

Overall design and delivery of the stakeholder engagement process

The issues for the evaluation in terms of overall design and delivery are around the extent to which the design was appropriate to the objectives and that the delivery was undertaken competently and professionally.

As outlined above, the purpose of the nine site stakeholder events was to "help understand the views of those who live near nuclear facilities"⁷²

The issue of representation has already been covered above, as have issues of transparency and clarity. This section therefore focuses on tackling the issues of the extent to which the overall design and delivery enabled participants to voice their views and to prepare other inputs to the consultation.

The section concentrates on issues of timing, information provision, the extent to which participants felt the event was fair and not biased, whether they could contribute effectively, the recording and reporting of participants' views, and whether the event facilitation was well-managed.

Various evaluation questions covered these points in stakeholder participant questionnaires and interviews. The summary findings are given below (full details in Annex 3). The percentages given below are all based on percentage of respondents, rounded to the nearest whole number; there was a 75% response rate overall (200 out of 265 participants).

⁷² *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.76.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All participants were treated equally and respectfully	54%	44%	2%	-	-
I was able to raise the issues I wanted to	33%	57%	8%	1%	1%
The facilitation of the meeting was fair and balanced	39%	55%	4%	2%	-
No single view was allowed to dominate unfairly	41%	46%	8%	3%	1%
The structure of the meeting enabled us to discuss the issues properly	23%	55%	9%	11%	1%
There was enough time at the meeting to discuss the issues properly	13%	50%	10%	24%	3%
There was enough information provided in advance to enable informed input	10%	37%	24%	24%	5%
All the main issues were covered in the meeting	20%	59%	14%	7%	-

As can be seen from the analysis above, the overall feedback on these issues is mostly very positive:

- 98% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that all participants were treated equally and respectfully
- 90% agreed that they had been able to raise the issues they wanted to
- 94% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that the facilitation of the meeting was fair and balanced
- 87% agreed that no single view was allowed to dominate unfairly
- 78% agreed that the structure of the meeting enabled participants to discuss the issues properly.
- 63% of stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that there was enough time at the meeting to discuss the issues properly.
- 47% agreed there was enough information provided in advance to enable informed input.
- 79% agreed that all the main issues were covered in the meeting.

This feedback is very similar to that from regional stakeholder respondents, except for there being enough information in advance to enable informed input: 69% of regional stakeholder respondents thought there was enough information (and 21% of those agreed 'strongly'), compared to a total of 47% agreeing here, and only 10% agreeing 'strongly'.

There were few clues in the comments following the tick box answers given above. Evaluators noted that participants at the first five site stakeholder events had not been sent the Consultation Document in advance. However, analysis of the feedback of those events compared to the other four does not show marked differences except at Dungeness (where only 9% agreed there was enough information in advance), Heysham (38% agreed) and Sizewell (44% agreed), all of which were below the overall 47% agreement. However, Hinkley (56% agreed) and Hartlepool (48%) were above the norm. The feedback from interviewees does give some more clues about this (see below).

The only comments on questionnaires that indicated any wider concerns were that 2 respondents (out of the total of 200) felt there were not enough opposing views (as already covered above), and 2 felt that the events were hijacked by those with strong views. The largest group of comments (7) were that it had been a good, well managed and useful process. Comments included:

"Well handled without haste or pressures!" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bradwell)

"Excellent chairperson" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)

"Information provided but not enough time to assimilate it ahead of meeting" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

"Not enough time available for final topics" site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, (Heysham)

"A well structured meeting which I enjoyed" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)

"Some attendees hijacked the time - prevented equal coverage of some important issues" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)

"Could have discussed issues over whole day, but with expert up front it was well worthwhile. Many thanks" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

"Much more interesting meeting than initially envisaged. Good level of audience participation" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)

"Excellent presentation" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

"No real discussion – opinion was polarised from outset. Different groups pushing differing agendas. The timing was wrong, i.e. when to hold this consultation" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

Similar feedback came from site stakeholder participant interviews. Overall the feedback was:

- 8 (of the total of 9) site stakeholder interviewees felt that the **structure and delivery of the event enabled them to have their say**; 1 was not sure.
- All 9 interviewees felt that everyone there had an **equal chance to have their say** and that no single view was allowed to dominate the discussion.
- All 9 interviewees felt they were **able to make the points they wanted** on nuclear power.

Comments from site stakeholder interviewees on these issues included:

"I did have my say. I'm not sure if there were more people than expected, but at this meeting we didn't have small tables, just an open debate ... Everyone who wanted to had their say. The facilitation helped every view to be heard. There was a lot of support for the station – it's so

crucial to Anglesey. The anti-nuclear campaigners were there but when they realised that they weren't in the majority, they got up and walked out. I felt they didn't want to hear alternative views" (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

"Yes I definitely felt I could have my say. I'm quite confident, but even quieter people were encouraged by the organisers to speak: they allowed the more confident people to speak and then turned to the quieter people and asked them if they wanted to comment. It was a relaxed and open event ... Everyone had an opportunity. There were no pre-set opinions. There were people who were pro- and anti- nuclear power. No one was allowed to overbear on others." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"It was OK ... they went for a market research approach: looking for consistency, statistically meaningful outputs, etc, so questions were phrased in a way that would provide specific answers. There was an opportunity to discuss issues in a round table session, but those running it were looking for "manageable" inputs ... I felt that the facilitators were looking for items of data, the 'what' not the 'why'. So I would say it was consultation, but neutered ... We could express points, but there was no chance to explore the alternative logics that lead to decisions. We couldn't put forward a coherent logical argument." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"Yes I was able to make my points ... I was fairly comfortable with the way it happened and so were most of the people there. Some people not accustomed to working in small groups might have found that difficult but I come from a public sector background so I'm used to it ... The meeting was well-chaired. People were encouraged to contribute. The [xx] representatives had pretty strong views. What they were saying was not unreasonable but it might have been off-putting to some participants. My criticisms of the event are very marginal, but in my sub-group there was someone from a [xx] who made strong statements and was fairly loud in his opinions." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"It was small enough to be able to make points ... I felt it was a positive thing. There were people who had concerns – this showed a mix of views. The problem was that we were given tasks to do – there were so many questions to answer ... It was not so much about 'having your say' as asking people to answer certain questions. I think the questions could have been better. We didn't have the expertise or information to answer. It was also too rushed. There was something lacking." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"There was nothing to stop people having their say. The facilitator was very fair. I had my chance." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"Was it a consultation? Consultation has become a dirty word in [xx] ... We are very distrustful. I regarded this as a PR exercise – and as a PR exercise it was very well done. Within the small group I was in, everyone had the opportunity to speak. And the same was true of the big group session ... I didn't have points to make – I went with an open mind. But I felt obliged to present an alternative viewpoint. I felt very lonely." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"Yes, it definitely enabled us to have our say. We were given quite a lot of information before – though the anti-nuclear person said we should have been given it with more time. I thought there was time to read it. I felt that there was the opportunity to speak ... Everyone had an equal chance. There was no pressure to 'say the right things'. It was well conducted. But people have to take their opportunity to have their say. It was clear that it was the opinion of the Government and the nuclear industry that was being presented." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"Yes the structure and delivery were good. I knew very little when I went to the meeting. I learnt a lot. The organisers did as well as they could ... Everyone had the opportunity to say what they wanted. Maybe staff from the power stations had more to say, but that was perfectly relevant ... I was able to say what I wanted." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

The comments from site stakeholder interviewees on these three questions, including those quoted above, suggest that respondents were very satisfied that they had been able to have their say, could make the points they wanted and that no single voice was allowed to dominate. Some clearly found it easier than others to take part, and some felt their views were overwhelmed by others who had different views. Overall, however, there was no sense that the discussion was limited or unfairly channelled. Quite the opposite; there was a strong sense that there were open and frank discussions and that people were able to say what they wanted to say.

This is confirmed by observation. Although at some events there were some quite intimidating personalities arguing strongly for their views, these were largely controlled well by the lead facilitator. Such individuals were allowed to have their say but not allowed to take over the event and prevent others from speaking. In some events observed, there was a slight sense of bullying by some participants which may have made others fearful of taking them on.

However, the split between table discussions and plenary sessions made it possible for everyone to have their say at some point, even if some of the plenary sessions were more conflictual. The only place that there were not full discussions within small table groups was at Wylfa; that event was run mainly as an open debate.

- **7 (of the total 9) site stakeholder interviewees thought there had been enough time** to cover all the main issues; 1 thought there had not and 1 was not sure. Comments included:

"To be honest, it would have been hard to get all the issues covered in small groups. There was one guy who was pro-nuclear but had one specific issue with nuclear power. It took a lot of time with him raising this issue, but he needed to have his say" (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

"Yes. The meeting lasted for two hours. It didn't feel as though we were being hurried in discussions." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"The time was adequate – it was a well-balanced event." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"There was a lot to take in: you had to think through, respond and then you were on to the next point." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"There was sufficient time. We could have gone on longer but it wouldn't have got us any further forward." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"There is never enough time. Any topic needs more discussion. But most of the points were covered in the session." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

This feedback from interviewees shows that, although there was enough time to cover the main issues, some would have liked to have continued the discussions in more depth. As with the regional stakeholder events, there is always a difficult balance in planning these events; some participants want to spend the time exploring issues in depth and will be attracted to a longer event; others want to go to an event that is focused and relatively short.

Overall, the view from stakeholders is that there was sufficient time to cover the issues. This was confirmed by observation. Discussions were focused and to the point but not unduly rushed and no-one was prevented from having their say by lack of time.

- **7 (of the 9) site stakeholder interviewees felt that the comments and views of stakeholders were recorded appropriately**; no-one disagreed but 1 was not sure and 1 said they did not know. Comments on the recording of views included:

"There was someone recording all views" (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

"We were divided into groups and each group had a chair and minute taker. Everything was recorded." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"I didn't think there was any evidence that they hadn't recorded views and comments appropriately ... The minutes of the meeting were OK. The majority of people don't look at the results of a workshop like this ... I was optimistic at the time [about how the information would be used], though this later proved not to be the case." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"Yes. We were told that notes would be made of the discussions." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"There was a young lady doing the recording efficiently." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"I don't know whether my points were recorded. All the people in my group had a vested interest in the new generation of power stations. That was the majority view and that was what was reported back to the main session. But I think there was someone recording on the top table." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"Yes, they were noted. I have confidence in the way they record these meetings." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"Yes, there was an efficient young lady taking notes." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

Here again, interviewees were largely satisfied with the way the points made by participants were recorded although there was less clarity about what happened to those notes and whether it made any difference. They seem to have been reassured by seeing the points being recorded on laptops.

From observation, the recording was carried out conscientiously and thoroughly by facilitators on laptops. In this case, the plenary sessions were also recorded in this way, rather than audio recordings and transcriptions used in the regional stakeholder events. This has resulted in shorter meeting reports, covering just the main points from the plenary sessions rather than full transcripts of questions, answers and discussion.

This approach is sufficient in this case. The main points stakeholders made were recorded, written up and published and, from observation, covered the main points made in the meetings.

- **8 (of the total 9) site stakeholder interviewees said there was enough information** provided to enable them to take part in the discussions; the other 1 said the information had been sufficient to some extent.
- **All 9 interviewees said that the information at the meeting had been clear and reliable.** As with the regional stakeholders, some made a distinction between clear and reliable.
- **All 9 interviewees said they felt able to ask questions** (if they needed more information).
- **6 of the 9 interviewees said they felt that the important issues around nuclear power had been covered;** 1 said they had not and 2 were not sure.

Comments from site stakeholder interviewees on the information provided included:

"I felt there was enough information. There was a good presentation which put across the Government's recommended position ... [The important issues] were covered both in the presentation and in the questions. There was an opportunity for questions on different elements after each section. There was only one question that the Government representative couldn't answer, but that was because it was a local government issue" (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

"Yes. We were sent the proposal documents prior to the meeting ... The information they gave at the meeting reinforced what I'd read ... They have enough information if people read it ... I was happy with the answers [to questions]. There was no whitewash. All the questions raised were answered and there were no halfway answers ... The most important issue was safety. They discussed things like the incidents at Chernobyl and in the UK and how those occurred. I'm fairly pro-nuclear even though I can understand people's concerns." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"There was enough for me personally – I didn't have any problem participating. I don't remember anyone saying that they hadn't had enough. There was some frustration that people were being consulted at all, with people saying 'Hasn't this already been decided?' Taking a decision on nuclear power in isolation makes no sense, but we couldn't make comments on the wider framework ... It might have been clear, but it didn't allow you to go beyond the nuclear. We did have information for the nuclear power discussion, but not for the wider energy discussion ... Yes [able to ask questions], especially given the range of participants ... There was lots of time to mingle and talk informally. That is important and good practice." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"Yes [enough information] ... I was able to ask questions. I felt that the answers we were given were frank ... Yes [important issues covered]. The range of participants meant more issues were covered." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"It was lacking in some information that people would have wanted, but that information probably didn't exist, it was too early on. They could have given the presentation and then had a discussion later on, after it had time to sink in." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"Yes, they gave a PowerPoint presentation ... We felt that we did have enough information with the background information that was provided ... The issues were reviewed in the presentation and the questions. My community council is divided between people with pro- and anti- views. I went to understand the issues and I was quite happy with the information." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"Yes, the information was adequate – I remember reading it ... The information was absolutely clear – I'm not sure how reliable it was. I only read the information they sent out about half an hour beforehand. I didn't know enough to ask many questions ... Not many questions were asked. I did ask some questions ... Lots of issues were not raised: e.g. the disposal of spent fuel, the enormous cost of power stations, alternatives – how will spending on nuclear power affect spending on other approaches? I mentioned this but it wasn't taken up." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"There was enough for me. I don't have a technical background, so it was adequate for me, but for others with specialisms it wouldn't have been enough – but they could have found things out from elsewhere ... It was clear and as reliable as it could have been. Whatever you try to write has one vein on the subject. There is always a doubt about the information we are given, it is always debated by the anti-nuclear groups ... They [the important issues] were fully aired. There is an ongoing discussion on the issues, for example the Government needs to sort out what to do with the waste." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

Yes. I mainly got my information through the presentations at the meeting and the discussion. There's not much time to read a lot of information ... Obviously they are selling it to you. It is in [their] interests to make you believe that nuclear power is the way ahead. The information was challenged by someone there from an NGO who raised questions. So it was open to discussion ... Yes [able to ask questions]. I was happy with the answers that were given ... You could have gone on all day but it doesn't always resolve anything. I would say that the discussion covered most things." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

The feedback from interviewees, as illustrated by the quotes above, is more positive than the immediate feedback from questionnaire respondents. Although it was not articulated explicitly, there was a sense from the interviewees that they had a lot of the information in their heads already and that this was another meeting to which they applied that information.

Although the majority were satisfied overall with the specific information provided for the specific purpose, a significant minority did not feel that there was enough information provided *in advance* in this case. This may be something that could be considered in future stakeholder engagement plans.

The information provided at these events was also designed to support participants in making individual written responses to the consultation. This was a specific part of the objectives of the regional stakeholder events but not the site events; however some information was gathered for the evaluation about whether respondents intended to, and did, make a separate submission.

- 69% of site stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that they would also be participating in the consultation in other ways; only 4% disagreed and 24% were unsure.
- 2 of the 9 site stakeholder interviewees said that they did go on to make input to the consultation in other ways (about 22%): 1 online and 1 using the paper response form. 7 said they had not. One said they had looked at the online consultation but did not complete it. 2 specifically said that attending the meeting had been enough; they were satisfied they had made their input there.

As with the feedback from respondents from the regional stakeholder events, there was a marked difference between the site stakeholder respondents who said they would be participating further in the consultation and those who actually did: 69% said they would participate further in the questionnaires completed at the end of the meeting, and around 22% actually did.

Again, as with the regional stakeholder events, from the feedback from site stakeholder respondents interviewees, this seems to be partly loss of commitment and lack of time in practice, and partly that evaluation respondents from the site stakeholder events felt that participation in the events had been sufficient for them to give their views.

Overall, these findings - particularly about the ability of stakeholders to give their views and for those views to be recorded and taken forward - suggest that the design and delivery of the events did work well and did meet the objectives of the events, as outlined above.

Learning and changes in participants' views

The issues for the evaluation of site stakeholder engagement events in terms of learning and shifts in views are around the extent to which those involved felt they learned something as a result of taking part in the process, and how that affected their views. The evaluation tested these issues with specific questions to stakeholder participants in interviews.

The feedback was in summary:

- **6 (of the total of 9) site stakeholder interviewees said that they had learnt something new**; 1 said it had clarified their thinking and 2 said they had not learnt anything new. The new knowledge seems to have been largely around updating existing knowledge and some facts and figures. Comments included:

"Yes. In broad terms, I knew a bit. The consultation information taught me a lot more ... I found the process very informative." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"Yes, I learnt about CO2 emissions and how they are assessed." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"Yes. It kept me up to date with issues affecting energy policy." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"I learnt something from the literature – but I could have picked that up anyway." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

The feedback from interviewees, illustrated by the quotes above, suggests that the events did have some real value to participants in terms of providing access to information and knowledge, even if this was building on existing knowledge rather than providing startling new information.

- **Only 1 (of the 9) site stakeholder interviewees said being involved had made any difference to what they thought about nuclear power**, although 2 said it had clarified their views. 6 said it had made no difference. However, the feedback was also that it had been interesting to hear other views.

Comments included:

"As well as being slightly better informed, it strengthened my view that nuclear power should be part of a package of measures for energy policy and that nuclear power has a contribution to make in controlling global warming" (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"I didn't go with preconceived ideas. The event made me clearer that nuclear power is a short-term necessity that is becoming a long-term policy." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"No, though I find it interesting to hear people talk about the different points." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"I felt more positive. I had gone in with an open mind. If you look hard enough there are always negatives (the radioactive waste, the long term problem) but I learnt more about why we need it." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

The low level of change in site stakeholder views illustrated by these comments is not surprising, given that many of these respondents live and work near nuclear power stations and will have gone through the issues and arguments many times in the past. It is useful to know, however, that even here, engagement can help people clarify and develop their views.

- **4 (of the 9) site stakeholder interviewees said that being involved had made a difference to what they think about Government consulting stakeholders** on these sorts of issues. The main comment here was that it seemed to be a good way of doing it, although some remained sceptical.

Comments included:

"The consultation and the meeting crystallised in my mind my previous views. When the green groups walked out, it opened my eyes to those attitudes they take. They almost stand on a pedestal and take the moral high ground. The Government was listening but the anti-nuclear groups didn't want to hear. The groups said the consultation was a sham but they chose not to speak ... The Government consultation was very good and fair." (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

"It will [make a difference to what I think about consultation] if we can see the outcome of our meeting and compare it to the end decision. If the two are diametrically opposed then the meeting was a waste of time, unless the Government gives the reasons why it decided something different." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"Yes – I saw the problems. I thought they were down to BERR not understanding the nature of stakeholder engagement. They were forced to go through the motions of engagement because of the legal challenge, when the views of stakeholders were already known. So it wasn't value for money – though they got some benefit." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"The judicial decision was a bit of a reverse for the Government. In the future, I think that the Government will ensure that it meets the criteria for consultation." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"Many consultations involve stakeholders making some effort to be involved, e.g. by downloading documents. The benefit of this was that you had the opportunity to go to a meeting and express your views: it was an easier and more pleasant way of participating, knowing that this is a bit of an exercise." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"There is a general scepticism about consultations, they haven't got a good record anywhere: consultation results are not acted on, there's a general feeling that they don't change anything. ... The Government can say 'We have consulted' when the anti-nuclear groups say they haven't. The decision can't be taken through consultation." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"I think it is a good idea. It makes the public more aware. It could make people look at the Government in a different light. It could mean that constituents were more sympathetic." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

These quotes illustrate the largely (although not entirely) positive feedback from site stakeholder interviewees on the impact of the process on their views of consultation. This links to feedback above, which shows that all 9 site stakeholder interviewees were *more* likely to want to take part in future consultations as a result of having been involved in this one, which suggests a measure of approval for the way this one was planned and delivered.

Influence on policy decisions

The issues for this evaluation to consider in terms of influence on policy decisions are around the perceptions of expected influence among participants, the knowledge and perceptions of participants of actual influence, and consideration of the evidence on influence based on feedback from policy makers and documentary review.

Feedback from stakeholders at these site events on the issues around influence was, in summary, as follows:

- **76% of site stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed that BERR would listen to and consider the stakeholder views given at the event;** 21% agreed strongly, 55% agreed. 1% did not agree; 20% were unsure.

This is a positive response to this question; stakeholders are often very sceptical about the level of influence their input has. 21% agreeing 'strongly', as part of the overall figure of 76% believing that BERR would consider the stakeholder views given shows a good degree of trust in the process, and in BERR. The positive feedback on the structure and delivery of the events, and particularly on the very obvious recording of comments, may have contributed to this positive view.

- **2 (of the total of 9) site stakeholder interviewees thought that the Government had listened to and considered what stakeholders had said** when they decided their policy on nuclear power. 3 thought they had not, and 1 did not know. 3 did not really answer this question.

In addition, 3 felt they were clear about the impact of stakeholder views of the government's decision but 3 were not and 3 were not sure. Comments included:

"No [Government had not listened], but it's not as simple as that. I was happy with that meeting [Heysham] because it was part of the process of engaging local opinion around the process for new build. There was quite a different thing going on for local sites and stakeholders, which

could have influenced decisions, and that is important stuff. But those questions and comments were not recorded, they were not part of the process. So there was no record of these more informal discussions ... I did read the White Paper but not in a great deal of detail. I thought that the Government had already made up its mind. They had failed the legal test for full and fair consultation, so they re-did it. But they hadn't changed their mind and they were fully aware of what the stakeholders thought. They were 'going through the motions'. The stakeholders couldn't frame the arguments – the opportunity wasn't offered." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"It has had zero impact. They don't have to take views into account ... I think that the Government is going through the motions. They are doing this so that they can put a tick in the box." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"I'm quite sure that the Government doesn't listen to anybody ... I am absolutely sure that they didn't listen. I'm totally sure they disregarded anything that didn't fit with their preconceived positions ... Whatever the stakeholder views, they won't have changed the Government's preconceptions ... I wasn't so jaundiced about consultation before. The meeting itself wasn't so bad, but we have had so many cases of bad consultation in Hartlepool ..." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"I can't remember if we got anything written [about the results] – we probably did ... I have seen the document [the White Paper]. I'm happy with it ... I hope they took things into account. That's fair – they have to take the decision." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"I would like to think so [had listened], but I think they'd probably made up their minds. They were doing what they needed to be seen to be doing. Most people felt that it had been decided anyway." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

These comments illustrate what was quite a negative response overall about the influence of stakeholder input. From the comments from site stakeholder interviewees overall, it seems that the negativity was largely to do with a view that the Government had already made up its mind and/or there was no change to its position; it was just going through the motions. A couple of interviewees said they 'hoped' that the Government had listened.

It is interesting to relate the feedback on influence to answers to previous questions by interviewees. Some of those who felt quite positive about the actual event felt cynical about their influence overall later because they had not heard anything about how their views were taken into account. It seems that the benefits of a good event can easily be lost if there is insufficient communication afterwards to explain how the results from the stakeholder discussions have been used. For example, the site stakeholder interviewee from Dungeness said they were "More disappointed than anything else. It just stopped, there was no feedback." Feedback is clearly as important as a good interactive event in building trust in such processes.

Quite a few interviewees said they did not know what the results were (as noted above) and so could not answer. These interviews took place some months after the White Paper had been published, to quite a lot of press coverage. 4 interviewees said they knew what the final decision was (just under half) but very few had seen let alone read the White Paper.

Indeed there were quite a few comments from interviewees expressing disappointment that they had not been sent anything since the consultation. In some cases that lack of contact reaffirmed their suspicion that the stakeholder engagement would make no difference, that it was just an exercise.

There is more on this issue at the end of this section, covering the overall influence of stakeholder input, along with feedback from BERR policy makers.

Costs and benefits

The issues for this evaluation on costs and benefits focus on a qualitative and descriptive approach to considering the *perceived* costs and benefits of the site stakeholder events for the participants and policy makers. There was no formal consideration as part of this evaluation of the balance of costs and benefits. However, it is a useful indicator of the 'value' of the exercise to ask those involved about *perceived* costs and benefits.

Participant interviewees were asked a specific question on this topic, which was:

"Stakeholder engagement obviously has financial costs. Do you think it is money well spent or not?"

Some were asked a supplementary question on what would make it more likely that they felt it was money well spent, which provided additional information on caveats.

This evaluation has not sought details of the costs (financial, staff etc) of the stakeholder engagement events (or any other elements) in this consultation process. The only information on costs sought or provided was that a total budget of £2.4 million was allocated by the department "for the implementation and running of the consultation and subsequent collation and analysis of consultation responses"⁷³.

Although consideration of the costs is becoming increasingly important in evaluations of engagement processes, at the time this evaluation research was carried out, no data was collected on detailed costs during the evaluation and it was not possible, in retrospect, to gather any meaningful data later.

The focus on consideration of costs is therefore based on feedback from participants, specifically in participant interviews, and from policy makers. The actual costs (the total budget identified above) was not discussed with respondents, although that information was by that time in the public domain. The feedback from policy makers is covered in section 6.2.2 on the regional stakeholder events, as their comments covered all stakeholder events together.

The feedback from site stakeholder participant interviewees on whether the process was money well spent was as follows:

- **6 (of the total of 9) site stakeholder interviewees felt it was money well spent;** only 1 thought it was not. 3 made the point that the process had not been lavish, and 2 that it had to be done so cost was not really the issue. Comments included:

"It must have cost several million. I would have thought it was a waste of money. But if the court judge ruled it had to be held, then there was no choice." (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

"There is a cost to democracy. Getting people who can go out and talk to people has a cost. It would be naïve to think that it could be done another way." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

⁷³The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.16.

"The meeting was valuable. The costs were probably not high: they didn't rely on a lot of external facilitators. You need to ensure that in-house facilitators are well-briefed: in this case, they weren't, though they were competent." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"It was probably not that expensive. It was held at the power station, so it used those facilities – that was value for money." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"In terms of the overall consultation, yes it is perfectly reasonable to spend money informing people." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"From my point of view, it wasn't money well spent. It was a successful PR exercise. It would have been better value for money if there had been a full debate about all the aspects of nuclear power. Organisations like Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace who are knowledgeable about alternatives should have been invited." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"It was a fairly modest event – I've been to much more lavish events, it was not out of the way or disproportionate. And it served a purpose, if only to give the Government the argument to go ahead." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"It's difficult to say. It probably didn't cost that many thousands, and basically it was a PR exercise." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

The comments from site stakeholder interviewees, illustrated by the quotes above, and the results of observation and informal interviews, suggest that this particular strand of the consultation was money well spent. The views among site stakeholder interviewees about this were based, as they were for the regional stakeholder interviewees, on issues around whether the consultation actually made any difference, and whether the expenditure had been excessive and the process had been 'lavish'. Most of these interviewees were reassured about the second of these, it was not lavish, but not about the first. This may be why their feedback on this was rather more negative than from regional stakeholders.

It may also be that these stakeholders do have regular meetings about nuclear issues, often with largely the same group of stakeholders as attended this event. They may therefore not have ascribed as much value to it (and thus not considered it money well spent) as the regional stakeholder respondents did, who did not usually meet with the other participants or discuss these issues.

In considering the **benefits** of the process, feedback from site stakeholder participants on the most important benefits for them was as follows:

- 39 site stakeholder questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 200 respondents) said that the most important benefit to them had been hearing and understanding the wide range of views and concerns (and knowledge) from other stakeholders
- 23 respondents (out of 200) identified increased knowledge of the subject, being better informed and clarifying thinking as the most important benefit to them
- 14 identified the opportunity to give their own / their organisation's views, and being heard as the most important benefit
- 12 identified the participation itself, engaging in the consultation, and being able to contribute
- 11 said information
- 9 said understanding the Government's position

- 4 said the main benefit had been networking, contacts, meeting people
- 4 said finding out about the consultation / understanding the process
- 4 said it was a chance to take information back to their community / others.

This feedback identifies almost exactly the same benefits, in the same priority order, as the regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents. The main focus here, as there, is on the interaction with, listening to and talking with other stakeholders. Here, there is slightly more emphasis on information and knowledge gained more generally (there was little mention of 'information' as a benefit from regional stakeholders), but otherwise the benefits are very similar.

Comments from site stakeholder questionnaire respondents on the most important benefits for them include:

"Understanding other delegate's views" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bradwell)
"It gave me a chance to update my views and hear the latest government thinking" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bradwell)

"To take back information to residents" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)
"Chance to input local view" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)

"Involvement in the process and being able to interject with security aspects of the discussion" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)
"Listening to local community representatives' views" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)
"Hearing the view of the government and being able to take this to pass on to other parties" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)
"Gathering of knowledge/clearer understanding of views of differing sides of the argument" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

"The ability to give a brief input on the future of nuclear in the future to our members" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)
"Understanding key issues raised by local participants" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)

"An improved knowledge of the issues surrounding nuclear energy" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hinkley)
"Taking on board the views of other representatives in the local community as well as the official DTI line" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hinkley)

"Learn the full spectrum of issues and concerns" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)
"Face to face understanding of depth of feeling on specific issues" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)

"Being here and hearing views (feeling informed and listened to)" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)
"Better understanding of the consultation process" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)
"Getting/reconfirming my view on how local people feel about nuclear energy" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

"The information provided and the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)
"Opportunity to ensure balanced debate take place" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)
"Understand real stakeholder views" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)

"Getting my views over" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)
"To observe the futility of the so called consultation process" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

"The fact that this discussion was at Wylfa was highly positive" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

Very similar feedback was received from **site stakeholder interviewees**, when they were asked similar questions some months later on the benefits of the process for them. They also mentioned hearing others' views, networking and contacts, expressing their own views, hearing from experts and the Government. Comments from interviewees on the main things they got out of being involved in the consultation were:

"I made some contacts with the coast guards and with other people in the area. It was interesting to hear people's views, especially the views of people who don't think the same as me, and to understand their positions." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"The atmosphere at the meeting was very positive. Information was being given, but the people representing Government agencies were interested in what was being said by participants. It wasn't just a token gesture." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"[The main things I got from the consultation were] Exploring the Government's views. Reinforcement of understanding of problems. Expressing my own views." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"I do like to hear people expound their views, whether or not I agree with them. I like to hear things directly from those responsible, from the experts." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"I thought it was interesting. It opened my mind to thinking about where power comes from. It made me think about the cost and future costs." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

There were also benefits to policy makers from the whole stakeholder engagement process; these are described towards the end of section 6.6.2 above, on the regional stakeholder events, as their feedback covered stakeholder engagement events as a whole.

What worked best and least well

The sections above have provided detailed analysis of the different elements of the stakeholder engagement events. This section considers feedback from participants and policy makers about the aspects of the process that worked most effectively ('best') and least effectively ('worst') for them.

Feedback from policy makers on the best and worst aspects for them of the stakeholder engagement events are covered towards the end of section 6.2.2 on regional stakeholder events, as their feedback covered stakeholder engagement events as a whole.

The best aspects for site stakeholder questionnaire respondents, identified in answer to an open question, were:

- 36 site stakeholder questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 200 respondents) said the best aspect of the meeting for them was the opportunity to hear and share views, and discuss the issues, with a range of stakeholders with diverse views
- 33 (of 200) identified the open, useful discussions
- 12 said the best aspect had been that the event had been well structured, conducted and facilitated

- 12 mentioned the information provided
- 10 said it was the small group / table discussions
- 10 said it was a good chance to contribute and give their own views
- 7 mentioned good presentations
- 7 said the best thing had been understanding more about the issues
- 4 said it was all good
- 2 each mentioned that the best aspects had been a good mix of stakeholders, BERR facilitation and the presence of local community representatives.

Comments from stakeholder questionnaire respondents on what were the best aspects of the meeting included:

“Openness and clear discussion between all present“ (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bradwell)

“I learned a lot about other people’s views and also more detail about things like safety. I feel I have a much better knowledge on the subject now” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bradwell)

“Good opportunity to share opinions” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)

“Being a lone anti nuclear person I was able to express my views” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)

“Info provided at meeting and additional sources identified” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

“A good number of different points of view were expressed. There was no attempt to stifle discussion” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

“Having representatives from BERR facilitating the meeting – having a good representation from the local community” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

“Variation of views expressed/discussed” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

“Getting a full picture of range of points and opinions” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)

“Ability to discuss the issues with a good mix of other interests around the table” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)

“Hearing from experts and people with a policy background” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hinkley)

“People had chance to give their opinions. Good group discussions” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hinkley)

“Open discussion” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)

“Way presenter controlled a difficult meeting” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)

“Hearing opposing views of the minority taken fairly and squarely by speaker and made worthwhile (i.e. answered well)” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

“Ability to expose the limitations of the debate – it should be about energy, not nuclear” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

“The combination of well informed participants and some very different viewpoints” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

“Good facilitation that sparked a good discussion around the issues” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

“How the diverse opinions were allowed to flow in positive useful debate” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

“Good level of debate” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)

“Able to discuss issues in an open supportive environment” (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)

"Listen to other views and the opportunity to put over my own" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

"Diverse as well as well informed views" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

"Every view was given an opportunity to be aired" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

Many of the points made by site stakeholder questionnaire respondents (above) were reflected in the feedback from **site stakeholder interviewees on the best aspects for them**. The main elements of what they thought worked best were that it was well-structured and run, and the small group discussions. These comments also mentioned the BERR facilitation and the presentations as among the best aspects.

Comments from site stakeholder interviewees on the best aspects of the event they attended included:

"Working in small groups [worked best]. It was a random selection of people. We had the pro and the anti people in one group. People explained what they felt and the organisers probed why. That cross over or mixing of views allowed exchanges to happen." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"There was good will. They were a good natured bunch of stakeholders with a positive approach. The round tables were bogstandard. BERR pulled out the main points. So there was not much innovation in the process. I liked the local ownership of the day." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"The explanations were well-presented. They were based on dealing with lay audiences, but we weren't patronised. The group working was alright" (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"You learn new stuff all the time. It was interesting to get a sense of public opinion ... it was held at a nuclear power station ... that was better than going to a fancy hotel. It wasn't over the top." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"There was an excellent facilitator." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"The meeting was efficient and well organised. Local consultation meetings are not always like that." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"Lunch.... No, it was a good all-round event. The participants and the presenters were very open. The organisation was very good." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

The worst aspects for site stakeholder questionnaire respondents, identified in answer to an open question, were:

- 24 (out of the total of 200 respondents) said the event was too short; some felt it could have been a whole day
- 14 (out of 200) said that a few individuals pushed their views rather than debating, and/or dominated the discussion
- 13 said there was not enough time to read the information in advance
- 6 said there were no worst aspects, it was all good
- 4 said the worst thing was not enough anti-nuclear / opposing views
- 4 mentioned that the discussions were rushed
- 3 said there were not enough community people

- 3 said the worst thing was participants giving incorrect / ill-informed 'facts'

More specific comments from site stakeholder questionnaire respondents on what were the worst aspects of the meeting also covered a range of other issues, and included:

"Would have liked more time" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bradwell)
"Limited attendees from local community" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Bradwell)

"Shortage of preparatory briefing" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)
"Bit rushed for a complex subject" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)

"Too few local residents present to forward views adequately" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)
"Overpowering individuals" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)
"Not sufficient prior information provided" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

"Questions seemed framed to get required Yes. Short of time on most issues" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)
"Dominated by nuclear industry and pro nuclear lobby" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)
"It was held on a working day, so it limited many people's ability to attend" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)

"Distribution of delegation at table" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hinkley)
"No anti nuclear representation" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hinkley)

"Dominating persons / sometimes in my opinion with incorrect facts" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)
"Lack of time to discuss waste disposal" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)

"Over dominance by very strong views and not pressed to give alternatives" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)
"Belief that little notice will be taken of views expressed" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)
"Structure of questions based on availability (or lack of) information" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)
"More time to consider detailed issues would have been useful" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)
"Filling in forms like these" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

"Perhaps more time could have been given to discussing the issues" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)
"Not many anti nuclear views" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)
"Not enough prior information" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)

"Discussion was not restricted to the consultation questions, so no definite feedback could be gained" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)
"Some people who like the sound of their own voice" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

These comments illustrate the emphasis in the feedback from site stakeholder questionnaire respondents on the desire from some for more time for discussion, and that there were some disappointments in relation to the mix of stakeholders present.

All these issues are exactly the same as the feedback from the regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents, and in the same priority, except on one issue: the site stakeholders identified the domination of some individuals as a much higher priority problem than regional stakeholders.

This is confirmed by observation. The regional events were largely polite and professional; the site events were more passionate with people expressed strong opinions strongly (as mentioned above). This is useful intelligence in planning any future local and regional stakeholder events, as it seems that local events may be more volatile and emotional.

The issue of people 'grandstanding' was also raised by **site stakeholder interviewees**, as were comments about the need for a wider range of voices, too little time and discussions being rushed. A separate issue for them, not surprisingly as the interviews were later, was dissatisfaction with follow-up. This was linked to concerns about demonstrating that the consultation had made some difference, and that stakeholder inputs had been taken into account.

Comments from **site stakeholder interviewees** about the worst aspects included:

"The people who didn't turn up [was the worst thing]. I haven't got an answer as to how you could make them turn up. Its important that people should attend to give their opinions and debate them." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"The follow up should have been quicker. [Also] I don't think that the procurement of the process was transparent ... Rarely is procurement on engagement transparent." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"The [xx] representatives were making strong points ... Some people may have felt overwhelmed. But for me it added to the breadth of the meeting." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"The format. The organisers' expectations of what they were going to get in a short time. No time to explore, debate, clarify. You needed time for 'chewing the cud' as the debate developed." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"The disregard of the Scottish dimension. More understanding / clarity of the relative weight given to different stakeholder views. Facilitator not able to respond to all questions." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"The range of voices needs to be wider." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

Lessons for the future

Finally, all respondents were asked to suggest any specific lessons that Government should take from these events.

For site stakeholder questionnaire respondents the responses were only sought in an open question at the end asking if they had any other comments. Here the comments were very positive:

- 10 (out of the total of 200 respondents) said it was good, excellent, they enjoyed it and 'thanks'
- 8 (out of 200) said it had been a well organised, well facilitated event
- 6 said the government need to get on and make a decision
- * 3 said there needed to be more on other issues (2 said waste; 1 said security)
- 3 again mentioned there had not been enough time

Other comments were around the need to have publicised the meeting more widely, the problems with one group dominating, and wanting to see more of these sorts of events so they could participate again. Comments included:

"More such meetings are needed as this progresses" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Dungeness)

"Why was I the only person against nuclear power. What is being done to engage more like me to get a better idea of all opinions – I am not a professional, 90% of attendees were" site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, (Dungeness)

"It would have been informative to discuss these issues at the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums prior to the meeting to obtain a wider view and also to publicise the question more widely" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

"When and how are the community/citizen consultations to be held – due to location in power station with power station staff rather biased" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hartlepool)

"More meetings of this type are necessary to keep the public informed" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)

"Meeting was incredibly interesting and very well compered" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Heysham)

"A pop in centre away from the site and closer to local towns would be beneficial and reflect a wider view of the local community" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hinkley)

"Too rushed, 1/2 day at least" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)

"More public information on meetings and date of meetings" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Hunterston)

"Very talented presenter, encouraging, well informed, commanding respect, and very pleasant atmosphere in which to discuss issues" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

"The debate strayed into areas not covered by the scope of this review and was used to showboat various anti nuclear issues. The record will not show the true feelings within the room!" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

"Lack of transparency on figures used (can't see how nukes will increase security of supply – we import) lack of time to investigate" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Sizewell)

"Consultation document should have been made available online rather than sending out paper wasting tomes!" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)

"Well presented, well run, professional" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Torness)

"It's time the government came to a decision. Wylfa has the necessary skills" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

"As a member of the general public I was unaware of this meeting until the day before it happened and so was unable to prepare properly. It should have been publicised more widely and sooner" (site stakeholder questionnaire respondent, Wylfa)

Site stakeholder interviewees were equally positive in their final comments, although they were also asked a specific question about what were the lessons about involving stakeholders that Government should take from this consultation. The only issues raised by more than one interviewee was the need for more transparency about how stakeholder views are taken into account, including how views from different stakeholders are weighted.

Other views (from single interviewees) included the need to do better (and earlier) feedback than was done, the need to get consultation right first time to avoid having to spend so much doing it again, and the importance of continuing to do consultation, and do it right.

Comments from **site stakeholder interviewees** on the lessons for the future, and final comments, included:

"When they write the White Paper, don't say they are going to have the fullest possible consultation." (site stakeholder interviewee, Wylfa)

"Make sure that any decision made is justified by the information that the public has given. And be prepared to give that justification." (site stakeholder interviewee, Bradwell)

"Get it right first time – if they had, it would have avoided the legal challenge and the obligation to re-do the consultation. And don't spend more money than is necessary. They held too many events: there were regional events, a national deliberative event, films, etc. I was pretty annoyed that tax-payers' money was being wasted." (site stakeholder interviewee, Heysham)

"The Government doesn't need advice from me about the advantages of consultation. And the Government must provide leadership ... I know that consultation is a necessary process. Both local and central Government has to demonstrate that a proper consultation process has been carried out." (site stakeholder interviewee, Torness)

"The Government needs to be transparent in its response – it needs to feed back and report back transparently. They should say if they heard things they weren't expecting, and give their reaction to what the event produced." (site stakeholder interviewee, Dungeness)

"To make it better: you could break up the time more effectively. The Q & A session was brought to a close before it had finished. The presentation was interrupted by people with strong views. There was a disappointing result from local people: they didn't attend." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"The Government should provide some guidance as to how it weights responses: is a response from an individual less important than a response from an organisation? Are organisation' opinions given different weight? I can't see the White Paper saying something like, '[xx] Community Council said ...'. It was a worthwhile exercise. I might be cynical but I don't feel that it makes much difference. Your phone call is appreciated. I would be very interested to see the summary and full evaluation report – and the Government's response to that!" (site stakeholder interviewee, Hunterston)

"Th[is] evaluation should be more immediate. Local people are involved in lots of meetings, so memory fades." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hartlepool)

"Make sure you send a good representative, that they know the information and can relate to the people (they don't put you down or patronise), that they are able to take questions and respond, and that they can take criticisms. It has to be someone who can do the job. On a scale of 1 – 10, I would give the Government representative at the Sizewell meeting about a 7." (site stakeholder interviewee, Sizewell)

"It's a shame there weren't more people there. I'm not sure whether people aren't just complacent and negative. There is a low turn out for many events – I don't have any magic formula to get them to attend ... Cash incentives sometimes work, but not necessarily, and it's not a question of dragging people in ... In general I feel that the Government and the organisers did their bit to make the event interesting and enjoyable." (site stakeholder interviewee, Hinkley)

Overall, the feedback from the regional and site stakeholder groups was very similar, both in terms of positives and negatives overall. The only difference was the greater incidence of individual participants being seen to be 'grandstanding' at site stakeholder events. From observation at two events, that was certainly the major difference between the two types of stakeholder events: the local events were more volatile and views were expressed more forcefully.

However, this may have been because at local level the views are more polarised between some who see the existing and potential new nuclear power stations as playing a vital role in the local economy (providing a lot of quite highly paid jobs in areas where there is little other employment), and those who are looking at environmental and ethical issues around nuclear power. All these are very personal and highly emotive issues so it is perhaps not surprising that they surfaced in some of these local meetings.

In terms of evaluating the process, however, these difficulties were dealt with professionally and they did not derail either the individual events or the wider consultation.

6.4 The reconvened stakeholder events

6.4.1 The reconvened stakeholder events process

The two reconvened stakeholder events were held in London and Manchester in February 2008. The purpose of these events was to provide "an opportunity to gain a more detailed understanding of the policies put forward in the White Paper and how the consultation has shaped these policies and the Government's decision. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions and put across your views on the White Paper" (quoted from the letter sent confirming registration for the event).

BERR staff co-ordinated these events with the support of the COI. Invitations were sent by email to all those stakeholders who had already attended regional stakeholder events and had supplied email addresses. A total of 96 people attended these two events, as follows:

- Manchester event, 7 February 2008: 50 participants
- London event, 19 February 2008: 46 participants.

Once people registered to attend, they were sent a confirmation letter with an agenda, details of the venue and timing, and a copy of the White Paper. On arrival, participants were given a pack containing a further explanation of the purpose of the meeting, a final agenda, an attendance list, an evaluation form and a copy of the slides used in the presentations.

Each event lasted about two hours, and was held in a city centre hotel, and followed by refreshments. The agenda was, in summary, as follows:

- Welcome, introductions and explanation of purpose of the meeting
- Presentation on the White Paper on nuclear power, covering the content and process of developing the White Paper policies, followed by discussions in small table groups and plenary. This session formed the bulk of the meeting and lasted around one hour and twenty minutes.
- Presentation on next steps future planned activities on aspects of the policies outlined in the White Paper, followed by plenary Q & A and discussions.

Senior BERR staff took the lead facilitation role and made the presentations. Table facilitation was also by BERR and COI. Notes were not taken of these table discussions, or plenary discussions.

6.4.2 Evaluation of the reconvened stakeholder events

The assessment that follows is based on analysis of the questionnaires returned by stakeholder participants at the end of the events: 71 evaluation questionnaires were returned from the 96 participants, which is a 74% return rate overall. Full analyses of the questionnaires is provided in Annex 4. All the percentages given below are based on percentage of respondents, rounded to the nearest whole number.

In addition to participant questionnaire feedback, six telephone interviews were carried out with participants from these events, three from each event. The interviews were with two stakeholders from industry, one NGO and one union representative, and two stakeholders from local government. This sample broadly reflected the types of stakeholders present. The interviews were carried out in April and May 2008. In addition, evaluators attended the London event to observe and talk informally with those involved in the meeting.

The participants at the London reconvened event reflected the overall types of stakeholders that had taken part in the regional stakeholder events, although there were more from energy companies and other business and industry interests, and fewer local authorities and NGOs than at the regional events (no details are available on the types of stakeholders at the Manchester event). The participants were, in summary:

	Total attended	Regional / local government	Energy companies	Other business / industry	NGOs	Unions	Government agencies	Government departments	Academic	Other	Unknown
Manchester	50										50
London	46	4	8	7	2	3			6	9	7
Total	96										96

The evaluation questionnaire circulated to participants was designed to test feedback from these participants on the consultation as a whole, on the extent to which they felt the Government had listened to stakeholder views, and with feedback on the reconvened event itself.

This feedback can only be seen as partial feedback on the consultation as a whole, partly because the reconvened events attracted only about 25% of the total number of stakeholders who participated in the regional events, and partly because the participants were not fully representative of the stakeholder interests that took part in those earlier events. However, as these events were open to all and those particularly interested in the consultation were likely to be those that attended, their views are of interest and value to this evaluation.

The evaluation questionnaire asked participants whether they had attended a previous stakeholder event: 97% said they had. It also asked which one and the respondents' answers showed that all twelve stakeholder events were covered by respondents except for Belfast.

In terms of **representation and diversity**, participants were asked their views on whether the relevant stakeholder interests were represented at this meeting: 63% of respondents thought they were; 17% thought they were not. 20% said they did not know. In the open comments following the tick box answers, the main comments were that there were too many pro-nuclear or with vested interests in nuclear and too many business and industry interests. 2 said it was a shame that the NGOs did not get involved.

Overall, this is positive feedback, with almost two-thirds agreeing that the relevant stakeholder interests were represented at the meeting. However, it is worth noting again some disappointment at the lack of NGO presence.

In terms of the feedback on the overall consultation, the feedback from evaluation questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows (see Annex 4 for full details):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The purpose of the consultation overall was clear	42%	45%	7%	3%	-
The extent of the potential influence of the consultation on Government was clear	21%	52%	17%	7%	-
There was enough relevant information provided for me to contribute fully	23%	59%	10%	7%	-
I was able to express my views fully in the consultation	35%	49%	10%	3%	1%
I was satisfied with the way the consultation was structured and run overall	32%	46%	10%	6%	4%
I found taking part in the consultation useful and worthwhile	18%	55%	4%	1%	6%
It is important for the Government to consult stakeholders on these sorts of issues	59%	37%	3%	-	-

This analysis shows, in summary:

- 87% of questionnaire respondents agreed that the **purpose of the consultation had been clear**. This is positive feedback, given some of the difficulties expressed at earlier stages of the consultation on the precise objectives and overall framing.
- 73% agreed that the extent of potential **influence of the consultation on Government** was clear. This question is about clarity, rather than agreement with the level of influence and the feedback is that this was clear to the great majority of respondents.
- 82% agreed that there was **enough relevant information** provided for them to contribute to the consultation.
- 84% agreed that they were able to **express their views** fully in the consultation. Although some strong disagreement, there was a large majority of respondents who agreed they had been able to express their views fully.
- 78% agreed that they were **satisfied with the way the consultation was structured and run overall**. This is very positive feedback overall although a minority (10%) disagreed.

- 73% agreed that they found taking part in the consultation **useful and worthwhile**. This is less enthusiastic than the feedback immediately after the regional stakeholder events. Not only did 6% disagree 'strongly' that the consultation had been useful and worthwhile (7% disagreed in total), but only 18% 'strongly' agreed that it had been worthwhile. This is less than enthusiastic feedback.

Feedback from stakeholder interviewees from the reconvened events some months later was much more positive. Overall, 5 of the 6 reconvened stakeholder event interviewees were satisfied with their involvement in the consultation. Their feedback suggested that the main things those stakeholders had got from the consultation were the exchanges with other stakeholders, better understanding of the arguments and that they felt genuinely consulted.

- 96% of reconvened stakeholder event questionnaire respondents agreed that it is **important for the Government to consult stakeholders** on these sorts of issues. This is strong endorsement for the principles of consultation.

This overall feedback from reconvened stakeholder events respondents on the consultation process is positive overall, and suggests that, for these respondents at least, the consultation worked well in terms of the process, although there was less enthusiasm, among questionnaire respondents, for the idea that it had been useful and worthwhile, although 73% did agree overall that it had been.

The questionnaire asked whether respondents from the reconvened stakeholder events had read the White Paper. The feedback was that 86% said they had, and 14% said they had not.

In the comments following the tick box answers, 5 (of the total of 71 questionnaire respondents) said they had started but not finished it, 2 said that they planned to. 2 said it confirmed the decision was a foregone conclusion, 2 said it was very good and clear, 2 said it was comprehensive and detailed. 2 complained that it was very long and not very reader friendly.

The next set of questions on the questionnaire was about the **influence** of the consultation on Government. The feedback from questionnaire respondents from the reconvened stakeholder events was as follows (not all respondents answered all questions):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The Government has listened to stakeholder views	28%	48%	13%	3%	4%
The Government has taken account of stakeholder views	24%	41%	21%	6%	6%
Differences between stakeholder views and the Government's plans have been clearly explained	15%	51%	20%	7%	3%
The results of the consultation have taken the debate on these issues forward	23%	58%	8%	4%	3%

This analysis shows, in summary:

- 76% agreed that the **Government had listened** to stakeholder views.
- 65% agreed that the **Government had taken account** of stakeholder views.

Feedback from stakeholder interviewees from the reconvened event provided some detail on this. 5 of the 6 interviewees agreed they were clear about the impact of views on the Government (1 was not). 3 thought the Government had listened but, in answer to another question, 3 were sceptical that it made any difference.

- 66% of reconvened stakeholder event questionnaire respondents agreed that the **differences between stakeholder views and the Government's plans had been clearly explained**.
- 81% agreed that the results of the consultation had **taken the debate on these issues forward**.

The responses to this last question is the most positive feedback on all these questions, and suggests quite strongly that these respondents felt the consultation had taken the debate forward, which is quite an achievement given the complex and highly contentious context in which the consultation took place.

- In terms of their **satisfaction with the way the reconvened event was structured and run**, 92% of said they were satisfied; 38% were 'very' satisfied and 54% were 'fairly' satisfied. 5% were not satisfied; 1% of those were not at all satisfied.

This is a very positive satisfaction rate overall: 92% satisfied is a very positive response to the process from these respondents.

In terms of the main **benefits** these stakeholders gained from taking part in the reconvened events, for questionnaire respondents the benefits were as follows:

- 12 (out of the total of 71 questionnaire respondents) said the most important benefit was finding out about the consultation process and where it had got to
- 9 (out of 71) said it was hearing other stakeholders' views
- 8 said it was about understanding next steps
- 7 said it was finding out about Government's position
- 4 said it was a chance to give their views
- 4 said it was hearing about waste

Other benefits mentioned were good presentations and answers to questions, to hear support for new build, and networking and contacts. A few said it had helped them understand engagement processes better.

In terms of the **lessons for the future that the Government should take from this consultation**, there was only a small amount of feedback from questionnaire respondents, which was as follows:

- 4 (out of the total of 71 questionnaire respondents) said do more of these consultations / continue
- 4 (out of 71) said there was a need to get and take action
- 3 questionnaire respondents each mentioned that said the Government needed to ensure earlier / better engagement with environmental NGOs; that should get it right first time next time, and do future consultations as fully as this one; should do more on waste; that there was a need for better information for the public; and that the Government needed to listen

Feedback from stakeholder interviewees from the reconvened events also provided some lessons for future stakeholder engagement. These were that the Government needed to do it more, that there needs to be more explanation in terms of how they dealt with the results of the consultation, and that they did it very well and need to keep up the good work (2 out of the 6 interviewees each mentioned these points).

6.5 Overall findings, conclusions and lessons for the future

For the evaluators, taking into account this feedback from those involved, observation and overall review, the overall findings on the stakeholder engagement events are as follows:

- **Representation and diversity.** The stakeholder events reached a large number and variety of stakeholders at regional and local levels: 360 at regional level plus 265 at site events making a total of 625 stakeholders overall. A very small number attended more than one event but this is a good indication of the overall numbers of stakeholders involved.

This is good outreach in terms of numbers alone. In conventional consultations many of these stakeholders would only be involved by submitting a written response and they clearly valued the additional contact, information and chances for discussion given by the approach taken here.

The policy makers interviewed for the evaluation also clearly valued the opportunities for face-to-face discussions and to hear, first hand, the range of stakeholders' views on the issues being discussed.

The variety of stakeholders involved was also good. There were some comments about the small numbers of NGOs, particularly environmental NGOs at some meetings. However, environmental NGOs were invited to all events and did attend some events, and all events had both pro- and anti-nuclear views expressed.

There is a sense in the feedback from stakeholders overall that they would have liked more anti-nuclear views in all events, and feedback from BERR officials shows that the small number of green NGOs involved (and later withdrawal of some of the largest green NGOs) was the biggest disappointment for them in the whole process.

However, it is important to recognise that, even if all the targeted stakeholders attend, there is no guarantee that the event will be balanced in terms of *views*. In this case, participant stakeholders generally seem to accept that there was

a reasonable *mix* of views, and that relevant stakeholder interests were represented, but that there were more pro-nuclear views in the room than opposing views. They also seemed to feel that this was because of the participants who attended, rather than a major flaw in the process.

It had been a principle of this strand of the consultation process that any stakeholder who wanted to attend would be allowed to do so. That open invitation approach will always lead to a level of self-selection of participants and potential imbalance of views. It is clear from observation, as well as the feedback from stakeholders that, in this case, there was some imbalance in terms of stakeholders present but it was not overwhelming, opposing views were present, encouraged and supported, and good discussions were held.

It is very difficult to overcome the problem of ensuring that all the stakeholders felt to be essential to the process actually do attend, both for Government and for NGOs. Government wants NGOs involved in order both to understand their views, and better respond to them, and because there is a sense that the process is more legitimate with more NGO voices - there were some in this case but a feeling that it would have been better with more. From informal conversations at various events, and previous experience, NGOs tend to worry about being co-opted into a Government process with an agenda they do not support.

Where NGOs have attended, they also have difficulties participating because, feedback from various respondents suggests, they state their views and argue their case rather than debating openly with other stakeholders. This is entirely understandable from the NGO perspective as they see that as their job, but it does not fit entirely comfortably with the principles of stakeholder engagement.

This is a much larger problem than this consultation, and needs further consideration and negotiation between engagement practitioners, green NGOs and Government to try to take this relationship forward and overcome these problems. The prize is to overcome entrenched positions and find new solutions for dialogue, but that is currently some distance away in many cases.

- **Design and delivery of the events.** The design, delivery and reporting of the stakeholder events worked well. As outlined above in the summary following the regional stakeholder event evaluation, the approach of the Government department taking the role of lead facilitator may not always work in future (with different personnel and resources). In this case, the lead civil servant had the skills, experience and personality to make the events work well, put people at ease and engender trust in the process. The approach clearly worked very well in this case and provided significant benefits to all involved.

The basic structure of a mix of presentations, discussions in small table groups and then feedback and further discussion in plenary worked very well and this model could be used again. This does require quite significant numbers of skilled facilitators being available from the Government department (or through COI or others), but those skills are increasingly available in Government.

This approach is a very good way for those involved in policy development to hear stakeholder views at first hand, resource the process, learn more about engagement processes and develop personal skills. It also avoids duplication of resourcing as many of these people would need to attend these events in any case to hear and understand stakeholder views.

The only change suggested by stakeholders that may be worth considering in future is to try to ensure that tables are mixed in terms of views. It is not always possible to know what someone's view is just because they represent a certain interest group. However, some effort can be made to mix, for example, industry, local government and NGOs so that each table includes that level of mix of views.

- **Information provision.** The information provided was clear and largely reliable, although feedback was more positive on clarity than on reliability. This may partly be part of the inherent distrust of Government but signals the importance of always being clear about sources of data and ensuring that stakeholders understand where the data has come from and that those are respected sources.

There were some complaints that the presentations of information were biased and one-sided because they only presented the Government view. This was the case: the consultation was presenting the Government view and asking for feedback.

However, the wider point is that presentations are usually designed to structure and stimulate discussions, not to provide all information that stakeholders need to have that discussion. Part of the information they need comes from themselves and each other. Much of the feedback to this evaluation recognised that and strongly asserted the value of the discussions between stakeholders, and between stakeholders and policy makers. That is where a major part of the information exchange takes place and where the greatest value of engagement exists.

- **Sufficient time.** There was quite a lot of feedback that some stakeholders would have liked the discussions to have continued for a full day, rather than the half day of the regional events and the roughly two hours of the site events. However, there is a balance to be struck here between losing those participants that would not attend a full day event and pleasing those that want to meet for longer. One option for the future may be to run the main event for half a day, but offer a continuation of discussion for a longer period for those who want to continue.
- **Overall timescales.** There were some problems with late notice for some of the early regional stakeholder events. It was clear that the timescales overall were extremely tight throughout the consultation. This not only put pressure on the Government team, it risked reducing the effectiveness of the consultation overall. From observation throughout the consultation, it was clear that it was only because, in this case, BERR, the COI and all the contractors worked extremely hard throughout the consultation that there were minimal problems with recruitment.

There is always a danger in evaluators praising the delivery team, as observers will see it as co-option. However, it would be a failure of the evaluation in this case not to recognise that this hard work was a major element in the extent to which the consultation met its own objectives.

- **Policy influence.** The overall policy influence of the stakeholder input remains unclear to many respondents to this evaluation. Policy maker interviewees have described the process for considering the results of the stakeholder engagement to this evaluation (see section 8.4). They used the overarching

report from the Henley Centre which covered all the outputs from the regional and site stakeholder events as part of the evidence they considered in drafting sections of the White Paper, as well as all the full transcripts from the meetings, and the analysis of notes at tables (these latter being covered by each meeting report, eventually published on the consultation website). They also used the knowledge they gained from attending events in person and hearing views first hand to assess where there was real strength of feeling.

BERR policy maker interviewees said that the particular issues that were raised in priority in the White Paper as a result of the stakeholder engagement were (similarly to the deliberative public events) around waste, regulatory arrangements and an increased stress on renewables.

It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to undertake a full documentary review and analysis to check whether all the many detailed points raised by individual stakeholders in the regional and site stakeholder meetings were reviewed and responded to by Government policy makers. However, in order to provide some overview of the extent to which Government listened to and took account of stakeholder views, a brief review has been undertaken for the evaluation, as follows.

The Henley Centre review identified the following as the key issues arising from the stakeholder events (among many other very detailed points):

- **Energy mix.** Stakeholders thought the challenges of energy security and climate change were both important, but that countering climate change needed to be the focus rather than energy security. They also stressed the need for the decision on new nuclear build to go alongside the Government continuing to invest in renewables and reducing energy consumption.
- **Waste.** The ethics of leaving legacy waste for future generations, and the successful management of nuclear waste were key issues, with a view emerging that it was unacceptable to invest in new nuclear plants without finding long term storage and/or disposal solutions. There were also concerns about costs and how to manage cost responsibilities over long periods of time.
- **Safety and security of nuclear plants.** Stakeholders were less worried than the public about security, but did raise issues about the safety of nuclear power plants (including to the health of local communities) and other risks (e.g. rising sea levels).
- **Regulation.** Stakeholders felt that an ongoing programme of independent scrutiny and inspection, and a strong regulatory framework, were key conditions for building new nuclear capacity.
- **Need for action and skills.** Stakeholders were keen to see a decision taken on these issues quickly, particularly to address energy security. There was, however, some concern about the 'capacity gap' in terms of their being sufficient skills in the UK to deliver a new nuclear programme.

A basic review has been undertaken for this evaluation and we have concluded that the Henley Centre review has taken account of the key points raised in all the regional and site stakeholder reports. That review also reflects the priorities observed at the stakeholder events attended by evaluators -

around waste, regulatory arrangements and an increased stress on investment in renewable energy sources.

The Henley Centre report works well in structuring the key issues around the three elements of:

- whether nuclear power **should** go ahead (covering the issues of climate change, security of supply, risks and increased focus on energy efficiency)
- whether there were sufficient **capabilities** to deliver new nuclear power stations (skills and capacity, safety, and managing nuclear waste), and
- **who and how** the new nuclear power stations would be delivered, covering public or private finance and subsidies, and the problems of relying on the private sector for a diversity of energy supply sources.

This structure summarised the key points in an accessible form, and policy makers clearly found this summary useful, although they also referred to the source materials (the individual meeting reports from both the regional and site stakeholder events). The independence of the Henley Centre report was seen as important in Government, although it was not as well known beyond Government as it could have been.

In terms of the Government response on these issues, as one of the policy maker interviewees said, it is important to note that the White Paper itself is not a conventional White Paper but more a response to the consultation. Each section of the White Paper summarises the issues raised by the consultation and then describes the Government response. It is unfortunate that so few stakeholders had read the White Paper; that may have provided some evidence of the extent to which the consultation results had been listened to and taken into account.

As evaluators, we can conclude that all the major issues in the Henley Centre report are covered and responded to in the White Paper, which may be some evidence that stakeholder input was taken into account. Of course, it may be that none of the input received from stakeholders made any difference to the Government's views or final decision; the fact that the final decision was the same as the Government's preliminary view would tend to support that conclusion. However, as one stakeholder said:

"If there had been tremendous opposition to nuclear power then I am sure it would have determined the outcome ... The government would have adhered to that."
(NGO stakeholder interviewee, Manchester)

As evaluators, we tend to support that conclusion. The feedback from stakeholder participants was not wholly negative but did raise some significant concerns that do seem to have been considered within the process of drafting the White Paper (and are responded to directly in the White Paper).

Overall, we believe we can conclude that stakeholder input did support the Government propositions in the White Paper and, where there were concerns, these were largely addressed.

These issues are covered more broadly at the end of this section (6.5) and in more detail in section 8.4. However, for the purposes of the evaluation of the stakeholder events, there does seem to be a clear audit trail in terms of:

- how the views of stakeholders were recorded - and feedback from stakeholders on whether they were satisfied with that, and they largely were
- reports of each stakeholder event published on the website, and no challenge from any stakeholders to the content of those; although only a few stakeholders read these, some did and they were available
- an independent review by a respected independent body (Henley Centre HeadlightVision) of all the meeting reports was undertaken and a summary published
- feedback from policy makers about how they used the results.

No system of measuring the influence of stakeholder input is comprehensive and without flaws and limitations, but the process used here for reviewing and taking into account stakeholder input, the review and summary of that by a respected independent body, and the publication of all the issues raised and the Government response to those issues (including in the White Paper) seems highly robust by any norms of consultation practice.

- **Information about stakeholder participants.** More information is needed about who attends stakeholder events, for internal learning purposes, to start to build up longer term stakeholder networks, for evaluation purposes and, most importantly, to reassure stakeholders that the process was robust and legitimate in terms of who was involved. We therefore suggest:
 - attendance lists are given to all participants at all events; these lists should show the individual's name, company and type of stakeholder by category (e.g. industry, NGO, local government, etc).
 - as these lists will be produced before the actual meeting, a final attendance list should be produced showing who actually turned up; this should then be used in final reports on the consultation to show the breadth and depth of stakeholder involvement
 - a summary from the front of each event of who is there, who was invited and how; this information should be included in the participants' packs along with the list of names (and categories).

This approach should reassure those who were unsure about who else was in the room and the legitimacy of the process in terms of the types and numbers of stakeholders involved. It will not solve all problems but this approach would at demonstrate that efforts have been made to provide this data participants ask for.

- **Better communication with stakeholders after events.** In this case, it was good practice to run reconvened events to explain to stakeholders what had been done with their input and what were the final Government decisions. However, this did not reach everyone and not everyone has the time or resources to attend yet another meeting. We therefore suggest:
 - an explanation is given at the consultation event of what the next steps in the process are and what participants will receive next in terms of information

- a report of the meeting is produced and emailed to all stakeholders; or sent by post to those without email (some community groups and members of the public may need this e.g. stakeholders at the local site events in this case, but also others)
- that meeting report is also published on the website, and available long term; that meeting report should also go to policy makers, even if there is also a summary overview, and feed into the policy process
- stakeholders are informed by email when the final decision is made, told what it is, and be given online access to all the final documents; in this case all the documentation was published which was good practice, but few stakeholders knew about it
- at the time of the final decision, a short summary of how participants' input related to the final decision, and what was changed as a result of that input should also be sent (probably not more than two pages, preferably one).

This sort of approach should help stakeholder participants understand more about the process and how their input has (and has not) influenced the final decision and specific policy proposals. That would help demonstrate to them (and wider audiences) that the consultation has achieved valuable outcomes, by improving the final policy decisions. All such information can help build understanding and potentially trust in engagement activities and in public policy making.

- **Better stakeholder lists at regional level.** Invitations for these stakeholder events depended on good lists of contacts, and these had to be researched and put together at very short notice and with few resources for research. We therefore suggest:
 - Each government department should invest in some stakeholder analysis and then research to develop a database of regional and local contacts that can be used for a range of stakeholder events around their subject interests; stakeholder lists go out of date very quickly but some initial investment and the development of a core database would at least provide something that can be updated when needed, rather than starting from scratch with the risks of missing out some particularly useful stakeholders and their input
 - Send invitations as early as possible, even if it is just to hold a date with an indication of location (e.g. Manchester city centre); at that stage there is no need for details but it would ensure that such an event gets into more people's diaries than leaving it until all the details are confirmed; this is not just practical good practice - stakeholders are suspicious of being told about events late and feel the process is not inclusive
 - It is not enough to know which organisation to invite; different organisations process such invitations in different ways. In some, the invitation needs to go to a named individual or it goes in the bin. In others, the invitation needs to go to the Chair, or Chief Executive, or it is ignored. It does need fairly deep knowledge of the field, and regular research, to update stakeholder lists in this way, and may require expert guidance

- A broad mix of stakeholders, representing the range of stakeholder interests, can be invited but it is not possible to force people to attend and it is every stakeholder's right to decide not to take part. It is also every stakeholder's right to insist that attendance does not necessarily imply endorsement of the process or the proposition being put forward
- Good practice in stakeholder engagement now recognises that, to be fully effective, a great deal of work is needed to build relationships between Government and stakeholders behind the scenes, in order for the 'set piece' face to face events to work at their best. Some stakeholders will simply turn up if invited, but others will need to be negotiated with over a period of time to be reassured that they can trust the process and that their role and status is protected
- Some stakeholders simply have far greater resources than others. In this case, many of the industry, local government and academic stakeholder participants came as part of their job. Many NGOs have limited staff and cannot take part in every consultation that they are invited to. Indeed, for many NGOs the majority of their capability at local level is voluntary, and there are limits to the input such volunteers can make. One stakeholder interviewee raised this issue as follows:

"All the people who work in the nuclear industry are paid to be here but a lot of anti people are there in their own time and at their own expense." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester).

NGOs have to very carefully prioritise those engagement activities where they feel they can make most difference, and where they have the greatest chance of meeting their own priorities. This does need to be taken into account in planning future stakeholder engagement activities.

- **Opportunities for taking other issues forward.** All consultations throw up issues that are not appropriate to that discussion but which are important for other parts of Government to consider, or that need to be borne in mind at a later date.

We therefore suggest that each event identifies these issues specifically, and how they will be passed on. It may just be passing it on to another part of Government, but it will reassure participants that, even though the points they want to make are not relevant for the current consultation, they will not be lost or ignored. This is likely to require minimal resources and may provide significant reassurance and help build trust. The issues identified in this way, and who they have been passed on to, could usefully form part of the report back to participants about what has happened to their input.

Stakeholder engagement is now well established across government, and elsewhere, but the practice is still evolving and practitioners and those commissioning these processes are continuing to learn and develop good practice. This consultation process can provide further experience on which to draw in taking practice forward and cannot be seen as anything less than entirely normal (and in many cases highly effective) in the stakeholder analysis and representation, design and delivery, impacts on policy and benefits for those involved, that it has achieved.

7. Public engagement events

7.1 Introduction

The engagement of the public in a series of nine deliberative events was the third core strand of the consultation, alongside the written and online consultation and the stakeholder events. Members of the public also participated in the written and online consultation, and also attended site stakeholder events (held on or near existing nuclear power stations). However, the deliberative events were the key focus for activities designed specifically to engage the public.

The two key objectives for the deliberative public element of the consultation process were⁷⁴:

- To engage a representative cross-section of UK citizens in an informed, transparent consultation on allowing private sector energy companies the option of building new nuclear power stations
- To understand the opinions of participants through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative reporting of findings, and to understand how these have shifted as a result of the deliberative process.

The two key questions for this element of the consultation, simplified from the 18 questions in the full Consultation Document, were:

- In the context of tackling climate change and ensuring energy security do you agree or disagree that it would be in the public interest to give energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations?
- Are there other conditions that you believe should be put in place before giving energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations?

The focus of the public engagement was a series of nine regional large-scale deliberative workshops held around the UK on 8 September 2007. The decision to use large-scale deliberative events had been taken by Government as "they engage the wider public on a complex technical or scientific issue, enabling discussion about trade offs and conditionality and providing a detailed picture for policy makers on the issues that concern citizens most"⁷⁵.

This section presents an overview of the development and delivery of the deliberative public events, describes and evaluates each part of the process including feedback from those involved, and assesses the value and effectiveness of this strand of the consultation.

However, before continuing with the main parts of this section, it is important to summarise the context for the consultation (see section 3 for details), as the context was such an important factor in the design and delivery of the whole consultation process, and particularly affected the deliberative public events.

⁷⁴ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.14.

⁷⁵ *ibid*

The broad policy context was that nuclear power has been an emblematic issue for the environmental movement for decades. It does not seem to be an issue that engages vast swathes of the population, but it arouses strong feelings for those with an interest.

The more immediate legal context for the consultation was that Greenpeace had brought a successful Judicial Review around an earlier consultation process on the issue of nuclear power. Greenpeace and some other green groups did participate in this new consultation initially, but these groups withdrew the day before the public events in September 2007, and did not participate further.

Meanwhile, two British Prime Ministers had made statements in favour of nuclear power as part of the energy mix of the UK. The consultation was therefore designed to test that preliminary view from Government, and to test the evidence and arguments on which that view was based. The consultation was structured about the formal Consultation Document and the information and questions it contained (see section 5 for details), which provided the basic content for the whole process.

There was also significant media coverage of all the controversial aspects of the consultation itself, and the continuing development of Government thinking on the issue of nuclear power.

As a result of all these factors, the consultation took place in a uniquely contentious and challenging legal, political and policy context, which fundamentally affected elements of the design and delivery of the process.

7.2 Overview of public engagement process

The nine deliberative public events held around the UK were the culmination of a development process that included a Citizens Advisory Board, a Stakeholder Review Group to gain stakeholder input to drafting the information materials to be provided to the public at the deliberative events, and a workshop with public participants to pilot the planned workshop process and information materials.

The planning and delivery of the nine deliberative public events ran alongside the continuing written and online consultation, focused on the published Consultation Document (see section 5), and the regional and site stakeholder events around the UK (see section 6). The main steps in the development and delivery of the deliberative public events was as follows:

Date	Activity
1 June 2007	First Citizens Advisory Board meeting
25 June 2007	Second Citizens Advisory Board meeting
13 July 2007	Stakeholder Review Group meeting
2 August 2007	Third Citizens Advisory Board meeting, to consider redrafted materials and re-design of deliberative process
	Revised structure and flow for deliberative events circulated to Stakeholder Review Group
10 August 2007	Further revised materials circulated to Stakeholder Review Group
14 August 2007	Development Event with recruited public participants, to further test the materials and planned process
8 September 2007	Nine public deliberative events around the UK

As can be seen from the summary of the timetable above, activity by the members of the Citizens Advisory Board, the Stakeholder Review Group, BERR, COI and the various contractors involved in design and development was intensive, and the timescales throughout were short (see below for details).

7.3 The Citizens Advisory Board

7.3.1 The Citizens Advisory Board process

The Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) was made up of 10 specially recruited members of the public. These participants had been recruited to represent diverse backgrounds, with a good mix of age ranges and ethnicity, and an equal gender division. They had also been recruited to be 'social influencers'; individuals who would ask questions and challenge draft materials. Participants were paid an incentive fee of £50 per meeting.

Opinion Leader ran these CAB events to feed into the planning for the nine public deliberative workshops to be held in September 2007.

The CAB met three times, in central London, on 1 June, 25 June and 2 August 2007. Each meeting was in the early evening, starting at 5pm and lasting 2.5 to 3 hours each. Refreshments were provided (sandwiches etc) at the start.

The purpose of these meetings was:

- to evaluate the accessibility and comprehensibility of the handouts
- to highlight any areas where comprehension could be improved
- to highlight any key areas that were missing
- to flag up any burning questions which arose from discussion of the handouts.

Each event started with an introduction (in the subsequent meetings, a reminder) on the nature of the overall consultation, the key questions for the consultation, and the role of this group.

Every CAB member was given a copy of the full Consultation Document, although reassured that they did not need to read it. It was stressed that the Consultation Document was the Government's view, that alternative views would be available at the public deliberative events, and that no decision had yet been made on whether to go ahead with allowing the private sector to build new nuclear power stations.

It was also explained that all the issues being brought to the CAB were based on the Consultation Document and that these would be the issues covered in the deliberative public events in September 2007.

In the first and second CAB meetings, the participants were given a series of three or four handouts and asked to discuss and comment. The initial handouts were structured around three elements of sustainable development: environment (e.g. carbon emissions), economic (e.g. costs, fuel supply) and social (e.g. safety, transport, supply chain, skills).

The CAB did not find that this structure worked very well and, after the second CAB meeting, there was a complete restructuring of the materials to start with background and drivers, challenges (e.g. waste and safety) and reasons why nuclear might be considered. This was the structure that went forward to be used in the deliberative public events.

After the first two meetings, a summary of the key points raised by the CAB was prepared, and the handouts were revised.

At the third meeting, the CAB agenda was structured differently and focused on the planned agenda for the deliberative events in September 2007 as well as the materials to be used. The meeting covered:

- the scene setting session for the deliberative events, with discussions on the first part of the video script and the first three handouts for the 'pub quiz' sessions
- a session on 'why is the government considering nuclear?', with discussion on the next section of the video script, handouts and reference sheets on the benefits of nuclear (nuclear power and carbon emissions, security of supply benefits, supply chain and skills)
- a session on nuclear safety and waste, covering the next section of the video script, handouts and reference sheets on nuclear waste and safety (waste and decommissioning, reprocessing of fuel, transportation, safety, nuclear power and the environment).

The handouts and the process for the deliberative public events were revised by the contractors (Opinion Leader) following these CAB meetings, and used in the subsequent stages of development (see below).

7.3.2 Evaluation of the CAB

The evaluation findings that follow are based on observation (and informal conversations with participants, facilitators and Government policy representatives involved) at all three of the CAB meetings, and a questionnaire distributed to CAB participants at the end of the final meeting.

Eight questionnaires were returned, which is a response rate of 80% from the full list of 10 participants. Most of the participants attended most of the meetings, although there were up to three (different) absences each time. A full analysis of the participant questionnaire responses is provided in Annex 5.

The results from the analysis of the CAB participant questionnaire responses was as shown in the following table (based on a total of 8 responses overall):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There was enough time for me to say everything I wanted to say	5	3	-	-	-
I would have liked more information in advance of the meetings	-	1	1	5	1
The way the materials were presented was not biased in any way	1	7	-	-	-
All members of the CAB were treated equally and respectfully	6	2	-	-	-
No single view was allowed to dominate unfairly	2	6	-	-	-

I am clear about how the results of our meetings are collected and used	2	5	1	-	-
I believe those drafting the materials will listen to and consider our views	4	4	-	-	-
I understood what was expected of our group all through the process	4	4	-	-	-
I understand how our work fits into the wider public consultation	4	3	1	-	-
I learnt something I did not know before	8	-	-	-	-
Attending these meetings has helped me think more clearly about the issues	7	1	-	-	-
I changed my views as a result of attending these meetings	2	1	2	3	-
I enjoyed taking part	7	1	-	-	-
I am more likely to get involved in public consultations in future as a result of attending these meetings of attending this one	4	4	-	-	-

Overall, this is very positive feedback, showing that CAB participants had found their involvement in the process highly satisfactory. In particular:

- There was complete agreement among respondents (all 8 agreed) that they had enjoyed taking part, had learnt something new and that taking part had helped them think more clearly about the issues. 3 out of 8 had changed their views as a result of the learning and clarified thinking.
- There was also complete agreement (all 8 agreed), although with slightly less enthusiasm (fewer 'strongly' agreeing), that there had been enough time to discuss all the issues and that they were more likely to get involved again as a result of taking part in this process. They also all agreed that the materials had been presented in a way that was not biased and that they did not need any more information in advance of meetings.
- There was complete agreement too (all 8 agreed), although again with slightly less enthusiasm, that those drafting the materials would listen to and consider the CAB's views, and that they understood what was expected of the CAB throughout.
- There was a little uncertainty around how the results of the CAB meetings were being collected and used, and how the work of the CAB fitted into the wider public consultation. This issue is returned to below.

The benefits and positive aspects of the meeting identified by the respondents provided similar feedback and included that they particularly valued:

- the structured and informative discussions in the group
- the learning about the subject, particularly learning from each other by listening to each others views
- the way the group was run, so that opinions were shared and respected by all involved

- the sense that they were involved in something worthwhile, and that what they said was listened to and valued.

Specific comments on CAB participant questionnaires included:

"Having a structured informative discussion [was the best aspect]. It was good to hear lots of different views"

"The way they [CAB meetings] were led and how opinions were shared and respected by all involved"

"I felt as though my contributions were helpful and worthwhile"

"The group's opinions were listened to and included in evaluative materials"

In terms of feedback from CAB participants on the *content* of the information materials on which they were commenting, their immediate reactions to nuclear power were negative and focused on risks (e.g. accidents). Questions were also raised about the role of the private sector in running any new power stations, what the alternative options for energy supply were, what was happening in other countries, what people living and working around current nuclear power stations thought about building new stations, and the extent of the dangers of climate change. There was also some cynicism about the role of Government in the whole process. All these issues came to be repeated by participants throughout the deliberative public engagement process.

Not all the participants found the CAB process easy; one said that "Some info was hard to take in and have an opinion on" and that was reflected in findings from observation. There were a lot of papers (draft handouts and reference sheets) and a lot of information for participants to take in, which was difficult and tiring at the end of a working day.

The CAB gave a clear steer on the importance of clarifying the context for the whole consultation. The OL notes from the second meeting (25 June 2007) recognised this, and summarised the key points as follows:

- Stronger context setting needed from the outset to alleviate worries / doubts / suspicions early and clearly set out parameters, fact sources and range of opinion. Only *then* can participants truly engage with the analysis and decision-making process
- Complicated facts and figures have no real meaning for CAB members and need to be re-worked into meaningful comparisons / scenarios / visuals for them to have any positive impact (in fact, currently they can be negatively impacting due to shut-down of interest)
- Need for concrete / solid whole examples wherever possible e.g. based on existing experience or other countries with experience. Where it is only possible to use projections, we need to be honest about what the government doesn't know for certain. This doesn't come across clearly enough right now. There is a sense of 'why are you telling me this?' Participants just want to know if something is expected to be a problem and, if it is, what is going to be done about it.
- Need to focus on 'need to know' information only, in a package that is tangible and in context, especially where maths / science is particularly complicated.

- Some key questions unanswered currently e.g. final cost consequences for customers / tax payers, government restrictions on market, why not just do renewables?

Other points that were suggested from CAB meetings included the need to provide a clear summary of the overall shape of the day for participants in the deliberative events before launching into the content; and also the need for clarity about the fact that most of the information came from the Consultation Document and the discussions and questions for participants were focused around testing responses to that.

In addition, the CAB stressed that comparisons were needed about how nuclear compares to other energy sources in terms of carbon footprint, amount of energy produced, reliability, waste, security, health risks, availability of fuel etc, so that public participants would be able to see the benefits and drawbacks of all the energy sources in the current energy mix. That was expected to help public participants consider trade-offs of nuclear against other energy sources. All these issues, again, recurred throughout the deliberative public events.

One issue that arose in CAB discussions that was not covered in much detail in OL notes was the role of the private sector. This had been a 'given' throughout the framing of the consultation overall. However, the role, motivations, risks and regulation of the private sector in this role was raised by the CAB several times. This issue, too, arose numerous times later in the process.

In terms of the design of the process being proposed for the deliberative public events, the feedback from the CAB was that the most awkward part was the facilitator reading out information that was, in some cases, different from the text that the participants were reading. It was noted in observation that participants struggled to have the documents in their hands, to have something slightly different being read to them, and to have no time to read the actual documents properly before launching into discussion.

The participants coped very well, and did manage to have very productive discussions, but this was (even at this stage) clearly not an easy and comfortable approach to information input and debate.

Participants were not allowed to take any papers away after meetings, nor were there any mechanisms for them to feed in any further thoughts after the second meeting. OL took away comments in order to produce revised versions of the written materials for the third meeting, when a run through of the main elements of the deliberative process was undertaken.

From observation and informal discussions with participants at the meetings, the CAB did work very effectively in providing a mechanism for evaluating the accessibility and comprehensibility of the handouts being prepared for the public deliberative events in September.

The participants were actively engaged with the issues and challenged and asked questions about the content of the information and how it was to be used, and their comments and views were fully recorded and summarised in notes after each meeting, which informed the further development of the materials and process. Overall the CAB did fully meet the objectives that had been set (see above).

However, there was some lack of clarity in CAB participants' minds about how (and how much) their input would be used. On reflection, based on observation as well as formal feedback from CAB members, and from observing the whole development process for the deliberative events, it does seem that the CAB did in fact identify some of the key problems in the *process* (e.g. facilitators reading out chunks of text) as well as the key issues of *content* that public participants raised in the deliberative events.

Although many of the overall and detailed points raised by CAB participants were incorporated into the revised materials for the deliberative events (including a complete restructuring of those materials), some of the issues raised (and noted and recognised by OL) were not fully covered in the final materials. For example:

- clarity about sources of facts quoted: some sources / references were cited in the final handouts, including some from green NGOs, although quite a few simply referred to the Consultation Document
- the need for visuals in the materials: there were some diagrams, key facts in boxes etc in the final handouts used, but the majority was just straight text
- the need for concrete comparisons, especially between the UK and other countries: not really covered
- information on final cost consequences for consumers: the final version of reference sheet 4 gave details of electricity generation costs for different technologies (e.g. gas, coal, wind and nuclear) but not specific implications in terms of costs to consumers; also, reference sheets were not all given out to everyone and tended only to be used to answer specific questions at the events
- limiting information to what public participants really did 'need to know': the final information was extensive: 12 handouts and 8 reference sheets

These examples are given to illustrate how the points from the CAB were clearly listened to, and noted and largely dealt with, but perhaps not always fully dealt with, in terms of the content of the final materials for participants at the deliberative events. It may be that this information was not available, or could not be produced in time. Those will always be problems in these circumstances.

However, the fact that these issues were identified by the CAB, and then went on to be seen as problems with the information when it was used on the day, suggest that it could have been worth the extra time being made available to deal with them fully early on. Although significant changes were made, both to the structure of the deliberative events and the information materials, the very tight timescale did limit the extent to which changes could be made during the later stages of development.

Overall, it is a measure of the success of the CAB process that they did flag up all these potential problems early on, and shows the value of mechanisms like a CAB to involve members of the public in providing early scrutiny and challenge in the planning of deliberative public events.

The CAB members were invited to the development event which took place on 14 August 2007 (and two did attend) but otherwise CAB members took no further part in the consultation.

This was potentially an opportunity missed. A mechanism similar to the CAB was used in another national policy process (the Department of Health consultation on the health and social care white paper: Your Health, Your Care, Your Say - YHYCYS), but it had a rather wider role. That Citizens Group provided feedback on the whole public engagement process to the Department of Health, attended the deliberative public events as observers and provided feedback on those, and continued until after the decision was made so that the ways that the results of the public events were used in drafting policy could be checked back with them.

The role of the Citizens Group in the YHYCYS process was more comprehensive (and therefore potentially more effective) than the role of the CAB group in this process, and could have provided a valuable addition to the checks and balances to the development of the information materials and process design in this case. It is worth noting that OL had been responsible for the design and delivery of the YHYCYS process, as well as this process on nuclear power.

Overall, however, as noted above, the CAB here nevertheless played a very valuable role and made a significant contribution to the planning and development of the process and materials for the deliberative public events.

7.4 Stakeholder Review Group

7.4.1 Stakeholder Review Group process

A specially convened Stakeholder Review Group was held to enable some key national stakeholders to discuss and give feedback on the information materials drafted by Opinion Leader to be used in the deliberative public events. The Stakeholder Review Group was convened to consider, in particular:

- were the materials fair and balanced?
- was the range of views reasonably represented?

The Stakeholder Review Group meeting ran for a full day, from 10am to 4.30pm on Friday 13 July 2007. It was held at Wallacespace, Covent Garden in central London - a well-designed, relaxed venue which created an informal atmosphere. This meeting had originally been scheduled to take place on 18 June, but had been postponed as some of the stakeholders invited had found that to be too short notice.

The event was attended by 14 stakeholders from a good range of organisations with a wide variety of views including green NGOs, the energy industry, regulators, trade unions and industry trade bodies. The event was also attended by a further 10 people:

- 3 representatives from the department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR, formerly DTI), as the government department leading the consultation
- 3 from Opinion Leader (OL) who were designing and running the public deliberation events and drafting the stimulus materials (with COI and BERR)
- 2 from 3KQ, the facilitators for this meeting
- 1 from COI, the government agency that managed the procurement for the consultation and helped draft materials
- 1 from Shared Practice, as evaluators.

The meeting was facilitated by 3KQ who had been separately contracted to manage this specific piece of work, and attended by Opinion Leader so they could take detailed notes of comments in order to revise the materials for the public events accordingly.

The meeting was part of the wider materials drafting process which included the Citizens Advisory Board (see above) and the Development Event at which the whole set of materials was to be piloted and finalised (see below).

The draft agenda for the meeting (circulated on 1 July) was as follows:

- Purpose, agenda and ground rules for the day
- Context: the whole consultation process, the deliberative events and the use of the stimulus materials (presentations by OL and BERR)
- Draft materials: to work through the draft materials, as already circulated and record comments on flip charts
- Next steps

The first and second items on this agenda were covered at the meeting but the structure and overall emphasis of the meeting was changed as a result of stakeholder suggestions on the day (see below).

Prior to the meeting on 13 July (on 10 July), a set of briefing papers was circulated to all participants. This included an overall briefing note giving background information on the deliberative public events and the objectives of the public engagement strand of the consultation, an introduction to the purpose and use of the draft materials, plus a 31-page set of draft materials and outline programme for the deliberative public events.

Some participants arrived at the meeting with annotated versions of the draft stimulus materials and outline programme, and these were collected at the end by OL to contribute further to redrafting. Those that had not annotated their copies by the time of the meeting were invited to send in comments afterwards and several did so.

After the meeting (on 18 July), 3KQ circulated a report of the meeting to all those involved. This report provided a transcript of all the notes recorded on flipcharts during the meeting, to provide an aide-memoire to participants rather than a record of every point discussed. It also included the slides used in the introductory presentations by BERR and OL.

On 2 August, an evaluation report was circulated to all those involved in the 13 July event by Shared Practice; that report covered the same issues and figures as the analysis below, and in Annex 6 of this report which provides a full analysis of the questionnaire responses.

Also on 2 August, an update was circulated to all participants in this meeting from OL on the changes they had made to the structure and flow of the deliberative events as a result of the stakeholder input; this revised version was also tested with the CAB held on 2 August.

The revised information materials were then re-circulated to the Stakeholder Review Group on 10 August with a deadline of 15 August for final comments.

7.4.2 Evaluation of the Stakeholder Review Group event

The assessment that follows is based on an analysis of the questionnaires returned by stakeholder participants at the end of the event (all 14 participants returned completed questionnaires - a 100% return rate; full analysis of questionnaire responses is given in Annex 6). The assessment is also based on observation at the event and informal conversations with those involved, on two interviews with stakeholder participants, and on the evaluator's previous experience of reviewing stakeholder consultations.

Overall, the way the process was run on the day was very effective. The facilitators (3KQ) and presenters (BERR) created a positive atmosphere in which people were willing to discuss very contentious issues with others who had fundamentally different views, allowing significant progress to be made on developing the structure and content of the stimulus materials.

A short time was given at the end of the meeting for people to reflect at their group tables on how the event had worked (and to complete evaluation forms). Feedback into plenary suggested that the participants felt overall that the event had been very positive, had brought together a very good group of people and had made a lot of progress. In comments in questionnaires, the word 'constructive' was used several times and seems to sum up the general view of the mood of the meeting.

Findings from the questionnaire feedback from participants include the following:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All the main issues were covered in the meeting	5	7	2	-	-
All the main relevant stakeholder interests were represented at the meeting	-	12	2	-	-
The facilitation of the meeting was fair and balanced	11	3	-	-	-
The structure of the meeting enabled us to discuss the issues properly	4	9	1	-	-
All participants were treated equally and respectfully	13	1	-	-	-
No single view was allowed to dominate unfairly	5	7	2	-	-
The meeting was useful and worthwhile	8	6	-	-	-

This analysis shows very positive feedback on these issues, including that:

- all 14 respondents agreed that the facilitation had been fair and balanced, that all participants were treated equally and respectfully, and that the meeting had been useful and worthwhile
- a large majority agreed that all the main relevant stakeholder interests were represented at the meeting, that all the main issues were covered in the meeting, that the structure of the meeting had enabled participants to discuss the issues properly, and that no single view had been allowed to dominate unfairly.

This is very positive feedback for a meeting of this type with stakeholders, especially given the contentious nature of the topic.

In terms of clarity and transparency, the feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The objectives of the meeting were clear and transparent	2	9	3	-	-
The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders at the meeting were clear	3	9	2	-	-
The way the outputs of the meeting will be used was clear and transparent	2	7	4	1	-
The level of influence of the stakeholders on the drafting of the materials was clear and transparent	2	6	6	-	-
Those drafting the materials will listen to and consider stakeholder views	4	7	2	1	-

This analysis also shows still quite positive feedback from participants:

- Most (11 and 12 out of 14) agreed that the objectives of the meeting, and the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders, were clear and transparent
- Most (11 out of 14) agreed that those drafting the materials would listen to and consider stakeholder views; only 1 disagreed. This does demonstrate a remarkably high level of trust in the process, given the participants, and the positive response does seem to be linked, at least in part, to satisfaction with the way this particular event was run.
- A majority (8 and 9 out of 14) agreed that the way the outputs of the meeting would be used, and the level of influence of the stakeholders on the drafting of the materials, was clear and transparent. However, 5-6 were unsure or disagreed.

There was rather less agreement on timing and information provided in advance. Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was as shown below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There was enough time at the meeting to discuss the issues properly	2	8	-	4	-
There was enough information provided in advance to enable informed input	3	7	2	1	1
There was enough time before the meeting to review the draft materials	-	0	3	8	3

This analysis shows, in summary:

- The majority of respondents (10 out of 14) agreed that there was enough time in the meeting to discuss the issues properly, and that there was enough information provided in advance to enable informed input. This feedback was not very enthusiastic (few 'strongly' agreed), this is fairly positive overall.

- However, **no-one** thought there had been enough time before the meeting to review the draft materials. Although the draft materials had been circulated in advance, that circulation had been delayed because of the change in Ministerial responsibilities. There were some complaints from participants about lack of time to read and review them in advance; indeed some had not even received them before they travelled to the meeting. 5 people (36%) identified this late receipt of materials as the worst aspect of the whole event.

Comments from participants on questionnaires included the following:

"Didn't really get into details of issues, but this may be ironed out if document is redrafted to take into account issues of 'conditionality'. Need to know that OL will effectively take these on board."

"I would have liked to talk about the contents more"

The timing was very tight. The materials had been emailed to participants on 10 July, only three days before the meeting on 13 July. A show of hands at the meeting indicated that almost everyone there had been able to read the materials in advance, so they were able to fully participate in the discussions. However, the very short timescale for considering the meeting clearly did cause difficulties in discussing the draft materials in detail.

From observation, analysis of feedback questionnaires and informal conversations with participants and others present, among the key issues to emerge were as follows:

- **Effective recruitment.** There had been careful recruitment by the facilitators of a good mix of organisations to ensure that the widest possible range of views could be brought to bear on the materials. Also, all the participants had been carefully briefed about the nature of the meeting and the role they were being asked to play, which reduced the risk of people arriving with unrealistic or simply mistaken expectations. The effectiveness of the mix and attitudes of participants was reflected in some of the comments from participants on questionnaires about what had been the best aspects of the meeting, including:

"Good group of contributors; no grandstanding"

"Meeting participants were open and frank in views"

"Useful to meet with wide cross-section of stakeholders"

- **Clarity of approach to the meeting.** The facilitators were very clear about the approach being sought for the meeting, which was articulated as being to:
 - focus on the needs of the public / citizens to enable them to have a clearer understanding of the issues
 - focus on "it can be improved if ...", rather than on simply pointing out problems
 - focus on broader issues of balance, coverage of issues etc and not on 'wordsmithing'; people were invited to take away copies of the materials on which to write their detailed comments.

- **Clear and open recording.** There was clear and transparent recording of the points made during the meeting on flip charts at the front of the room. This was the formal record and participants were encouraged to challenge what was being written up if it was not correct; challenges were made and corrections made once or twice. This is very useful in reassuring participants that their points are being fully recorded, and in giving them some control over that record.
- **Time management.** The facilitators took great care of the participants' needs for clarity of structure (e.g. clear times given for breaks, lunch, and finish time, repeated regularly) which ensures that people feel comfortable and secure with how the day will work. The whole event was very well-timed: discussions on the tables were not rushed; feedback in plenary allowed plenty of time for further discussion and, indeed, for broad consensus to emerge.

Discussion was kept very well-focused in spite of there being a wide range of views in the room, some of which were deeply held and highly emotive. The facilitator ensured that all participants were fully engaged and able to voice opinions, both in table discussions and in feeding back to plenary.

- **Flexible and responsive facilitation.** The facilitators were highly responsive to the needs and wishes of the participants. The original plan for the day (to go through the draft materials section by section) was abandoned after a number of cross-cutting issues were raised in the discussion following the introductory presentations. The meeting plan was completely restructured on the spot to allow each of these cross-cutting issues to be discussed in small groups.

As a result, the four tables focused as follows:

- Group A examined the possible links to other current policy developments and consultations, and the implications of a decision against any nuclear new build;
- Group B looked at how to differentiate clearly between facts and opinions in the materials;
- Group C examined how 'conditionalities' might be framed in the consultation (what ifs);
- Group C examined how the overall 'problem' to be discussed might be framed.

This approach worked very well. The facilitator checked before breaking for lunch that people felt it was worthwhile and got very positive feedback from participants. After lunch, each group fed back their conclusions in plenary and each presentation was followed by further discussion of that issue, recognising that all four were closely inter-related.

The original boundaries of the meeting were also expanded to enable stakeholders not only to comment on the content of the materials but also to input ideas on how the materials might be used in framing the questions for the deliberative events, which was seen as a positive opportunity by participants here. For example, one group suggested that the deliberative discussions could focus on each issue in turn (e.g. waste) and consider:

- why the issue is important
- what the government view is
- alternative views and challenges (with clear attributions)
- whether the challenges should be addressed or not in the events and, if so
- what conditions might be applied to meet the challenges.

Feedback from participants on questionnaires reflected satisfaction with the flexibility of the facilitators and their ability to create a constructive process:

"A good constructive process"

"High quality of inputs made in a constructive manner"

"V[ery] well facilitated meeting, with useful discussion and outputs. Feel like have had an influence"

"Excellent facilitation"

- **Timescales.** Less positively, the timescales of responding to draft materials was clearly an issue for many of those involved both in terms of looking at materials before the meeting and the remaining timescale for comments. Participants questionnaire feedback included:

"I hope that there will be adequate time to properly assimilate the information and input from the group. Timescales appear too compressed"

Overall, although several of the organisations represented at the meeting did have clear organisational positions on some of the specific issues covered in the stimulus materials, and on the inclusion of nuclear power in the overall UK energy mix, the discussion was open, frank and respectful, and people did not simply repeat their organisational position and did contribute well to the overall debate.

The lessons for the future involvement of stakeholders in the development of materials for deliberative public engagement that emerged from this meeting include the following:

- **Value of careful preparation.** The facilitators had clearly put effort into ensuring the right people were in the room, and that they were clear about the purpose and boundaries of the meeting and their role. Questionnaire feedback shows that the great majority of respondents were clear about the objectives and about the role of stakeholders.
- **Value of experienced facilitation.** The shift of the agenda to respond to proposals from participants was done very smoothly and professionally so the whole process still felt very much under control, and participants could still feel that the process was safe and could be trusted.
- **Value of independent facilitation.** Independent facilitation is not necessary in every circumstance but, in this case where there are very divided and strongly held views on a highly contentious subject, and where the commissioning body for the consultation is known to represent a particular view, independent facilitation allows external participants to trust that they will be able to have their say without being manipulated or sidelined.

In this case it was important that the roles were very clearly demarcated between the facilitator taking responsibility for ensuring that the process worked well for all parties, and BERR's responsibility for providing information on content (on the wider consultation process and the issues being raised). This division of responsibilities ensured that the participants could trust the process to be fair and not directed by specific content concerns: the facilitator was not seen as partisan. It also meant that participants' concerns could be collected by the facilitators during the meeting, on the participants' behalf, and put to BERR, which was only possible because the facilitator was seen to be impartial and independent.

- **The venue and style are important.** It helped defuse any preliminary tensions between stakeholders (who may often be taking up very different positions on the issues being discussed) to be working in an informal, friendly space, with everyone being together for informal coffee and lunch breaks. The informality of the venue was supported by a relaxed and confident facilitation style.

The overall feel of the meeting was very positive, as can be seen from the statistics and quotes given. This was confirmed by observation: stakeholders were all clearly fully engaged in discussions at the event, there was a lot of positive energy in the event overall, and a broad consensus emerged about ways forward.

There was significant appreciation expressed at the meeting (as shown in the formal meeting notes circulated by 3KQ) of both the open and transparent approach from BERR staff, and the quality of the facilitation.

The clear benefits of this approach for those responsible for designing and delivering the deliberative public events were that BERR were able to have greater confidence that the materials would be (and would be seen to be) fair and balanced, and OL were provided with a very clear steer on stakeholders' views on the way forward.

As noted on one of the questionnaires, the "process worked well - but [the] end result will be the judge". However, in terms of the engagement of stakeholders on the stimulus materials for the public events, this meeting worked very well and generated some high quality, useful, relevant and valuable data to guide the next stages of drafting. It provided a good start to continuing discussions with stakeholders throughout the consultation process.

7.4.3 Activities and feedback following the Stakeholder Review Group event

Although initially it was expected that there would not be time to circulate further drafts of papers following the meeting, a further draft was prepared and circulated to stakeholder participants, at their request.

The remaining timetable meant that stakeholders were sent the next drafts of the process design and materials on 10 August - that draft took into account comments from the Stakeholder Review Meeting and the third and final meeting of the Citizens Advisory Board. This 10 August draft was also used at the Development Event on 14 August. Stakeholders were asked to focus their comments on how their own (or their organisation's) views had been represented, and if there was anything substantive missing.

All comments from stakeholders were requested by 15 August, so they could be incorporated alongside those from the Development Event in the final versions to be used at the deliberative events on 8 September. The timescale for all concerned was very tight.

However, several stakeholders did send in further comments, both immediately after the Stakeholder Review Group meeting and then in response to the redrafts circulated on 10 August (by the deadline of 15 August). Most were minor points of detail although one green NGO did send in significant numbers of substantive comments on matters of fact and areas where they felt the text was misleading.

A formal response was sent by BERR to these proposals, explaining which had been accepted and which had not, with reasons for any refusal to make changes.

By this time, several of the stakeholders had also taken part in filming short presentations that were to be included in the video shown to all participants at the deliberative events: the Confederation of British Industry, Greenpeace, Nuclear Industries Association, Unite (the union) and the Renewable Energy Association had all taken part in video filming.

BERR had also offered each stakeholder organisation two observer places at the deliberative events. These were taken up by various of the green NGOs at the deadline of 30 August. Several green NGOs also provided details of their organisations to be included in an information sheet to be given to public participants at the deliberative events to facilitate follow up.

It should be noted that the judgement by the Market Research Society to uphold one aspect of the Greenpeace complaint against Opinion Leader (see section 3.6) was focused around how OL handled the comments from stakeholders on materials. That judgement suggests that BERR dealt with those comments, rather than OL as the independent contractor responsible for the materials. While the MRS considered that it was reasonable for OL to rely on BERR to review the technical issues, they stated their view that OL should have reviewed those comments first hand to check if there were any non-technical issues they should respond to.

Although the research for this evaluation has no independent evidence on which to base a specific assessment of this issue, we do have evidence that it was BERR that formally responded to stakeholder comments (as mentioned above), which suggests that they did indeed handle these comments. While this may not have been appropriate in terms of conventional market research guidelines (and, as evaluators of public and stakeholder engagement, this is not our area of specialist knowledge), this was not actually a market research process.

In this case, however, our view as evaluators is that it seems quite appropriate for BERR to respond to stakeholder comments following this event, especially as communications and engagement between all the parties was continuing on various aspects of the consultation.

In later interviews with stakeholder participants in this event, there remained criticisms of the content of the materials in terms of coverage of anti-nuclear views and alternatives to nuclear energy. However, they also recognised the difficulties of drafting such materials. Comments included:

"It was not reliable. [The important issues] were certainly all covered e.g. cost and waste. But ... the implications were not necessarily explored" (stakeholder interviewee)

"As a result [of stakeholder input] OL moved the materials a fair way" (stakeholder interviewee)

"We felt that the information wasn't accurate. It was BERR's consultation but we felt that the NGO's position wasn't presented accurately" (stakeholder interviewee)

"I felt that I had my say but I don't feel that it was adequately transmitted down the line or that it had an influence on the regional one-day events that followed. The green groups wanted our views to be set out as an alternative which could be compared and contrasted at those meetings... I felt I'd said my points and that the points had been recorded" (stakeholder interviewee)

"Some information was used but it got fairly buried and was not given the impact we would have wanted" (stakeholder interviewee)

"[Our group] issued a statement [after the deliberative events] saying that ... some information was not included and information was not portrayed in a way the NGOs would have wanted. Nuclear provides 4% of energy: for [our group] this issue is the litmus test. I saw this information in one document used by the public on the day but it was not very prominent (and that could furthermore have made it seem as though it was not very important information) and I question whether BERR would have brought it up on the day" (stakeholder interviewee)

The feedback from stakeholder participants, as illustrated by these comments, shows that some would clearly have preferred certain information to have been stressed more strongly and [in one case] that their own organisation's position should have been represented differently.

Although ideally the final draft materials would have been fully supported by all those involved, these final criticisms do not suggest that the information provided to participants was seriously lacking or biased. These criticisms focus on issues of 'degree' of coverage, rather than suggesting that key information was excluded or slanted.

Overall, our view as evaluators is that it seems that there was acceptance even among some of the most critical stakeholders (including from one green NGO) that the key issues were covered and that there was information on opposing views. These are the key elements in ensuring that the information was appropriate to enabling and supporting good deliberative discussions at the public deliberative events. Further analysis of the information materials as they were finally used at the deliberative events is given below.

7.5 Development Event

7.5.1 Development Event process

A Development Event was held in Slough on 14 August 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to test the information materials drafted by Opinion Leader to be used in the deliberative events with the public, and the overall design of the deliberative public events within which the materials would be used. The Development Event was designed and delivered by Opinion Leader.

The participants were 30 specially recruited individuals designed to provide a representative cross-section of the public. The meeting was also attended by representatives from BERR, COI and from Shared Practice (the evaluators). In addition, two members of the Citizens Advisory Board attended.

The meeting ran for a full day, from approx 9.45am to 4.45pm on Tuesday 14 August 2007. It was held at the Spirit Centre in central Slough. Although a rather bleak and municipal building, there was good space for group discussions and the organisers felt it was important to hold this event outside London.

This event followed three meetings of the Citizens Advisory Board and the Stakeholder Review Group meeting (see above). The draft of materials that was considered at this Development Event had also been circulated to the Stakeholder Review Group for their final comments, after which the materials were to be finalised for the public events on 8 September 2007 taking into account inputs from both this event and from stakeholders.

The Development Event included all the elements planned for the public deliberative events: the pub quiz, the polling and the video as well as the handouts and reference sheets. The polling was by paper questionnaire rather than the electronic key pads that were used at the 8 September events, and the video had not been finally edited but did include all contributions (including Greenpeace, who withdrew permission for their input later; see below).

The event also followed the order of themes that was to be used in the deliberative events: introductory information on the Government's preliminary view and the key questions for the consultation, along with consideration of background information on climate change, Government plans and then including questions in a 'pub quiz' format to provide more information on the 'big picture' and the energy mix.

Then, in the afternoon, briefings and discussions were held at individual tables on nuclear waste and safety including transport, nuclear power and the environment, decommissioning, reprocessing, why the government is considering nuclear power (including nuclear power and CO2 emissions and security of supply), and finally weighing up the benefits and implications for the future of nuclear power in the UK. Each table discussion was followed by plenary feedback of the key points from the table discussions.

It was made clear to participants at this event that *their* views would not be included in the consultation; this was a practice run for the main deliberative public events that would contribute those views. Participants were directed to the written and online consultations as the way to input their specific views if that was what they wanted to do.

7.5.2 Evaluation of the Development Event

The assessment that follows is based on analysis of the questionnaires returned by stakeholder participants at the end of the event (all 30 participants returned completed questionnaires - 100% return rate; full analysis of questionnaires is given in Annex 7).

The evaluation assessment also draws on observation and informal conversations with those involved in the meeting, and on the evaluator's previous experience of a wide range of public engagement exercises.

Overall, the way the process was run on the day was very effective. The introductions to each part of the process were clear and concise but also informal, so that the public participants quickly understood what the day was about and what they were being asked to do.

The participants were seated at group tables of approx 10 people on each, with a facilitator who worked with them throughout the day. The facilitation was generally excellent, with good encouragement given to less confident members of the group to speak, and good control of the more confident members who may otherwise have dominated. Time was given at the end for participants to complete evaluation questionnaires.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There was enough time at the meeting to discuss the draft materials properly	11 (37%)	18 (60%)		1 (3%)	
All participants were treated equally and respectfully	17 (57%)	13 (43%)			
No single view on the issues was allowed to dominate unfairly	13 (43%)	16 (53%)	1 (3%)		
I understand clearly the purpose of this meeting	13 (43%)	17 (57%)			
I understand clearly how this meeting fits into the wider public consultation	12 (40%)	17 (57%)	1 (3%)		
I was able to discuss the issues that concern me	14 (47%)	15 (50%)		1 (3%)	
I learnt something I did not know before	20 (67%)	9 (30%)		1 (3%)	
Attending this meeting has helped me think more clearly about the issues	13 (43%)	17 (57%)			
The meeting was well-structured and well-run	10 (33%)	18 (60%)	2 (7%)		
It is important to involve the public in discussing these sorts of issues of government policy	20 (67%)	9 (30%)	1 (3%)		

This analysis shows positive feedback overall, especially given that this was a test run of materials rather than an actual opportunity to input views. In summary:

- All 30 respondents (100%) agreed that they were satisfied with the way the meeting was structured and run, that participants were treated equally and respectfully, that they understood the purpose of the meeting and that attending the meeting had helped them think more clearly about the issues.
- Almost all (97%) agreed that there was enough time at the meeting, that they understood how this meeting fitted into the wider consultation, that they could discuss the issues that concerned them, that they learnt something they did not know before and that it was important to involve the public in these sorts of issues of government policy. A similar proportion (96%) agreed that no single view was allowed to dominate discussions unfairly.

Feedback on other issues was also given in questionnaire responses from participants, as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would have liked more information in advance of the meeting	5 (17%)	11 (37%)	4 (13%)	9 (30%)	
The way the discussion was run and structured was fair and balanced	8 (27%)	20 (67%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	
The way the materials were presented in the meeting was fair and balanced	3 (10%)	22 (73%)	1 (3%)	4 (13%)	

There was a good mix of people	12 (40%)	15 (50%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	
I understand clearly how the results of this meeting will be used	10 (33%)	16 (53%)	4 (13%)		
The meeting was worthwhile and I enjoyed taking part	7 (23%)	21 (70%)	2 (7%)		
I believe those drafting the materials will listen to and consider our views	2 (7%)	25 (83%)	3 (10%)		
I am more likely to get involved in public consultations in future as a result of attending this meeting	7 (23%)	19 (63%)	4 (13%)		

Although still very positive overall, this feedback was slightly less enthusiastic on some of the issues (e.g. fewer agreeing 'strongly'). In summary:

- Although 94% agreed that the way the discussion was run and structured was fair and balanced, only 8 people (27%) agreed strongly. This suggests slightly less enthusiastic agreement on the overall structure and delivery of the event.
- There was also a slightly more varied response to whether there was a good mix of people. Although 90% agreed that there was a good mix, only 40% (12) agreed strongly.
- A similar, but even less enthusiastic, response was given to the question as to whether participants agreed that the way the materials were presented in the meeting was fair and balanced. 83% agreed but only 10% (3 people) agreed strongly (and 4 people disagreed).
- 54% (16 out of 30 people) would have like more information in advance than was provided. There were some mixed feelings on this, as 4 people were unsure whether they did want more information in advance, and 9 people (30%) disagreed (i.e. they did not want more information in advance).
- There was also less than complete agreement on the question of whether people were clear about how the results of this meeting would be used. Although 86% agreed that they were clear, only 10 people (33%) agreed strongly.
- There was still less enthusiastic agreement that those drafting the materials would listen to and consider the participants' views. Although 90% agreed in total, only 2 people (7%) agreed strongly that this would be the case.

This analysis shows a continuation of the generally positive feedback on the event overall, but questions were being raised particularly about the way the materials were presented, wanting more information in advance, some lack of clarity about how the results of the meeting would be used, and not great confidence that those drafting the materials would listen to and consider participants' views.

Two questions in the questionnaire were designed to test overall satisfaction with the process (as shown in the table above):

- The first was whether participants felt the meeting was worthwhile and they enjoyed taking part. Although 93% agreed with this, only 7 people (23%) agreed strongly. This is a good positive response, but very often public

consultations provoke a more enthusiastic response than this, with large proportions agreeing strongly that they enjoyed the experience. In this wider context, this is a less enthusiastic response than might be expected.

- The second was whether people are more likely to get involved in public consultations as a result of attending this meeting. Again, the results overall are fairly positive, with 86% agreeing that they were more likely to do so, but only 7 people (23%) agreed strongly. Again, this is a less enthusiastic response than is usual with public consultations.

In summary, therefore, the feedback from participant questionnaire respondents suggests that the basic principles of consultation such as ensuring that people were given opportunities to speak, understood what was going on and how results would be used, fairness, balance etc were all achieved.

However, the response from participants is unusually restrained overall, with little of the enthusiasm often apparent from questionnaire feedback from public consultations. This could be due to the fact that it was a 'test' of a consultation process rather than the 'real thing'. It could also reflect the lack of enthusiasm among participants for the conclusions they rather reluctantly came to as a result of considering the issues.

From observation and informal interviews, some additional issues were noted:

- **Clarity about start times.** Participants had obviously been given different times for the start of the meeting, so some arrived very early and felt they were kept waiting for quite a long time before it actually got going; this seems to have been a simple mistake by the recruiters but it is worth noting that participants do notice these things and it can create an atmosphere where they are less positive about the whole thing from the start.
- **No opportunity for participants to input views.** Although it was made clear on several occasions, by the lead facilitator, that this was a workshop to test the materials rather than taking people's comments on nuclear power, that distinction was not always maintained in the consciousness of participants, and they did get quite deeply into discussions about the issues. It is a very difficult balance to maintain but it may be worth considering in future that the views of a group taking this testing role should also be fed into the final considerations of the issues in some way.
- **Answering questions.** During the working groups at tables, participants asked the facilitators a lot of questions about the issues, not all of which the facilitators could answer (although some attempted answers). The role of facilitators is to make sure the process works for the participants and delivers the overall objectives of the event, and that they limit answers to technical questions to issues they are very sure about and to call for expert technical help where necessary.

This problem was noted by OL and BERR and changes were made to arrangements for the deliberative public events. For example, facilitators at the actual events were briefed not to answer questions beyond those issues on which information had been provided (e.g. in reference sheets). Also, BERR policy makers with expertise in the subject were recruited to attend each deliberative event to deal with any important technical questions that arose there (see below for details).

- **Access to diversity of views.** There were positive responses to the different opinions given in the video; participants liked different views being aired. In the evaluator's experience, providing a range of views to participants allows them to feel more confident in voicing their own views - on the basis that there is no 'right' answer. Some input was liked more than others, with criticism of contributions from Government (for being unclear about their role in getting new nuclear power stations built, and leaving it to the private sector) and Greenpeace (for only complaining about what Government was doing and not offering any positive alternative suggestions).
- **Repetition and delay in getting on to key issues.** Several participants mentioned that they felt that the discussions in the morning had become repetitive and 'going round the same things', and they felt that they could have moved onto the next topic more quickly in some cases. The discussion in the afternoon was much more animated, and people were much more engaged, than in the morning. This was probably partly due to people gaining confidence in the topic, and getting to know each other, but also because the issues of waste and security were being addressed and that was what people wanted to talk about. One or two people suggested that this discussion could have happened earlier in the day and been given more time.
- **Too much and too little information.** Although participants were pleased to receive the information introduced to the table groups, a couple of people felt there was too much to read and too many handouts. At the same time, a few mentioned informally (and one on the questionnaire) that some information was not fully explored and did not answer some key questions (e.g. on waste, and on other energy sources).
- **Wanted to know what local communities felt.** There were some questions raised at the event about the views of the communities where nuclear power stations were currently located; participants wondered what they thought of it. At that stage, no mention had been made of the consultation also including a series of consultation events at existing nuclear power station sites, so that stakeholders living and working nearby could participate.
- **Cynicism and trust.** There was some cynicism expressed informally about the position of the Government, and a sense among some participants that the decision had already been made. At the same time, there was also a sense that Government was listening more than it used to.

However, informal conversations with some participants suggested some confusion about the relationship between a Government consultation and the focus in the consultation question on the private sector simply being given the option of investing in new nuclear power stations. It was not clear to some who was actually going to decide and take action. While there was to some extent a lack of trust in Government, there was also a sense from these participants that there was more trust in Government than in the private sector in developing new nuclear power stations.

Finally, the questionnaire asked participants what had been the best and worst aspects of the event for them.

In terms of the **best aspects** of the meeting for participants, learning was the best aspect for 9 people (30%) identifying that in an open question. Comments from participant questionnaire respondents included:

"Broader view regarding the nuclear [and] alternative sources of energy"

"Learning about nuclear power - I didn't have a clue before this"

"Learning why government are considering nuclear power and what the opposing views are"

"Learning about the energy systems"

"Better understanding of the issues"

The second and third most frequently mentioned best aspects were hearing other views expressed (5 people; 17%) and group discussions (4 people; 13%), so it is clear that participants enjoyed talking with and listening to others. 4 people (13%) identified the information as the best aspect, and another 4 people (13%) identified the video.

In terms of the **worst aspects** of the meeting for participants, the most frequent complaint from respondents, by 11 people (37%), was that the day was too long. The second most frequent complaint was that there was too much repetition; 6 people (20%) mentioned that they felt discussions on some topics were repeated over and over. One comment was "We talked about some topics over and over - too much time".

Although the main focus of the evaluation of this event was as part of the overall evaluation of the consultation process in general, and the public engagement elements in particular, analysis of the feedback and findings from observation was completed quickly so they could be passed on to BERR and the COI to feed into the final planning for the public deliberative events on 8 September. The draft evaluation findings were completed and circulated on 16 August, and the full draft findings on 20 August.

As with the CAB, it is notable that this event clearly succeeded in identifying what worked well and less well in the materials and the proposed design for the deliberative public events, to feed into the final design and drafting.

However, although this feedback shows how well the event succeeded on its own terms, there was so little time before the actual date of the events (just over three weeks), that it was very hard for the organisers to do any more than make minor readjustments to the programme and materials before they were finalised.

A little more time between this pilot event and the actual deliberative public events could have allowed for some of the issues identified here to have been more fully addressed in the programme and materials for the events, and to have avoided most of the negative feedback that was made on those events.

7.6 Deliberative public events

7.6.1 Deliberative public events process

Nine public deliberative events were held around the UK on Saturday 8 September 2007. These events were the main focus of the public engagement elements of the consultation. The planning and development process for these events (the Citizens Advisory Board, the Stakeholder Review Group and the Development Event) was extensive, as outlined in the earlier parts of this section.

The public could also engage in the consultation through the written and online consultation (see section 5) and the site stakeholder events (see section 6), but the deliberative public events described in this section were the primary mechanism for engaging the public specifically.

The purpose of these deliberative events was

"to engage a demographically representative sample of UK citizens in an informed debate and to enable the Government to understand the views of such people on the Government's preliminary view of nuclear energy as outlined in the consultation document"⁷⁶.

Potential participants were recruited to reflect the demographic make-up of the UK. Recruitment was from the electoral register: 100,000 people were selected and asked to complete a brief questionnaire about themselves; participants were then selected from that questionnaire data. The subject of the consultation was not disclosed with the aim of avoiding over self-selection by those with a particular interest in the subject.

Opinion Leader (OL) was contracted to design and deliver the deliberative events, and to develop all the information materials used as 'stimulus' for the public discussions (with COI and BERR). A separate company (M) was contracted to deliver the logistics and management support for the events.

The aim was to achieve a good geographical spread of events, and nine locations were identified to cover all regions of the UK: three English locations were selected as capable of representing an extra, adjacent Government-defined region - Newcastle, Leicester and London (as shown in the table below).

The locations and numbers of public participants at the events were as follows:

Region	Event location	Number of participants
North East / Yorks & Humber	Newcastle	159
North West	Liverpool	77
East Midlands / West Midlands	Leicester	147
East of England	Norwich	80
London / South East	London	160
South West	Exeter	84
Wales	Cardiff	84
Scotland	Edinburgh	91
Northern Ireland	Belfast	74
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS		956

These figures are very slightly different from those published by OL in their final report as, in two places (Cardiff and Edinburgh), more evaluation questionnaires were received than numbers of participants counted by the contractors: in Cardiff 84 questionnaires were returned by participants (compared to a count of 83 by

⁷⁶ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.41.

the contractors) and in Edinburgh 91 questionnaire were returned by participants (compared to a count of 85 by the contractors). The total figure here of 956 participants is therefore an increase of seven over the contractor's total of 949. These are very minor discrepancies and are only identified here to explain the slight differences in figures in the different sources.

Public participants were all paid an incentive fee: those who lived more than one hour away from the venue (some of whom had to stay overnight) were paid £125; those who lived closer were paid £75. Travel expenses were also paid by arrangement.

Each event was held at city centre locations and ran for a full day, from 9.45am to 5pm, with 50 minutes for lunch. There was also a 15 minute break in the afternoon and participants were encouraged to get tea, coffee etc during the day.

The overall agenda was as follows:

- Welcome and introductions (50 minutes). This session included training in the use of the electronic keypad and initial polling questions. It also included a session where participants could discuss among themselves their initial views on nuclear power, before any information was introduced. The first video extract was shown here as part of the welcome. Where a Minister was present (Cardiff, Edinburgh, Exeter, Leicester, Liverpool, London), they gave a short welcome address to the participants.
- Background information and discussion (three separate sessions up to lunch time). An initial discussion followed a further video extract to provide overview and scene setting (20 minutes discussion).

This section of the event also included a further video extract and the two sessions of the 'pub quiz'. The pub quiz and the three handouts provided during that session (90 minutes overall) included information on climate change, the ways energy is currently produced and carbon emissions from energy production.

The final part of this session (20 minutes) included a further two handouts focused on the energy challenge, energy security, and the current energy mix including renewables.

- Briefing, discussion and feedback on nuclear waste and safety (immediately after lunch for 85 minutes). Plenary briefing based around further video extracts and four handouts on nuclear safety and waste including decommissioning, reprocessing of fuel, transportation, nuclear power and environment. Table discussions (60 minutes) were followed by a plenary feedback session and this session concluded with a set of polling questions.
- Briefing, discussion and feedback on why the Government is considering nuclear power (for 65 minutes). This session included a plenary briefing based around further video extracts and three handouts focusing on the benefits of nuclear (carbon emissions from nuclear power, security of supply including of fuel, supply chain and skills). Table discussions (40 minutes) were followed by a plenary feedback session and this session concluded with a set of polling questions.
- Final briefing and discussion to bring together key themes and issues (40 minutes). Plenary briefing based around video extracts and information read

out by the facilitator considering the implications for the future of nuclear power in the UK. Throughout the day, each table had compiled a 'concerns board', and this session reviewed those concerns and considered the implications of keeping nuclear power in the energy mix. The final polling question was incorporated into this session.

- Wrap up and close (20 minutes). Thanks. Evaluation forms were completed during the final minutes of this time.

The timetable for the day was very precise, with specific amounts of time allocated for information provision and for group discussions at tables. The information provision mechanisms are described below. The group discussion periods were as follows:

- 20 minutes for discussion on initial views on nuclear power
- 20 minutes discussion on initial background information
- 30 minutes discussion on second set of background information
- 60 minutes discussion on nuclear waste and safety
- 40 minutes discussion on why the Government is considering nuclear power
- 15 minutes discussion on bringing it all together and the implications for the future of nuclear power in the UK
- 15 minutes discussion on the conditions the public would place on new nuclear build.

This is a total of 200 minutes (3 hours 20 minutes) for discussion out of a working day (not including breaks) of just under six hours, so just over half the time was spent in small group discussions.

The participants were seated at tables of 10, and their discussions were supported and recorded by a total of 122 facilitators across the nine events. The facilitators met the evening before the event to be briefed on their role and responsibilities. The facilitators were briefed to:

- Ensure that all participants had their say
- Keep participants' discussions within the timings set out on the agenda
- Read out certain information and provide other handouts when specified on their briefing documents. This approach was for two reasons. First, it was designed to allow all tables to follow the same structure, have the same information, answer the same questions and for the answers and discussion points to be recorded in a common format. Second, it was intended to overcome any literacy problems in the group. Facilitators were instructed to read out the highlighted information 'word for word'.
- Hand out additional reference sheets as appropriate, particularly in answer to participants' questions
- Pose questions as specified on the briefing documents to stimulate appropriate discussions and capture participants' answers using a proforma provided on a laptop
- Take notes of the main points of discussions and provide a good flavour of the discussions that took place on their table, also on the proforma.

Information was provided to public participants in six main ways, all using the Government's Consultation Document as the core source material. The input to the development of the information materials has already been outlined in the previous sections on the Citizens Advisory Board, the Stakeholder Review Group and the Development Event. The six main sources of information provided for participants were as follows:

- * **The video**, which was used to provide presentations from a range of different viewpoints (including the Government) on the various issues covered in the consultation. The video was designed to ensure that all locations had the same information and range of views in the same format, which would not have been possible if presentations were made in person by a range of different interests.

The video initially included short filmed contributions from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Unite union, Nuclear Industries Association (NIA), Greenpeace and the Renewable Energy Association, as well as Government. These contributions were designed to ensure that a range of views was available to participants, not just the Government view. The video was presented by Anna Ford, an experienced broadcaster familiar to the public from television news.

The day before the events (7 September), Greenpeace announced that they, and some other environmental groups, were withdrawing from the consultation and that their contribution to the video should be removed. This was done overnight but, rather than there being no input from the green NGO perspective, a voiceover was added to the video to reflect the Greenpeace position.

The withdrawal of Greenpeace was mentioned briefly in the introductory session to the events, not least because it had been covered extensively in the media the previous day and on the morning of the event, but it was not referred to from the platform during the rest of the day.

- **The 'pub quiz'**. This was a highly interactive activity in which tables of participants acted as teams to answer questions on issues relevant to the future of nuclear power, which were displayed on the video screen at the front. Each table had a 'table keypad' so that quiz answers could be registered from each table. The lead facilitator then provided the answers to each question and provided more information on the specific issue of the question. After the second session of the pub quiz, one table was declared the winner and given a prize collected from the platform. All the questions in the pub quiz are shown in the final OL report.
- **Information read out by the facilitators** at each table. Each facilitator was working to a proforma and briefing documents on their laptops which specified the information to be given out, how and when. The handouts and reference sheets are described below but some information had to be read aloud to the table groups by the facilitators. Some information that was read out from facilitators' laptop screens was additional to that in the handouts and reference sheets⁷⁷. The decision to ask facilitators to read out information was designed to ensure that all participants had the same information in the same form at all tables and at all events, and to overcome any literacy problems among participants.
- **12 handouts** were given out to participants over the course of the day, as outlined in the summary of the agenda above. Some of the handouts were introduced by additional information read out by the facilitators from their screens. The handouts were as follows:

⁷⁷ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008; Annex 7, pp 218-229.

- Handout 1: Why are we here / why are we discussing nuclear energy now?
- Handout 2: Tackling climate change and implications for our energy supplies
- Handout 3: What is the Government doing about our energy in the context of climate change?
- Handout 4: Thinking about our energy mix
- Handout 5: Our electricity mix and low CO2 electricity options
- Handout 6: Managing nuclear waste
- Handout 7: Nuclear power and waste
- Handout 8: Managing security and safety risks
- Handout 9: Views on security and safety risks and nuclear energy
- Handout 10: Nuclear power and CO2 emissions
- Handout 11: The role nuclear power could play in making the UK electricity supply more secure
- Handout 12: Bringing it all together

The handouts varied between one and three pages long, and included a mix of facts and figures, charts, graphics and views from a range of sources including environmental organisations, trade unions, business representatives, the nuclear industry and the Government.

- **Nine reference sheets** were available and given out at the discretion of facilitators at various points to support discussion or answer participants' questions. The reference sheets were as follows:
 - Reference sheet 1: Who provides the energy? (1 page on the energy market and the role of energy companies and Government)
 - Reference sheet 2: Information on renewables (half page of bullets on existing and planned developments in wind energy, hydroelectric power stations, biomass, and jobs in renewable energy)
 - Reference sheet 3: The main benefits and disadvantages of the different electricity sources (3 pages of tables of the advantages and disadvantages of wind, solar, tidal, biomass, geothermal, wave power, fossil fuels e.g. gas, oil and coal, and nuclear power)
 - Reference sheet 4: Range of electricity generation costs for different technologies (1 page covering costs per megawatt hour of electricity produced, and consideration of the carbon price)
 - Reference sheet 5: What is nuclear power and how is electricity produced through nuclear energy? (1 page on the energy production process and the waste created)
 - Reference sheet 6: Aren't there any other methods we can use to generate electricity? (half page on carbon capture and storage - CCS, and combined heat and power - CHP)
 - Reference sheet 7: How decisions about where to build any new nuclear power stations would be made (half page on how the decisions about locating plants would be taken, and timing)
 - Reference sheet 8: The European Union Emission Trading Scheme (half page on capping and trading carbon emissions)
 - Reference sheet 9: Does the UK have sufficient skills and supplies needed to build new nuclear power stations?
- **Access to experts.** At least one person was available in each location to answer any particular technical or scientific questions from participants' questions (a policy expert from BERR).

However, facilitators were briefed that this access to experts was not being promoted to participants. If facilitators were faced with a technical question, they were briefed not to 'guess' at answers but simply to say they did not know. If pressed, they were briefed to look at the FAQs and reference sheets provided; if that did not solve the problem it was suggested that they try to move the discussion past the point of difficulty; if still stuck, they could raise their hand showing a green card, and someone would come to the table and find the relevant policy expert to answer the question. In practice, policy experts were called on and, where this happened, the process worked well.

No information about the content of the issues to be discussed was sent to participants in advance of the event, beyond a letter confirming that the event was part of the consultation on the future of nuclear power, and details of the venue, timing and other practical matters.

It was suggested to this evaluation that no other information was sent for three reasons: first, that not everyone would read any information sent which could put those that had not read it at a disadvantage; second, that some participants may be put off attending if the topic looked too complex; and third, that the organisers had considered the literacy levels of participants and did not want to exclude anyone (by them withdrawing) anyone who felt unable to read advance materials.

The events were recorded and reported as follows:

- Facilitators worked to a proforma and briefing document that provided detailed guidance on how to record answers to a set of common questions, and points made in discussion, on laptops at each table.

The facilitators' notes were captured on a structured proforma organised into a grid. This was designed to allow all tables of participants to follow the same structure, answer the same questions and for the answers and discussion points to be recorded in a common format to enable easy qualitative analysis.

- A small team of note takers at each event sat in on different tables at different times to record some of the participants' points verbatim in order to provide quotes to illustrate the overall findings and to reflect the diversity of responses given in the discussion sessions. Some of these quotes were used in the final Opinion Leader report on the results of the events.
- The notes recorded by facilitators on laptops could be read remotely by the co-ordinating team at each event, so they could monitor the themes arising and key points being made by participants.

The co-ordinating team briefed the lead facilitator about these points, and some of the quotes from the note takers (sometimes using participants' own words) could then be referred to from the platform at various stages in the event. This was designed to reassure participants that their views were being recorded, being taken seriously and taken forward into the final reports.

- Electronic polling was used at the beginning, during and at the end of the events, to gather quantitative data for the final reports, and also to enable participants to get a sense of the views in the room on specific issues at specific points in the day.

Each participant was given a 'smart card' when registering in the morning which they inserted into their keypad and which contained personal information unique to that participants. This was to enable the research team to look at differences in viewpoints across different groups (e.g. men and women, different ages).

The polling questions were designed to cover the same issues as the key questions in the Government's Consultation Document, and the final overarching question was taken directly from that document. The polling was also designed to measure changes in views over the course of the day, as a result of the information provision and discussion. Some questions were therefore asked twice during the day.

The full list of polling questions and results is given in the full OL report. The results of the questions that were asked twice in the day, and the overarching question, are given below. These figures are quoted in full here to:

- Illustrate the types of issues that were put to the participants in the electronic polling activities, and how the questions were asked.
- Show how the views of participants changed over the course of the event. This was important for two reasons:
 - It was one of the objectives of the public deliberative events that they should provide results that would show the extent to which views had changed as a result of participation and therefore is an issue for evaluation.
 - To provide basic data to illustrate the extent to which the process had affected people's views, which is a specific question for the evaluation.

These questions and responses, pre and post-deliberation, were in summary as follows; the figures given below have been checked with data supplied directly to the evaluation team by OL:

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Tackling climate change is a critical challenge for the UK?	Pre-deliberation	Post-deliberation
Strongly agree	60.0%	66.1%
Agree	28.3%	24.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	5.9%	5.2%
Disagree	3.6%	2.8%
Strongly disagree	0.8%	1.4%
Don't know	1.4%	0.3%

The figures in the table above show that there was very little change in views before and after deliberation on this issue, with those agreeing it was important being 88% before and 90% afterwards.

How far do you agree or disagree that nuclear power stations could make an important contribution to reducing the UK's CO2 emissions?	Pre-deliberation	Post-deliberation
Strongly agree	23.8%	19.5%
Agree	40.9%	40.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%	18.1%
Disagree	5.1%	13.1%
Strongly disagree	2.8%	8%
Don't know	8.4%	0.7%

The figures above show a shift in numbers overall from those agreeing to this proposition before deliberation to those disagreeing afterwards: those agreeing fell overall from 65% before deliberation to 60% afterwards, and those disagreeing rose from 8% before deliberation to 21% afterwards. This suggests that participants were *less* convinced of the contribution of nuclear power to reducing CO2 emissions after deliberation than before it.

How far do you agree or disagree that ensuring a secure and reliable supply of energy is a critical challenge for the UK?	Pre-deliberation	Post-deliberation
Strongly agree	68.9%	71.5%
Agree	27%	22.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	2.5%	3.6%
Disagree	0.7%	0.9%
Strongly disagree	0.3%	1.0%
Don't know	0.6%	0.3%

The figures above show some shifts in views, with higher numbers agreeing that security of supply is important after deliberation: up from 87% to 94% (although those strongly agreeing only rises by 2.6%).

How far do you agree or disagree that nuclear power stations could make an important contribution to providing the UK with secure and reliable energy supplies in future?	Pre-deliberation	Post-deliberation
Strongly agree	21.4%	22.7%
Agree	41.2%	39.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	20.5%	17.0%
Disagree	5.9%	10.7%
Strongly disagree	4.8%	8.8%
Don't know	6.2%	1.2%

These figures show very small changes pre- and post-deliberation, with 63% overall agreeing before deliberation, and 62% afterwards, although numbers of those disagreeing rose, with 11% disagreeing before, and 20% afterwards. The 'Don't know' numbers dropped from 6% before deliberation to 1% afterwards.

How concerned are you about safety and security issues associated with nuclear power?	Pre-deliberation	Post-deliberation
Very concerned	61.4%	53.0%
Quite concerned	25.8%	30.4%
Not very concerned	9.5%	13.1%
Not at all concerned	1.2%	3.4%
Don't know	2.2%	0.1%

The figures above do show more change in views over the course of the event, with the numbers being concerned falling from 87% before the event to 83% afterwards.

The level of concern also decreased, with those 'very' concerned falling more, from 61% to 53%, and those who were 'not concerned' rising from 11% before to 17% afterwards. This does suggest that some levels of concern about safety and security were reduced as a result of deliberation.

How concerned are you about the creation of new nuclear waste?	Pre-deliberation	Post-deliberation
Very concerned	68.9%	60.1%
Quite concerned	21.1%	29.4%
Not very concerned	6.6%	8.3%
Not at all concerned	0.9%	2.0%
Don't know	2.6%	-

The figures in the table above show very little shift of views, post-deliberation, on this issue, with around 90% being concerned in both polls. However, the number of those 'very concerned' fell after deliberation (from 69% to 60%), and the number of those 'quite concerned' rose (from 21% to 29%). This suggests a remaining concern but perhaps less intensity of concern.

On the overarching question for the public deliberative events (which was also the substantive question in the Consultation Document and therefore also the written and online consultation), the results were as follows in the polling at the end of the event:

In the context of tackling climate change and ensuring energy security, do you agree or disagree that it would be in the public interest to give energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations?	Answers
Strongly agree	14.8%
Agree	29.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	17.7%
Disagree	19.5%
Strongly disagree	17.0%
Don't know	1.5%

Overall, these results show that 44% agreed, and 37% disagreed. 18% neither agreed nor disagreed.

It should be noted that the OL final report includes warnings against taking these figures as representative as broad public opinion; they are the results of a specific exercise with a specific group of people at a specific time in specific circumstances. The weighting and analysis methods used for these quantitative results are also explained in full in the final OL report (page 162).

- The qualitative analysis of the notes taken by facilitators was undertaken on the day by the central analysis 'hub' in London. Each event co-ordinating team fed back polling results and summary points from their event and the 'hub' collated results across the UK. This initial analysis identified the themes and issues emerging. Draft chapters of the final OL report were created based on these themes.

A separate team of researchers, who had not been involved in developing the design and materials for the event, then worked on the data collected from all the public events and identified key themes, which were then compared to the initial analysis and a final set of themes created which were used to write the final OL report.

- Draft final reports were made by OL to COI (as the commissioning body) and BERR (as the responsible department) in October 2007, followed by a final report in November 2007.
- The key policy and decision makers had also attended the public deliberative events and were therefore aware of public views first hand.
- An end of day report was produced for participants, policy makers and the media. This was a five-page summary of the deliberative public engagement process, and the conclusions from the day including figures of polling on the key questions, across the UK.
- Reports back to participants were in two stages:
 - The five page summary of the conclusions of the day (see above) was sent to all participants a week after the event, by email or post if no email address was available.

- A further communication was sent in January 2008 when the White Paper was published. This consisted of a covering letter from OL, enclosing a letter from BERR explaining that the White Paper had been published, and what the decision was, and a copy of the Foreword to the White Paper.

At the end of the event, participants were also provided with an information sheet which included details of how to take part in other elements of the consultation and how to access the Consultation Document and the website. The sheet also provided contact details of six organisations where participants could get further information: British Energy, EDF Energy, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Nuclear Industries Association and SERA.

- The White Paper reporting on the Government's decision - to go ahead with giving private companies the option of building new nuclear power stations - was published in January 2008.

7.6.2 Evaluation of the public deliberative events

The assessment that follows is based on analysis of the questionnaires returned by public participants at the end of the events (910 out of a total of 965 participants returned questionnaires: a 95% return rate overall), questionnaires circulated online to all 122 facilitators (95 facilitators returned questionnaires: a 78% response rate), and questionnaires to observers (27 out of 28 observers returned questionnaires: a 96% return rate). Full analyses of all these questionnaire responses is provided in Annexes 8, 9 and 10. All the percentages given below are based on percentage of respondents, rounded to the nearest whole number.

In addition to analysis of questionnaire feedback, 30 formal telephone evaluation interviews were undertaken with a sample of participants from each event, four of the 28 observers, policy makers attending the events, the contractors, BERR and the COI. Interviews were conducted in April and May 2008 (see section 2 for details of interview sampling, timing etc).

In addition, evaluators attended three of the nine events to observe and talk informally with those involved in the event. Some documentary review has also been undertaken. The assessment also draws on the evaluator's previous experience of a wide range of national public engagement exercises, particularly deliberative public engagement on national policy issues.

Representation and diversity

The key issues for this evaluation in terms of representation and diversity are around the extent to which the participants were a demographically representative sample of UK citizens, that the recruitment process was appropriate and met the targets set, and that those participating felt there was an appropriate mix of people to ensure the necessary diversity of views.

Demographic representation. The contractors (OL) provided a detailed analysis of the people who attended the nine events in terms of gender, age, socio-economic group, employment status, ethnic categories, regional coverage and location (urban / rural) in their final report. The evaluation research has not included a detailed study of these issues, but the statistics and level of analysis provided by OL shows a sufficiently good spread of participants to ensure that there was indeed was a demographically representative sample of UK citizens.

The evaluation did collect some very basic demographic statistics from those who completed questionnaires (95% overall), covering age, gender and ethnicity (see Annex 8 for full analysis). These findings also show that there was a good spread of age, gender and ethnicity over the UK as a whole.

There were some areas where the coverage was less good:

- In terms of age, there were some locations where there were very few young people: the event in Exeter only had 5 participants (6% of respondents) who were under 24, compared to a national average of 13%. Edinburgh, London and Newcastle had 11% of participants who were under 24.
- In terms of ethnicity, the overall coverage of the UK was appropriate: 8% representation compared to a national BME population of 6% according to the 2001 census. However, there were some locations where representation from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups did not appear to be appropriate to the location. For example:
 - In Leicester, the BME representation was 7% compared to a BME population in Leicester of 33%
 - In London, the BME representation was 10%, compared to a BME population of 23%
 - In Cardiff, the representation was 2%, compared to a BME population in Cardiff of over 8%.
 - In Newcastle, BME representation was 1%, compared to a BME population in Newcastle of 6%.
 - In Edinburgh, the BME representation was 1%, compared to a BME population in Edinburgh of 4%.

The evaluators do recognise that each event was intended to be regionally representative, and that the BME population in the cities where the events took place was likely to be significantly higher than in the region as a whole. However, there was feedback in observers' questionnaire responses that BME communities did not seem to be proportionately represented in Leicester, Edinburgh and Cardiff. Comments from observer questionnaire respondents included:

"I think the number was good. I thought it strange that there were not that many from ethnic minority groups present, especially as the debate took place in Leicester. The mix of young and old was good. As was the mix of male and female." (Observer, Leicester)

"Very good [mix and scale] - but lacked representation from ethnic minorities" (Observer, Edinburgh)

"This aspect was fine. Few BME participants may well reflect 'rural' Wales but did not reflect Cardiff / Swansea" (Observer, Cardiff)

The feedback in participants' questionnaires was generally very positive about whether 'there was a good mix of people', with 94% agreeing that there had been (48% of which agreed strongly). This was supported by evidence from participant interviews later on, with 28 of the 30 interviewees agreeing that there had been a good mix of public participants at the event they attended.

The participant questionnaire feedback did show differences from different locations. There was slightly less satisfaction with the mix of people in Exeter, London and Newcastle. Where comments revealed details of why they disagreed that there was a good mix, it was around the representation of BME groups and young people. It may be that these categories of people were specifically missed by participants because they are more visible. However, it is important that participants are satisfied with the mix of people as they perceive it, as that can affect participants' views of the validity of the exercise.

There is no doubt that, across the UK overall, participants in these deliberative events were a demographically representative sample of UK citizens. This was a major achievement given the tight timescales of the whole process. However, in future events it would be valuable to invest specific resources to ensure a greater proportion of BME and young people, particularly in locations where such representation would be expected to be higher.

Effectiveness of the recruitment. The recruitment process appears to have been very effective overall. The use of the electoral register to identify 100,000 individuals, followed by a questionnaire to identify a final sample, was comprehensive, valid and effective. This approach seems to have avoided problems experienced in other public engagement processes where participants have been recruited by random 'on street' selection and interview.

The overall target was 1,100 participants across the UK: 90 per region or 180 where two regions were joined together, and 200 for London. A total of 956 was achieved which was more than adequate.

Analysis of the figures provided by OL show that:

- The events in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Exeter all achieved over 90% of their target numbers
- Norwich and Newcastle achieved 88% of their target numbers and Liverpool achieved 85%.
- The lowest figures were for Leicester (83% of target numbers) and London (80%).

Overall, however, the recruitment process was entirely appropriate and the numbers of participants was more than adequate for the purpose.

Observer questionnaires specifically asked for their perceptions about the numbers and mix of people, and the great majority agreed that the balance and scale were good (apart from the BME representation already mentioned).

Comments from observer questionnaire respondents included:

"The numbers [of participants] are impressive and sufficient. I heard a diverse range of views throughout the day" (observer, Leicester)

"I have never attended an event where such careful attention has been paid to having a random and full mix of people from around the population. The widest spectrum of views was achieved." (observer, Liverpool)

"The sampling was extremely well organised. It is important that a balanced view from this sample is heard. It is important to consult as widely as possible and to take a balanced view based on as wide a consensus as possible." (observer, London)

Diversity of views. The statistics and comments above already illustrate that there was a broad diversity of views at the deliberative events. The effectiveness of the overall recruitment process was enhanced by ensuring that each table had a mix of participants, to ensure a good debate. Although one or two participant questionnaire respondents complained that no-one on their table disagreed (a result that could not have been avoided), and one complained about the recruitment because the person he sat next to went to the same school, overall there was considerable satisfaction with this element of the process.

As already mentioned, 94% of participant questionnaire respondents agreed that there had been a good mix of people. Also, the most frequently identified 'best aspect' of the event by these respondents was talking to others, exchange of views, listening to others; also, the fifth most frequently identified 'best aspect' of the whole event was the mix of people and diversity of views. This is an element of real importance to those participating, and therefore affects any judgement of the quality of the engagement as well as being crucial to the research aspects of the consultation process.

Similarly positive feedback was given by participant interviewees some months later: 28 of the 30 interviewees agreed there had been a good mix and the remaining two were not sure (one mentioned lack of BME representation). One comment was:

"That was one thing I thought was actually really impressive. I don't know how they managed it, but there was great diversity on my table" (participant interviewee, Newcastle).

There is a further question around representation and diversity, which is about the scale necessary for a consultation exercise of this sort. Research continues on this topic, including:

- In terms of research methodology, and the potential for looking beyond the broad research guideline of around 1,000 public participants being necessary for a demographically representative sample of the UK population
- In terms of the practical cost effectiveness of consultation and engagement processes, considering what scale is really necessary to gain the data and/or engagement sought and to meet the specific objectives
- In terms of maximising the status of the conclusions of such processes: what numbers are needed for politicians and policy makers to take the results seriously.

For these public deliberative events, all these were in fact met: there were nearly 1,000 participants, the scale was entirely appropriate to the objectives and to the context (demonstrating full public engagement), and policy makers and politicians were entirely satisfied with the scale in terms of the validity of the conclusions. In all these terms, the recruitment process was successful, and representation and diversity was achieved.

Overall feedback on the engagement

The satisfaction of participants is an important criterion for assessing the quality of any engagement process. Their feedback is an essential element of evaluation analysis. This section focuses on participant satisfaction but also covers feedback from observers and policy makers on the overall quality of the process.

In this evaluation research, overall participant satisfaction was tested in a number of ways: questions on the questionnaire asking directly about whether the process was worthwhile and participants enjoyed it, and whether being involved in this process had resulted in their being more likely to want to get involved in future. There was also a question about levels of satisfaction with the way the event was structured and run. Interviewees were asked whether they were satisfied with their involvement in the consultation. The findings are summarised below.

The feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The event was worthwhile and I enjoyed taking part	45%	48%	4%	1%	1%
I am more likely to get involved in public consultations in future as a result of attending this event	41%	48%	9%	2%	>1%

This analysis shows that almost all respondents agreed that they found the event worthwhile and that they enjoyed taking part (93%), and a large majority were more likely to get involved in public consultations in future as a result of attending this event (89%).

There were some differences in the extent to which people found the event worthwhile and enjoyable in different locations, with Newcastle registering the lowest level of satisfaction here with 35% 'strongly' agreeing. Norwich was also lower than average, with 41% 'strongly' agreeing. The most enthusiastic location was Belfast with 61% 'strongly' agreeing.

Similar regional variations were found in these answers to the question about willingness to engage in future, with Norwich (with 31% 'strongly' agreeing) and Newcastle (35% 'strongly' agreeing) as the least likely to want to engage again. Here Liverpool was the most enthusiastic, with 55% 'strongly' agreeing.

Further feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way this event was structured and run?	52%	40%	4%	1%

This analysis shows that a very large majority were satisfied with the way the event was structured and run (92%).

Again, there were differences in feedback from different locations. Newcastle and Edinburgh were the least enthusiastic, with 42% very satisfied. Here again Norwich was also among the least enthusiastic with 44% very satisfied. The most enthusiastic was again Belfast (with 71% very satisfied, and Exeter (with 61% very satisfied).

These are very high levels of satisfaction overall. Numerous other comments on questionnaires confirmed the levels of enthusiasm with respondents, unprompted, expressing how much they enjoyed the event, and found it interesting. The highest single number of comments at the end of questionnaires, when asked if there was anything they wanted to add was thanks for how enjoyable and/or interesting it had been.

A similar response came from participant interviewees, who were interviewed after the decision had been announced in January 2008. Immediate feedback at the end of events is often euphoric as participants enjoy the process on the day, but interviewee feedback is given after a period of reflection, and covers the whole process including the final decision. Here too, however, the response was very positive in this case:

- 28 of the 30 interviewees said they were satisfied with their involvement in this consultation; only two said they were not.
- 29 out of 30 interviewees said they were more likely to want to get involved in public consultations in future, and only 1 said they were not.

Four participant interviewees stressed, however, that they would only be more likely to get involved if Government 'listened'. The potential influence was an important element here.

From observation, this high level of enthusiasm was confirmed by the ways in which participants engaged with the discussions, did not leave the room for any long periods and generally tackled the whole process with commitment and energy.

Observer questionnaire respondents and interviewees were also asked about the levels of motivation, interest and commitment of the public participants. 21 of the 27 observer respondents said that there had been a very high level of motivation, interest and commitment among the public participants.

Comments from observer questionnaire respondents included:

"The participants seemed engaged in the discussions and enthusiastic (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"Excellent! I have been extremely impressed by this throughout - put many 'paid' participants in other consultations to shame." (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"They were clearly very interested and engaged" (observer questionnaire respondent, Norwich)

"Good - all seemed to stay all day" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"People were extremely well engaged" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Very high involvement" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Participants were very interested and motivated including in the process" (observer questionnaire respondent, Exeter)

"Higher than I thought it would be" (observer questionnaire respondent, Exeter)

"There seemed to be a high level of interest and tone was active discussion at the tables" (observer questionnaire respondent, Exeter)

"Level of interest and commitment was high" (observer questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"I was very impressed with the knowledge motivation and interest of the participants and the facilitators did a good job in trying to engage all participants." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"This was mixed. Some were very enthusiastic, some just there for the day out. So probably a reasonable cross section." (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"Generally good debate. Listening, learning, 'open-minded' debate for the most part" (observer questionnaire respondent, Norwich)

"Pretty good - people respected different opinions and asked questions when they needed more information to form a view" (observer questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"I was very impressed with the knowledge motivation and interest of the participants and the facilitators did a good job in trying to engage all participants." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

Feedback from observer interviewees was also very positive about the levels of motivation, interest and commitment of the public participants. Comments included:

"I think people really enjoyed the opportunity to discuss things in a structured way, to have a forum. This was in despite the sense of the narrowing down of the discussion ... One thing that did impress me was the way that people discussed things and let other people make their points. No sense of a few people dominating the discussion." (observer interviewee)

"Most people were interested and engaged. There was a good level of energy throughout most of the session" (observer interviewee)

Government policy maker interviewees who attended these events were also asked about these issues and were also very positive.

Comments from observer interviewees included:

"There was a high level of engagement ... I was hugely impressed by the time and energy people put into them. We were slightly humbled by the events - we were surprised at how willingly people contributed and were engaged. They gave good insights. As a concept, the deliberative event is a very good one" (policy maker interviewee)

"The interest and enthusiasm of participants was encouraging ... it was ... surprising that the public that the public were so willing to participate" (policy maker interviewee)

"Wonderful opportunity to see how a balanced sample of ordinary people address these issues. People had opinions. Very different from stakeholders - great honour to be part of deliberative events ... great enthusiasm and commitment ... ordinary people have a lot to contribute ... actually a very sensible debate" (policy maker interviewee)

"The most interesting thing was the richness of debate on the tables, the intelligence people applied and their willingness to engage in debate. The information we gave was almost irrelevant in a way. People didn't need more prompting to get going ... It was great. It gave me a real sense of people having far stronger views on this than I'd expected" (policy maker interviewee)

"At the consultation events the debate was remarkably intelligent" (policy maker interviewee).

One question that has arisen in previous evaluation studies is whether it makes a difference to participant satisfaction levels if a senior politician is present and seen to be listening to the public's views. In this consultation, Ministers were present at six of the events: Cardiff, Edinburgh, Exeter, Leicester, Liverpool and London. Ministers remained at the Liverpool and London events all day. The locations with the lowest levels of strong satisfaction overall were Newcastle and Norwich (see above), which did not have Ministers in attendance.

The evidence is not conclusive here, however. There was a Minister at Edinburgh which did not have very high satisfaction ratings in terms of the way the event was structured and run, and Belfast consistently gained very high satisfaction rates with no Minister present. However, overall, those areas where Ministers were present did seem to have higher satisfaction rates than those without Ministers.

Clarity and transparency of objectives and process

The key issues for this evaluation around clarity and transparency of objectives and process were around the extent to which it was clear to participants what the objectives of the event were, how the results of the event would be used, and how the event fitted into the wider public consultation on nuclear power.

Additional questions were asked of interviewees (as noted earlier, interviews were conducted some months later) including the extent to which they were clear about the Government's preliminary view on the future nuclear power, about what the public involvement was expected to achieve and the overall impact of public views on the Government's decisions.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I understand clearly the purpose of this event	39%	48%	10%	2%	1%
I understand clearly how the results of this event will be used	23%	41%	25%	7%	2%
I understand clearly how this event fits into the wider public consultation on nuclear power	19%	51%	22%	6%	1%

This analysis shows that the majority of respondents were clear about the purpose of the event they attended (87%), that they understood clearly how the results of the event would be used (64%) and that they understood clearly how that event fitted into the wider consultation (70%).

These are good levels of clarity and transparency in terms of objectives overall. However, there is less clarity around the last two issues, with 23% 'strongly' agreeing they were clear about how the results would be used, and only 19% 'strongly' agreeing that they understood how their event fitted into the wider consultation. Although there is clarity here, it does not appear to be particularly strongly felt.

Participant interviews later produced similar results:

- 23 out of 30 participant interviewees were clear about why and how the Government was consulting the public on the future of nuclear power; 3 were clear to some extent; 4 were not clear.

- 25 of 30 were clear about how this consultation fitted into the wider context of UK energy policy generally, and the challenges of climate change and energy security; 2 were clear to some extent; 3 were not clear.
- 26 of 30 were clear about how the event they took part in fitted into the overall Government consultation on nuclear power; 4 were not clear
- 29 of 30 were clear about the purpose of the actual event they attended; 1 was not.
- 22 of 30 were clear what the public involvement was expected to achieve, and what difference it would make; 8 were not clear. Those that were clear were divided about what the results would be: 5 thought it would make no difference; 3 thought it was intended to get public support for nuclear power, and 2 thought it had already been decided. Other views were split or were not clarified but overall there was a mix of positive and negative reactions to this question.
- 17 out of 30 were clear about how the information collected at the event they attended was to be used; 13 were not clear.
- 12 of 30 participant interviewees were clear about the overall impact of public views on the Government's decisions on nuclear power; 18 were not. Here, the responses were fairly evenly split between those who thought public views would have no impact (7), and those who thought they would have an impact (5), plus 2 said they 'hoped' it would have an impact. 2 were not sure.

In terms of clarity of purpose, the feedback overall suggests that participants understood what the purpose was of the event they attended, how that fitted into the wider consultation on nuclear power, and how the whole consultation fitted into the wider policy debates about nuclear and energy policy. This suggests that the way in which the consultation overall was described to the public worked effectively, and achieved a reasonable overall level of understanding.

It is also worth noting that lack of clarity is often identified in evaluation research in 'worst aspects' and lessons for the future in feedback from participants. In this case, there were no complaints at all about lack of clarity about the purpose of the specific event or the consultation overall.

As noted above, there was much less clarity about how the results of the event would be used: only 23% of participant questionnaire respondents strongly agreed that they understood. This links to the mixed response of interviewees about what the public involvement was intended to achieve and what difference it would make, and whether they were clear about what impacts public views had actually had.

By the time of the interviews with public participants, the White Paper had been published, the decision had been announced in the media and public participants had been sent information about the decision. 19 out of 30 interviewees confirmed that they had received this information, and some had seen the results in the media. However, they remained unclear what difference their input had made and, indeed, 10 interviewees (one third) suggested that they did not know what the Government's final decision had been on nuclear power.

Comments from participant interviewees included:

"Yes I was [clear] – because it needs to make a change, do something now and make a decision" (participant interviewee, Belfast)

"Well I kind of believed it was just the views and opinions that were being got and that they wouldn't really properly use them" (participant interviewee, Belfast)

"Basically a reasonable effort was made in that regard. Consultation is great but at the end of the day it will be committees, scientific experts and the Government that make the decisions" (participant interviewee, Belfast)

"Yes I think so. I think it's a big public relations exercise but I think they listened too" (participant interviewee, Cardiff)

"I went in thinking the Government had made their decision and came out knowing that they had made their decision. It felt like this was a formality and they were doing it to be seen asking people" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"The facilitators were good at explaining what we were there for, why we were doing it and how the information would be used" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"Basically I think it was the whole ignorance of the general public and the Government were seeing how the public reacted to the facts they gave them" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"I was clear about what they were doing and how, but I do think it was a bit of a rubber stamp. It was good to do but I'm not sure what impact the public voice had" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"I don't think it was mentioned at the consultation, but they had been forced to do it after the last time. I don't think it was said at any point 'we've already made the decision and got forced into doing this'" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"I felt it was an exercise in looking like democracy" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"Obviously the Government was trying to get public support and educate the public as to why it should go for nuclear power. We were given enough information to develop our own views though" (participant interviewee, London)

"I was clear what it was expected to achieve but I felt it was maybe just lip service. By the end of the whole thing I felt the Government had already made their minds up" (participant interviewee, London)

The *actual* impacts and influence of the public input, and perceptions about that, are considered in more detail below. However, the lack of clarity about the impacts of public input identified in this feedback suggests that, although information was provided after the events and final decision, it did not provide sufficient details or clarity for many participants to understand how their input had been used, or what difference it had made.

Participants rate 'making a difference' very highly in their judgement of engagement processes and they are likely to have been looking for this assurance. Here, good practice was achieved by actually sending public participants information when the decision was made (rarely done in many consultations at all).

However, the actual information provided to participants on these issues could have been more effective in terms of explaining the impact of their input on the final policy decisions. In terms of future good practice, it would be useful for more effective ways of communicating the public impact on the decision to be developed. Public suspicion and in some cases cynicism about public engagement exercises, and indeed their trust in government overall, is affected by their views on whether their views have been listened to and taken account of.

Finally, in terms of clarity, participant interviewees were asked whether they were clear about the Government's preliminary view on the future of nuclear power. There was a much more mixed response here, with 17 interviewees (out of 30) saying they were clear, and 13 saying they were not. Clarity did not imply that interviewees liked or agreed with the Government view; simply that they thought they understood what it was.

Feedback on this issue linked closely with that on the question about participant understanding of the purpose of the event they attended, how results would be used and how these events fitted into the wider public consultation on nuclear power, as already covered above. It also links to issues around the extent to which public views would have influence on policy decisions, which are covered below in more detail. Here, however, the focus is on participant understanding of the limits and boundaries of the consultation given clarity (or not) over the Government's preliminary view.

Comments from participant interviewees included:

"I knew where they were going with it. It felt like nuclear power was something they needed to do and felt like they were looking for public support. I don't feel like they were neutral"
(participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"This is the most interesting part. There was a definite whiff of conspiracy – that was a defining characteristic of the whole day. People felt they were projected an agenda. I am a supporter of nuclear power but I am sympathetic with the view this was a tick box – there was a real sense of resentment" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"I understood that it could be a viable option and that was why we were discussing it"
(participant interviewee, Leicester)

The comments quoted above are not indicative of the overall feelings of participant interviewees, many of whom simply said they were clear or not. These comments do, however, identify some of the key issues for participants: the perceived search for public support, the lack of neutrality, the feelings of being led or directed to a Government agenda, the feelings of resentment - but also a very pragmatic sense of this being a valid topic for public discussion.

All these reactions can be seen as resulting from a number of factors:

- The withdrawal of some green NGOs the day before the public deliberative events, and the media coverage of that withdrawal which suggested that the reason for the withdrawal was that a decision had been made, clearly had an impact on participants. Even those participants who had not seen any media coverage directly were soon informed about this wider context by other participants on the day who knew all about it. Such conversations are inevitable and to be expected, but clearly affected the mood of the events and affected the level of trust participants had in the process and Government.
- Earlier media coverage of nuclear issues in the UK; these issues are covered in more detail in section 3 of this report on the wider context.
- General lack of trust in Government and politicians which, although not a new phenomenon, was apparent to a degree here.
- The complexity of the proposition that framed the consultation overall.
- The wording of some of the questions put to the participants.

The last two of these points are the most relevant to cover in this section of the report, as part of considering the clarity and transparency among participants of the objectives of the engagement process.

The overarching proposition framing the consultation was as follows:

- The Government has a preliminary view on the future role of nuclear power within the UK energy mix but has not yet decided; this view is that it would be in the public interest to give energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations
- The Government wishes to consult citizens and interested parties for their views and concerns relating to the arguments it has presented
- The Government will consider the views expressed as part of the policy development process and then make a decision.

The first part of the first bullet point, that "the Government has a preliminary view" seems to have been interpreted by some of the public participants as actually meaning 'The Government has made up its mind'. In many ways, that is an understandable simplification by members of the public. In reality, the Government could not legally make a decision until after the consultation had been completed and taken into account, but such formalities of the Government's decision making processes are not something many of the public understand or are interested in.

The second part of the first bullet point further complicates the issue by focusing on the role of energy companies. From feedback at various points of the public engagement strand of the consultation (including the Citizens Advisory Board and the Development Event), the role of the private sector was unclear and highly contentious for some participants: some did not understand the private sector's existing role in running nuclear power stations, and some had significant worries about the private sector taking this role. Including this highly contentious issue in the framing of the whole consultation further muddied the water.

As a result, the basic framing of the consultation, and the way it was presented to the public participants, seems to have been too complex and subtle for this type of exercise.

This is not to say that public participants are not able to grasp complex and subtle concepts, because they clearly are. It is rather that they tend to mistrust complex and subtle concepts when presented by Government in this way, especially when there has been such extensive (and largely negative) media coverage and within a general mood of distrust of Government.

It is clear from feedback, and indeed from observation of the very high level of participant engagement with the issues, that people felt to some degree that Government was going to listen (see section below on Influence and impact). It is also clear that, to a large degree, participants and others involved felt that the public engagement was as good as it could be in the circumstances, and that the proposition was honest.

However, the circumstances were not ideal and clarity and understanding could have been improved if the Government's initial view had been expressed more briefly and simply. Five lessons emerge from this:

- The honesty and transparency of the framing of the consultation in this case was good practice. It was clear from the outset what the Government's position was, and participants were clear about the objectives and limits to the consultation, and what would and would not be considered. However, the way the proposition was framed for the public engagement strand of the consultation could have been worded more clearly and simply.

However, clarity of purpose and process requires more than expressing an honest position and developing clear objectives, all of which were achieved in this case. It requires developing a purpose and framing for the consultation which is going to create the most productive dialogue between the public and Government. Although the deliberative public engagement did produce clear benefits in this case, there was the potential for more to be achieved.

- For Government, the consultation was designed to test their preliminary view, and the evidence and arguments on which that view was based. As part of that, one of the two objectives for the deliberative public events had been to consider "other conditions that you believe should be put in place before giving energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations"⁷⁸.

However, to some extent, the deliberative process was designed to lead up to the yes / no polling question, which was asked in the final hour of the day, rather than focus on conditions. Although public views on conditions had been captured in notes of the discussions during the day, the only point on the agenda at which conditions were explicitly discussed was in the final half hour of the event (with 15 minutes discussion), at which point time was tight and participants were tired.

Even more valuable public input could potentially have been gained with more time for consideration and discussion of specific conditions. An approach that does focus on conditions is likely to always be particularly valuable in circumstances where, as in this case, Government has a preliminary view.

- The public participants had to take in a great deal of detailed and technical information, participate in deliberative discussions on highly contentious issues about which some people feel very strongly, and come to conclusions on a lot of detailed issues all in one (long) day. Given more time to digest the information, consider the issues individually and collectively, and then come to conclusions, participants may have felt more comfortable with the complex and subtle propositions they were considering.
- Although there were some obvious issues here about wording and clarity, it should not be taken out of proportion. The public engagement overall was well designed and delivered, and it achieved a great deal, and provided significant benefits for many of those involved given the short timeframes and resources available, and in a very challenging wider context. It is simply that even more could potentially have been achieved with a simpler overall framing and propositions, more time for planning, and more time for the public to digest information and deliberate.

There is further coverage of these issues below in terms of process design and delivery, information provision and influence on policy decisions.

⁷⁸ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.14.

Overall design and delivery of the engagement process

The issues for the evaluation in terms of the overall design and delivery of the engagement are around the extent to which the design was appropriate to the objectives, and that the delivery is undertaken competently and professionally.

As outlined at the beginning of this section, the objectives for the public engagement strand of the consultation were as follows:

- To engage a representative cross-section of UK citizens in an informed, transparent consultation on allowing private sector energy companies the option of building new nuclear power stations
- To understand the opinions of participants through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative reporting of findings, and to understand how these have shifted as a result of the deliberative process.

The issue of representation has already been covered, as has the issue of transparency (see previous section on clarity of purpose and process). In some engagement processes, the provision of information to participants (to enable an informed consultation) would fall within these issues of design and delivery but, in this case, the information materials were so critical to the overall success of the consultation that they are dealt with separately below. In addition, the details of recording and reporting are a substantive element of the evaluation and are therefore tackled in a separate section below.

This section therefore focuses on issues of timing and balance between information input and discussion, the extent to which participants felt the event was fair and not biased, whether they could contribute effectively, and whether the event facilitation was well-managed.

Various evaluation questions covered these points in participant questionnaires and interviews, observer questionnaires and interviews and facilitators' questionnaire responses.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I was able to say everything I wanted to say	33%	57%	5%	34%	1%
The facilitator encouraged everyone to participate fully	60%	37%	1%	1%	>1%
All participants were treated equally and respectfully	62%	36%	1%	>1%	>1%
No single view on the issues was allowed to dominate unfairly	40%	47%	7%	4%	1%
There was enough time overall to fully discuss the issues properly	27%	52%	7%	11%	2%

This analysis shows positive feedback:

- Almost all participant questionnaire agreed that the facilitator encouraged everyone to participate (97%) and that all participants were treated equally and respectfully (98%).
- The great majority of respondents agreed that they were able to say everything they want to say (90%).
- A large majority of respondents agreed that no single view on the issues was allowed to dominate unfairly (87%), that there had been enough time to discuss the issues properly (79%).

The feedback from participant interviewees later was also positive overall:

- All 30 participant interviewees agreed that they had been able to say what they wanted to say.
- 28 out of 30 interviewees agreed that everyone had an equal chance to have their say, and that no single view was allowed to dominate the discussion.
- 21 of 31 participant interviewees felt there had been enough time at the event; 6 felt this had been the case to some extent, and 3 felt there had not been enough time. There was a sense from some interviewees that some activities had been rushed.

Other evaluation research findings on these issues included:

- In addition to their tick box responses, 140 participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910, and the second most frequent responses to this open question) said that the best aspect of the event was that it was well structured, well organised and well facilitated.
- 15 out of 30 participant interviewees suggested that the best thing about the event had been the organisation and delivery. This was the most frequent response from participant interviewees to this open question.
- Feedback from observer questionnaire respondents was also largely positive about the timetable and process for the event, with the most frequent response to this question (6 out of 27) being that the event was very competent, with a good structure and process.
- 79% of facilitator questionnaire respondents felt that the overall timetable and structure was fine, and worked well. Some did identify that the discussions were too rushed, but overall the feedback was positive.
- 64% of facilitator questionnaire respondents felt that the mix of activities was the main factor in the overall design working so well, with the pub quiz, polling, discussions and video all working together. Observer questionnaire respondents were also positive about this mix of activities throughout the day.

There were also evaluation questions to participants, observers, facilitators and policy makers about which aspects of the event **worked best**, and which **worked least well**. These findings also relate to the overall design and delivery of the process and are therefore summarised in this section.

- **What worked best for participants.** The best aspects for participant questionnaire respondents, identified in answer to an open question, were:
 - 161 (out of the total of 910 respondents) identified talking to others, exchange of views, listening to others
 - 140 (out of 910) said it was a well organised, well structured, well facilitated event
 - 117 said good discussions, debate
 - 51 said a good mix of people, diversity of views
 - 51 said polling/ voting
 - 45 said taking part / contributing / influence
 - 43 said meeting new / nice people
 - 32 said it was a chance to give own opinions / have say
 - 31 mentioned good / useful information / presentations
 - 31 said it was the venue, food etc
 - 19 said everything / all of it
 - 14 said it had been good / enjoyable / interesting

From this analysis it can be seen that participant questionnaire respondents particularly valued the discussions with other participants. The issue on talking to others, exchanging views etc is the most frequent comment, and similar issues are covered in the feedback on meeting new people. This has emerged throughout the evaluation analysis as the element of the deliberative process that worked particularly well for participants, but these figures and feedback show this even more strongly. Participants also clearly valued the level of organisation and delivery of the event (the second most frequent comment).

There was also some positive feedback on the opportunity people had been given to take part and contribute, and to have their say. Around 77 respondents (out of the total of 910) identified this; although this is less than 10% of all respondents, it is interesting how important this was to these people.

Overall, comments from participant questionnaire respondents on the best aspects of the process for them included the following:

"The amounts of information given which helped us form a balanced opinion" (Belfast)
"The opportunity to discuss my views with a wide range of people and to listen to the views of others" (Belfast)
"Organisation, facilitation, atmosphere, structure" (Belfast)

"That after we were asked for an overall answer to the main questions, we were asked if there were any conditions we should impose" (Cardiff)
"Involving members of the public and soliciting their views" (Cardiff)
"The opportunity to open up a public discussion and debate" (Cardiff)
"Important knowledge of a subject I hadn't thought much about and the ability to make an informed decision" (Cardiff)
"Being able to understand and marshal my own perspective on nuclear energy" (Cardiff)
"Feeling involved in a national debate." (Cardiff)

"Engaging in debate. Sharing views, opinions. Turning people on to politics and government. Excellent" (Edinburgh)
"Awareness of the general concern expressed by the participants – the quality of that concern and how it was articulated" (Edinburgh)
"Meeting others who expressed opinions similar and were willing to discuss and move views without confrontation" (Edinburgh)
"Being able to express views and discuss amongst varying other opinions around the table" (Edinburgh)
"Good all round representation of differing views" (Edinburgh)
"The opportunity to have a cross section of views on important issues for our future" (Edinburgh)

"The variety of views, opinions and people involved" (Edinburgh)

"Cross section of opinion, led well by facilitators. Interesting debates and opinions changed" (Exeter)

"Well organised, good venue, decent food, fun to use the keypads with instant feedback" (Exeter)

"Information, giving the public a chance to understand and have an input" (Exeter)

"Learning things about nuclear power, as I now realise how much it affects me!" (Leicester)

"Learning more about nuclear energy than I did already and being able to express my own views and listen to other people's points of view" (Leicester)

"At least I felt I had a chance to voice my opinions and the chance to meet new people" (Leicester)

"Making friends with people. Feeling that I can influence important decisions for now and the foreseeable future" (Leicester)

"Being in a position to try and influence the government's policy on energy" (Leicester)

"Well run event, good variation in activities which kept concentration levels high. Information supplied was well delivered and flowed well in the day. Information supplied appeared well balanced and unbiased" (Liverpool)

"Although a serious subject, it was handled with humour. Light hearted attitude which wasn't detrimental to the subject matter" (Liverpool)

"There were lots of different people and views were aired fully. The polling meant each person's voice was heard as well as group discussion feedbacks" (Liverpool)

"I feel I have learnt a lot and been able to put my feelings and thoughts to the group" (Liverpool)

"Each and every participant was involved. Polling questions made it more interesting as well as helped to increase knowledge" (London)

"The opportunity to listen to other people's point of view and then compare it with yours before making conclusions" (London)

"I was able to discuss issues and find out what others thought. Good to hear a variety of informed opinions" (London)

"The wide and varied opinions of other members of the public, together with an educative day for me!" (London)

"Feeling informed, hearing other people's views. Hoping that what I think will make a difference to what the government decides" (London)

"A great opportunity to learn and debate important issues that I have not previously thought of. A great overall event" (London)

"Time set aside to be able to discuss an important issue with a range of opinions" (Newcastle)

"Hearing all sides without there being any arguments" (Newcastle)

"Very well organised. All needs catered for – food etc. Small tables with facilitator very good idea. Very good technology, very balanced selection of people – male/female, young/old etc" (Newcastle)

"Very well organised. Easy to understand info and document. Nice to meet people" (Newcastle)

"Good facilitators – and at least an attempt to garner public opinion" (Newcastle)

"Meeting other people and gaining the views from a variety of people from different backgrounds" (Newcastle)

"Involving public on such an important issue, table discussions allowed everyone to express their views" (Newcastle)

"Opportunity to think the issues through with others who do not necessarily hold the same views/opinions etc as myself" (Norwich)

"It has forced me to think about nuclear energy and its risks to the public, and I am now aware that I need to ask my MP to vote against it" (Norwich)

"Team work and discussions. Keyboard polling system, comparing results, instant feedback very good" (Norwich)

"I learnt about nuclear power. I also learnt that the government could do more to promote wind farms and solar" (Norwich)

"A learning curve. Also good to be in group discussion on the serious issues" Norwich

"To feel that I may have helped to make a slight difference" (Norwich)

"Feel like I am contributing to national discussions and decisions. To consider in depth and more seriously the issues and nuclear crisis" (Norwich)

"Talking to people about problems that I find of supreme importance" (Norwich)

Participant interviewees gave similar feedback later on. For them, the best aspects were as follows:

- 15 out of 30 interviewees said it had been well organised and delivered
- 9 said the small group discussions were the best aspect
- 7 mentioned polling / voting
- 2 mentioned the cross section of people

Again, the aspects that were valued most by these respondents were the discussions with other participants, and the good organisation.

The cross section of people, the diversity of backgrounds and views, was also clearly important from comments from participant interviewees, although various questions were raised about how people had been chosen. More information about that, and the mix of people in the room, could have clarified that quickly and simply.

Comments from participant interviewees on the best aspects of the process for them included the following:

"I thought it was excellent from start to finish – everything had been thought of. It was one of the best most efficient meetings I've been to" (participant interviewee, Belfast)

"At first I wondered if I wouldn't know as much as other people, but the facilitator made sure we were OK" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"You were made to feel comfortable, it wasn't like you were on the spot and it wasn't too overlong. Everyone was very pleasant to each other and was listened to" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"It was good that we were in smaller groups with a mix of age and gender – it brought more opinions out" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"I liked the smaller groups on tables. I liked the interactive voting a lot and I liked how it was set up in terms of the talking points to get the ball rolling on discussions" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

- **What worked best for observers.** 11 out of 27 observer questionnaire respondents said that what had **worked best** had been the pub quiz; 2 mentioned polling, and 2 said the small group / table discussions.

Comments from observers about the best aspects of the deliberative public events included the following:

"The 'pub quiz' produced very good group engagement and lowered 'tension' and apprehension" (observer questionnaire respondent, Norwich)

"Mix of presentation, video, discussion and fun" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Facilitators at table worked well. I think the event was run very well. The voting mechanism kept everyone interested" (observer questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"The pub quiz was effective in engaging some participants who may have been more reticent if the organisers had not made so much effort to include a range of devices to encourage debate." (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

In interview later, the observers focused their comments on what had been the best aspects on the good intentions and efforts to provide an opportunity for debate. Comments from observer interviewees included:

"People had the opportunity to think about what Government and experts have been discussing" (observer interviewee)

"They did at least try to do it in a thought-through manner. They were not naïve. It did work on the design side, the sampling was good; it didn't work on the framing" (observer interviewee)

"The day went very smoothly" (observer interviewee)

"I was very impressed by the civility of people towards each other and their enthusiasm throughout the day" (observer interviewee)

- **What worked best for facilitators.** Facilitator questionnaire respondents said the best aspects for them had been the following:
 - 32 (out of the total of 95) respondents said the pub quiz
 - 13 (of 95) said it had been the good mix of activities throughout
 - 13 said the video
 - 6 mentioned that it was that people did listen, learn and re-evaluate their views
 - 5 said the delivery of the event on the day (organisation etc)
 - 5 said polling
 - 5 said it was the good social mix of participants
 - 4 said it was the table / group discussions
 - 4 said it was that participants were really engaged and involved

This feedback was very similar to that from the observer questionnaire respondents, with the pub quiz clearly the best aspect for the facilitator respondents. Facilitators thought the video worked well to facilitate a deliberative discussion.

Comments from facilitator questionnaire respondents about what worked best for them included the following:

"The pub quizzes were a novel idea which went down very well and you could see the people relaxing and interacting with others more easily" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"It is important to provide information in a variety of ways to suit everyone's learning preferences, therefore there was visual and auditory information, and some active participation in the pub quiz and polling. This should have helped the participants digest more of the information and be able to discuss it than they would if it had been presented in a narrower range of methods. This helped my facilitation as I could bring participants back to where information had been presented and how, and their recall of it was facilitated" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"I thought the video worked well (would've been loads better if Greenpeace hadn't pulled out - people saw it as biased without their presence). The pub quiz really helped them to remember what they'd heard and lighten things up - they worked well" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"Pub quiz was fun and brought the team together - also gave the less expressive, shy participants the feeling their voice was being heard and was valid. Perhaps again though ran a little too long. This was really just to get an initial impression and to establish a voting system. Video footage was professional, informative and initially paved the way for engaging discussions" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"There was a good balance achieved between the various methods in which information was imparted. The pub quiz fulfilled various functions - both in terms of imparting information, creating a group dynamic and energising the participants. The videos also worked well although the format can come across as somewhat one sided (my feeling is that this was a function of the medium rather than the content)" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"I think it worked best when the participants felt they would indeed be 'heard' that their contributions would mean something in the larger picture. Where there is a national linkup and somebody's actual words are used and picked up on then this is really great. In terms of that day I think they loved the pub quizzes best" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

- **What worked best for policy makers.** For the policy makers, the way the best aspects of the public engagement activities were described was rather different from other respondents but the focus was the same: the professional design and delivery of the events, the chance for direct engagement with the public and the quality of the public debate. Feedback from policy makers on these issues is given in more detail below in the section on Costs and benefits.

All this feedback matches the findings from observation, which noted that the level of engagement and commitment of participants to the small group discussions was very high, and that those discussions worked well even if they were rather rushed at times.

The pub quiz worked well to build a team spirit at the table groups, and to relax people early in the event. It also worked well to provide initial basic information although the amount of information provided through this method, and the length of the pub quiz overall, could have been reduced. Although participant feedback does not rate the pub quiz particularly highly, they clearly enjoyed it at the time.

Participants also enjoyed the polling, and that also worked well to provide a sense of the views across the room, beyond the individual table groups. Overall, the event was very tightly managed, kept to time and generated a fast pace overall, and the organisation seemed highly competent.

The positive mood created by these successful elements was somewhat undermined by some cynicism that the decision had already been made, and that participants were being encouraged simply to agree with that. This did not reduce people's enthusiasm for the debate but did dampen the mood somewhat. This was compounded by the withdrawal of the green groups. Even those who did not know that when they arrived soon found out from other participants and, although some observers felt it had little impact, from observation this did raise the level of cynicism and suspicion about the whole event. In informal conversation, one participant told an evaluator that the event was "not as misleading as I expected it to be", demonstrating the initial levels of suspicion had been high but also some sense that something worthwhile had been achieved.

Overall, therefore, the evidence from the feedback from participants, observers and facilitators suggests that the overall design and structure of the event worked very effectively, that the mix of activities worked particularly well, and that the delivery was highly competent. In particular:

- The facilitation worked very well to encourage people to participate, to enable everyone to have their say, and ensured that no single view or voice was allowed to dominate the discussion. This all helped ensure the quality of discussions among participants that was achieved. In addition, the overall style and delivery of the event ensured that all participants were comfortable, able to express their views, and were treated equally and respectfully
- The pub quiz worked very well to get table groups engaged and working as a team, and to feel confident about taking part because it was so informal, had a real pace about it and was very interactive

- The polling worked well for participants (and others) to give a 'temperature check' in the room; it also gave participants a chance to express their individual views as well as views being expressed into the table groups.

Participants did enjoy the polling and it did provide the quantitative element to the research findings from the public engagement, but there were also some negative aspects to polling which emerged here and which suggest that the use of polling may need careful consideration in future. One observer and a policy maker commented:

"The voting trivialised things, it didn't allow debate" (observer interviewee)

"It was not altogether helpful to do the polling ... polling did not really help the process. It adds understanding and depth but has given rise to the false impression that how people voted affected the decision. Actually this was consultation ... It was not about market research and polling" (policy maker interviewee)

Broader feedback confirmed these concerns, including that some media and other commentators fixated on the polling results, and there were some accusations that Government only wanted to persuade people to vote in favour of nuclear power. For these reasons, polling in this instance had value but also to an extent did perhaps undermine the intended focus on deliberation.

This analysis will now consider what was seen to work **least well** by all involved.

- **What worked least well for participants.** The worst aspects for participant questionnaire respondents, identified in answer to an open question, were as follows:
 - 104 participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910 respondents) said the worst thing was the repetition
 - 97 (out of 910) wanted more information / facts and figures / alternatives / other options
 - 87 complained about the venue / food / noisy
 - 80 said it had been a long day / event too long / too tiring
 - 78 said the event / questions / information had been biased / leading
 - 45 mentioned logistics / timing etc
 - 23 said too much information/handouts to take in / deal with in the time
 - 17 said they wanted more from opposition groups
 - 17 said group discussions cut short / rushed
 - 7 said the pub quiz took too much time

These comments echo feedback from respondents on other questions about the problems with the information and the way it was provided: being too repetitive, needing to include more and different facts and figures, seeming to be biased or leading, too much to take in and deal with in the time, and not enough from opposition groups. This issue is covered in more detail below.

There were some complaints about the venues, especially the room being noisy which were largely about not being able to hear each other because of the sounds from other groups (sometimes the facilitator reading out).

The issues raised by respondents about logistics were largely that some people at some events had to wait a long time at the beginning of the day because of unclear information about the start time; that early start also contributed to some people feeling it had been a long day.

Comments from participant questionnaire respondents on the worst aspects of the process included the following:

"Somewhat repetitive and leaning strongly to the government's view" (Belfast)
"Seemed biased, don't feel our opinions will be considered very much" (Belfast)

"Too much information given in such a short time" (Cardiff)

"The questions felt repetitive and almost as if asking the same thing but in a different way" (Edinburgh)

"Tedious, repetitive of questions, lack of information about alternatives to nuclear in helping come to a conclusion" (Edinburgh)

"Many points were repeated and there was not sufficient information on other energy sources" (Edinburgh)

"A lot of information in a short period of time." (Edinburgh)

"Handouts were too long and took too long to read" (Edinburgh)

"I feel the energy question was loaded in favour of opting for the nuclear option" (Edinburgh)

"Lack of info about alternatives e.g. energy reduction/ the SD commission option" (Edinburgh)

"Repetitive nature of the whole programme. Could have done with more variety e.g. visiting speakers" (Exeter)

"Repetitive information being discussed over and over in a biased manner" (Exeter)

"Not being able to fully discuss certain issues. Not having anybody with background information to answer the big issues" (Exeter)

"Not enough information and fact around alternative options" (Leicester)

"Too intensive – opportunity to study facts and figures in advance would have been very useful" (Leicester)

"Some questions asked repeatedly, hoping for right answer?" (Leicester)

"Biased and incomplete statistics. Repetitive questioning – leading questions became frustrating" (Leicester)

"Would have liked to have heard more about Green lobby's alternatives" (Leicester)

"Lack of information on other energy sources. Generally feeling it is biased, lead to less productive discussions" (Liverpool)

"Too much paperwork and videos. Conversations stopped when in flow to move on to the next question when all valid arguments" (Liverpool)

"Having to read the handouts in the time frame, before discussion. Facilitator reading out word for word from the handouts, not taking the actual points of the group" (Liverpool)

"Having the handouts read to us – find it irritating – we can all read!" (Liverpool)

"The questions were very specific and often worded in such a way to channel towards a particular answer. I would have appreciated time to talk about the wider issue of energy in a more broad sense" (London)

"Regrettably one cannot eliminate a continuing tinge of cynicism that this may be paying lip service to public consultation, validating decisions already made" (London)

"The whole issue was an important one, BUT the presentation was biased (heavily) to make us agree with the government decisions, which have clearly already been reached i.e. this was just window dressing" (London)

"Much too repetitive. Same questions discussed in every session" (London)

"We relied on the facilitator to summarise – we should have had material in advance. We needed material written by groups/academics/independent people" (London)

"Repetitive questions, felt a bit too long, not enough info on renewable energy. More info needed at times" (London)

"The confusion around the safety issues of nuclear power and the repeat questions" (London)

"Rather circular questions – often repeated responses" (London)

"Non provision of materials or availability of experts in the energy sector" (London)

"The event was far too intensive, too much covered though repetitive in the time allowed" (London)

"Some information I felt was biased towards nuclear energy and some figures not accurate and contradictory" (London)

"No representatives from other organisations to give an alternative view" (London)

"I don't feel that this was a consultation and a range of views were not expressed re e.g. renewable energy lobby, Greenpeace, those for and against etc" (Newcastle)

"Repetition. Lack of unbiased information regarding viability of other energy suppliers, e.g. renewables" (Newcastle)

"I felt it was repetitive in parts, the same question seemed to be asked" (Newcastle)

"There was perhaps too much repetition in the questions and the evidence presented was not a balanced view of all options" (Newcastle)

"Too rushed and it was partisan. Not enough information on the side effects of nuclear waste, or why the opposition views are as they are. And our facilitator was charming but his reading skills were not good so really better to let people read by themselves" (Newcastle)

"I feel that it was being held to promote nuclear power energy, when it was generally agreed that there is a need for nuclear energy alongside developing renewable" (Newcastle)

"Lack of options on outcome. We really wanted the option for the government to run its stations" (Newcastle)

"Not really able to check/verify that the public is listened to" (Norwich)

"A lot to fit in, in the time available. More detailed and/or technical information was not available. Sound levels at discussion" (Norwich)

Participant interviewees, responding later, raised far fewer negative than positive comments, but they focused on most of the same main issues as those raised by participant questionnaire respondents:

- 4 out of 30 interviewees said that the questions had been leading
- 3 said there had been a lot of repetition
- 2 mentioned that the day had been rushed at times

Comments from participant interviewees on the worst aspects for them included:

"I felt like at the end there was a bit of an overload where I felt like everyone had been rounded up and directed towards a resolution that would please the Government. I felt the whole day was designed to do that" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"With the questioning I felt a bit trapped in a sense. For example 'if there were no other alternatives, would you go with nuclear power' which didn't really allow people's concerns to be included" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"Why didn't Greenpeace accept the invitation or why didn't the Government accommodate them or other organisations? It's a shame there wasn't an alternative forum, for example half a day on nuclear power, half a day on the alternatives. A lot of the questions felt like they were forcing us into the positive" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

- **What worked least well for observers.** 9 out of 27 observer questionnaire respondents said the what had worked least well had been the poor, biased information (especially the videos); 4 said the day had been too long and 3 mentioned that there was too much information to take in and deal with in the time. 3 mentioned that it had been repetitive and 3 said it was a shame the green groups withdrew.

Comments from observer questionnaire respondents on the worst aspects included:

"The length of the day and slightly repetitive nature." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"Too rushed and as participants themselves noted the questions were structured to elicit particular answers. Videos were slick but probably antagonised a large part of the audience. The materials overall did not answer the very questions that participants wanted answered." (observer questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"A lot of information to digest at the start of discussions. Groups felt they were not being given the wider picture." (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"The videos were sometime a little facile. Overall there's a sniff of bias in the presentations - as perceived by the participants" (observer questionnaire respondent, Norwich)

"I believe the Greenpeace and FOE withdrawal was unhelpful but I do not believe this undermined the event. I felt the material used by the Government put across their concerns much more effectively than Greenpeace or FOE would have been able to do themselves." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"It is such a shame that Greenpeace et al withdrew at the last moment - deliberately to try undermine the event. I don't think they achieved this and it was a very effective consultation exercise." (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"I repeat my concern that the Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth withdrawal was timed to try to undermine the process, having previously participated in developing the material to be presented. I don't believe they managed to undermine it at all: it was a very open, transparent and thorough event." (observer questionnaire respondent, Liverpool)

As with the feedback from participant respondents, the observer questionnaire respondents highlighted the problems with the information (including too much to take in and deal with in the time, and the perceived bias) and the repetitive nature of the programme. The new aspect of their comments here was the (clearly very strong) regret that the green groups withdrew, although a strong sense that this did not derail the public engagement process overall.

For observer interviewees, the main focus of criticism was perceived bias, both in the way the consultation was framed and the event was designed overall and the way the questions had been framed. Comments included:

"At the macro level, it was biased. At the micro level, the use of the video – three out of the four people in it were saying 'support this, it will keep my job', but without that message being spelled out" (observer interviewee)

"There was a strong failing in the way the consultation was set up to lead to a given central conclusion. This was a basic failing." (observer interviewee)

"Having very tight questions" (observer interviewee)

These comments from observers illustrate the strength of feeling about these issues from this group of respondents. It is important to note, however, that these views on the 'worst aspects' were not fully shared by participant questionnaire respondents and interviewees (see above), and facilitator questionnaire respondents (see below). However, these issues of bias are covered in more detail.

- **What worked least well for facilitators.** In terms of what worked least well, facilitator questionnaire respondents said it was the following:
 - 30 (of the total of 95 facilitator questionnaire respondents) said it was reading out the information handouts and therefore debate being rushed
 - 26 (of 95) said there was too much information, especially written information
 - 18 said the information had been biased or leading
 - 14 mentioned repetition
 - 9 said there had been too much focus on information and too little on discussion

This feedback is also very similar to that from participants and observers, in that negative comment focuses on the content and delivery of the information although there is much more emphasis here on the 'reading out' of the information. However, there is also some sense here that there was too much

information overall, that it was perceived to be biased, and that the quantity of information meant that discussions were curtailed.

Comments from facilitators on the worst aspects of the process overall included the following:

"I was worried about how much information we needed to get over. It was far too much. Rather than dialogue, it was a mission in understanding. There was so little time for thought and deliberation that people reacted rather than deliberated. My table felt forced into things and didn't trust that they were hearing both sides of the debate" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"Tight on time - most of the time it was just a matter of recording a response without exploring the statements both with the originator or their colleagues. This also meant that as a facilitator I needed to focus to a disproportionate amount on time. However, we were able to achieve the objectives but could have got 'richer' responses with more time - it is a question of the time / cost quality tensions" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"It was a very full timetable, but then again it was a large and complex subject. However, it was very hurried, the timeslots would have been about right had we not been required to read out significant portions of the handouts. This left insufficient time for discussion leaving some participants feeling rushed" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"The timetable and topics were very varied and built on each other. As a facilitator I felt the timetable was OK, but I felt that some of the participants were a bit overwhelmed by the amount of material and the length of the topic discussions. However my group were able to discuss the issues and I think we did meet the objectives" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"I felt that there was too little time to give everyone the opportunity to discuss and exchange views with the time period allotted for each topic and insufficient time for me to record their views as fully and accurately as I would have liked" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"It felt like a lot of time was spent briefing participants on the subject rather than on the debate itself. This was necessary as most of my table were on a steep learning curve. Reading out the unusually lengthy but thorough information sheets took time and I know some participants looked bored listening to them. These duplicated some of the DVD info. There was repetition of some info in the afternoon. Some of the material could have been reduced" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"I think the idea of information, probing, feedback, more information, more probing is good. However, the number of discussions sessions, the level of detail in the information and its sheer volume made it very difficult to keep meaningful discussions going throughout the day ... The reality of 10 minutes per question really meant that each person got to react to the subject matter and that the group had no time to discuss it / each others' views before it was time to move onto the next question" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"My group were encouraged by how busy and professional it all seemed. The level of technology - IT, voting pads, instant analysis and manageable group sizes made them feel involved and consequently more willing to participate. The main downside for them however was that they felt that the final sessions became very repetitive with same questions + same answers = no discussion. Perhaps if these later sessions could have been consolidated, the earlier ones could have been lengthened to provide greater time for discussion" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"I felt that if they'd had a bit longer in the morning sessions to fully explore some of the issues that were coming up then they might have moved on from their key points. I think because it was so pressured they didn't really explore all their thoughts and so they just kept coming back to the same issue over again" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"The overall structure was engaging and at times entertaining. The material was interesting and professionally put together. There was a good balance between live presentation from the podium/ video screenings/ interviews and discussion - at times it felt quite cutting edge and participants initially had the feeling they were part of an exciting and ground-breaking event. However, the material soon became repetitive and the outcomes of each discussion session became less well defined. I felt the material lost its focus. The discussion group

began to feel they were repeating what had gone before" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"Largely because of the timing, I was basically acting as a note-taker, hander-out of info sheets and timekeeper, it was difficult to find time to really explore beyond each participants' initial (adversarial) position, why their opinions were what they were, what really concerned them, and under what circumstances (if any) they might find elements of the proposal more or less acceptable" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"There was perhaps a bit too much pub quiz time, this could have been better spent hearing from a wider range of speakers/input or on the questions; I think the may have worked better by asking less questions of the participants but giving more time for the deliberations" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"The need to slavishly read out reams of information was far too time-consuming, and left too little time for subsequent discussion.... it also seemed to be a patronising and schoolish way to impart information, and could have been better done all together from the platform" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"There were lots of concerns about the context of the information, and the dramatic (cynical?) Greenpeace last-minute pull-out certainly was a successful tactic if the objective was to make participants more sceptical about the process and its purpose" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"There was too much information and not enough at the same time. The sort of information the respondents wanted (i.e. the opposite side of the argument) was not always available and some of the information driving the government's view was somewhat repetitive" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

- **What worked least well for policy makers.** The single biggest **worst aspect** of the public engagement activities for policy makers was that the green groups withdrew; this echoes the views of some observers. This withdrawal caused real disappointment (a word that recurs in these interviews), especially as the green groups had been involved in the early stages.

As can be seen from all the analysis above, the key elements of the design and delivery that worked least well for all these respondents were timing (especially too much information in the day and too little time to take it in, the day being too long), repetition, biased / leading process and questions. In addition, the information presented to participants was seen to be problematic in terms of the quantity, coverage, perceived bias and the way it was presented. especially the repetition and reading out by facilitators.

The other overall problem identified in observation was that the facilitators were overloaded by having to manage the discussion on their tables, record all comments and read out long pieces of text. The overall feedback from facilitators is that, in their view, this was not a major problem but, from observation, it did not work well. The proforma for recording comments was complex and took a lot of facilitator attention, which meant that they sometimes focused on that rather than keeping the group discussions moving effectively. The laptop was a physical barrier in some cases between facilitator and participants.

The problems with facilitators reading out information have already been identified and include that this information seemed to repeat what people had already been told in the video, that it took up a lot of time (up to 10 minutes each time) so that discussions on that issue were then rushed, and that what was being read out was not exactly the same as people had on the handouts.

In addition, people with hearing difficulties had problems hearing and using this information, the level of noise created by all the facilitators reading out text at slightly different times meant that each table had difficulty hearing their own

facilitator and, as participants were encouraged to take breaks when they wanted (to get tea and coffee etc), some were often absent when the reading out was happening so they did not have that information to work with.

Overall, from observation, this approach overloaded facilitators (and participants) and reduced the quality of the facilitation and recording. Facilitators managed as well as they could, but they were very stretched and participants felt harassed. The lack of separate note takers, and sufficient access to experts to answer questions, was felt. These issues are dealt with in more detail in the section on information below.

There was also real disappointment around the withdrawal of the green NGOs; this is dealt with in more detail in section 3. Here the analysis will now deal mainly with the issues of timing and repetition, and the process itself being leading.

The problems with timing were clear across all the evaluation research on the deliberative public events, with much lower levels of participant questionnaire respondents agreeing strongly that there was enough time to discuss the issues properly (27% of those questionnaire respondents). The other problems with timing for participants are outlined above. In particular, participant interviewees identified the problem of discussions being rushed, and too much information to take in and digest in the time.

Comments from participant interviewees on timing included the following:

"At certain points it tended to be a bit rushed but they couldn't have run it for much longer because of time constraints. I felt there was more to say on certain points" (participant interviewee Liverpool)

"Probably not [enough time] on the things where we went into depth – they got a bit cut off" (participant interviewee Liverpool)

"The day was very repetitive in the way you had a discussion, then a video, then a discussion, then a video" (participant interviewee Liverpool)

21 participant interviewees (out of 30) agreed that there had been enough time to absorb the information and use it for discussion, but 5 felt there had not. Essentially there was a feeling that there had been too much information to take in and remember in the time.

Comments from participant interviewees on this issue included the following:

"It was a lot to take in. We kept being given handouts so there was a lot of information to take in so there probably could have been a bit more time" (participant interviewee Leicester)

"There was not enough time to absorb it all, but there was enough information to take home and follow up" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"There was a lot to take in but there was just about enough time" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"No [not enough time]. There was a lot to do and a lot of stuff to process – it is the experience of the people around the table I am thinking of" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

Observers also identified the lack of time for discussion as a key issue for the process. Some suggested that one day was not sufficient time for the issues and material covered; others felt it was a lot to fit in but that it had been done well.

Comments from observer questionnaire respondents on timing included:

"The balance of information, discussion and feedback was well done. It was appropriate"
(observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"I think a lot had to be fitted in and you did this well. If anything though, the day was very long and quite repetitive and the qualities of your later discussions may have suffered as a result"
(observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"One day is a compressed time frame for a very complex issue. A 'reconvened' design where participants go away to reflect for a week before voting would be much better." (observer questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Good balance of time to all activities" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Perhaps too much material for one day" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"One day is, quite simply, far far too short a time-frame" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"Timetable was OK, however it was a very long day for a number of participants" (observer questionnaire respondent, Belfast)

"Good [discussions] - but constrained by time and information provision and time to metabolise that information" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"Inhibited by a lack of information or time to read info in advance" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

Feedback from facilitator questionnaire respondents was also critical of the amount of information that participants had to absorb, and the time left for discussion. 26 (27%) of facilitator questionnaire respondents felt there was too much information for participants to take in and too little time to think about and discuss that information. 68 (72%) simply thought there was too much information (especially written information) during the day.

From observation and overall review of the evaluation findings, the key problems in terms of overall design and delivery were as follows:

- **Day too long.** The day was too long overall, and very tiring. Participants were working from 9.45am to 5pm with only 50 minutes for lunch (actually around 40 minutes by the time they had stopped and started again). They were debating complex issues that some people felt strongly about, and others knew nothing about and who were on a very steep learning curve. Taking in large quantities of facts and figures, and remembering them sufficiently to be able to debate them and answer questions is very demanding.

Participants did manage to keep going but it was clearly difficult, and it is likely that the quality of debate reduced as participants got tired. In addition, they became less tolerant as they got tired, which made them even more critical where they saw the process and the questions becoming repetitive.

In terms of specific ways to reduce the time taken, the issue of information overload is dealt with below and later in this report. In addition, the pub quiz went on for 90 minutes. While this was a popular element of the design of the event, from observation, it did start to become repetitive (in terms of process), and go on for a long time. This was mentioned by some respondents as well. A much shorter pub quiz element, possibly 30 minutes, could have achieved the same benefits, and saved an hour on the day.

- **Lack of time for discussions.** This has already been mentioned, but it was clearly quite a major issue. Discussions were cut short as facilitators pushed groups to move on to the next issue and set of questions.

As the analysis at the beginning of section 7.6.1 showed, the balance of time for information input compared to time for discussion was about equal: 3 hours 20 minutes for discussion and 2 hours 40 minutes of information input.

There are no clear guidelines for deliberative public engagement, but in general the emphasis is expected to be on the discussion, with information provided to enable participants to be able to discuss the issues in an informed way.

Nuclear energy is a complex and technical subject and the reasons for the extensive information provision in this case are well understood. In this case the balance between information provision and time for discussion was adequate but could have been better, with more time and more open questions for discussion. This would have lessened the pressure on participants and reduced their feeling of being harassed into conclusions.

- **Repetitive.** There was a lot of feedback that the day was repetitive. From the detailed responses it is possible to see that this complaint is partly about feeling that the same questions were being asked over and over, and that information was repeated. This added to the sense that some participants had that they were being led or directed to certain answers and conclusions.

As the feedback from facilitators confirms, the repetition came partly through the same (or very similar) information being provided through the answers to the pub quiz, the information read out by facilitators, and the information on handouts. It was also partly that participants felt they were being asked the same question in different ways; there were a large number of questions and a huge amount of information provided. This contributed to the sense among some that a specific view was being sought, and that specific views were being drummed into participants.

It was clear from the organising team that the intention had been to ensure that participants were clear about and remembered the crucial information, but in this case there was some overload. There is a full analysis of the information provision in the section below, but it was clearly an issue of overarching concern.

- **Event and questions leading.** There was feedback from all types of respondents that the overall event was 'leading' and 'biased', in terms of the way the topics were introduced, the way the questions were posed both within table groups and as part of the electronic polling, and the overall agenda and shape of the day. While this was not a problem for the majority of respondents, it was an important issue for some.

As has been outlined above, the context for the process was not ideal, the framing was complex and subtle, and some participants were cynical about the Government position (taking the view that the Government had already made up its mind). Comments from two observers point up some of the key issues here:

"Too rushed and as participants themselves noted the questions were structured to elicit particular answers" (observer questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Delegates did feel that they were being led in a special direction. The CO2 questions were described by one as 'motherhood and apple pie...' (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

This evaluation has carefully considered this issue, through all the evaluation methods outlined earlier and including observation, questionnaires, interviews and a brief review of the documents on the design and structure of the day, the questions and the information provision.

From this review, it is possible to understand the view of some public participants (and others) that the questions and the structure of the event were leading. An analysis is given below of the final polling question of the day to illustrate the points.

The final polling question for the public participants was:

In the context of tackling climate change and ensuring energy security, do you agree or disagree that it would be in the public interest to give energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations?

From the perspective of the Government department that commissioned the consultation (BERR), it was one of the objectives of the exercise to "place the consultation firmly within the wider context of UK energy policy and the challenges of climate change and energy security", which explains to a degree why the wording of this final question emerged as it did.

The question also included the mention of the role of 'energy companies' in delivering these new nuclear power stations which, as has already been mentioned, was highly contentious for some participants. Again from the perspective of BERR, this was an essential part of the framing of the consultation and therefore needed to be explicit in the final big question for the public engagement part of the consultation.

The problems with this approach were fourfold:

- The question became very complex and encapsulated too many issues for an easy answer. A respondent may have agreed with the need for nuclear power but not liked the idea of energy companies running them; they may have wanted to tackle climate change and energy security for the UK, but not wanted nuclear power.
- This is essentially the 'yes / no' question for the public engagement element of the consultation on the building of new nuclear power stations, but that simple 'yes / no' question is buried in a lot of other ideas.
- The question incorporates some of the arguments in favour of nuclear power (climate change and energy security) but not the arguments against. To include these would have required an even longer and more question something like:

In the context of tackling climate change and ensuring energy security, and the creation of more radioactive waste, do you agree or disagree that it would be in the public interest to give energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations?

- The use of the wording "In the context" can be interpreted as leading, controlling, narrowing the debate and the issue for decision. It can be seen as trying to *determine* the context for participants rather than allowing them to decide what they think the context is.

Again, from the BERR perspective, this was about making the context for the consultation explicit, but it had the effect of making participants feel 'channelled' and 'controlled', and of 'narrowing' rather than 'opening up' the debate, and was therefore likely to have been seen negatively.

In fact, the feedback from participants was that they felt they could say everything they wanted to say (90% agreed they could), and a majority felt that all the main issues were covered (54%). There was clearly an open debate, enabling participants to say what they wanted, and covering the key issues. Nevertheless, the wording here did create some problems which affected the *mood* of that debate.

There are numerous other examples of similarly unhelpful approaches to the wording of other polling questions and questions for the table group discussions.

Feedback from policy makers clarified their motivations for the process as part of policy development, and the approach they were taking:

"We had a fairly clear idea that we were trying to flesh out and test our preliminary view: this was a very clear objective. We wanted to know if people felt that we had missed out on things in our preliminary view. People often wanted to discuss other things, for example alternative sources of energy. But you can't satisfy everyone and we wanted to test our preliminary view" (policy maker interviewee)

"We wanted to know what the public felt. We weren't carrying out an exercise to say Yes or No to nuclear - we wanted people to understand our preliminary view and the context of the challenge of climate change and the different energy sources. This set the context for the discussions. We didn't hide from controversial aspects: all known activities pose risks and we discussed those openly" (policy maker interviewee)

"We wanted to know if we had got anything wrong or omitted anything. The range of people maximised the chance of covering all the issues" (policy maker interviewee)

The feedback from policy makers, illustrated by these comments, is very clear that their view was that the engagement process was a consultation on Government's preliminary view, which is exactly how it was articulated in all the explanations of the purpose of the consultation overall. There was no hidden agenda or desire to lead people towards a certain conclusion because it was the content of the discussions that were key for policy makers and Government, not a concluding poll on a single question.

Overall, from a thorough review of the evidence and having observed the whole of the public engagement process from the start, this evaluation does conclude that the way the process was designed, and the questions constructed, resulted from a desire for the questions to be as full, explicit and consistent as possible, rather than a desire to lead or direct a particular conclusion by the public in response to these questions.

In terms of any lack of balance in the overall design and delivery of the event, there is no evidence that this was intentional. Indeed it is clear that significant efforts were made to avoid any such bias or lack of balance.

However, the research for this evaluation suggests that, although some drafting and delivery could have been clearer and simpler, there is no evidence that the process was designed or managed to ensure that the public took a particular view.

There is some specific feedback from participants and others that deals with these issues, in terms of the way the meeting was run and whether respondents felt that all the main issues were covered.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The amount of time spent on each topic was fair and balanced	20%	59%	9%	9%	2%
The way the meeting was run was fair and not biased	17%	36%	22%	18%	6%
All the main issues were covered	16%	38%	19%	21%	6%

This analysis shows that:

- A significant majority agreed that the amount of time spent on each topic was fair and balanced (79%).
- A much smaller proportion, although still over half, agreed that the way the meeting was run was fair and not biased (53%), and that the main issues were covered (54%).

While more than half of respondents agreed that these elements had been delivered adequately, none of the responses could be seen to be overwhelmingly positive: only 20% of public participants agreed 'strongly' that the amount of time spent on each topic was fair and balanced, only 17% agreed 'strongly' that the way the meeting was run was fair and not biased, and only 16% agreed 'strongly' that all the main issues were covered

There was more positive feedback from participant interviewees. 22 of the 30 participant interviewees agreed that the important issues around nuclear power were covered. 5 were not sure and 3 felt they were not.

Observers were more mixed in their assessment of the balance in the way the events were run, and the coverage of the main issues. Comments from observer questionnaire respondents included:

"Good balance given difficult range of topics" (observer questionnaire respondent, Exeter)

"A full day event was sufficient to bring out the key issues." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"Over-simplification of complex realities combined with limited time-frames may result in a flawed process" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

In terms of the *process* for ensuring that the deliberative public events were fair and not biased, there is clear evaluation evidence that significant efforts were made by the contractors (OL) to ensure that stakeholders, including green NGOs, were involved in the design of the process through the Stakeholder Review Group. The feedback from the majority of those stakeholders (including some green NGOs) was that the process and information materials were improved as a result of the significant changes that were made to respond to that stakeholder input.

In addition, the public were involved in the planning for the design of the events through the Citizens Advisory Board and the Development Event. These too had a significant impact on the design of the events, as well as the content of the information materials.

As evaluators, we obviously recognise that there was a perception among some participants (and others) that the event and questions were designed and delivered in a way that was leading and encouraged the public participants to give the answer the Government wanted.

However, from all the evidence available to the evaluation we would conclude that the commissioning department (BERR), and the contractors (OL), were honest about the process, and were honestly committed to making it work as well as possible in order to get the best possible outputs for future Government policy making and to ensure a good quality process that delivered benefits to the participants and all others involved.

The framing of the consultation was perhaps too complex and subtle for a large-scale public engagement of this type over just one day. The design and delivery was also perhaps over-ambitious and created an overload on participants which made them feel 'pushed'.

These problems seem largely to have been created as a result of the complicated context (especially legal pressures to provide the maximum information and to maintain consistency and clarity by explaining, repeating and reading out everything in detail), which resulted in an attempt to say and do too much in the time and resources available.

However, from all the evaluation evidence, these problems were caused by the commissioning department and contractors over-compensating for the external pressures to get the design and delivery (and information) right in the difficult context for the consultation, rather than being cynical and manipulative.

Our conclusion is therefore that this was a genuine attempt at fair and effective consultation that possibly tried to do too much and antagonised some participants - but also achieved some very valuable benefits for all concerned.

Information provided

Information was provided for the public participants at the deliberative public events in six main ways: the video, the pub quiz, information read out by facilitators at tables, written handouts (12), written reference sheets (9), and some access to experts who were available to answer technical and scientific questions. A full description of these different formats of information provision is given in section 7.5.1 above.

This section focuses on feedback from participants, observers and facilitators on the content and delivery of the information provided, and an assessment from observation and informal interviews (these issues have also been tackled in the previous section). It also reflects, at the beginning of this section, on the process for developing the information.

- **Information development process.** The process to develop the information ran alongside the overall public engagement process design and development activities. As outlined in sections 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5, there were three main elements to these information development activities:
 - The Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) made up of 10 specially recruited members of the public. The CAB met three times and focused much of its attention on the structure and content of the information materials to be used at the deliberative events with public participants.
 - The Stakeholder Review Group, which met once, primarily to consider the information materials. The Group also considered further drafts of materials after the actual Group meeting.
 - The Development Event, with 30 specially recruited members of the public. This event was designed to trial the process design and the information materials.

This was a highly intensive, demanding process for drafting the information materials, which required a significant investment of resources. Each event was designed, facilitated and the outputs written up in various forms, to be pulled together into the final drafts of the information materials used by the public at the deliberative events.

Each of these events is separately evaluated in their separate sections; each had a fairly full evaluation. Individually, these evaluations show these events were highly successful in engaging with their target groups, and gaining valuable input to the drafting of the information materials. There was generally very positive feedback from those involved and, from observation and informal interviews, it was clear that the participants gained a lot from taking part, and the information materials were changed significantly and improved as a result.

As importantly, the information materials were scrutinised by a good mix of different interests, to try to ensure they were as useful, fair and balanced as possible. The extent to which these qualities were achieved in the final information presented to the public is considered below.

From subsequent reflection, the one weakness of this otherwise comprehensive and effectively delivered development process, was in linking up the various elements, and maintaining the involvement of the public and stakeholders who took part.

Participants from these development events did continue to be involved in some ways after their initial input. Two people from the CAB attended the Development Event, which was good practice in maintaining continuing of involvement. Also, all stakeholders attending the Stakeholder Review Group were invited to send representatives to observe the public deliberative events which, again was good practice. Both these efforts to maintain contact went beyond what is usually achieved in consultation initiatives.

There were just two areas where this good practice could have been extended even further:

- The CAB could have been continued through and beyond the public deliberative events. This was done within the Department of Health's Your Health Your Care Your Say public consultation. Their CAB was formed at the same sort of early planning stage as was done here, but continued until after the decision was made and announced. They could be therefore be consulted on last minute negotiations about how to deal with some of the public views during the final stages of drafting the White Paper on health and social care. They were also on hand to speak to the press about having been involved all the way through, and to give their perspectives on what was proposed. Such a mechanism could also have been useful here.
- A stakeholder steering group could also have been set up at the beginning, to act alongside the CAB and to provide access to the concerns and perceptions of the wider field of interests in relation to the consultation as a whole. Such a steering group could have provided a more effective and long term 'sounding board' throughout the planning and delivery of the public and stakeholder engagement activities. It could also have provided a more coherent focus for stakeholder input, and provided a more robust and collective method of communication. The Stakeholder Review Group worked well as a one-off event, but longer term stakeholder involvement could have brought wider benefits.

As already outlined, the involvement of the public and stakeholders in the planning of the design and the information materials did work very well. The two points above are intended simply to suggest how this good practice could have been improved still further.

- **Feedback on information provision.** The evaluation research has collected extensive feedback on the quality and quantity of the information provided. A separate section below deals with the different mechanisms for delivering that information. Feedback from participants, stakeholders and facilitators on the quality and quantity of information provided was as shown below.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I understood and could use the information provided	16%	69%	11%	1%	>1%
I felt able to ask questions to clarify anything I did not understand	30%	59%	3%	5%	1%
There was enough information to enable me to contribute fully	14%	50%	15%	15%	3%

This analysis shows:

- A majority of participant questionnaire respondents felt there was enough information to enable them to contribute fully (64%); 18% disagreed.

- The majority of participant questionnaire respondents could understand and use the information provided (85%) and felt able to ask questions to clarify anything they did not understand (89%).

10 participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910 respondents) said that there had been no experts available to answer their questions. Although the feedback above suggests that respondents felt able to ask questions (they were not prevented or inhibited), this did not mean that they necessarily received all the information that they wanted in answer to their questions.

This issue was picked up by observer questionnaire respondents, whose comments included:

"It is not universally true that all questions were answered. Probably facilitators could not answer every question" (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"I believe some participants have unanswered questions and some have left the event with more questions than they arrived with. This should not be a surprise as having been given more information will prompt new questions" (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"Facilitators didn't make enough use of 'experts' in the audience. Questions were left unanswered for some participants" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Individuals had questions that facilitators could not answer. Perhaps there should be an expert panel for a Q & A session?" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

Participant interviewees, responding later were, perhaps with hindsight, more positive on these issues, as shown in the following analysis:

- All 30 participant interviewees agreed that they could understand and use the information provided on the day. All 30 also agreed that the information on the day was clear and informative. Comments included:

"It was very user friendly" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"The information I did receive added to my knowledge of the broad issues. Overall I left feeling pleased to have been there in terms of knowledge acquisition" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"Yes, considering the complexity of the issue" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

- 23 out of the 30 participant interviewees thought there had been enough information to enable them to take part fully in discussions. 7 thought there had not. Comments included:

"Enough for pro-nuclear power but I don't think there was enough about the cons or problems – it felt like the decision had already been made" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"Yes, although I felt some of it was a bit biased. It was not obviously biased, but the way some questions were worded led to a certain conclusion" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"Not really but it would have been difficult to give more information as there was lots. I think some people would have appreciated more information beforehand" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"Yes – by the end of the day I knew a lot more about nuclear power than I did at the beginning" (participant interviewee, Leicester)

"No. It was vague on issues like how power stations would be managed and where the fuel would come from. There was a big argument that nuclear fuel would make Britain more secure by removing foreign control, but who would control the companies was not clear" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

The feedback from participant interviewees, illustrated by these comments, suggests that the information worked well in terms of being understandable and effective in enabling people to contribute to the debate. Participants clearly felt comfortable with the information, and with being able to ask questions if they needed more information.

However, the low figure of 14% of participant questionnaire respondents who agreed 'strongly' that there was enough information to enable them to contribute fully reflects other comments on questionnaires and in interviews. Those comments suggested that the quantity of information was enough (indeed too much in some cases), but that it was not always exactly the information they wanted.

The feedback from facilitators in their questionnaire responses was overwhelmingly that there had been too much information. About 10% of facilitator questionnaire respondents thought there was roughly the right quantity of information, but 72% felt there was too much (especially written) information, and 27% said very specifically that there was too much information for participants to take in and deal with in the time available.

There was also a lot of feedback from all respondents that they found the information, and the way it was presented, was repetitive. 104 participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910) identified 'repetition' as the worst aspect of the event overall (the most frequent comment in answer to this open question). Some participant interviewees also identified this as one of the worst aspects. Facilitator questionnaire feedback also picked up on this issue, with around 45% of those respondents (43 out of 95) identifying this as a problem with the information provided.

In terms of the extent to which the information covered the range of views on the issues, and was fair and not biased, and was accurate and reliable, the feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as shown below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The information provided covered the main different views on the issues	9%	49%	15%	19%	6%
The information provided was fair and not biased	7%	32%	28%	23%	9%
The information provided was accurate and reliable	7%	32%	49%	8%	3%

This analysis shows that there was less satisfaction among participant questionnaire respondents with the information provided in terms of these three questions:

- Over half agreed that the information provided covered the main different views on the issues (58%)
- Less than half (39%) agreed that the information provided was fair and not biased, or that the information provided was accurate and reliable.

These are quite low levels of satisfaction on these issues. Although over half felt that the information did cover the main different views, only 9% agreed 'strongly'. Only 7% agreed 'strongly' that the information was fair and not biased (and less than 40% agreed in total).

Similarly, only 7% agreed 'strongly' that the information was accurate and reliable. The large numbers of those unsure in answer to this question (49%) was explained by further comments following the tick box answers: to some degree respondents said they felt unable to judge whether the information was accurate and reliable because they were not experts in the subject.

In addition, 63 participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910) mentioned in the open comment box at the end of these questions that they wanted more information from those opposing nuclear power, on alternatives and on other options; 21 (out of 910) wanted more facts and figures. 26 suggested that the information was leading or biased.

Some observers also raised problems of perceptions that the information materials were biased. Comments included:

"I certainly felt that one particular side of the debate was championed and not all sides were really represented. This may not have been purposeful but I felt that participants picked up on this." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"Participants were not shown or given sufficient information on alternatives to nuclear power" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Significant scepticism was expressed about data provided and Government perspective" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

A separate set of questions was asked on the participant questionnaires to try to find out whether information on some topics was more trusted than on others.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	Completely	Mostly	Unsure	A bit	Not at all
To what extent did you trust the information you were given <u>overall</u> ?	8%	61%	21%	8%	1%
To what extent did you trust the information <u>on climate change</u> ?	15%	54%	20%	7%	2%
To what extent did you trust the information <u>on UK energy security</u> ?	11%	51%	25%	8%	1%

To what extent did you trust the information <u>on the need for nuclear power in the energy mix?</u>	13%	46%	25%	10%	4%
To what extent did you trust the information <u>on waste?</u>	7%	38%	29%	17%	7%
To what extent did you trust the information <u>on safety and security?</u>	8%	41%	30%	14%	6%

This analysis shows that there were reasonable levels of trust overall (69% of participant questionnaire respondents said they trusted the information overall), and more than half said they trusted the information on climate change (69%), on UK energy security (62%) and on the need for nuclear power in the energy mix (59%).

However, less than half trusted the information on waste (45%) and on safety and security (49%).

These figures show a number of trends:

- Respondents trusted the information overall, and the information on climate change and on UK energy security, reasonably highly
- Respondents trusted the information on the need for nuclear power in the energy mix less
- Fewer than half the participant questionnaire respondents trusted the information on waste, and on safety and security
- 20 - 30% of participant questionnaire respondents were unsure about the information they were given in every category.

These varying levels of trust and uncertainty were also clear in observation of the events. There was a level of resistance and suspicion about the information being given, particular on the subjects of waste and safety. Some participant questionnaire respondents wanted more information on these topics, but some (29 - the most frequent response in the open comment box at the end of these questions; out of the total of 910 respondents) were concerned that the information was biased or misleading.

In the open questions at the end of the participants' questionnaire, 97 respondents (out of the total of 910) wanted more information, facts and figures especially on alternatives and other options. 78 (out of 910) thought the information was biased or leading. 23 thought there was too much information, especially to deal with in the time.

As mentioned above, there is no contradiction between having too much information and wanting more (e.g. having too much on one subject but not enough on another).

In terms of the six different delivery mechanisms used to provide the information, the feedback and evaluation findings were as follows:

- **The video.** The video worked quite well at the time, although there were clearly problems after Greenpeace pulled out and their filmed contribution had to be replaced by a voiceover. Some participants felt that the green NGO contribution was entirely missing because there was not a named person on the video giving these views (see comments below).

19 of the 30 participant interviewees thought the video was useful in helping them understand the different views on the subject; other interviewees could not remember (8). Some did remember that they felt it was biased.

Comments from participant interviewees on the video included:

"Yes it was [useful] – we saw all the different sides and could make an assessment based on that" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"Yes, it was very good but again there could have been a bit more about the negatives on nuclear power – that would have been a bit more useful to have a clear understanding" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"It didn't have anything from Greenpeace. The fact that they didn't take part should have been discussed a bit. I felt the pro-nuclear part was very pro-nuclear. It came across as persuasive" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"That was difficult to do I think. For example Greenpeace were asked but they did not submit anything. So it did come across as biased" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"No, I don't think so. It was a shame the environmental groups pulled out. Having watched their video since the event I think it would have been useful if we had access to their video on the day. Also using a newsreader lent a certain weight and authority to the video which I was not comfortable with. It felt skewed" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"I felt it was but I got the feeling that it was steering us into a particular way of thinking. It felt manipulative. Because I am not an expert I can't say one opinion wasn't presented, but I did feel massaged into a particular way of thought" (participant interviewee, London)

The feedback on the video was a little more mixed from observer questionnaire respondents. Their comments included:

"The videos were sometime a little facile. Overall there's a sniff of bias in the presentations - as perceived by the participants" (observer questionnaire respondent, Norwich)

"The video [was] unbalanced even allowing for absences" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"I believe the Greenpeace and FOE withdrawal was unhelpful but I do not believe this undermined the event. I felt the material used by the Government put across their concerns much more effectively than Greenpeace or FOE would have been able to do themselves." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

Taking into account the findings from observation, as well as this feedback from respondents, as evaluators our view is that we can understand the motivation for using a video and that it did offer a mechanism for providing the same diverse range of views at the same time at all nine deliberative events across the UK.

However, a great deal of the value of the video was lost when Greenpeace withdrew. Even with the inclusion of the alternative / opposing view in voiceover, without the actual representative of the organisation, the effect was so weakened as to be negligible.

Without that representation, to provide the necessary counterbalance, the style and apparent messages from the video took on something of the feel of corporate marketing ('selling' particular ideas) especially the sense that it was 'authoritative' by being presented by a newsreader - which actually seems to have increased distrust and suspicion. The feedback from participant interviewees identified these issues particularly clearly, as can be seen from the quotes above, and those match our conclusions from observation.

In the circumstances, especially given the timing of Greenpeace's withdrawal, it is hard to see what else could have been done. Overall, however, the use of this sort of video to get across a range of diverse views may have created more concerns among participants than it answered and may, in the end, have been rather counterproductive.

- **Pub quiz.** The pub quiz was very popular. From observation on the day it worked very well to engage the participants and make them feel comfortable discussing the issues. As mentioned above, from observation and for some participant questionnaire respondents, it went on too long (90 minutes). Interestingly, although it clearly worked well on the day and people enjoyed it, the pub quiz did not figure strongly on the 'best aspects of the day' for participants - 6 mentioned it, out of 633 comments on that question; and 7 saw the pub quiz being too long as one of the worst aspects.

It was very popular with others. For 11 (out of 27) observer questionnaire respondents, it was the best aspect of the day. For facilitator questionnaire respondents, 32 out of 95 (34%) thought it was the best aspect, by far the most frequent comment in answer to that question.

As evaluators, our conclusion is that the pub quiz did work very well to encourage engagement, help the table groups work as a team, and start to familiarise people with the issues as well as starting to present a lot of detailed information. It did seem to go on too long; maybe 30 - 40 minutes would have been a better use of time than 90 minutes given other time pressures.

- **Information read out by facilitators.** This approach to information provision was intended to ensure consistency of information provision across all facilitators at all events, and to reduce the potential for facilitators putting information into their own words and potentially providing material that was inaccurate.

It was also suggested to the evaluation that this would be a way to ensure that anyone with literacy problems was not disadvantaged; this was the explanation given to facilitators in their briefing documents. However, some participant respondents specifically mentioned that they had hearing problems, and found the reading aloud very difficult to deal with. An approach designed to deal with one form of disadvantage seems to have increased those with another form of disadvantage.

This approach was generally very unpopular and did not work effectively at all. From observation, it did not work well in practical terms, as facilitators were often all reading out quite long pieces of text, all at slightly different times, so groups could not always hear the information very clearly and it created quite a chaotic atmosphere. It also took up a lot of time, reducing the amount of time available for group discussion.

Although it did not feature as a major problem in the participants' feedback (questionnaires or interviews), from observation it was clearly unpopular on the day. Facilitators themselves were very negative about it: 68 out of 95 facilitator respondents (72%) said that reading out the information did not work well. The main reason they gave for this was that it took up too much time, but several also mentioned that they felt it was very patronising to participants.

As evaluators, our conclusions on this approach to information provision are that it did not work well at all. It did not work well at the Development Event, but the information then had not been finalised and the final sections of text read out were even longer.

Reading long pieces of text made it difficult for participants to take in, some information was read out that was not the same as that on the handouts given to participants, and the participants and the facilitators found the whole approach patronising and time consuming. It also further contributed to the idea that someone was telling participants what to think. Overall, it had no advantages and really did not work well on the day, and we cannot think of any circumstances where it should be used in future.

- **Handouts.** 12 handouts were given to participants throughout the day, at the relevant point in the programme and to support specific topics for discussion.

In terms of quantity, there was clearly enough information to enable people to participate in the discussions. However, there was probably too much of this written information overall, as facilitators' feedback suggests. There were a lot of handouts (12), and some of which were two to three pages long. This was too much to take in at a glance, especially when information was also being read out.

In addition, the handouts largely repeated the information that had been provided on the video (and facilitator read outs), which may be why so many participants complained about repetition. It seemed to many of them that they were being told the same thing over and over again, which contributed to the sense that they were being overwhelmed and pushed to come to certain conclusions.

In terms of quality, the information in the handouts did cover all the key issues being discussed and in some detail, and included opposing views as well as Government views.

The feedback from participant questionnaire respondents that they could understand and use the information suggests that the content was clear and informative; this was a specific question to participants interviewees and all 30 felt it was clear and informative. This certainly related to the handouts as much as to the other information sources. They were clearly written, illustrated and accessible, and did support participants in taking part in the discussions.

As evaluators, our conclusions on the handouts is that the way they were written was useful and accessible, but that they were too long, there were too many and they duplicated information being provided through other means. Shorter and fewer handouts would have worked better to support discussions, left more time for discussion rather than reading, and been less likely to make participants feel overwhelmed and pressured.

- **Reference sheets.** There were nine reference sheets, and these were given out at the discretion of the facilitators, either to answer questions or to support a particular strand of discussion. Some facilitators gave out all the reference sheets, some a few and some none.

In terms of quantity, they simply added to the weight of information provided. From observation, tables were awash with pieces of paper, and participants really struggled to keep the various documents in order so they could refer to them when they wanted to.

In terms of quality, the reference sheets did cover some very useful aspects of the debate that participants, in feedback, said they wanted more information on: including the benefits and disadvantages of the different electricity sources, information on renewables and costs. Again, the information in these sheets was presented in a clear and useful way.

As evaluators, our conclusions on the reference sheets is that they did cover some very valuable information but they were not sufficiently woven into the programme, or the way the facilitators dealt with the topics over the course of the day, to really be as useful as they could have been.

In retrospect, it may have been better to only have the reference sheets, rather than handouts which in many ways duplicated the information on the video and provided in the pub quiz. This was valuable information succinctly written, but it was not used as fully as it could have been.

- **Experts to answer questions.** As mentioned above, participants did feel they were able to ask questions, and facilitators were provided with reference information to answer them. In addition, 2-3 BERR policy experts attended each event, and were available to answer questions when called: facilitators raised their hands and showed a green card to call for an expert to answer questions. Where and when this was used, it worked well.

However, although experts were available, facilitators were briefed to use them as little as possible so that the timetable was not held up by seeking information on questions of detail that were potentially of little value to the discussions overall.

There are various ways of providing expertise that do not need to be resource-intensive. One highly technical national deliberative process placed post-graduate students at each table with a remit to answer questions; another had several roving experts who could respond quickly to specific questions. 'Experts' in this sense do not need to be the leading international expert in the field, but just someone with sufficient technical and scientific knowledge to be able to answer basic questions of fact that arise in discussions of this sort.

The advantages of having experts available are that participants feel they can get answers to their questions and are therefore less likely to feel their debate and information provision is very tightly controlled, additional information is fed into the process when needed, and experts have the opportunity to find out the issues that cause most concern to the public.

Overall, the approach to providing participants with access to experts did not work as well as it could have at all events. Ideally, future exercises of this sort should aim to ensure that a sufficient number of 'experts', with sufficient

experience of talking to the public to enable them to answer questions effectively, is available at deliberative public engagement events.

- **Participants' knowledge.** Although not a formal part of the information provision here, the information that participants themselves bring to the process is a key aspect of the learning process and one that is central to those activities. Some participants may arrive with no knowledge, or with prejudices, preconceptions and/or simply inaccurate information that they have picked up. This is inevitable and part of the process is to allow participants to share and challenge all this existing knowledge.

Some participants arrive with knowledge, experience and strong existing views on the specific topic (nuclear power in this instance), and on the wider issues surrounding it (e.g. energy policy, sustainability, democratic control, regulation). Some participants will be disposed to be in favour of the proposition, some will be against and some will be entirely neutral. Providing access to a diverse range of views is particularly important, so that participants are not led into thinking that there is only one 'right' answer, and partly to stimulate debate. However, the process itself should allow a new balance of opinion to be developed in the room through discussion, questioning and challenge.

This is why the discussion elements of deliberative processes need to be allocated the majority of the time available, rather than too much focus in the agenda on information provision. Participants need the time to go through the process of digesting the information - their own, their fellow participants' and that provided formally within the process - before they can come to a considered view based on their new level of knowledge. This is the real value of deliberation compared to market research, polling or other conventional qualitative research forms: here the participants create their own new level of knowledge and come to new conclusions about the issues in that new context.

There are two remaining issues around the information provision here that need to be addressed: the issue of providing information to participants in advance, and the issue of bias. Each of these is addressed below.

- **Providing information in advance.** The three reasons given to the evaluation to explain why very little information was provided to participants in advance of the event are outlined in section 7.6.1. These were, in summary, that not everyone would read advance information and those that did not would be at a disadvantage in discussions, that it may put some people off if it is looked too complex, and that there was concern about excluding those with poor literacy.

However, the feedback from participant questionnaire respondents is quite clear: 72% agreed that they would have liked more information in advance of the event; 25% agreed 'strongly' that this was the case (19% disagreed). These are actually much higher figures than is usual for these sorts of deliberations, where few people tend to be keen on having information in advance.

It may be that in this case, there was so much information on the day (and questionnaires were completed at the end of the day) that they would have liked some in advance. Or it may be that they would just have liked to have had the time to take in and digest some of the information in advance, so they could think about it more.

Some observers and facilitators also suggested that some information could have been circulated in advance, although it was not a major issue in their feedback.

Evaluation research also discovered that 2 (of the 30 interviewees) said that they had looked at information on the internet before the event. Several mentioned that they had started to look at media coverage once they knew that the subject was nuclear power. This rather undermines arguments that sending out information in advance would disadvantage those who did not read it, given that some had sought information, and gained that advantage anyway.

The second reason for not sending out information in advance, that it may put people off, does need more thought. However, it should be possible to provide information that helps people to start to think about the issues without scaring them out of taking part. It is recognised that this would be a challenge.

Finally, concerns about literacy were also part of the reasons why facilitators read out so much information. While differing literacy levels do need to be taken into account, poor literacy affects a relatively small proportion of the population, and more effective methods of dealing with this issue could be found (e.g. extra help on the day).

In an ideal world, deliberative events such as this take place over two separate occasions. The first occasion can be designed to introduce some basic information, after which people go away and absorb that and talk to friends and family about it. In some cases, participants can be given more to read at home. The second event is then the full deliberative discussions, supported by more detailed and specific information.

As evaluators, our conclusion is that some information in advance could have been useful here, as long as it did not risk skewing the sample of people taking part. If there is no opportunity for a two-stage process, because deadlines or resources will not allow for it, this may be a reasonable option on a complex topic of this sort.

- **Biased, misleading or leading information.** There was clearly quite significant feedback that some respondents felt the information provided was biased or misleading, or was designed to push participants into coming to a certain (pro-nuclear) view. Participants expressed these concerns themselves, and observers and facilitators also reported that participants felt that, as well as observers and facilitators themselves feeling that the information was biased.

Views were also expressed by some evaluation respondents about the questions and the process overall being biased or misleading; these issues are dealt with above in the section on Overall design and delivery of the process.

The evaluation was not designed to assess the technical and scientific content of the consultation, and that would in any case have been unlikely to be productive as so much of the information is contested.

Any assessment of bias in this instance therefore needs to be based on the extent to which the information was clear, useful and effective in encouraging and supporting a fair and balanced discussion among public participants. We can also consider the process for creating the information as well as examining the final versions of the information provided.

The evaluation team has been provided with the script for the video as well as having viewed both the full version (with Greenpeace) at the Development Event, and the revised and final version at the deliberative events. We have also seen all the final text for the facilitators to read out, and all the written information handed out, as well as the answers and further information provided during the pub quiz. We also obviously draw heavily on the feedback from participants, observers and facilitators.

As evaluators, our conclusion is that the information did work to encourage and support debate among the participants. It was problematic in various ways, with too much and repetitive information in some cases, and a lack of detailed information in others. Overall, however, the information was comprehensive and did cover all the key issues of the debate was structured on that day.

In terms of the process to develop the information, the contractors, BERR and COI clearly made significant efforts to ensure that the various views on the issues were covered, and that the materials were fair and balanced, as well as being clear and informative. Our conclusion is that they largely succeeded in that.

There were clearly problems in losing the Greenpeace contribution to the video, and that was felt as a clear gap, but their views were included (in voiceover) even if that was clearly not as powerful as it would have been if they had been represented by an individual from the organisation. In addition, diverse and opposing views were explicitly covered in the handouts given to participants.

There have been criticisms about the specific language used which implied bias against anti-nuclear views and the position of green groups. However, there has also been feedback, including from green NGOs, on the difficulties of producing this information, and recognition of the efforts made.

Comments from a range of different individuals involved in the process about the nature of the information provided to participants include:

"As a result [of stakeholder input] OL moved the materials a fair way" (observer interviewee; who had also been involved in the Stakeholder Review Group)

"The quality [of the information] in itself was fine - it was professionally produced. But it was used within a strong framing." (observer interviewee).

"This was all about getting information and content in a phraseology and narrative for wider public understanding, when the subject is so complex The numbers are so big and confusing that even experts in [our green NGO] have trouble understanding. Let alone conveying it to a wider public. I had some sympathy for BERR in framing the issue for the public" [participant in Stakeholder Review Group]

"There is deep scepticism and no agreed mechanism for finding out what the truth is ... almost nothing in this area is an uncontested fact ... so no solid ground of agreement to build on" (policy maker interviewee)

Overall the feedback has been that the framing of the deliberative events, and the consultation as a whole, was to present the Government view, and that view was certainly presented and these views were not excluded or glossed over. A significant proportion of respondents would have liked to have had more of those opposing views, and more on alternatives to nuclear power and on renewables. There may have been room for more on these issues, and on waste and financing and some of the other most contentious issues. However, those issues were certainly covered in the material provided.

The feedback to this evaluation shows that some participants did clearly believe that the Government had already made up its mind about nuclear power, and that the framing of the consultation - including the information - was therefore biased and designed to lead participants to that conclusion. One observer interviewee said "It was closer to an attempt to persuade than an attempt to have dialogue".

However, our view as evaluators is that the consultation was very transparently designed to present and test the Government's preliminary view and the evidence and arguments on which that view was based, and the information reflected that. The information was designed to achieve those very specific purposes.

Our conclusion is that, although the information provided to the public participants could have been improved, and the Government's view and the evidence supporting that view was presented, opposing and alternative views were also presented throughout and that - although far from perfect - overall this worked reasonably effectively and fairly to provide enough relevant information, including on the various diverse perspectives on the issues, to enable participants to debate the issues, and to participate fully in the consultation.

Overall, it is also clear that some methods for providing information worked well, and the information was absorbed easily by participants and supported their discussions: the pub quiz and the video, in spite of the specific problems with the video in this case. The information sheets were useful but could have been used better: avoiding the repetition caused by the handouts and providing instead the valuable information on the reference sheets. Other methods did not work well at all, particularly the facilitators reading out information word for word and the lack of experts to answer questions. These were not, however, major failings of bias but simply of attempts to achieve consistency that did always not work as well as had been hoped.

There were some specific suggestions contained in the feedback that may help in future deliberative events of this sort. There was some demand for more information not mediated by Government, and from non-government sources. There was also quite a strong demand for more of the information to show where it came from, so people could judge it on that basis. These sorts of detailed changes can all help increase trust in the information and the process.

We can therefore conclude that the information provision at these events was perceived to be problematic but it was not unreasonably biased or unbalanced. The process to develop the information was comprehensive and engaged the public and stakeholders, and took their views into account in drafting the materials. There was sufficient information to encourage and support debate, and a range of diverse views (including opposing views) was covered.

The information provision was not perfect but every attempt was made to ensure balance, fairness and effectiveness across all the information materials. The result was some complaints but also some satisfaction with the amount of information that people gained, and the learning that they achieved (see below).

Recording and reporting

The main issues for the evaluation of the deliberative public events in terms of recording and reporting are related to transparency and utility, so that participants are aware of what is being put forward in their name, the outputs (reports) are accurate and useful to those to whom they are directed, and that there is good reporting back to participants about the outcomes of the process.

The methods for recording and reporting these public engagement events have been described in section 7.5.1. In summary, qualitative data collection was undertaken by table group facilitators who recorded comments and answers to questions from the group in a proforma on a laptop throughout the events. A small team of note takers sat in on table discussions from time to time to record some of the participants' points verbatim.

The facilitators' notes were then analysed qualitatively by a research team at OL. The quantitative data was collected through the use of electronic polling at various points during the day, and the results noted. Some polling questions were repeated so that changes in views over the course of the day could be noted.

The evaluation research has sought feedback on these recording and reporting methods. The findings were:

- Participant interviewees were asked specifically for their views on the recording of their views during the event. 22 out of the total of 30 participant interviewees agreed that public views were recorded fully and in the best way; 4 were not sure and 4 did not agree.

Where participants were satisfied with the recording methods, they mentioned that it was particularly useful when facilitators re-capped the points made to ensure they were recording them accurately. The difficulties of recording the views of the group discussions, especially when these were taking place at quite a pace, and where the members of the group had quite different views, were recognised.

Those less satisfied suggested that public views were not always recorded accurately or fully, that they were rephrased and that some of the questions were limited which restricted the options for answers. However, these negative views were a minority (4 out of 30), and participants overall were satisfied with the way their views were recorded.

Comments from participant interviewees on how their views were recorded included:

"At the end of the day we were answering questions that were put to us. The idea had already been come up with. There was quite a split on a lot of questions and it was always going to be a majority vote. The negative side wasn't always got across" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"No I was definitely not happy. The facilitator did not write down what we were saying – he couched it in a different way. I was sitting next to him watching what he was writing and what we were saying wasn't recorded honestly – in fact we picked him up on it several times. Also the questions we were asked to answer – there was only one way you could really answer. We felt manipulated – on our table I would say 90% of people felt coerced" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"No. I remember walking out thinking they wouldn't take any notice. Our answers were twisted into the way they wanted and they were reformatted" (participant interviewee, London)

- Observers were not specifically asked about recording and reporting, but several made comments about the difficulties they saw that facilitators had in recording at the same time as facilitating the discussion.

Comments from observer questionnaire respondents on recording participants' views included:

"Facilitators should not be taking notes as they could not concentrate on facilitation. Need separate note takers." (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Also the table facilitators struggled to present information, encourage deliberation and record views in one breath (task overload for many of them)" (observer questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

- Facilitators themselves were generally happy with the way they were asked to record the participants views. 68 out of 95 (72%) thought the recording methods worked well, and that the proformas they used worked well. 8 (8%) said that this method worked fine as long as the facilitator was a touch typist. However, 20 (21%) did suggest it was hard to do both good facilitation and recording.

From observation, it was clear that most facilitators were able to balance the demands of facilitation and note taking, and were able to ensure that participants' views were captured. Participants clearly felt most reassured when facilitators summarised and checked back with the table what they understood participants' views to be before typing them in.

However, and in spite of the positive feedback from participants and facilitators, as evaluators we would conclude that, in an ideal world, there would be separate note takers so that facilitators do not have to do both tasks. The facilitators' role could then have been to focus on enabling and supporting good discussions. This is not to say that good discussions did not take place; they clearly did. But the balancing of all these, and providing information at different points, all added to a sense of overload and pressure, and did not create as relaxed an atmosphere as may have been ideal.

In addition, this approach to note taking cannot fully capture the richness and detail of the points made by public participants. In practice, the data collected was entirely adequate for the purpose. However, given the quality of the debate, and the number and diversity of the participants, possibly more data could have been captured and referred to over time. Overall, the approach to recording worked well but was not absolutely ideal.

In terms of reporting, there are two elements to consider: the reporting to policy makers of the results from the deliberative events, and the reporting back to participants.

Participants were given an information sheet at the end of the event, which gave them contacts so they could participate further in the written and online consultations, and where they could find out more information (including from green NGOs). They were also sent two communications after the event: one within a week, with a summary of the deliberative process and the main results of the public events, and one after the Government had made its decision and published the White Paper, in January 2008.

All these communications with participants were examples of good practice. Many similar public engagement initiatives fail to communicate with participants at all after events. Also, the information was not only timely but well-written and provided access to more information if participants were interested. 14 of the 30 participant interviewees said they did find out extra information after the event; mostly simply by noticing when relevant issues were reported in the media but 6 did report that they actively sought out more information later.

19 of the 30 participant interviewees remembered that they had been sent information after the event although not all could remember what it contained; 10 of the 30 said they were not sure or did not know what the Government's final decision had been, although the other 20 did know. 3 mentioned that they had found the earlier information they had received on the conclusions of the event useful. 6 said they would have liked more. This was positive feedback from participants overall on these report backs, even if some would have liked more.

However, as outlined above under the section on Clarity and transparency about objectives and process, there was less positive feedback from participants in relation to whether they were clear about the impact public views had had on the Government's decisions. 12 out of 30 participant interviewees said they were clear, but 18 were not. This information was not provided in any detail to participants; although the White Paper itself described the influence of the consultation overall in the final policy, very few of the participants saw or read the White Paper.

In an ideal world, participants would be told what had changed as a result of their input and, if strong conclusions had emerged that were not being taken forward, some explanation given of why not. This was the approach taken in the Your Health, Your Care, Your Say public consultation on health and social care. There, a reconvened meeting was held with 100 participants (of the original 1,000) to go through the Government's decisions in detail and test participant satisfaction with what had been achieved. There was then a follow up reconvened meeting one year later which again tested participant responses to progress on implementation. Not everything the public had suggested in the consultation process had been taken forward, but explanations were given of why not.

In this nuclear consultation, there was certainly good practice in communications with participants. More can always be done, and more feedback on the influence of public input on policy decisions would have been very valuable in increasing trust in Government and in engagement processes if that had happened. In this case, an opportunity was missed as there were real impacts on policy that may have reassured participants about the value and influence of their contribution (see section on Impacts and Influence below).

In terms of the reporting to policy makers on the results of the public deliberative events, OL produced a full and summary report drawing on the enormous amount of data collected at the events. This final report was valued and used by the Government policy makers who were drafting the White Paper, alongside the

results from the written and online consultation, and the stakeholder engagement activities. A number of specific issues emerged from the public events that did influence the final policy (see below under Impacts and influence). One policy maker interviewee said:

"The OL report is quite easy to read and dip into ... better overview. [It] reflects a conversation with people so quotes reflect the discursive nature of people exchanging views" (policy maker interviewee)

It was clear from the interviews with policy makers, and one specifically articulated it, that the reports of the public deliberative events were used alongside the experience of listening to the public views first hand by attending the events in person. One said:

"I found it really valuable going to the meetings and learning what people had to say first hand. BERR people found that very useful and interesting, those that could go out. You've heard it, you've got a sense" (policy maker interviewee)

"There is nothing quite like personal exposure, so it was important that the team went to the stakeholder and public events: it gives you an idea of what people are thinking and why. It is important to have a summary of other events, to compare one's own experience and see if what you heard is representative and reflects others, or is just the view of a few people" (policy maker interviewee).

That first hand sense of the strength of feeling that emerged from the public deliberative events was a crucial element in the judgement by policy makers of which were the key issues for the participants. The final OL report backed that up but was necessarily more detailed and reflective, based as it was on a more objective qualitative analysis of all the thousands of pages of notes. There were no complaints from participant respondents (or others) that any of the reports were in any way skewed or not representative of the public views.

However, a report can only ever provide part of the picture of the results of public deliberations. In this case, BERR officials attended the deliberative events in sufficient numbers to ensure they also had first hand knowledge of the issues that most concerned people, and a strong sense of the public views in each location, which cannot be fully understood without actually being there in person.

In summary, as evaluators we can conclude that the reporting of the process worked well. The report provided an accessible overview of the key issues, illustrated with quotes, that ensured that a balanced picture of the results across all the events was produced. That report, alongside the personal experience of policy makers hearing public views first hand, provided a comprehensive picture of the quality, value and richness of the results of the public deliberations.

Learning and changes in views

The issues for the evaluation in terms of learning and shifts in views are around the extent to which those involved felt they had learned something as a result of taking part in the process, and how that had affected their views. The evaluation tested these issues with questions to participants both in questionnaires and in follow up interviews, and to observers.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I learnt something I did not know before	45%	48%	4%	3%	1%
Attending this event has helped me think more clearly about the issues	39%	51%	4%	4%	>1%

	Yes	No	Don't know
Has being involved made any difference to what you think?	64%	25%	7%

This analysis shows that:

- The great majority of participant questionnaire respondents agreed that they had **learnt something** they did not know before (93%) and that attending the event had helped them think more clearly about the issues (90%)
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) said that being involved had **made a difference to what they thought**.

More detail on what difference had been made was apparent from the comments provided in the open section following the tick box question:

- * 210 respondents (out of the total of 910), by far the most frequently mentioned point, said that the difference in thinking had been that they had learnt more, thought more, become more aware and clarified their thinking.
- 51 (out of 910) respondents said they had learnt more specifically about nuclear power
- 49 respondents said that being involved had resulted in them having learnt more and made them think about climate change and their own energy use
- 22 said the experience had made them more worried and/or raised more questions about nuclear power
- 16 said they needed to or wanted to find out more
- 13 said they wanted to see more emphasis on alternatives / renewables
- 7 specifically said they had been affected by hearing other people's views

This open comments box also allowed some respondents to specify how their views had shifted in terms of nuclear power (although that question was not explicitly asked):

- 55 said their views had changed or become reinforced as pro-nuclear
- 53 said their views had changed or become reinforced as anti-nuclear

This very balanced result, although from only a very small proportion of the 910 respondents to the questionnaire suggests that, although there had been shifts of views, the overall proportions of pro and anti-nuclear sentiments had not changed very much as a result of participation.

This reflects the polling results at the events in terms of showing changes of views (see section 7.6.1 for these results). It also matches the results of the question OL put to recruited participants immediately after they had agreed to

take part but before they knew what the subject was, and then put to participants at the deliberative event. Those results were:

- 46% of the recruited participants (i.e. well before the event) supported the continuing use of nuclear power to generate electricity in the future; 24% did not
- 46% of those at the event supported the continuing use of nuclear power to generate electricity in the future; 24% did not

The only differences were that the proportion strongly supporting nuclear power went up from 12 to 15%, and those supporting it 'somewhat' dropped from 34 to 31. Again, this suggests very minimal changes of mind on the Yes / No question as a result of participation.

Further feedback from participant questionnaire respondents on the issue of learning and changes of views was as follows:

- 102 respondents (out of the 910 total respondents), the fourth most frequently made point, said that the **'best aspect'** of the event had been the information, learning and knowledge gained
- 317 respondents (out of 910) said that the most important **'benefit'** to them personally, by far the most frequent point made, was learning, information, knowledge and/or awareness.

This feedback shows how important and valuable the learning they achieved was to participants in the deliberative public events. This issue was also explored with the participants in the follow up interviews some months after the events. The feedback here was, in summary:

- 24 of the 30 participant interviewees said they had **learnt something new** about nuclear power as a result of taking part in the consultation; 5 said they had not. 7 interviewees mentioned learning more details, facts and figures etc; 5 mentioned learning more about waste, storage etc.
- 20 of the 30 interviewees said that being involved had **made a difference to what they thought about nuclear power**; 10 said it had not. 12 said it had removed doubts, made them feel more positive / comfortable about nuclear power

This feedback is interesting as it seems to contradict the immediate feedback on the participant questionnaire, in which the shifts between pro and anti nuclear seemed so small as to be negligible. However, the specific comments from interviewees suggest that this does not mean a complete change of mind on the issues and that, here too, the shifts in overall views were minimal. Comments from participant interviewees included:

"It didn't really change my attitude that much. There were certain things I wasn't aware of but it didn't really change my views" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"Probably not [made much difference to what I think]. I got more understanding of the concerns of people generally about the waste disposal issue – it was interesting to see how strong this view was. Talking to the scientist was interesting, for example the capacity for storage increasing. My attitude was this was something we needed to exploit in the near term. The message from our table was consistent in emphasising the need for Government to continue in the pursuit of renewables. It reinforced my tentative views on renewables too. I suppose I have come out with more nuanced attitudes" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

- 16 of 30 said being involved had **made a difference to what they thought about Government consulting the public** on these sorts of issues; 13 said it had not. 8 specifically said it had made them think it was a good thing.

Overall, the feedback from participant interviewees suggests that the shifts in attitudes to consultation were towards greater enthusiasm for engagement, but not without caveats, particularly respondents wanting to be sure that any involvement results in some change - that it makes some difference.

Comments from participant interviewees included:

"It is good to know the Government do ask but again I am not too sure how much they listened" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"I was pleased that people like myself were asked to take part, though I was a little sceptical to begin with. I felt they had the results wrapped up in a sense – I'm not sure if they pinpointed the areas where they felt they would get a positive result" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"Yes, I think they should involve the public a lot more than they do" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"I thought it was a good idea and I appreciate getting that information. I felt privileged to be there" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"I think by the Government doing this kind of consultation it shows they actually do want to listen. It is a step in the right direction" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"I really think when they do consultations like this, which is a good thing to do, they ought to be prepared to seriously consider what people have to say and take account of it in policy making" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"I really like the idea of these public consultations but it was wrapped up as politics with all these implications. If you were able to do a consultation on a subject that wasn't wrapped up in that controversy I would have walked away thinking what a great thing to do. But we felt a little bit manipulated ... It drew away a bit from what the good things were, for example the educative part" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"It made me very angry. I was really angry at the way it was done" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"Yes I was impressed – I thought it was a good way of getting the public involved in a difficult issue and they should do it for other issues" (participant interviewee, London)

"It is good they are actively seeking views but it depends on how much they use them" (participant interviewee, Leicester)

- 16 of 30 participant interviewees said the **main thing they got out of being involved was the information and learning**, again by far the most frequently cited benefit. This feedback is covered in more detail below in the section on Costs and benefits.

Participant interviewee feedback made it clear that the learning they experienced was not just from the formal information provided as part of the deliberative process, but was probably as much learning from each other (see also section above on Information provision). This was also specifically mentioned by participant questionnaire respondents, and "listening to each others' views" (this was the second most frequently cited 'benefit' for them, mentioned by 128 out of 910); and there were 161 comments that exchanging views, listening and talking to others was the 'best aspect' of the event (the most frequently cited point in terms of what were the best aspects of the event).

From observation and previous experience of evaluating public engagement, this feedback supports the view that one of the most important elements in learning in deliberative public engagement is the opportunity for the public participants to listen to and learn from each other. This is very important to understanding the overall use of information to support and encourage discussion in deliberative public engagement, and provides a challenge to the view that the formal information provision by event organisers is the only source available to participants.

Many public participants arrive with knowledge and views and are very willing to share and debate these views. While some participants arrive with no knowledge and little interest in the subject, that rarely lasts very long. All participants find that discussions start to touch on deeper values and principles through which almost everyone can relate to the specific topic under discussion. That is the real benefit of deliberation, and one that can get lost in the search for provision of comprehensive information that will cover every perspective.

The whole point of the demographic mix in deliberative public engagement is that there will be a diverse group of people that will provide a diverse mix of knowledge, views and beliefs and it is the exchange of views, linked to the provision of some basic information, that creates the real value in the process because it is then that the deeper concerns and aspirations of the participants starts to surface. It is also the part of the process that the participants value most highly. This issue is also explored in more detail below under Costs and benefits.

It is also part of the value of these forms of deliberative public engagement that it does create real learning, in terms of Bloom's taxonomy of learning⁷⁹. Bloom identified that there is a learning hierarchy through which levels of learning can be tested: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Evaluation, the highest level, requires critically considering ideas, information, knowledge and their limitations, assumptions and bias to test their validity in the context of the issue under scrutiny. This is precisely what good deliberative public engagement can achieve, sometimes in one day and even on subjects as complex as nuclear power.

This goes far beyond knowledge, the lowest level of Bloom's hierarchy: Bloom defines 'knowledge' as being about recalling information. This level of learning is often the explicit level of learning expected from deliberation, and almost always achieved, but much deeper levels can also be reached through the most effective processes. Given the levels of increased knowledge reported by participants in the feedback to this evaluation, it is clear that this process did achieve the highest levels of learning in Bloom's taxonomy.

Learning is rarely the only, or most important, objective of any deliberative public engagement process: influence on policy decisions is often the key aspect of assessing value. However, without effective learning mechanisms covering all levels of Bloom's taxonomy, it is unlikely that the other objectives would be fully realised.

⁷⁹ Bloom, Benjamin (ed) (1956) *The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA. Copyright (c) 1984 by Pearson Education.

Finally, in terms of learning, observers were asked whether attending this event had affected their views of public engagement. 6 out of the 27 observer questionnaire respondents said they had seen the benefits of public engagement, and 5 said they had felt more positive about it.

Comments from observer questionnaire respondents included:

"Reinforced my belief that details of the design / process are critical to success" (observer questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Confirmed my views that most people are intelligent and able to discuss issues intelligently and considerately" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"Has shown me the benefits of genuine representative public participation" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Hugely reassuring. Difficult complex issues well managed. Impossible to stimulate this level of debate via the media" (observer questionnaire respondent, Norwich)

"Reinforced the view that given the info, time to talk and think, groups of people can [?] reach a robust conclusion" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"Impressed by lack of 'conflict' and professional way participants handled themselves. I'm much more positive about this type of engagement now" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"I was impressed by the genuine attempt to give citizens an opportunity to become informed and then debate issues. Better than I expected" (observer questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"Thought this approach was valuable and was appreciated by the participants" (observer questionnaire respondent, Exeter)

"It reinforced my view of the need to consult the public. A number of questions and concerns were raised for which answers and solutions exist and the event highlighted the areas where further information was required. It is dangerous to assume what the general public knows or doesn't know. There is a definite need to make information available and allow people to make their minds up" (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"It underlined my belief that public involvement is vital and can be done very well" (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"It underlined my belief in the need for full and transparent debate on difficult issues; it was the most effective event I've seen" (observer questionnaire respondent, Liverpool)

The feedback from observers, illustrated by these quotes, demonstrates the impact on observers of actually seeing a deliberative public engagement process of this sort first hand. There are clear benefits of continuing to enable observation as a learning mechanism, particularly in developing good practice in public engagement across Government, and more widely as several of the observers were from the private sector and NGOs.

In summary, the participants responding to this evaluation learnt a great deal from taking part in the deliberative events (especially from each other), and significantly clarified their own thinking on this issue. It is interesting to also note how many respondents mentioned, entirely without prompting, that they had learnt about climate change and how that had affected their views on their own energy use.

Being involved had made a difference to their thinking but it seems that, overall, it had not made much difference to their basic views on nuclear power, with very minimal changes of mind between pro and anti-nuclear views before, during or after participation.

Observers too learnt from watching the deliberative process in action, often becoming more positive as well as more knowledgeable about how these processes could and should be used in future.

Influence on policy decisions

The issues for this evaluation to consider in terms of influence on policy decisions are around the perceptions of expected influence among participants, the views of others (e.g. observers) on expected influence, knowledge and perceptions of actual influence, and consideration of the evidence on actual influence based on feedback from policy makers and documentary review.

Considering levels of influence on policy decisions is essential for gaining understanding of the level of trust in the process as the extent to which participants and others believe that Government will listen to and take account of public views fundamentally affects levels of trust. This does relate to judgements about the value of participatory processes overall; as shown in the section on Costs and benefits below, the extent to which participants value the process they have been involved in depends on the extent to which they feel they have been listened to and made a difference. Equally, there is little point in Government funding public participation exercises if no notice is taken of the conclusions of those exercises.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents on these issues was, in summary, as follows:

	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not at all important
How important do you think it is for the Government to involve the public in discussing these sorts of issues?	82%	13%	2%	1%

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I think the Government will listen to and consider the public's views	8%	19%	49%	16%	7%

This analysis shows:

- Almost all participant questionnaire respondents thought it was important for the government to involve the public in discussing these sorts of issues (95%).

This feedback provides evidence that participants felt strongly that public participation in these sorts of discussions was important, and that Government should do this. This provides the context for questions about whether respondents thought such influence would be achieved in this specific initiative (see below).

- Far fewer thought the Government would listen to and consider the public's view: only 27% thought this would happen.

There were some significant differences in the responses from different locations on this issue: Newcastle and Liverpool were the least positive, with only 5% agreeing 'strongly', although only 6% agreed 'strongly' in Cardiff, Exeter and Norwich. The most positive were Belfast (15% agreed 'strongly'), London and Leicester.

The positive reaction generally from respondents from the Belfast event has already been noted above. Here again, it seemed as though it may be that the presence of a Minister at the event may have influenced the differences in feedback. However, although Ministers were present in London and Leicester, where the response was positive, Ministers were also present in Liverpool, Exeter and Cardiff, where the response was less so. Other factors may have had more impact on participants' views than simply the presence of a Minister, although that may have helped increase trust and optimism about potential influence in London and Leicester.

- There were significant differences between participants' views on whether public views **should** or **would** influence the Government. Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents was, in summary, as follows:

	A great deal	Quite a lot	A bit	Not much	Not at all
To what extent do you think public views <u>should</u> influence Government's decision?	54%	26%	10%	5%	1%
To what extent do you think public views <u>will</u> influence Government's decision?	4%	13%	37%	33%	9%

At first glance, these appear to be very pessimistic figures, with such a small proportion thinking there would be much influence. However, overall, only 9% of respondents thought there would be 'no' influence at all, which means that 91% thought there would be some influence - to varying degrees.

In comments following this question, there was a balance between the cynics and the optimists (although from relatively few comments overall on this issue): 17 respondents (out of the total of 910) said they 'hoped' there would be influence; 14 said they were cynical and that they expected that the public input would not make any difference.

The most frequent comment following this question, however, was that the Government had already made up its mind: 48 respondents raised this (out of the total of 910 respondents overall). This sense of the exercise having no influence and only being a box-ticking exercise by Government did recur in the feedback from participants:

- 48 participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910) said that they felt the decision had already been made in the comments following this question
- 15 participant questionnaire respondents (out of 910) identified the fact that the Government had already made up its mind, and that this was a tick box exercise, in comments following the first question on the questionnaire

- participant interviewees identified the need to keep an open mind, and not deciding in advance, as one of the lessons for the future they would like Government to take from the consultation.

From observation and informal interviews, numerous participants (and others) involved in the consultation did believe that that the decision had already been made. That feeling did clearly cause a degree of cynicism among participants. However, these suspicions do not seem to have reduced participants' willingness to debate the issues enthusiastically and with quite significant commitment, as outlined above in the analysis of the Design and delivery of the event.

Feedback from participant interviewees on influence, after some months, was as follows:

- 22 out of 30 participant interviewees said they were clear about what the public involvement was expected to achieve and what difference it would make; 8 were not. Here the detailed comments suggested that there were suspicions it will have made no difference, and that the purpose had been to get public support for nuclear power.
- 12 out of 30 participant interviewees said they were clear about the impact of public views on the Government's decisions on nuclear power; 18 were not. The comments here too suggested a balance between the optimists and cynics, with 7 saying there had been no impact, and 5 said there had - plus 2 who said they 'hoped' it would have had an impact.
- 11 out of 30 participant interviewees thought the Government has listened to and considered what the public had said when they decided their policy on nuclear power; 11 thought they had not listened, and 5 were not sure. Here too there was some scepticism, even when the answer seemed positive - 6 thought the Government had listened but it had made no difference.

This is not unusual levels of mixed feedback on these issues. The general mood of distrust of Government does seem to result in expectations of little or no response to public views. However, these figures are not wholly negative. There was a reasonable balance between those who believed there would be an impact, or hoped there would, and those who believed there would be no impact.

Comments from participant interviewees on influence included:

"I think overall it was a big public relations exercise. I do think the Government have used the feedback but whether or not the Government had really already made up its mind I don't know" (participant interviewee, Cardiff)

"Yes I would hope they wouldn't spend all that money otherwise, but I do feel that the people in high positions who know about it had already made up their minds" (participant interviewee, Cardiff)

"There probably was an impact, as the Government know they have to be sensitive about people's views" (participant interviewee, Cardiff)

"I would like to think they did otherwise it was a waste of time" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"I do think there was an impact and that it reassured the Government in their decision" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"A little bit. I was quite surprised they had gone to the trouble of listening to the public" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"I think they did listen but I think they wanted to back up their decision" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"I should think they listened to it. What would have happened I don't know if the majority had been against" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"I'm not so sure it did – I believe it comes back to bias again. I feel events were weighted towards convincing people to go with nuclear power" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"I think they did listen but I don't think there would have been anything that would have swayed them" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"I think they listened but I'm not sure they took it on board" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"No. I felt they did it as an exercise to show they were listening" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"They listened to the part they wanted to hear" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"No, I didn't think it would make any difference. It was a farce really, put together in such a way that there was only one conclusion. It was a waste of money" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"it would be nice to see if there is any correlation between the public voting and what came out" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"No I don't really. I felt the whole event was set up to lead us through to a certain result. There were a lot of questions I had problems with; there were a lot of leading questions where they would give you certain information then extrapolate to a question which missed out other important information" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"I didn't feel our views were represented so they couldn't have had an impact" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"Obviously the Government was trying to get public support and educate the public as to why it should go for nuclear power. We were given enough information to develop our own views though" (participant interviewee, London)

"I was clear what it was expected to achieve but I felt it was maybe just lip service. By the end of the whole thing I felt the Government had already made their minds up" (participant interviewee, London)

"No I don't really. I got this feeling that was very difficult to quantify, that the decision had been made already. I felt what we said didn't make much difference and that the videos and so on were trying to persuade us that this was the best option. I felt they were pushing the alternative options aside" (participant interviewee, London)

"They said Government would look at the views and make decisions but I am not sure how that was done" (participant interviewee, Leicester)

The feedback from participant interviewees, illustrated by these comments, suggests a predisposition among participant respondents to lack of faith in their input making much of a difference, even if Government has listened to it. However it also suggests a real lack of knowledge about what impact their input actually did make; there is significant uncertainty in these responses about actual influence. It is important to remember that these interviewees took place after the final decision had been made, and after the White Paper had been published (with significant media coverage).

This may partly be a matter of appropriate information being provided to participants. In this case, participants were told about the Government's decision but were given no details about what specific impact public input had made on the details of that decision; as shown above, 18 out of 30 participant interviewees were not clear what that impact was.

While it was good practice to at least let participants know what the final decision had been (which is more than many similar consultations have done), there may be arguments for more detail to be provided to participants about exactly what difference their contribution made. This may have reassured the specific participants more than was the case here, and potentially increased their trust in Government and their willingness to take part in these sorts of participatory exercises in future.

In terms of encouraging future active citizenship, such feedback could be a valuable (and relatively inexpensive) tool. However, even without this feedback, the vast majority (29 out of 30 participant interviewees) said they were more likely to want to get involved in public consultations in future - although 4 did specify that they would only do so if Government listened.

In spite of the apparent negativity of some of these statistics and comments, it is worth noting that some participant questionnaire respondents did identify taking part and contributing to something important as one of the main benefits for them personally in taking part. These issues are covered in more detail below under Costs and benefits.

Feedback from observers at the events was also quite mixed. Their questionnaire feedback also shows a real difference between what the extent to which they felt the public views *should* influence Government (85%), compared to less than half (45%) who thought public views *would* influence Government; *none* of the observers thought there would be no influence at all. This is actually more positive feedback than might be expected, with almost half thinking the consultation would have some influence on Government, given that quite a few of the observers were very critical of the process.

All the analysis above focuses on the *perceptions* of participants and observers about the extent to which they thought public views would or had influenced Government decisions. The evaluation also has feedback from policy makers describing how they used the public input; the evaluation has also briefly compared the published results from the deliberative events and the final policy statements in the White Paper. Although public views will only have been one element of the evidence used in the final policy decisions, this does provide some degree of evidence (or not) of influence.

The Opinion Leader reports⁸⁰ on the deliberative events summarise the results of the public discussions, and of the polling throughout the meeting. The key issues to emerge from those reports can be summarised as follows:

- **Energy mix.** Energy security and climate change were both significant issues for public participants, although more saw security of supply to be significant (96%) than climate change (88%). They were keen to see Government continue to invest in other options for energy production,

⁸⁰ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008. pages 104-156; and *Talking Energy: The Future of Nuclear Power*. Saturday 8th September 2007 (the 'end of day' report' published immediately after the deliberative events).

including renewables and ways to reduce energy consumption, as well as nuclear power.

Although more public participants voted in favour of giving energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations (44% in favour; 38% against), there were concerns that this should not detract from investment in alternative energy sources and energy efficiency.

- **Waste.** There were significant concerns about the management and disposal of nuclear waste. 90% were concerned about the creation of new nuclear waste, and over half (51%) were not satisfied with the proposals in the Government's proposals. There were concerns about who would bear the costs of waste management, and about the role of the private sector in waste management, and the public wanted waste disposal arrangements and processes to be overseen by an organisation independent of energy companies and Government.
- **Safety and security of nuclear plants.** Here too there were significant concerns, with 83% expressing concern. Participants wanted reassurances that there would be transparent information available, for the role of the private sector to be minimal, and for safety and security issues to be monitored by independent and authoritative bodies.
- **Reassurance and regulation.** This related both to waste and security, as shown above, with the need for independent and authoritative bodies to provide this public reassurance.

There were many other issues raised, debated and noted throughout the course of the day, but these four areas of concern were seen to be the issues on which there was particularly public concern and interest.

In interviews with policy makers, their feedback suggested that all these concerns had been recognised and dealt with. Details of policy maker feedback are given in a section 8.2 below. The responses from policy maker interviewees to the issues arising from the public deliberative events were:

- Policy makers knew that waste would be a major issue, but were surprised at how strongly public participants felt about it. They felt they therefore needed to develop additional policy initiatives to deal with the level of concern expressed.
- Policy makers were not surprised by the concern at safety and security, and felt that the ways they had been thinking about tackling these issues was sufficient.
- There was some surprise at the level of knowledge about climate change expressed by public participants, but not at the level of concern about that. There was also some surprise that the level of concern over security of supply was significantly greater than over climate change.
- There was complete surprise for policy makers about the level of public concern over the role of the private sector in the future of nuclear power. This had not been considered an issue at all for the consultation, and was wholly unexpected. Policy makers had been expecting that there would be a level of distrust in Government, but not in the private sector. This issue is returned to below.

The analysis in section 8.2 does strongly suggest that policy makers had listened to and taken public views into account. In order to provide some check on the extent to which the feedback from policy makers reflected the actual concerns of the public, the evaluation considered three factors:

- First, all the key points identified in the OL final report, summarised above, were also identified in the end of meeting report, which was available to the media in the evening of the deliberative events, within a couple of hours of the end of the discussions (and circulated to participants during the following week). That leaves very little time for manipulation of results at that stage.
- Second, from observation and all the evaluation feedback, the issues in the OL report were very clearly those raised by participants at the events, and those where there was the strongest feeling.
- Third, the summary of the results of the deliberative events was sent to all participants within a week of the deliberative events and there was not one comment in the evaluation interviews with participants that the summary was inaccurate in any way; on the contrary, the only comments were that it had been a good reflection of what had been said.

These sources do suggest that there is no reason to suggest any manipulation of results to fit with the expectations and existing plans of Government. That does seem to demonstrate that Government listened and took account of public views, and made the identified policy changes as a result (see section 8 for details).

As evaluators, we can therefore conclude that these issues were genuinely taken account of by policy makers. This conclusion is further supported by an analysis as part of the evaluation of the extent to which the issues raised by the public identified above were responded to in the White Paper (see section 8.2.2 for details). That analysis shows that all the issues in the OL report of the public events were dealt with in the White Paper.

The one issue raised by the public in the deliberative events, and identified throughout the OL final report, that was not explicitly dealt with in the White Paper, was the role of the private sector. The OL report mentions this issue in relation to managing waste (page 119), and in relation to safety and security (pages 128, 131 and 136). The role of the private sector also emerged as an issue in the final session of the day in relation to conditions on new nuclear build (page 153). However, this issue was not brought out as a specific concern in the various summary reports (unlike waste, or safety and security).

The concerns of the public about the role of the private sector, and the public's very clear preference for Government to 'play a key role' (page 153) and for nuclear power stations to be 'in public ownership' (page 136) was the issue that created the greatest surprise for policy makers (as mentioned above). Policy maker comments on this issue included the following:

"Three elements struck us at the public events. These were the public's concerns about 1) waste; 2) security (we were already conscious that the two concerns existed – people may have continued to feel concern about these aspects because we didn't pull our punches); and 3) nuclear power being in the hands of private industry. This hasn't changed Government's approach, it has sensitised Government to that concern (it hadn't been expected) and it is clear we need to be sensitive around ownership: we had thought that there were negative connotations of public ownership. This hasn't changed our approach but it has changed our approach to presenting our case and our approach to regulation." (policy maker interviewee)

"[The big surprise was about] the role of the private sector. We thought that people might feel that the Government should be doing more, but we didn't have to alter our policy." (policy maker interviewee)

"Surprised [about the] scepticism that the private sector is the right sector to build power stations and deal with waste ... [that] didn't feature in the Consultation Document or on our horizon. Completely new. Indirect effect is the new [Nuclear Liabilities Financial Advisory Board]" (policy maker interviewee)

These comments illustrate that policy makers were not expecting this issue to be raised at all. However, the comments also demonstrate that the policy makers were listening to the public views, and heard these concerns, and also that they identified ways that they saw were tackling that public concern (including the establishment of the NLFAB, and regulation of waste management).

The way the public concern on the role of the private sector was raised and tackled within this consultation raises some interesting issues for future consultations. The policy makers in BERR tried to find a way to answer the concern within the parameters of nuclear policy (as shown above).

However, this issue clearly did not fit easily within this consultation; it provided a much broader challenge to Government thinking - not just beyond the consultation but beyond the remit of the Government department running the consultation. It may be that future consultations need to consider how they will deal with such broad political issues that arise so clearly; for example, how such findings from a single consultation can be fed into the broader political debate and/or to other more relevant Government departments (e.g. HM Treasury).

More generally, the approach to the construction of the White Paper seems to be an unusually clear example of how public engagement has impacted on Government policy in some very practical ways. The White Paper itself summarises the consultation questions, the input received from the public and stakeholders, the Government response and the policy conclusion. This is a very clear and transparent response to the consultation and good practice that other consultations could follow.

Overall, as evaluators, we would conclude that there is clear evidence that the public views expressed in the deliberative events did influence the Government's final policy conclusions on nuclear power as published in the White Paper. There were also wider impacts, which are described in more detail below (under Costs and benefits) and in section 8.

Costs and benefits

The issues for this evaluation on costs and benefits focus on a qualitative and descriptive approach to considering the *perceived* costs and benefits of the deliberative public events for the participants and policy makers. There was no formal consideration as part of this evaluation of the balance of costs and benefits. However, it is a useful indicator of the 'value' of the exercise to ask those involved about *perceived* costs and benefits.

Participant interviewees were asked a specific question on this topic, which was:

"Public consultation obviously has financial costs. Do you think it is money well spent or not?"

Some were asked a supplementary question on what would make it more likely that they felt it was money well spent, which provided additional information on caveats.

This evaluation has not sought details of the costs (financial, staff etc) of the deliberative public events (or any other elements) in this consultation process. The only information on costs sought or provided was that a total budget of £2.4 million was allocated by the department "for the implementation and running of the consultation and subsequent collation and analysis of consultation responses"⁸¹.

Although consideration of costs is becoming increasingly important in evaluations of engagement processes, at the time this evaluation research was carried out, no data was collected on detailed costs during the evaluation and it was not possible, in retrospect, to gather any meaningful data later.

The focus on consideration of costs is therefore based on feedback from participants, specifically in participant interviews, and from policy makers. The actual costs (the total budget identified above) was not discussed with respondents, although that information was by that time in the public domain.

The feedback from participant interviewees on their **perceptions of costs** was as follows:

- 12 out of 30 participant interviewees thought it was money well spent, 6 did not, and 3 were not sure. 9 specifically said that it was 'money well spent' if the consultation makes a difference. Comments included:

"It was a lot of money just for our opinions and views, which weren't really listened to anyway" (participant interviewee, Belfast)

"I think yes – you need to hold these events in a democracy" (participant interviewee, Cardiff)

"No. ... I don't think so much money needed to be spent. It relates to it being a PR exercise – the amount spent on it makes me feel they were doing it to look good" (participant interviewee, Cardiff)

"If it has made a difference then yes it is money well spent" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"I do think it's a necessary expense, yes. It is an important thing even if just to be seen to do this" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"Yes I think this was money well spent" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"Yes I think because of the different people involved from different backgrounds. I walked out of there more happy and enlightened. Even if the Government didn't listen at least people went out knowing more" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"For something that important, yes, you need that broad section involved" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"I think the amount of money we got was a little excessive – it could have been done cheaper" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"It is hard to say because it depends if they took our ideas and opinions on board. If we did influence the decision then it would be worth the money because I didn't know the outcome I couldn't say" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

⁸¹ *The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of Consultation Responses*. BERR, London, January 2008. para 1.16.

"Considering it is one of the most important things going on, I think so" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"I think if they are going to spend money it needs to have an impact otherwise there is no point in doing it" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"The really important thing is the diversity of viewpoint. People who have interest and time, for example the middle classes, would normally turn up to these things, so given the range of people who were attracted it was worth it. But on the other hand I shudder to think how much money was spent" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"I thought this was money well spent, especially in terms of helping the public understanding of nuclear power" (participant interviewee, London)

"If our views were taken into consideration then yes, but if not then no" (participant interviewee, London)

"If the Government as a result of consultation actually listened to the public and the decision was influenced by the majority then yes" (participant interviewee, London)

"It could be money well spent if they took more notice, but this one was a waste as I know they didn't listen. They had already made up their minds" (participant interviewee, London)

"Yes for this because it is quite a big issue. Although it probably cost a lot I think the end result would be worth it" (participant interviewee, Leicester)

The feedback from participant interviewees, illustrated by these comments, is very clear that there was a general feeling that this consultation (and consultation in general) was money well spent if, and often only if, Government listened, took notice and what the public said made a difference.

For policy maker interviewees, the feedback on whether it was 'money well spent' was based more on the fact that it had to be done, and it was a matter of spending the money to achieve the best possible result. Comments from policy maker interviewees on perceived costs included:

"It was money well-spent. Knowing all the components, for the value we got from it, I would say it was cheap at the price" (policy maker interviewee)

"It was important that we could do as much as we could to reach people. This consultation happened against the backdrop of losing the judicial review. So in that context, it was money well-spent" (policy maker interviewee)

"I thought the public event was really good – it was a good use of money – a good experience for both participants and observers. And I really enjoyed it. It's so much better going out and hearing people" (policy maker interviewee)

"I'm more positive. Intuitively I'm in the category of those who think that the Government is there to take decisions. I think the consultation was expensive, this is a cost to the tax payer ... [However] The decision we took will affect the whole country for at least 50 years in a fairly profound way: it is not a flash in the pan decision. So the magnitude of the decision required it and it was right to take that approach – the Government needed to expose its views and do it thoroughly" (policy maker interviewee)

From the feedback from policy maker interviewees, illustrated by these comments, the consultation costs were certainly 'money well spent'. Their focus was on the importance of the decision, having to do a consultation and wanting to do it well. Policy maker interviewees were quite clear about the benefits of the process to their work (see below for more on benefits), and they clearly believed the costs were commensurate with the objectives and the context within which they were operating.

Finally, on costs, the interviews with four observers asked about the extent to which they felt the costs of the exercise had been 'money well spent'. Their comments on costs included:

"[It was] a missed opportunity to get a better and more robust view" (observer interviewee)

"The resourcing was very good (it was reported that £2m had been spent on the exercise). Perhaps the level of events looked too slick, but I thought the level of resourcing was commensurate with the issue. You should try to resource a process like this properly and in this case the resources were there" (observer interviewee)

"The money wasn't wasted. I wouldn't have done the process that way. I would have had a longer process with fewer people and more qualitative analysis" (observer interviewee)

"I thought it was well worth the costs. It stiffened the Government's spine on this issue" (observer interviewee)

"It was very interesting ... I suppose there were about 100 people there [at one event] and that each of them may have told 10 people about it. If I compare that with the cost of nurses or teachers, it seems expensive. In principle, I think it 's great. People were really engaged and would have told their friends. But it is very expensive" (observer interviewee)

"I judge value for money in terms of how many people were reached, the cost per head ... I would say that the impact from media coverage is going down ... For [my department] I would like to do something that maximised impact, perhaps more regional, involving regional media and local media, to extend the whole thing out" (observer interviewee)

"I think the motivation is great: more people involved in the democratic process. But there is the issue of cost - the money has to come from somewhere else ... I wouldn't like to see a lot more consultations like that. I think if people knew they would object" (observer interviewee)

The feedback from observer interviewees, illustrated by these comments, was therefore more complex. The level of resourcing was considered appropriate to the issue and context, although some would have spent those resources differently. However, here too, there was quite a strong sense that this particular process did result in some important benefits.

From observation of this whole strand of activity, the evaluators can conclude that it was clearly well resourced, and that such a level of resourcing was appropriate to achieving the objectives in this context. It is possible that some costs could have been saved: some participants suggested that the incentives paid to everyone who attended could have been less. Others, particularly observers, suggested that more could have been achieved with small changes to the process at no additional cost (particularly opening up the questions and range of issues for discussion). However, aside from relatively small cost savings and the potential for some greater benefits being achieved, the feedback from all those involved suggests that the level of resourcing was appropriate and represented 'money well spent'.

Any assessment of the level of resourcing clearly requires a parallel consideration of the **benefits** that were achieved for the investment. Again there is feedback on this from all those involved.

Feedback from participant questionnaire respondents on the most important benefits to them personally in taking part in the event were, in summary, as follows:

- 317 participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910 respondents) said that they gained learning, information, knowledge and awareness

- 128 respondents (out of 910) said they had got benefit from talking to others, listening to others' views, and meeting people
- 90 respondents said they had learned specifically about nuclear power
- 86 said they had benefited from taking part, contributing to something important, feeling valued
- 78 said they benefited from sharing their views, having their say

There was similar feedback from participant interviewees. For them the most important benefits were as follows:

- 16 out of 30 participant interviewees gained information, learning, knowledge
- 9 mentioned being pleased to be invited, and to have the opportunity to put their views across and have their say
- 8 mentioned meeting people and exchanging views

Comments from participant interviewees on the benefits for them included:

"It was interesting to contribute and to listen to other opinions. There were quite a few people who knew what they were talking about and I found it very useful from that point of view" (participant interviewee, Belfast)

"I could be cynical and say I got to stay in a nice hotel but I do feel that maybe in a very very small way I contributed to policy making" (participant interviewee, Cardiff)

"It was interesting to see a process where you could influence policy and also get information on power and energy" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"Being able to tell my family what an authority on nuclear power I am" (participant interviewee, Edinburgh)

"That people really do care (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"I learned a lot. It enabled me to have information I'd not had any access to before and I felt I was able to have my say on the subject. But I felt it was still a bit biased" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"The information and knowing you can actually say something. It was good to be there and have your say in person" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"At least it proves that consultation does go on and that public views are put in front of the Government. Personally I suppose you feel involved" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"I felt it was quite a big responsibility and I felt honoured to be asked to take part" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"I was pleased that the Government was asking people's views and that I was one of those people" (participant interviewee, London)

The feedback from participant interviewees, illustrated by these comments, shows that the key benefits for participants were learning, exchanging views and being involved. The comments quoted above focus more on the benefits of being part of the process, of the actual participation and, from the clear strength of feeling on those points, to illustrate that those were also clearly important benefits even if not mentioned by as many respondents as learning.

The social aspects were also clearly important for public participants, both meeting new people and (as quoted elsewhere) meeting a diverse group of people with a range of views. It seems that participants particularly value being taken out of their usual social sphere and mixing with people they would not normally meet, and hearing (and discussing) views they would not normally come across. In terms of contributing to wider social benefits, such as social cohesion, this mixing and getting to know people with different backgrounds and views has real value.

Observers also gained some valuable benefits from watching the process. The feedback from observer questionnaires was that the two main benefits to observers was:

- 11 out of 27 observer questionnaire respondents identified the benefits of gaining insight / learning public / grassroots views on the issues
- 7 said they had learnt a lot about participatory processes.

Comments from observer questionnaire respondents on the benefits of being involved in the process for them included the following:

"It gave me a good idea of what can be achieved and the limitations of the process" (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"Good opportunity to hear people who are not directly involved in the industry" (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"It was my first event so I learnt a lot. Thanks for letting me observe." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"Real knowledge of the key issues and sense of public feeling on nuclear power." (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Might run an event like this in the future" (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Insight into public opinion and knowledge" (observer questionnaire respondent, Exeter)

"A very good insight into the views and level of understanding of a cross section of the public" (observer questionnaire respondent, Exeter)

"Gaining grassroots views and understanding qualifications" (observer questionnaire respondent, Exeter)

"It was very useful to hear the views of the participants first hand and understand some of the fundamental drivers that affect their attitudes towards energy production and use." (observer questionnaire respondent, Leicester)

"It gave me the opportunity to hear the range of views and to understand the issues on which people need reassurance." (observer questionnaire respondent, London)

"It was an excellent opportunity to listen to new views and attitudes. Being part of the wider energy industry we get used to hearing the same points made repeatedly by groups with vested interest in specific technologies." (observer questionnaire respondent, Liverpool)

Observer interviewees identified further benefits of being involved in the consultation for them, when interviewed some months later:

"I think it is valuable. It could be done by market research but this way it is publicly verifiable and includes moral issues" (observer interviewee)

"For getting discussions on moral issues like this one which involve key questions like intergenerational liability, these issues are suited to these consultations. It is very reasonable that the feelings of the general population should be considered" (observer interviewee)

This feedback suggests some real benefits for observers, both in terms of understanding public attitudes on the issues and learning more about how to engage the public well in discussing these issues.

Finally, policy maker interviewees identified a range of benefits for them from the consultation, which were largely around strengthening the legitimacy of the decision, providing a mechanism for testing and gaining detailed feedback on ideas and views, and simply gaining an understanding of what the public really thought and cared about.

Comments from policy makers about the benefits of the consultation for them included the following:

"It strengthens the legitimacy of decisions" (policy maker interviewee)

"A good discipline; it strengthens the soundness of decision making. The process of justifying it in public fora has led to changes and stronger confidence that it [the policy decision] stacks up" (policy maker interviewee)

"It is always useful to get a wider view ... it would be quite dangerous to rely on experts - they don't always agree. And throwing the issue out more widely gives a broader range of views and tests views" (policy maker interviewee)

"It confirmed many of our views. It gave legitimacy to our view. There are those people whose views you'll never change. The results showed that our preferred view was well-founded" (policy maker interviewee)

"Having gone to great lengths to reach people and to hear their views, this must have increased legitimacy" (policy maker interviewee)

"There can be no substitute for doing this, especially on an issue where the Government has been ambivalent in the past. The Government can't just announce a position. The process was slightly humbling: we challenged people to say that the Government had got its preliminary position wrong, then we spent many months talking to people and asking them 'What is it about nuclear that is troubling'. The whole process gives people the initiative. The approach is well-regarded in Whitehall. It is different to normal work" (policy maker interviewee)

"Having seen the value of public engagement events, we want to go on running them. They're an effective way of helping people marshal their concerns." (policy maker interviewee)

"The September 8th meeting was incredibly useful. The most interesting thing was the richness of the debate on the tables, the intelligence people applied and their willingness to engage in debate. The information we gave was almost irrelevant in a way: people didn't need more prompting to get going. There was a great variety in the audience, a range of ethnic backgrounds. It was great. It gave me a real sense of people having far stronger views on this than I'd expected." (policy maker interviewee)

"The written feedback from those groups [public deliberative events] was extremely helpful. Also the consistency in the voting results across the stakeholder events, that was very helpful – I didn't expect there would be such consistency." (policy maker interviewee)

"I'm more positive. Intuitively I'm in the category of those who think that the Government is there to take decisions. I think the consultation was expensive, this is a cost to the tax payer." (policy maker interviewee)

"It gave us a clear insight into what people think" (policy maker interviewee).

The feedback from policy makers interviewees, illustrated by these comments, and the comments from others involved, identify a whole range of tangible and intangible benefits from being involved in this process. The feedback also suggests a general view that the investment in the consultation was 'money well spent' although, for participants in particular, that value was contingent on their views being listened to, taken into account and making some difference.

For the evaluation of this strand of the consultation overall, this feedback does provide some evidence that there was perceived to be a reasonable balance of costs and benefits in this case. The exercise was highly resourced in terms of both staff and money, but did also provide some significant benefits for all involved.

7.7 Overall findings, conclusions and lessons for the future

All evaluation respondents on the deliberative public events were asked to suggest specific lessons that Government should take from this event. The feedback was, in summary, as follows:

- **For participant questionnaire respondents**, the responses were only sought in a final section asking if they had anything else to add. The two main points in their feedback was, after expressing their thanks for an enjoyable event (by 80 respondents, out of the total of 910 respondents), that they would have liked more information on alternatives and opposing views (25 respondents), and that there should be more events like this one.
- **Participant interviewees agreed**. The most frequent comment (8 out of 30 interviewees) said that the main lesson was to do it more often. 4 said the main lesson was for Government to keep an open mind and not decide in advance, and 3 said that Government should take the public seriously. 3 also mentioned that there should have been more information on alternatives and opposing views.

Comments from participant interviewees on lessons for the future included:

"Never underestimate how interested and involved people are. And also many people had a lot of knowledge" (participant interviewee, Cardiff)

"The Government needs to be aware that there are a lot of different views out there" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"Present more on the possible problems of the topic and negative sides, for any topic" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"Not to be afraid to ask the general public about it because they do care and it is their lives being affected" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"It is good to know the Government is asking our opinion and they should do more of it" (participant interviewee, Exeter)

"If you are going to do it again you need to give people a broader amount of information on alternatives. It felt like 'we're gonna go down this route anyway and we just want your approval'. Give people all the information and make it clear if that's the route that has already been decided. Don't be patronising" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"It's getting a fair hearing from the other side, from people who would be against anything like that. If they are going to ask the public about things like this in the future the Government has to give both sides of the story and allow a fair approach" (participant interviewee, Liverpool)

"Do it before they make the decision. I can only think that our views do get put in front of them and feed into their decision making" (participant interviewee, Norwich)

"Number one: take your public seriously. It doesn't seem they were able to pull the wool over people's eyes. If people didn't know about the background and existing Government policy they found out within the first 10 minutes of being there" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"If you want to involve people, treat them with a degree of intelligence and actually listen to them" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"I think it was just that I felt really frustrated at the end of the day that essentially they didn't want to listen. They should give people more credit – we are intelligent people" (participant interviewee, Newcastle)

"More of these kinds of events on other issues wouldn't do any harm. Listening and involving the public is a good thing and the more they do it can only be a good thing for them" (participant interviewee, London)

"Well it's hard but if they can somehow have a follow-up to reassure people they have been listened to and that it wasn't just a tick box" (participant interviewee, London)

"Get some more people from the Government there to actually listen. They also need to come in with an open mind rather than having a closed mind, asking our opinion and ignoring it" (participant interviewee, London)

"Their motive for involving the public must be genuine – there is no point spending all that money and people spending all that time if the decision has already been made" (participant interviewee, London)

"It is good to be involved and a good thing the Government can make an effort to involve people" (participant interviewee, Leicester)

- **Observer questionnaire respondents** agreed with many of the issues raised by participant questionnaire respondents and interviewees in relation to lessons for the future. The most frequent comment from observer questionnaire respondents (from 3 out of 27 respondents) was the main lesson was to do more of these types of engagement events, and (2) said this needed to be done early in the policy process.

Comments from observer questionnaire respondents on lessons for the future included:

"Use the general public more! They have excellent ideas to contribute and a much better understanding than credited." (observer questionnaire respondent, Edinburgh)

"Well worth doing BUT do it at an earlier stage in policy making so participants feel less cynicism about its contribution" (observer questionnaire respondent, Cardiff)

"I'm sure this was a very expensive event. However, it was very worthwhile; and Government should consider similar events for other complex issues in future." (observer questionnaire respondent, Liverpool)

- **Observer and other interviewees** gave similar feedback with, like participants, a focus on trusting and respecting the public, and on ensuring a range of opinions are covered. Comments from observer interviewees included:

"Trust the public: give them the right information at the right moment and they will come up with a response" (observer interviewee)

"The day [of public events] was the highlight of the consultation process. It was the most powerful event ... this event gave the view of 'the man on the Clapham omnibus', but that's rather an outdated way of putting it. It wasn't the view of the general population, but the view of a general population" (observer interviewee)

"Doing a good consultation involves showing alternative scenarios. Those who advocate alternative scenarios should be able to say what they want, and not be given framed questions and only meaningless 'sound bite' time" (other interviewee)

- **For facilitator questionnaire respondents**, the key lessons were that around ensuring that the event and information were, and were seen to be, impartial (identified by 17 facilitator questionnaire respondents out of the total of 95), that public deliberation was needed at an early stage in the decision making process (8), and not to overload people with information (6).

Several respondents mentioned that there needed to be fewer, more focused questions (5), that there needed to be more 'open' questions and discussions (5), that there needed to be more time for participants to think and respond (5). Finally, some respondents mentioned that it would be helpful to give participants information in advance (4), and that it was important to demonstrate how the results of the public events had been used and made a difference in policy development.

Facilitator questionnaire respondents feedback on lessons for the future included:

"Do it sooner and spend the right amount of time running the process. This was a 50 year old issue with entrenched positions which deserved much longer in deliberation. Public engagement was the right thing to do, but needed more attention and time and more scientific expertise present in the room" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"The one big lesson is that people will genuinely try their best to provide information about their views - they really work hard with groups of people they have never met before so it isn't easy but they all give it their best shot. What the Government must do is reward this effort and update the contributors of what's happening to their contributions ... the government should be applauded for trying to engage and allow the public to contribute" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"The clear message from participants was that they believed this event was valuable both personally in enabling them to be better informed, and nationally as a means of reflecting the views of the country. If the process of public engagement is to have credibility, it is critical that the outcome is seen to influence policy. So that participation is not to be viewed as a chore e.g. jury service, but as a valuable contribution to improving the well-being of society" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"The public are sceptical and distrusting of government. Even when a policy position - like the government's position of the future of nuclear power - is made clear as it was from the start of this event, there is a fine balance in establishing the credibility of such an event in presenting all sides of the debate. Even though the government's position was made clear as the starting point of the days' discussions - in many ways this in itself served to undermine the public's perception of why they were there and they had made up their minds within the first few minutes that it was a 'fix'" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"To ensure that participants feel listened to and that they are actually having a say. It appears that consultation events are increasing, which is good and should be a continuing trend. and it is vital that the points raised in consultations are listened to, utilised, and that the public are made aware of how their discussions have influenced policies to demonstrate that consultation does have an impact. It is important that people at the event feel that their time and input is valued and will count. I think at the event on 8 Sept, most people felt that they were having a say and that it would be listened to, yet there were others who were sceptical on this and felt it was a publicity exercise" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"Do not underestimate the knowledge of participants. Avoid being patronising and make sure that information provided reflects a range of opinions (and I don't just mean Greenpeace) and experts" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"Participants are SMART. Don't underestimate them. You can't direct them into overlooking problems, not asking more questions than you have answers for - they will protest and to some degree, override your agenda. I think the "main question" or "purpose" at this event was overly complicated; simpler, more straightforward language and more open questioning might have been more successful. It's not good to rush people" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"Issues such as this must be presented in a balanced way, and whilst I understand the last minute difficulties relating to Greenpeace, not enough was done to cover the alternative options" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"I hope that they [Government] continue to explore and experiment with ways to engage the public. This is another huge learning opportunity, both good and bad I expect. From the participants there was a sense of cynicism because the government had to state its view - this sat uneasily with many participants - i.e. it made the process less credible as people think government will do what it wants to anyway" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"Next time...don't fail to offer clearly opposed view points. If you feel that your position is secure and thoroughly thought through don't be afraid to let the opposition speak. It only strengthens the trust the people have in you for being considerate and honest with them. My participants went away trusting the government less" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"That it is possible with the right approach and information to well chosen people to achieve a sensible debate on a subject where the normal discussions, probably in the pub, would be more driven by emotion" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

"I was really impressed by my participants, in the way that they conducted the debate. It is an immensely emotional issue, with strong feelings on all sides, and one in which there is quite clearly no simple answer. I was very proud of the way that my participants debated with each other, always very respectful of other people's points of views, but without being defensive, patronising, or aggressive in terms of ensuring they put their own view across. No one was dogmatic, everyone listened. When you compare it to discussions on Newsnight or R4's Today programme, I would say that the British public should not be judged by the behaviour of both the media and some politicians and pundits, looking to get their soundbite across. They should be given much more credit for their ability to deal with complicated issues, and their willingness to consider different points of view. I think it is unfortunate that neither Greenpeace, who as my participants said, were much missed by virtue of their abstention from the debate, nor the Government, with their legally appropriate descriptions of issues, were able to 'muck in' and take the risk of just running ideas by people and allowing them to make up their own minds" (facilitator questionnaire respondent)

For the evaluators, taking into account all this feedback from those involved, observation and overall review, the key findings at this stage are:

- **The design and development process for the public events worked well.** Each element of the development process was designed and delivered very well: the Citizens Advisory Board, the Stakeholder Review Group and the Development Event. However, they were not joined up as well as they might have been. For example:
 - The CAB had no continuing role, beyond two of the members attending the Development Event
 - Stakeholders had no formal continuing role. Some attended the deliberative events as observers but they had no formal role (e.g. as a continuing Steering Group for the process)
 - The timing between these different events was so tight towards the end of the development stage that it was very hard to respond to the complexities of feedback beyond 'tweaks' to the overall design and the content of the materials.

For example, the Development Event noted that the process and questions were repetitive, and that they would have like more input from people living and working around existing nuclear power sites. Also, the Stakeholder Review Group proposed quite a significant change of emphasis for the deliberative events. With more time, these more complex ideas could have been more fully integrated.

- Other pressures (legal as well as time) meant that the original focus of all information coming from and reflecting the formal written Consultation Document could not be changed, to ensure consistency, in spite of that being a great deal of information and questions for a deliberative public event.
- **The public deliberative events worked well**, but were constrained in some ways by compromise. For example:
 - The premise and boundaries of the debate were made very clear - the Government had taken a preliminary view but had not made a decision. This was precisely true - the Government could not formally take a decision until after the consultation. However, the proposition that the Government had a preliminary view was interpreted by some public participants as the Government having already decided, which led to a degree of cynicism about the level of influence of the public engagement.
 - There was plenty of information, covering all aspects of the debate and including opposing views and information about alternative sources. However, the clarity of sources of information, and the quantity of information on opposing and alternative views, could have been greater. In addition, the withdrawal of some green groups the day before the deliberative events contributed to the suspicion that not all views had been included in the information provided.
 - Participants did have time to discuss the issues, and relished the debate. However, the programme could have been adjusted to allow more time for discussion if less time had been given to information provision.
 - Participants did express their views freely and openly, they listened to each with respect and asked questions whenever they needed more information. However, it seems that questions from some participants could not always be answered fully as there were not sufficient 'experts' available at each event, and the time was too constrained to allow much pause to find additional information.

Overall, however, the public engagement activities worked well, and provided significant benefits for the participants as well as the policy makers who were using the results. For example:

- For policy makers, these events provided an extensive, comprehensive, large scale deliberative public engagement process that provided an opportunity to test the Government's preliminary views on nuclear power with a demographically representative sample of the UK population. It had to be implemented to a high standard and that was achieved.
- For policy makers, the events also provided some valuable feedback on issues that they knew to be contentious (such as waste and safety), and some that they were not expecting (such as the role of the private sector in owning and operating nuclear power stations).
- For participants, the activities provided a very enjoyable and worthwhile experience, from which they learned a great deal both about the subjects covered and about participating in public policy.

- There was a real debate, where participants listened to each others' views including those from different backgrounds and with different opinions. The next time the Government or media call for a 'public debate' on a major issue of the day, this approach to deliberative public dialogue could be an effective (if partial) option.
- Deliberative public engagement provides particular benefits. Participants learnt about the issues, formed and clarified their opinions. This sort of process allows the public voice into public policy decisions in ways that conventional consultations do not, and ensures they have the resources (time, information, support) to participate fully in ways that provide richer information on their views, and greater benefits to them as participants. Written consultations reach the 'interested public' not the 'uninterested general public'. Both these constituencies took part in these deliberative public discussions.

The public view is an essential part of the evidence base for any public policy decision, and this approach provides a very efficient and effective mechanism for achieving that, unmediated by the media or other commentators.

There are some concerns that deliberative engagement is not suitable for subjects that people do not have direct personal experience of; some argue that issues like health, or education, are more suitable. However, the quality of the participants' discussions demonstrated in these events, and the ability of the participants to absorb a great deal of highly technical information during the course of this day, suggests that it is entirely possible for them to engage in such complex subjects, and to identify and discuss the ethical and political implications of these issues.

- More generally, the deliberative public events provided an opportunity for Government to support the development of the democratic capabilities of nearly 1,000 UK citizens. Many of those involved learnt new skills in public participation: the participants, policy makers, observers and everyone else involved.
- The deliberative public events also helped develop new links between Government and citizens. The development of these relationships may be tenuous and temporary but was a clear outcome of the process and may be a (small) contribution to building trust between Government and citizens, in spite of the suspicion and cynicism that surrounded the particular issues.

In summary, therefore, the deliberative public events process had significant value, even if it was flawed in some ways. With more time to plan and amend the design and information materials, it could have worked even better.

In the light of these points, as evaluators, we would suggest that the main lessons for public engagement processes of this sort in future would include the following:

- **Time engagement to fit policy development.** Some guidance on public engagement suggests it should take place as early as possible⁸², and that is usually good advice.

⁸² Rowe, G. and Frewer, L.J. (2000) 'Public participation methods: a framework for evaluation', in *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 25 (1), 3-29.

However, this is an area of some contention and there are differing views on the best time in the policy process for consultation to take place. For example, too early and there are no clear policy targets for the results, and too late and the results may not be able to have any real influence.

In this case, the timing was difficult but there was still room for considerable influence: if there had been a significant public mood (and polling) against any future for new nuclear power stations, it would have been extremely difficult for Government to go ahead as planned. Also, where strong feelings emerged (e.g. on waste), they could be built into the drafting of the White Paper.

- **Frame the engagement honestly, simply and clearly.** The underlying question for any public engagement needs to be simple and clear. In this case the framing was entirely honest - the Government had 'taken a preliminary view' and wanted feedback on that view. However, this did not create a positive atmosphere because the distinction between 'taken a view' and 'made up its mind' is quite subtle. Given a general environment of some distrust between Government and citizens, such subtleties are likely to translate into suspicion. Some of these suspicions were overcome in this case, but the atmosphere was less positive than in many similar engagement activities as a result.

In addition, the substantive question for the public deliberative events was very complex and included so many sub-clauses that participants felt rather 'herded' towards a particular answer. Keeping consultation questions as simple and direct as possible reduces pressure on participants to grapple with such complex choices in a single answer, and thus reduces unease and distrust.

- **Focus the engagement on the types of issues to which the public can best contribute.** Deliberative public engagement of this type can be very valuable in identifying deeper public values, concerns and aspirations. It is participatory, developmental and educative. It is not designed to simply identify a 'top of the head' public view on a set of given questions.

In this case, a greater emphasis in the design of the process on discussion of conditions for acceptance or rejection may have provided valuable feedback to Government about where the public was willing to go ahead, and where it had real concerns and would draw the line. Some of this did come out, and there was a final session on conditions. Unfortunately it was a very short session, at the end of a long day. Even more valuable feedback could have been achieved with a slight shift of emphasis in the design of the day.

- **Take time to plan and deliver public engagement.** There is never enough time for the planning and delivery of public engagement processes to be relaxed. In this case, significant changes were made to initial plans to the programme for the day and the materials as a result of the valuable inputs of the Citizens Advisory Board, the Stakeholder Review Group and the Development Event.

However, in this case, the timing became very tight at the later stages of the design and development process, which reduced the opportunities for further changes. A little extra time at that stage could have been very valuable in enabling the contractors to iron out some of the remaining difficulties.

- **Design events to prioritise participant discussion.** The balance of time in any deliberative public engagement should usually aim to prioritise discussion over information provision. The purpose of public deliberation is public discussion so that participants can articulate and develop their views; the information is there to stimulate and resource that discussion. There needs to be time for participants to take in, reflect on and discuss the information they receive in a reasonably relaxed way.

Too much information not only takes time away from the limited time available overall, it also makes participants feel they are being 'sold' something and they start to resist and resent the process. Also, there is only so much information they can absorb in a short time; too much and they get tired and resentful.

There are no hard and fast rules but, as a rule of thumb, no more than one third of the time should be spent providing information - ideally less. In this case, there was too much information overall, too much for participants to take in and deal with in the time and, as a result, discussions were rushed and participants felt bamboozled. Less information could have achieved as much participant knowledge with less negativity.

- **Participants learn from each other.** Participants learn at least as much from sharing ideas and listening to each other as they do from formal information provided. Participants particularly value the interest and challenge of talking with people with different backgrounds and views in such a safe and supportive environment. The whole questioning and discussions in small groups is a very effective learning process in which people take on new information and formulate and refine their views. There needs to be time and a relaxed enough atmosphere for this to be really effective.
- **Participants want to hear opposing views.** The ways in which opposing views can be brought into deliberative public engagement can vary. On the day, they can include presentations in person, filmed presentations, written summaries of arguments for and against and who thinks what, expert panels covering diverse views. They can also include involving stakeholders with opposing views in the planning and drafting processes leading up to the deliberative events.

In this case, significant efforts were made to ensure that the main diverse perspectives were presented, following a stakeholder analysis which identified the range. The plan had been to cover opposing views in the video, with filmed presentations from Greenpeace and others, and in some of the written handouts. Several green NGOs were also involved in the Stakeholder Review Group that considered the plan for the day and the materials, to ensure that opposing views were included. Three lessons emerge from the problems that arose in this case when Greenpeace and some other green groups withdrew:

- Methods are needed to ensure opposing views are presented to participants in forms which do not rely on the goodwill of others (e.g. written summaries of the arguments for and against, and who believes what)
- If there is a good reason why opposing views are not presented in the way that was planned, the organisers say so very clearly and openly (e.g. in this case that some green groups withdrew the day before). Participants respect honesty and openness, and will forgive any small reduction in the quantity of opposing views as a result.

- Further consideration is needed of the role of NGOs in deliberative public engagement, both by Government and by NGOs themselves, to contribute to more effective public engagement in future (see section 3 for more details on this issue).
- **Provide the right sort of information.** Information for deliberative public dialogue needs to be designed to stimulate and resource discussion, not simply to 'educate' the participants. That means that the information has to be trusted and practical. The scrutiny of the information materials to stimulate public discussions in this case was so intense that some valuable lessons have emerged, including:
 - **Participants want information that comes from a range of sources,** and they want to know what comes from where. They tend to trust Government and private sector information less than information from universities, NGOs, independent researchers etc. That does not mean no information from Government; just that a larger proportion should perhaps be provided (and shown to have come) from elsewhere.
 - **They want to know about the process.** Participants ask for information about how many events are taking place, when and where, and how many people are involved (some of this was in the end of meeting report in this case). They also appreciate have a written summary programme of the day, showing lunch breaks etc. Also, participants often want to know how and why they were chosen, and something about the demographic representation. Finally, they want to know what will be done with their views, next steps and when they will hear more about the results. A paragraph on the programme can explain that.
 - **Written information can focus on facts and figures.** Ideally, it should be very brief and concise and presented in tables, bullet points, diagrams etc. In the field of nuclear power, in which almost nothing is uncontested, ideally written information is the basic background to the subject free of opinion (except where different views are explicitly summarised - see below).
 - **Different opinions can be presented by individuals,** chosen to reflect the diversity of views. Not all views can be covered but the main elements of the arguments need to be covered.
 - **International examples.** Participants often want details of how they do it in other countries. This came up quite often in this debate as participants had heard that countries such as France and Sweden were developing new nuclear power stations.
 - **What those most directly affected think.** In this case, the unions were among those providing views on the video, with their clear interests around skills and jobs. There was also interest among participants in what people who live and work around existing nuclear power stations thought. In this case, the site stakeholder meetings (see separate section on stakeholder events) could have been held earlier and the results of those, and other data, could have been provided.
 - **Information in advance.** Some participants want some information before they arrive at an engagement activity. Such information should be minimal and certainly nothing complex that will put anyone off taking part. Also, it should only be provided once participants have agreed to take part, so that

self-selection of those with a particular interest in the subject can be avoided. It can provide just enough to explain what the issue and / or main question is, what is the purpose of the engagement, what they will be doing and how it will work (e.g. small group discussions), what will happen to the results, and what information they will be given at different points (e.g. they will be told when the final decision is made and what difference their input made).

- **Information afterwards.** As mentioned above, participants want to know what happens as a result of their involvement. They need to know what is being recorded from their discussions, what results or conclusions are being taken forward to policy makers on their behalf, and what happens to that input. In this case, the end of day report (sent within a week) very effectively summarised the key results from across all nine deliberative events, and participants were told about the final decision.

It is also helpful for the final communication to participants to explain what difference the public input made. It is valuable for the policy makers themselves to go through the process of articulating what policy details have changed as a result of public input. It is also valuable in generating greater public trust in public policy making and in engagement activities to demonstrate where and how a difference to policy has been made.

In this case, the White Paper provided a detailed summary of input from all participants and a detailed response by Government. However, few participants in any part of the consultation will have seen, let alone read, the whole White Paper. Shorter summaries (ideally one page for public participants) would help here; probably separate summaries for each group involved (e.g. public at special events, stakeholders at specific events).

- **Mix of methods of information provision.** In this case, the pub quiz, the video and handouts provided a good mix of methods. Additional methods that can enhance information provision include ensuring that experts are available to answer detailed questions (on policy or the science).
- **Do not read out large amount of information.** This was an experiment in this case designed to avoid excluding anyone with literacy problems, and to ensure consistency of information provided. However, it did not work on any level.
- **Credible development process for information.** Information is more likely to be trusted by participants if it can be shown to have the support of a group of stakeholders with different views. This helps convince participants that the information is fair and balanced.
- **Remember that participants learn from each other.** As above; formal information provision will only ever be part of building greater knowledge and understanding.
- **Integrate stakeholder engagement, citizens advice and piloting processes throughout the planning and delivery.** Each of the parts of the development process worked well on their own terms, but could have provided greater and more valuable input if links had been maintained, such as a Steering Group of key stakeholders and a continuing Citizens Advisory Board. Those could have provided wider support as well as demonstrating greater independence and integrity in the information materials and process design.

- **Recording and reporting needs to be comprehensive and transparent.** In achieving the most comprehensive reporting, recording needs to be comprehensive. In many cases, it is too much to expect facilitators to lead and support discussions, take notes and give information. Additional recorders, who can support facilitators, would be ideal; digital recording can also be used as a backup (although this can be difficult given the levels of background noise at large events). Also, final reports need to be comprehensive to allow the nuances of public views to be fully covered and as part of the evidence base. Summary reports and presentations to policy makers of key findings may also be needed.
- **Logistics matter.** At some of these events, some people were waiting around for over an hour at the start, which had meant an early start for them and bad temper at the beginning of the day. That does not help create a positive atmosphere. All the other logistics generally worked very well throughout the day: lunch, refreshments, chocolates and fruit platters put on tables mid-afternoon etc. Those did all help create a good productive mood.
- **Invite the Minister.** From observation, there is a frisson when a Government Minister is present throughout and listening first hand to what the public are saying. Some Ministers are excellent at these events and that can create a highly positive environment where participants feel Government is taking their views seriously and values their input. A Minister adds gravitas and status to these events, and can strengthen trust in the whole process.
- **Media coverage.** Media coverage often focuses on the polling results from these events, which never communicate the nuances of the debate and the positive results. An ideal situation in future could be to involve the public participants in the media strategy in some ways, for example through a continuing Citizens Advisory Board that could talk directly to the media about the process and results of the consultation.
- **Trust and respect participants.** Participants are surprisingly willing to commit their energy and effort to these processes, even when they have no previous personal interest in the subject. Discussions among participants, especially in small groups, are almost always of much higher quality than policy makers and observers expect.

It helps to plan on the basis that participants have a great deal to contribute, will want to talk, will want to engage at a deep level, and will want to see their input taken seriously as a result. They can be trusted to respect and engage with the process and to contribute a great deal.

Conclusions

This section of the evaluation report has summarised all the activities of the deliberative public engagement strand of the consultation process on nuclear power including all the development activities to plan the deliberative public events and draft the information materials used by the public on the day.

The deliberative public events were by far the largest single element of the consultation overall in terms of face to face meetings with these numbers of people involved, and also the most contentious in terms of the content of the materials and the questions asked.

Overall, the analysis in this evaluation has concluded that designing and delivering this whole stream of activity was immensely challenging, and there was a great deal of cynicism and suspicion from stakeholders and public participants to deal with throughout - both in terms of perceived bias in the materials and questions asked, and in terms of a sense among many of those involved that the Government had already taken the substantive decision to proceed with building new nuclear power stations.

However, the evaluation also concludes that the process design and delivery for these public events, while not perfect, did work effectively to enable participants to discuss all the key issues, and that information materials covered all those key issues including providing information on alternative options and opposing views (although some of those involved would have liked more of these arguments).

As a result, participants took part with great energy and commitment and provided some valuable feedback to Government. In turn, evidence has been shown of the extent to which Government did listen to those views and have adapted and changed some policy conclusions to reflect the strong feelings of the public, particularly on waste and independent scrutiny.

The evaluation has identified numerous specific practical lessons for the future that emerge from this experience, as above, based on what worked well and what worked less well in this case.

Overall, and particularly in the specific very challenging circumstances of this consultation, the whole process of designing and delivering the deliberative public events was largely sound, worked well and delivered some significant benefits to all those involved.

8. Impacts and influence

8.1 Introduction

This evaluation report has provided a detailed analysis of the consultation activities, and the impacts and influence of each strand individually. This section brings these analyses together to summarise the overall impacts and influence of the process. It summarises the concerns of participants arising from each strand of the consultation in turn, and assesses the extent to which those concerns were addressed in the policy conclusions in the White Paper.

The impacts and influence of the consultation process may also go beyond the change to policy priorities and conclusions. There may also be impacts on all those involved. This section therefore also summarises the different benefits for public and stakeholder participants, observers and for policy makers.

8.2 Impacts on policy

Some details of the results of each element of the consultation process, and how those specific issues were dealt with in terms of the final policy conclusions announced in the White Paper, are covered in the relevant sections of this report (sections 5, 6 and 7).

This section focuses on the impacts on policy overall, including a description from policy makers about how they dealt with the input from participants in the consultation, and used that to draft policy conclusions.

8.2.1 Summary of results from each strand

The analysis that follows is based on a comparison of the key policy concerns identified in the different summary reports of each strand of the process, and the extent to which those key concerns were tackled in the White Paper.

- **Results from the deliberative public events.** The following issues are identified from the summary end-of-day report⁸³, and from the detailed final report⁸⁴, by Opinion Leader on the results of the nine deliberative public events. Those reports drew on the polling results as well as detailed notes from table facilitators, and other note takers, at the public events. According to those sources, the four main policy conclusions from the deliberative public events were:
 - **Energy mix.** Energy security and climate change were both significant issues for public participants, although more saw security of supply to be significant (96%) than climate change (88%). Participants were keen to see Government continue to invest in other options for energy production, including renewables and ways to reduce energy consumption, as well as nuclear power.

⁸³ *Talking Energy: The Future of Nuclear Power. Saturday 8th September 2007.* Opinion Leader. (End of day report on the deliberative public events).

⁸⁴ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008, pages 101-229

Although more public participants voted in favour of giving energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations (44% in favour; 38% against), there were concerns that this should not detract from investment in alternative energy sources and energy efficiency.

- **Waste.** There were significant concerns about the management and disposal of nuclear waste. 90% were concerned about the creation of new nuclear waste, and over half (51%) were not satisfied with the proposals in the Government's proposals. There were concerns about who would bear the costs of waste management, and about the role of the private sector in waste management, and the public wanted waste disposal arrangements and processes to be overseen by an organisation independent of energy companies and Government.
- **Safety and security of nuclear plants.** Here too there were significant concerns, with 83% expressing concern. Participants wanted reassurances that there would be transparent information available, for the role of the private sector to be minimal, and for safety and security issues to be monitored by independent and authoritative bodies.
- **Reassurance and regulation.** This related both to waste and security, as shown above, with the need for independent and authoritative bodies to provide this public reassurance.

There were many other issues raised, debated and noted throughout the course of the day, but these four areas of concern were seen to be the issues on which there was particularly public concern and interest.

- **Results from the stakeholder events.** The following issues are identified from the summary report by Henley Centre HeadlightVision⁸⁵ which covered all the regional and site stakeholder events. That report drew on the published reports from each event, but also on the detailed notes taken by table facilitators and transcripts of plenary discussions. The key issues from these events were:
 - **Energy mix.** Stakeholders thought the challenges of energy security and climate change were both important, but that countering climate change needed to be the focus rather than energy security. They also stressed the need for any decision on new nuclear build to go alongside continuing Government investment in renewable energy sources and identifying ways to reduce energy consumption.
 - **Waste.** Stakeholders thought the ethics of leaving legacy waste for future generations, and the successful management of nuclear waste were key issues, with a view emerging that it was unacceptable to invest in new nuclear plants without finding long term waste storage and/or disposal solutions. There were also concerns about costs and how to manage cost responsibilities over long periods of time.
 - **Safety and security of nuclear plants.** Stakeholders were less worried than the public about security, but did raise issues about the safety of nuclear power plants (including to the health of local communities) and other risks (e.g. rising sea levels).

⁸⁵ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008, pages 231-268

- **Regulation.** Stakeholders felt that an ongoing programme of independent scrutiny and inspection, and a strong regulatory framework, were key conditions for building new nuclear capacity.
- **Need for action and skills.** Stakeholders were keen to see a decision taken on these issues quickly, particularly to address energy security. There was, however, some concern about the 'capacity gap' in terms of ability of the skills in the UK to deliver a new nuclear programme.
- **Results from the written and online stakeholder consultation.** The following issues are identified from the detailed report by Dialogue by Design on the results of the results of the written and online consultation⁸⁶ (see section 5 for details).

That report provided a summary of the feedback on all 18 questions in the Consultation Document (and online consultation). The most contentious issues emerging from the written and online consultation, and that would therefore have been expected to be responded to by Government, were as follows:

- **The economics of building new nuclear power stations.** In terms of simple numbers, 405 participants agreed with the Government's propositions, and 244 disagreed (out of 1,524 total responses to this question). One key concern was the degree of subsidy by the taxpayer; another was around nuclear power being controlled by private sector companies.
- **Issues of safety, security, health and non-proliferation.** Here, 657 participants agreed with the Government propositions, 373 disagreed (out of 1,438 total responses to this question). Concerns here were largely to do with risk and regulation.
- **Supply of nuclear fuel.** 521 agreed with the Government propositions, 255 participants disagreed (out of 1,231 total responses to this question). Concerns here were around price, which countries were able and willing to supply fuel, and concerns about a finite supply of uranium. There were also comments about reprocessing spent fuel here.
- **Reprocessing spent fuel.** 376 agreed, 216 disagreed (out of 1,174 total responses to this question). There were concerns raised here linked to problems of managing waste, and to potentially limited access to uranium; as well as to safety and proliferation.
- **Whether energy companies should be given the option to invest in new nuclear power stations.** 734 agreed with the Government propositions on this, the substantive question for the consultation (Question 16); 424 disagreed (out of 1,338 total responses to this question). Concerns here focused partly on the view of some participants that the decision had already been taken, economics and ownership, demand reduction and decentralisation of power generation, the need for the Government to take action more quickly, and wider issues of energy supply and the energy mix.

⁸⁶ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008, pages 25-100

As can be seen from the summary above, very similar issues emerged in all three strands of the consultation around safety and security, risk and regulation, managing waste, and the need to ensure that allowing the building of new nuclear power stations did not detract from investment in other energy sources (especially renewables) and promoting reductions in energy use.

Both public participants and stakeholders at the events also expressed strong views on the role of the private sector in the development of new nuclear power stations; the issue was also mentioned in the written and online consultation but to a lesser degree. The public participants tended to question the role of the private sector overall in an area of service provision of such importance and that had such significant risks and long term implications; some were unaware that existing nuclear power stations were in the private sector. Stakeholders tended to question issues of investment and responsibility, and subsidies, in the short and long term.

8.2.2 Changes to policy as a result of input

The evaluation research included a brief review of how the issues raised in the different strands of the consultation were actually tackled in the White Paper. That analysis showed the following; all references are to pages and paragraphs in the White Paper:

- **Energy mix continues to include investment in renewables and energy efficiency.** The Foreword to the White Paper explicitly recognises the need for the Government to support nuclear "as one part of the overall approach ... including measures to save energy and to strengthen the Renewables Obligation to ensure that renewable electricity plays a full role in taking the UK towards a low-carbon energy economy" (page 6).

In addition, the White Paper (para 6) identifies existing measures in the Energy White Paper 2007 including increasing the Renewables Obligation to 20% and raising energy efficiency standards of appliances, plus plans to increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix by 2020.

- **Waste.** The Government's conclusion on waste and decommissioning includes the following statement (pages 27 and 99):

"Our policy is that before development consents for new nuclear power stations are granted, the Government will need to be satisfied that effective arrangements exist or will exist to manage and dispose of the waste they will produce."

This was seen by BERR policy maker interviewees to be a key change to policy. There had always been an expectation that the White Paper would need to tackle the waste issue, but this was seen as a much more robust proposal, as a condition for consent, than would have been Government policy without the consultation.

- **Safety and security.** The White Paper concludes that the consultation process did show public concern about safety and security, and that there are risks. The White Paper says that the Government does "consider these are very low and that our regulatory arrangements address those risks" (para 38).

However, there are some policy conclusions tackling this as shown below under Independent regulation.

- **Independent regulation.** Although the White Paper concludes that Government was satisfied that existing arrangements for safety and security were satisfactory, the White Paper does suggest that steps would be taken "putting in place measures to ensure that the effectiveness of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is further enhanced" (policy conclusion following para 82, page 34). Also, Annex C gives further details of the Regulatory and Advisory structure for nuclear power, covering the existing and future committee structure.

This was seen by BERR policy maker interviewees as a specific response to the concerns raised in the consultation around safety, security and health.

- **Private sector role.** In answer to "concerns about ensuring that the private sector adequately provides for waste and decommissioning costs" (para 82), the White paper announces the establishment of the Nuclear Liabilities Financing Assurance Board (NLFAB) (para 82, and Annex C) to scrutinise plans to finance waste management.

BERR policy maker interviewees suggested that it had been expected that this role would have been delivered through private advice to Government. However, the establishment of the Board was designed to ensure that such advice was public, transparent and independent to meet concerns about waste management, economics and the need for long term financial and management arrangements.

- **Increasing capacity and skills.** The White Paper concludes that the situation on capacity and skills is "challenging" but "manageable" within current arrangements (para 62).
- **Reprocessing spent fuel.** The Government view in the White Paper remained that they were not expecting any proposals to reprocess spent fuel from new nuclear power stations. However the White Paper states that "Should such proposals come forward in the future, they would need to be considered on their merits at the time and the Government would expect to consult on them" (page 31).

This was seen by BERR policy maker interviewees as reprocessing being unlikely but "not entirely ruled out", in response to feedback from the consultation on waste, proliferation, economics and availability of nuclear fuel.

These policy conclusions do reflect almost all the key concerns raised by participants in the consultation, across all strands of activity. There is therefore evidence that concerns were addressed, even if these conclusions were not as full or as strong as some participants would have wished,

The one issue not explicitly tackled in the policy conclusions in the White Paper is the role of the private sector in ownership of nuclear power stations. This concern was recognised in the White Paper, in John Hutton's Foreword, as one of the significant points raised in the consultation; here the concern is described as "the appropriateness of relying on energy companies for the construction, operation and decommissioning of nuclear power stations" (page 6). In interview, some policy makers argued that the NLFAB goes some way to addressing these concerns.

However, this issue clearly did not fit easily within this consultation; it provided a much broader challenge to Government thinking - not just beyond the consultation but beyond the remit of the Government department running the consultation. It may be that future consultations need to consider how they will deal with such broad political issues that arise so clearly; for example, how such findings from a single consultation can be fed into the broader political debate and/or to other more relevant Government departments (e.g. HM Treasury).

8.2.3 Feedback from policy makers on policy influence

The feedback from policy makers was that they saw five main areas where the input from participants had made a major difference to their thinking: tackling nuclear waste, the importance of increasing investment in renewables alongside nuclear power, the economics, the need for strong independent regulatory frameworks and institutions, and the role of the private sector.

In the first four of these issues (waste, renewables, finance and regulation, and independent regulation), feedback from BERR was that these were not new issues and they knew they were important; what was new was the strength of feeling from the consultation and therefore the imperative to strengthen the policy proposals on those issues.

The fifth issue, the role of the private sector was unexpected. At the time of planning for the consultation, this was considered entirely uncontroversial and, if an issue at all, there was an expectation that ownership would arise around lack of trust in Government and that participants would want the least possible public expenditure.

As mentioned above, there was a strong message from the public events (less so in the written and online consultation or from stakeholder events although these issues did arise there too) that the public would prefer such activities, with such long term (and potentially risky) implications, to be in the hands of Government and the public sector rather the private sector. As also mentioned above, this was the one that was not fully tackled in the White Paper.

Finally, policy makers recognised that the issue of reprocessing fuel was raised by some stakeholders and that was also responded to in the White Paper.

Overall policy maker comments in interview on the issue of policy influence included:

"The material that came forward made it clear that we needed to modify our position on 4 main issues: safety, waste, cost and crowding out renewables" (policy maker interviewee)

"The Government is always looking at these policies and numerous policies are being developed, particularly on the economics of different energy sources. The arguments raised in this consultation are being shared with other teams." (policy maker interviewee)

"We were able to say that nothing came out of the consultation that made us change our view. But we did review our policy ... In the waste section, between the consultation and the White Paper, a commitment was added that before development consents are given, the Government will need to be satisfied that waste will be dealt with. There is a recognition of the concern about waste, balancing this view against the 'middle view' of the need to make progress, because of the significant impact on climate change and energy supply. The government will need to be satisfied that effective arrangements for waste do or will exist – this is an additional commitment" (policy maker interviewee)

"Three elements struck us at the public events. These were the public's concerns about 1) waste; 2) security (we were already conscious that the two concerns existed – people may have continued to feel concern about these aspects because we didn't pull our punches); and 3) nuclear power being in the hands of private industry. This hasn't changed Government's approach, it has sensitised Government to that concern (it hadn't been expected) and it is clear we need to be sensitive around ownership: we had thought that there were negative connotations of public ownership. This hasn't changed our approach but it has changed our approach to presenting our case and our approach to regulation." (policy maker interviewee)

"[renewables have] really woken up, partly through the consultation and the strength of feeling on the whole renewable agenda, with assurance in legislation ... and clear on funding" (policy maker interviewee)

"There are two main things [impacts on policy]:

- we felt confident to take our decision on nuclear power but
 - it brought home the fact that people have strong concerns over nuclear.
- We are developing our policy to accommodate these concerns, e.g. by putting money aside for waste management and disposal and we have changed national policy development to say that there will be no new build without clear provisions on waste. It gave us a clear insight into what people think." (policy maker interviewee)

"The biggies were: the waste commitment [and] a beefed up analysis of renewables and our position on crowding out. On further review, we were reassured that nuclear would not crowd out renewables (and that in fact it was more likely to be the other way round. [Also,] keeping safety under review, developing a safety plan." (policy maker interviewee)

"Another one was [the shift] towards nuclear reprocessing. The Consultation Document was moving away from this ... representations from stakeholders were that we shouldn't rule it out. So now said door is not closed and government would consult on any new proposals." (policy maker interviewee)

"We realised that this is a subject that the whole country engages in – this was probably a new realisation. I came away thinking this is a really important matter that people have a passion for – I was surprised" (policy maker interviewee)

"[The big surprise was about] the role of the private sector. We thought that people might feel that the Government should be doing more, but we didn't have to alter our policy." (policy maker interviewee)

"Has made us think very carefully about policy. Things have significantly changed. One of them is very significant - on waste ... This principle [waste arrangements to be in place before consent given only appeared because 80% concerned about it ... therefore had to do something ... without the consultation and exposure to it, would not have been such a major issue and would not have made it a real condition" (policy maker interviewee)

"Also led on to Government Ministers taking a strong line on subsidies - there won't be any as far as possible" (policy maker interviewee)

"Surprised [about the public] scepticism that the private sector is the right sector to build power stations and deal with waste ... [that] didn't feature in the Consultation Document or on our horizon. Completely new. Indirect effect is the new [Nuclear Liabilities Financial Advisory] Board" (policy maker interviewee)

"[We felt our preliminary view was supported by the results] But even those who supported the Government's position did attach conditions, they were invited to attach conditions. We would have been unrealistic to expect unconditional support" (policy maker interviewee)

"[We felt our preliminary view was supported by the results] but not in an unreserved way. People would rather not do nuclear. People see it as a necessary thing to be done. If there was a magic wand, you could do it differently" (policy maker interviewee)

The feedback from policy makers, illustrated by the quotes above, does provide evidence that those using the results of the input from the public and stakeholder participants in the consultation process were doing so open-mindedly, thoroughly and conscientiously. The extent to which they considered view and tackled the issues raised is illustrated here; the extent to which public and stakeholder concerns were reflected in the White Paper are tackled in section 8.2.2 above.

8.2.4 Policy development process

In terms of the policy process, the main stages reported by policy makers of how they worked with the contributions from participants was as follows:

- **Production of the Consultation Document.** The starting point of the consultation was for the Government to make a proposition and then assess the extent to which the public agreed or disagreed with that. This position meant that the Government already had quite developed ideas for how the many issues and implications around nuclear power may be tackled, and those ideas were presented in the Consultation Document.

The Consultation Document was therefore an important first step in the whole process and effort was put into making that comprehensive and accessible. Policy makers found the discipline of producing that document "very profound", according to one policy maker interviewee.

The task of the Consultation Document was to explain *why* the proposition was being made and on the basis of what evidence and argument, to justify the Government's preliminary view "against a background of being subject to constant and hostile scrutiny" (policy maker interviewee).

BERR policy makers felt that the process of drafting the Consultation Document provided the important discipline of ensuring that the facts and argumentation in the Consultation Document were not wrong and could not be challenged on that basis. The whole process of producing the Consultation Document clarified what needed to be done in terms of the consultation process as a whole. Another policy maker commented:

"It was a huge amount of work due to there being a lot of information to convey. We tried to distil the information for the audience. We also spent a lot of time attending events. It was right to spend time making that judgement about how to present information. We had a fairly clear idea that we were trying to flesh out and test our preliminary view: this was a very clear objective. We wanted to know if people felt that we had missed out on things in our preliminary view." (policy maker interviewee)

The expectation from BERR was that the consultation process would then open the evidence and arguments in the Consultation Document to public and stakeholder feedback in terms of whether anything was wrong, or omitted.

In terms of the policy process, the input from participants was therefore used to review those initial propositions, and amend where necessary: strengthening some and reducing the priority or rigidity of others (to increase flexibility in future).

- **Receiving raw data.** The first results that policy makers saw were the raw data from the written and online consultation. A separate part of the website was set up so that policy makers could view participants' submissions online as they were made; the system of flagging up anyone who changed their contribution later was designed to ensure that those were rechecked later.

A summary of data was sent to BERR policy managers weekly (as well as them having access to the website), including all paper copies. Once the collation of data into groups was started by the contractor, policy makers could also browse those. This approach meant that policy makers received all raw as well as collated data.

All policy makers saw the data from Question 1 of the written and online consultation, as it became clear that quite a few respondents (particularly online) only answered that question and put all their comments in that one answer: 2,395 online participants answered Question 1; 1,684 answered Question 2, and numbers then reduced throughout the remaining questions.

- **Reviewing data.** The policy team was led by a senior civil servant as overall author for the White Paper. The remainder of the team was organised by chapter authors and their teams. Policy leads scanned all the data arriving to check for comments on their specific issue. This was a major task, given the amount of data to be covered. Feedback from policy makers includes the following:

"The written responses were hard work: we would receive a pile of documents as thick as a telephone-directory, it made your heart sink on a Monday morning. But if you embark on a thing like this, you need to go through with it. We couldn't outsource that work, it was important that we read it." (policy maker interviewee)

"We had a week by week review: each [policy lead] provided a narrative of their question [from the consultation responses] in order to develop responses which went into the text of the White Paper ... Sometimes there was a change in our position. We did not just get more views, we asked ourselves what they were saying, what was our response to those views." (policy maker interviewee)

"In the consultation document we said that this was our preliminary view and that if people came up with new views or input, we would consider them and say if they were material. So if they mentioned new reports, we went and looked at the new evidence and confirmed if this would change our views or not. We were relentless in this – it was time-consuming." (policy maker interviewee)

"We used the online input as base data and looked across at other results to see if they confirmed or questioned these. We didn't give weighting ... Reasoned arguments e.g. from learned bodies, were considered more significant than unfounded arguments ... it did work well. Though it was time-consuming – we had to check everything. It was then a matter of judgement whether that new information should alter the Government's view." (policy maker interviewee)

"The process wasn't smooth and straightforward – it took a while to get in tune with the information. The sheer volume of information was a problem – as information from new events came in, that had to be reviewed. And the people in charge of each question were checked to see that they were reviewing the information: there was a collective challenge process. Most people [team members] found making judgements challenging. We had a team about 15 strong, with one or two others involved in checking data." (policy maker interviewee)

"[Analysed responses] By reading through, establishing the key points, keeping a log. We regrouped information under themes that were emerging. Towards the end we found that nothing new was emerging, just the same themes reemerging. To write the White Paper, we looked at the serious points that had been raised. It was a distillation process with nothing left out. We worked the points into our response. We used an Excel spreadsheet to note the responses [of consultees], the key themes raised and the additional issues to be addressed." (policy maker interviewee)

"The sheer amount of the information was a challenge, because we had to make sure that it was all considered ... It was a case of having a good system for logging different responses, and we did have this from early on. We had to make sure that we looked at the responses to all questions, not just the written responses. It was a logistical nightmare, but I can't see any other way of doing it." (policy maker interviewee)

"The online responses were fundamental to us, they were a key component." (policy maker interviewee)

"Where views emerged from the consultation, we evaluated them against our policy. Where technical points were made, we sought technical advice, e.g. from the parts of the NDA

taking forward geological disposal, from the work of CoRWM – we could point to where work had already been done. We didn't commission vast swathes of additional research, but we were able to test our position ... But the responses helped us to check the validity of what we'd said." (policy maker interviewee)

- **Integrating data.** Later, the data from the public and stakeholder events was added to the policy makers' process. They used the full meeting notes (including transcripts) from the stakeholder events, plus the published reports from the stakeholder events (produced by the Henley Centre HeadlightVision) and from the deliberative public events (produced by Opinion Leader).

In addition, the policy leads had all also attended at least some of the public and stakeholder events so they had direct face-to-face contact with participants as well. This mix of detailed views on paper, in various forms, and meeting directly with participants was viewed by policy makers as particularly valuable and is good practice.

- **Developing policy conclusions.** Exactly how each issue was dealt with, and the decisions each policy lead made about drafting specific policies, has not in this case been open to scrutiny. Participants, and we as evaluators, accept that consultation in this form is an input to a decision making process, not part of the decision making. In this case, it was always understood that Government would make the decisions: the issue for evaluators of consultation processes is whether and to what extent they took account of public input - in process and content terms.

Feedback from policy makers, contractors and others in BERR is consistent across all those involved: that policy makers read all the input and used it to draft their White Paper sections. Policy maker interviewees reported that were debates within the policy teams and with the contractors about the implications of specific issues, and that added to the process.

There was no formal weighting of data. The only formal criterion applied to assessing input was the principle outlined in the Consultation Document, which was:

"The Government will give greater consideration to the arguments and evidence - in particular any new arguments, information or evidence - than to simple expressions of support or opposition to new nuclear power stations when considering responses to this consultation."⁸⁷

In terms of *process*, the feedback from policy makers provides good evidence that public and stakeholder was carefully listened to, reviewed, considered, and taken into account in coming to decisions and policy conclusions.

- **Announcing decisions.** The Government's final decisions were published as the White Paper in January 2008: *Meeting the Energy Challenge. A White Paper on Nuclear Power*. Unlike most White Papers, this document is detailed response to the issues raised by the results of the consultation, rather than simply a set of policy statements with technical evidence. Each section of the White Paper summarises the specific issues raised in the Consultation Document, repeats the question from the Consultation Document, summarises the feedback from the consultation, summarises the Government's response and then provides the Government's conclusion.

⁸⁷ *The Future of Nuclear Power. The role of nuclear power in a low carbon economy. Consultation Document.* DTI, May 2007.

It is those White Paper conclusions that provide the actual Government policy statements on the future of building new nuclear power stations. In this way, the policy decisions and evidence for them, from the consultation and elsewhere, are presented.

Policy maker interviewees also identified some clear benefits for them in policy terms in having undertaken such a full consultation (apart from having to do it for legal reasons in this case). Several policy makers said it had been valuable for providing a much stronger sense of public and stakeholder support for certain policy proposals, and a clearer idea of where there were still concerns.

As one stakeholder said, consultation could 'stiffen the backbone' of Government. Policy makers often highly value that sort of support, especially where the media might be suggesting that there is no public support (and potentially opposition) around an idea whereas in fact that is not the case. Feedback here shows that evidence from these sorts of consultations provides the data that can enable policy makers and Government to move forward with greater confidence.

The other clear value of the process for policy makers was 'legitimacy'. One policy maker interviewee stressed that consultation "strengthens legitimacy of decision making" and is about discipline, about the "*soundness* of decision-making" by incorporating changes made as a result of debate in public forums. In that way, consultation allows debate to move on rather than continually going over the same ground and concerns. Other policy makers said:

"It does give legitimacy ... The Government had come to a position after a great deal of reflection and we wanted to expose the Government's view to a wide cross-section of people, both antis (and we did get their views before they dropped out) and pro- (in favour of building new power stations)." (policy maker interviewee)

"By undertaking a consultation exercise we had to set out a clear review process and justify the basis for that. The onus was on us to provide the best possible evidence base for our view. We didn't just consider a whole range of encounters with the public and stakeholders, we carried out a lengthy and expensive process and factored the results into the whole decision. It was a very strong piece of evidence." (policy maker interviewee)

The experience of this consultation has resulted in shifts in views among policy makers about future use of consultation. Comments included:

"The Government has to be a bit careful about over-consulting. On major issues people do need to be consulted ... In the case of a decision like this, without any doubt I'd want to engage people. But otherwise [not such a major issue] I'd want something lower key ... The decision we took will affect the whole country for at least 50 years in a fairly profound way: it is not a flash in the pan decision. So the magnitude of the decision required it and it was right to take that approach – the Government needed to expose its views and do it thoroughly." (policy maker interviewee)

"There can be no substitute for doing this, especially on an issue where the Government has been ambivalent in the past. The Government can't just announce a position. The process was slightly humbling: we challenged people to say that the Government had got its preliminary position wrong, then we spent many months talking to people and asking them, "What is it about nuclear that is troubling". The whole process gives people the initiative. The approach is well-regarded in Whitehall. It is different to normal work ... Having seen the value of public engagement events, we want to go on running them. They're an effective way of helping people marshal their concerns." (policy maker interviewee)

From this feedback, evaluation observation of the process from the beginning and some documentary review, our conclusion is that the consultation did influence policy in both very tangible ways and, less tangibly, in enabling policy makers to feel the policy they were proposing was more robust and legitimate.

The process of integrating input from participants into the policy development process worked well in terms both of process and impact on content.

Clearly the whole process was a major task for policy makers but one they seem to have felt overall was essential and, ultimately, worthwhile.

Although there are points in the process where there is less scrutiny, including exactly how judgements were made about which points and concerns would be included from participant input and which would not, that may be inevitable in the way public policy making is currently carried out in the UK.

It is clear, however, that participants' input was listened to, taken account of and did influence the Government's final policy decisions on nuclear power.

8.3 The benefits for participants

The impacts of the process can also be assessed in terms of the benefits for participants. The assessment of the benefits for participants here largely draws on feedback from participants themselves (from questionnaires and interviews), but also draws on evaluation observation at a range of events, and on the evaluator's experience of reviewing public and stakeholder engagement in national policy issues.

The following section describes the benefits for stakeholders involved in the regional and site events, and the benefits for public participants from involvement in the deliberative events.

8.3.1 Benefits for stakeholder participants at regional and site events

Detailed feedback on the benefits gained by participants in the various stakeholder events is provided in sections 6.2 and 6.3, including statistics and quotes from questionnaire respondents and interviewees. In summary, the findings were as follows:

- **Hearing and understanding the views of other stakeholders.** The benefit mentioned most frequently by regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents from the regional events was hearing and understanding the wide range of views and concerns (and knowledge) of other stakeholders: 79 regional stakeholder participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total 271 respondents) identified this as the main benefit for them; the largest group of responses. A further 19 respondents specifically said that sharing views, talking to others, dialogue and discussions were the main benefit for them.

This was also the most frequently mentioned benefit by regional stakeholder interviewees: 10 out of 24 regional stakeholder interviewees said this was the main benefit for them.

It was also the most frequently mentioned benefit for site stakeholder questionnaire respondents: 39 of those respondents (out of the total of 200 respondents) said this was the most important benefit for them, again the biggest single group of comments.

- **Increased knowledge of the subject.** The next most frequently mentioned benefit for regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents was increased knowledge of the subject, being better informed and clarifying their own thinking: 38 respondents (out of the total of 271 respondents) said this had been the main benefit for them.

This was also the second most frequently mentioned benefit for the site stakeholder questionnaire respondents: 23 of those respondents said it was the most important benefit for them; a further 11 said that 'information' was the most important benefit.

- **Giving own and/or organisation's views.** This was third most frequently mentioned benefit for regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents: 33 identified this as the main benefit for them (out of the total of 271 respondents). Again the site stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed: 14 (the third most frequent comment) said this was the most important benefit for them.
- **Taking part.** 15 regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents from the regional events (out of the total of 271) identified that the main benefit for them was simply the act of participating, engaging in the consultation, and making a difference. 12 site stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed, and with the same priority.
- **Understanding the Government's position.** This was the main benefit for 12 regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents. 9 site stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed, and with the same priority.
- **Networking, contacts and meeting people.** This was the main benefit for 4 regional stakeholder questionnaire respondents. site stakeholder questionnaire respondents agreed, and with the same priority.

These comments from stakeholders illustrate how strongly and widespread the view was that the sharing of opinions from all sides took place at these regional stakeholder events, and was highly valued by participants. These stakeholders clearly relished the opportunity to engage with people from different backgrounds and with views different from their own.

There were no indications on questionnaires, or from observation at events, that anyone resented alternative or opposing views being presented. Quite the opposite: stakeholder comments suggest that it is precisely the diversity of opinions, and the opportunities to explore those that provided the greatest value for them. Certainly no one felt that they could not express their opinions (see feedback above), and that opportunity was clearly taken and valued by many of those involved.

It is interesting to note the same priorities emerge in terms of what are the most important benefits to regional and site stakeholder participants in those events. It might be expected that the site stakeholders regularly meet with each other to discuss issues around nuclear power, but these events clearly brought in new stakeholders that made meeting them and hearing their views of value to others.

In terms of taking the debate on nuclear power forward, it has already been shown that the whole issue is characterised by very strong feelings and polarised views (see section 3 for details). However, in feedback from participant questionnaire respondents from the reconvened stakeholder events, 81% agreed

that the consultation had taken the debate on these issues forward. This may be partly about the results of the consultation, in that the White Paper was published, and may also be about the process of the consultation.

It is interesting to note that these stakeholder events, where participants may be expected to arrive with significant amounts of knowledge and potentially organisational and personal positions to defend, were nonetheless able to generate positive debates between people who fundamentally disagreed but were able to discuss the issues effectively. It is possible that this process has therefore contributed, in some very small way, to breaking down assumptions and barriers that have existed to date between stakeholders who had not actually met each other face to face before.

8.3.2 Benefits for participants in public engagement events

Detailed feedback on the benefits gained by participants in the deliberative public events is provided in section 7.6, including statistics and quotes from questionnaire respondents and interviewees. In summary, the findings were as follows:

- **Learning.** The most frequently mentioned benefit for public participants in these events was learning, information, knowledge and awareness: 317 public participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910 respondents) identified this as the main benefit for them; the largest group of responses by far. A further 90 respondents said they had learned specifically about nuclear power.

This was also the most important benefit for public participant interviewees: 16 out of 30 identified learning, gaining information and knowledge as the most important benefit for them (the biggest single group of comments).

- **Talking with and listening to others.** The second most frequently mentioned benefit for public participant questionnaire respondents focused on talking and listening to others, especially listening to others' views, and meeting people (128 respondents identified this as the main benefit for them, out of the total of 910 respondents).

This was also one of the three main benefits identified by public participant interviewees (8 out of 30 specifically mentioned meeting people and exchanging views as the main benefit for them).

The social aspects were clearly important, both meeting new people and (as quoted elsewhere) meeting a diverse group of people with a range of views. It seems that participants particularly value being taken out of their usual social sphere and mixing with people they would not normally meet, and hearing (and discussing) views they would not normally come across.

From observation, this works particularly well in deliberative events, which provide a highly structured environment for people to learn more, test their own views and listen to the views of others. In terms of contributing to bigger social benefits, such as social cohesion, this mixing and getting to know people with different backgrounds and views in a safe environment may have real value.

- **Taking part and having their say.** The third most frequently mentioned benefit was from the 80 public participant questionnaire respondents (out of the total of 910 respondents) who said the main benefit from them was simply taking part, contributing to something important and feeling valued. A further 78 said the main benefit for them was sharing their own views, and having their say. Although not as many individuals identified this as a benefit for them as, for example learning, those that did identify it as a benefit clearly felt quite strongly about the value this had for them personally.

For public participant interviewees, this was the second most frequently mentioned benefit: 9 out of 30 participant interviewees mentioned being pleased to have been invited, and to have the opportunity to put their views across and have their say.

These benefits were clearly of value to participants, but they may also have value more widely.

In terms of the learning, the evaluation has shown that deliberative public engagement can create particularly effective learning processes; and here 93% of participants said in questionnaire responses that they had learning something they did not know before, and 90% said it had helped them think more clearly about the issues.

Bloom's taxonomy of learning⁸⁸ is an analysis of a hierarchy of learning from knowledge (which Bloom defines as being about recalling information) up to evaluation, which Bloom defines as critically considering ideas, information, knowledge and their limitations, assumptions and bias to test their validity in the context of the issue under scrutiny.

This 'evaluation' level of learning is precisely what good deliberative public engagement can achieve and which, from feedback to this evaluation and observation, is what was achieved in this case for many people. As a learning mechanism, and a way of spreading wider understanding and awareness, this sort of deliberative public engagement may therefore have particular strengths.

In terms of talking with and listening to people different from themselves, public participants may be seen as taking initial steps towards social cohesion. Social cohesion is built through better communications with and understanding of people with different backgrounds, cultures and identities, and different views and interests, from our own. Again, the sort of deliberative public engagement achieved here helps to break down those barriers, increase mutual respect and understanding and, in some small way, contribute to social cohesion.

Finally, in terms of the individual and personal benefits identified as simply having taken part in something important, there are links here to wider benefits of active citizenship. In this case, 89% of participant questionnaire respondents said they were more likely to get involved in public consultations in future as a result of attending this event. If this sort of experience, which certainly had its difficulties, has been able to establish such enthusiasm for future engagement, there is real potential for further development of this spirit through such activities in future.

⁸⁸ Bloom, Benjamin (ed) (1956) *The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA. Copyright (c) 1984 by Pearson Education.

8.4 Benefits for observers at public events

The public participants were not the only ones to gain benefits from their involvement in the deliberative public events. Observers also reported gaining some valuable benefits from watching the process.

The feedback from observer questionnaire respondents was that the two main benefits to observers were:

- gaining insight and learning about public / grassroots views on the issues; 11 out of 27 observer questionnaire respondents identified this as the main benefit for them
- learning about participatory processes: 7 said they had learnt about participation.

The observers were from a range of different backgrounds: NGOs, BERR, other government departments, industry, academics. It was interesting to review their feedback that they had learnt so much from watching the deliberative public events.

In terms of extending understanding about what public engagement can achieve, and what are its limitations and boundaries, there is no substitute for actually attending an event personally and watching the whole process first hand.

The invitation of observers always has to be carefully managed, as it is important that participants do not feel they are being watched. However, as long as numbers are limited and there is a strict set of guidelines about how observers behave, it is a very valuable learning mechanism for those within (and outside) Government.

8.5 The benefits for policy makers

Detailed feedback on the benefits gained by policy makers from the various public and stakeholder events, and the written and online consultation, is provided in the relevant separate sections of this report. In terms of overall benefits for policy makers of the consultation process overall, the findings were, in summary, as follows:

- **Legitimacy for decisions and decision making.** The biggest single overall benefit identified by policy makers was around the issue of legitimacy for a decision of such major public importance. Extensive consultation was felt to be an essential element in decision making on such issues, and the effectiveness of this process was felt by policy makers to have increased the legitimacy of the decisions that were finally made (and announced in the White Paper), and to have increased overall scrutiny and accountability of Government policy and decision making.
- **Testing and gaining feedback from the public and stakeholders on the Government's initial view.** This was the explicit purpose of the consultation and policy makers believed it had provided this feedback effectively. For policy makers, the consultation process had reached a large group of relevant participants, they had been able to give their views and policy makers had been able to access those views and use them to develop and refine policy.

- **Gaining a real understanding of public hopes and fears around the issues.** Beyond feedback on the detailed issues of the consultation, policy makers felt that the consultation had given them real insight into what the public and stakeholders felt strongly about, cared about, were worried about.

This seems to have been an unexpected bonus that came from the specific face to face events that took place; the written and online consultation were the core of the whole process and could not have been lost, but the events provided this added value.

- **Respect for participants.** Policy makers were clearly somewhat surprised and certainly impressed by the energy and enthusiasm with which all participants worked on the issues, and came to conclusions that they could put to the Government. The experience seems to have created a new respect between Government, citizens and stakeholders that was not there before.

These benefits for policy makers are a result of the very specific engagement processes that were used in this case. The mix of activities seems to have worked particularly well to deliver real benefits to this group.

8.6 Conclusions

This section has analysed the impacts of the various strands of the consultation process on policy, drawing on the results of the various strands of the consultation and testing what influence there has been. It has also summarised the findings from the evaluation as a whole on the benefits of the process for participants (public and stakeholders), for observers at the public events and for policy makers.

The evaluation has found that the results of the various strands of the consultation in terms of the key policy issues were reported clearly. It also found that, apart from one issue (the role of the private sector), all the key issues were addressed and answered in the White Paper. In particular, strong new provisions on waste management were introduced so that the issue needs to be dealt with before consents for development are issued. This is seen by BERR as a new and much stronger condition on waste management than existed before. Policies on safety and security, regulation, and the need for the development of new nuclear power stations not to negatively affect investment in other energy sources (especially renewables), and in reducing energy consumption were also included in the White Paper.

The process of how public and stakeholder input was reviewed and taken account of in the development of the policy conclusions in the White Paper has also been explored in detail above.

This evaluation assessment was based on interviews with policy makers but also broad documentary review, so that the conclusions on policy influence could be based on a series of sources with appropriate checks and balances to ensure that as full a picture as possible was developed. This included checking that feedback from policy makers was consistent across a number of interviewees, and that interviews were carried out by more than one interviewer.

The findings in this section also strongly suggest that the process had major benefits for all those involved. For public participants, the main benefits were learning, talking with and listening to the views of others (especially those who

were different from themselves), and meeting others, and simply taking part and being able to have a say. These individual and personal benefits were seen to have strong links to wider social benefits including wider learning, social cohesion and active citizenship.

For stakeholders (at both the regional and site events), the main benefits were very similar: for them the benefits were around hearing and understanding other stakeholders' views, increased knowledge on the subject, giving their own (and their organisation's) views, taking part, understanding the Government's position, and networking. The process was seen to have enabled the debate to have moved on, and enabled a better understanding between stakeholders who may not have met before face to face and who were better able to understand each other's positions and very different viewpoints.

For observers at the public events, there were also some clear benefits in terms of gaining insight into public and grassroots views on the issues around nuclear power, and learning about participatory processes. It is clear from this feedback that observation can be a very effective mechanism for understanding how participatory processes work, and how they can be used in policy development.

For policy makers, the key benefits identified were around gaining greater legitimacy for decisions and decision-making, including through greater openness and accountability, around testing and gaining feedback from the public and stakeholders on the Government's initial view, which was the main purpose of the consultation.

In particular, policy makers saw the benefit of gaining a real understanding of public hopes and fears around the issues more widely, and to have heard them direct by listening to public and stakeholder discussions first hand. Finally, there was a sense that policy makers had gained a new respect for participants, both public and stakeholders, as a result of having seen for themselves the energy and commitment that participants gave to the process.

The evaluation can, therefore, conclude that there have been significant benefits for all those involved in the process - public and stakeholder participants and policy makers. It can also conclude that the process for considering public and stakeholder input in developing policy proposals was comprehensive, and that there was real tangible influence on the final policy conclusions that were published in the White Paper.

9. Assessment of activities against objectives

9.1 Introduction

The Government set three overarching objectives for the consultation process on nuclear power⁸⁹, which were:

- To enable and facilitate a consultation which meets the commitment of the 2003 Energy White Paper to the fullest public consultation
- The Government wishes to consult citizens and interested parties for their views and concerns relating to the arguments it has presented
- For each strand of activity, to listen to and consider the views of those participating and to be transparent in the reporting back process.

This section of the evaluation report summarises the extent to which the consultation met these objectives. It then considers the extent to which it met the (original) good practice guidelines in the Cabinet Office Code on Consultation⁹⁰.

9.2 Assessment against objectives

OBJECTIVES	How each objective has been met
<p>To enable and facilitate a consultation which meets the commitment of the 2003 Energy White Paper to the fullest public consultation</p>	<p>The 2003 Energy White Paper did not specify what was meant by the 'fullest public consultation', and there are no clear benchmarks other than that the previous consultation on whether the Government should proceed with building new nuclear power stations failed.</p> <p>This consultation has been thoroughly evaluated in the previous sections of this report and has been found to be have achieved adequate or better levels of good practice in terms of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representation and diversity, open access (to some strands), scale, mix of stakeholder and public participants and providing a demographic representation of the public at the deliberative events • satisfaction of public and stakeholder participants in all stages of the consultation (public and stakeholder events and the written and online consultation) • clarity of objectives and process and the extent to which these were understood by all those involved

⁸⁹ *Meeting the Energy Challenge. The Future of Nuclear Power: Analysis of consultation responses.* BERR, January 2008, para 1.1

⁹⁰ *Code of Practice on Consultation.* Cabinet Office Better Regulation Executive, London, 2004. This Code has subsequently been superseded but the 2004 Code was current at the beginning of the evaluation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the competence and professionalism of the design and delivery of the various elements of the process • providing opportunities for participants to learn and share ideas and views with a diverse mix of others <p>In summary, this has been a very full consultation in terms of activities undertaken and achievements. It was not a perfect process and there are numerous lessons for future public and stakeholder engagement. However, overall, there is nothing additional that the Government could have done that would have made this consultation 'fuller', which suggests that it is, indeed, the 'fullest' public consultation that could have been provided.</p>
<p>The Government wishes to consult citizens and interested parties for their views and concerns relating to the arguments it has presented</p>	<p>The Government published a comprehensive Consultation Document which provided sufficient relevant information for the great majority of citizen and interested party participants to contribute fully; feedback from participants confirmed this. Further information was provided for stakeholders at regional events and at events local to existing nuclear power station sites. Extensive additional information was also provided for the deliberative public engagement events.</p> <p>The information provision was therefore extensive and provided sufficient grounding for participants to fully understand the arguments being presented by Government, as well alternative and opposing views. The information provided throughout was based on the data in the Consultation Document, so the narrative and details presented were consistent throughout.</p> <p>In addition, all the documentation made the Government's initial position (as well as their detailed 'arguments') very clear: that they had a preliminary view. Feedback from participants shows that the great majority of participants in all strands of activities were clear about this basic 'view'.</p> <p>There were opportunities for citizens and interested parties to contribute their views through the written and online consultation, which was open to anyone who wanted to participate. The additional stakeholder workshops at regional and site levels provided further opportunities for interested parties to be involved (plus some additional specific meetings were held by request).</p> <p>The recruitment of a demographically representative sample of the UK population provided an opportunity for the general public / citizens (not just the interested public) to give their views at nine deliberative events around the UK in which 956 people participated.</p>

	<p>Feedback shows that the great majority of the participants found it easy and worthwhile to contribute and felt they had been able to say what they wanted (express their views) throughout.</p> <p>The Government has therefore made every effort, and succeeded, in consulting citizens and interested parties, together and separately, for their views relating to the arguments it has presented. Government presented its arguments clearly and citizens and interested parties have provided their views.</p>
<p>For each strand of activity, to listen to and consider the views of those participating and to be transparent in the reporting back process.</p>	<p>Separate reports were produced from each strand of the consultation process, with separate reports from the written and online consultation, the deliberative public events and the stakeholder events. There are also separate reports from each of the twelve regional and nine site stakeholder events. All these reports were published on the consultation website, so this reporting was transparent.</p> <p>There is evidence in this report that a range of senior policy makers attended many of these events in person ('listening' in person to the views of participants); there is also evidence that policy leads saw and read all the written and online views provided by public and stakeholder participants. In addition, policy leads report having read all the reports of individual events, and the overall summary reports from each strand of activity. There is therefore ample evidence that they did listen to participants' views.</p> <p>From interviews with policy makers about how they used the results of the consultation process, and documentary review, the evaluation has also concluded that the Government also carefully 'considered' the views of those participating. There is substantial evidence in this evaluation report describing how that was done in practice.</p> <p>The reporting back process from the written and online process was transparent, as all input from the public and stakeholders to that strand of the consultation was published on the consultation website (except for those who requested confidentiality).</p> <p>In addition, the White Paper summarised all the key points raised in the various parts of the consultation and explicitly responded to those, before providing the policy conclusions. Finally, two meetings were held after the publication of the White Paper to report back directly to stakeholders who had participated about the results of the consultation, how participant input had been used, and the resulting policy conclusions. This was all entirely transparent.</p>

This summary analysis shows clearly that the consultation met all the stated objectives fully. There were some areas where some details of the process could have been improved, as identified throughout this report. However, these issues were not sufficiently problematic to suggest that the objectives had not been met.

9.3 Assessment against principles of good practice

The following assessment identifies the six key principles in the Cabinet Office Code on Consultation, as summarised in the Consultation Document. The evidence provided in the second column draws on the detail of the Code to provide relevant evidence for whether or not the principle has been met.

GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLE	How each principle has been met
<p>Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy</p>	<p>Consult widely: the consultation process involved 956 members of the public through nine deliberative events throughout the UK; it also involved 360 stakeholders in regional events, and another 265 in site events. This is 1,581 individuals who attended meetings to give their view. In addition, a further 2,728 individuals gave their views in the written and online element of the consultation. That is a total of 4,309 individuals involved from across the UK in a mix of open access, specially recruited and other events and activities. This evaluation has undertaken an analysis of those involved, and found that all categories of interested parties were involved, as well as a demographically representative sample of the UK population in the deliberative public events.</p> <p>The mix of activities, and the range and number of participants, demonstrates that the process succeeded in consulting widely.</p> <p>The written consultation period lasted from 23 May to 10 October 2007; a period of 20 weeks.</p>
<p>Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses</p>	<p>The Government was clear that the consultation was framed by the Government taking a preliminary view, but not having taken a final decision. It was therefore argued that it was possible for the consultation to affect both the substantive decision and policy details around the main decision. The Consultation Document was clear about the focus of the consultation and there is feedback to this evaluation that participants were clear what the Government's position and proposals were.</p> <p>Although the propositions in the consultation were clear, the overall framing of the consultation was complex and did cause some confusion and</p>

	<p>distrust of the process among some participants. It was clear that the Government had taken a 'preliminary view', but many participants understood that to mean that the Government had 'made up its mind' (as shown in feedback to this evaluation). This is a subtle distinction and, although clear, did not create the most positive and creative environment for consultation.</p> <p>A stakeholder analysis was undertaken at an early stage to identify who may be affected, so that all those who may be affected could be involved in the consultation. Invitations to events, mailings etc, were issued on that basis and all categories of interested parties did take part.</p> <p>In terms of the clarity of questions, a series of 18 specific questions were asked in the Consultation Document (and the online consultation) and those formed the structure for the analysis of views from participants and the final Government response in the White Paper.</p> <p>The questions for the public and stakeholder events were simplified from the 18, but covered the same issues. The questions were therefore clear and were consistent throughout the consultation. Again there is feedback from participants throughout that they found the questions clear.</p> <p>The timescale was also clear and announced at the start of the consultation.</p>
<p>Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible</p>	<p>The Consultation Document was clear in terms of the language used; there was an element of technical jargon but it was minimised and was inevitable given the subject matter. Again there is feedback from participants to the effect that the great majority found the information provided clear. The Consultation Document included an Executive Summary, which covered the main points of the consultation and provided sufficient information for people to decide if the consultation was relevant to them.</p> <p>The Consultation Document was available in hard copy and online (on the same date), and versions were available in Welsh, Braille, large print and audio form. Dialogue by Design state that the website met the AA+ standard of disability access. Feedback from participants shows that they had no problems using the website and giving their views. Participants could respond either online or using a paper form (with a freepost address), so costs to users were minimised and should have presented no obstacles to participants.</p> <p>The consultation was widely publicised through a national marketing and communications campaign, including advertising. In addition, mailings were sent to national, regional and local organisations</p>

	<p>that were thought to have an interest (following the initial stakeholder analysis). The mailing list included a range of community and faith groups, with the aim of reaching some specific sectors of society that may otherwise have been overlooked.</p> <p>The written consultation was part of a process which also included events: the public events included a good representative mix of the UK population with the aim of ensuring diversity of perspectives and views; the stakeholder events attracted a good diverse range of relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>A dedicated enquiry line was established to deal with queries and any complaints.</p>
<p>Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy</p>	<p>There is evidence earlier in this evaluation of the processes used by delivery contractors and policy leads to analyse and use the responses from participants. This was done rigorously and openly throughout and covered the results from every aspect of the consultation. As each strand was reported separately it was possible to differentiate views from different consultation activities. In addition, all those submitting contributions to the written and online consultation were identified (except for the few who wished their input to remain confidential), so it was possible to see where views came from particular representative groups (e.g. trade unions, voluntary and community groups).</p> <p>By attending the various public and stakeholder events in person, the policy leads were able to gauge the strength of feeling on particular issues more effectively than if they had relied on written input alone.</p> <p>There was a transparent process to identify all the input received, as above. Reports of all the stakeholder meetings were published on the consultation website within several weeks of the actual events. All the other reports, including all the written and online responses, were published on the website in January 2008, about three months after the consultation had closed.</p> <p>The White Paper itself contained a summary of responses to each question asked. The overarching summary reports of the written and online consultation, the public deliberative events and the stakeholder events all covered issues from the specific questions as well as themes that fell outside the specific questions. The White Paper summarises the Government response overall on how the consultation influenced the final policy conclusions. This evaluation has assessed the extent to which the concerns from the consultation were addressed in the White Paper.</p>

<p>Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator</p>	<p>BERR has a designated consultation co-ordinator.</p> <p>More generally, the effectiveness of this consultation has been the focus of this independent evaluation, which includes coverage of the numbers and types of responses, how effective the different methods of consultation were (what worked well and less well in each), and how the consultation responses affected the final decision.</p> <p>In addition the evaluation has identified lessons from each consultation activity, and from the consultation overall, to inform future consultations within and outside the department.</p>
<p>Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate</p>	<p>The Consultation Document included a Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment. It is expected that the various elements of policy contained in the final White Paper will each require RIAs to be completed at later stages.</p>

9.4 Conclusions

As can clearly be seen from the analysis above, the consultation on the future of nuclear power fully met its own objectives. It also fully met the principles of good practice in the Cabinet Office Code on Consultation (2004).

10. Overall conclusions

10.1 Introduction

This evaluation report has provided a detailed description of the context for the consultation on the Future of Nuclear Power in 2007, and all the activities with stakeholders and the general public. It has also provided a detailed evaluation of all the main activities of the consultation: the written and online consultation, the 21 regional and site stakeholder events and the nine deliberative public events around the UK. Separate sections have detailed the impacts and influence of the consultation process on policy and on the different parties involved: public and stakeholder participants, observers at the public events, and policy makers. It has also detailed the extent to which the consultation met its own objectives, and principles of good practice in consultation.

This section summarises the key findings from each of the three different strands of consultation activities, and then the lessons for the future, from each strand. Finally, it provides some brief overall lessons for future consultations, and some overarching conclusions on the process as a whole.

First, however, it is important to summarise the context for the consultation (see section 3 for details), as the context was such an important factor in the design and delivery of the whole consultation process.

The broad policy context was that nuclear power has been an emblematic issue for the environmental movement for decades. Many environmentalists remain passionately opposed to nuclear power with ethical and practical concerns including around health and safety, proliferation of nuclear weapons, and concerns about the management of radioactive waste. Nuclear power does not seem to be an issue that engages the entire population of the country, but it does arouse very strong feelings among some.

The more immediate legal context for the consultation was that Greenpeace had brought a successful Judicial Review around an earlier consultation process on the issue of nuclear power. Greenpeace and some other green groups did participate in this new consultation initially, but these groups withdrew the day before the public events in September 2007, and did not participate further. The legal and political scrutiny of the process, by these groups and others, contributed to the challenging context within which the consultation was designed and delivered.

Meanwhile, two British Prime Ministers had made statements in favour of nuclear power being part of the energy mix of the UK. The consultation was therefore designed to test that preliminary view from Government and to test the evidence and arguments on which that view was based. The consultation was structured around the formal Consultation Document which presented that view and evidence, and asked a series of questions about it.

There was also significant media coverage of all the controversial aspects of the consultation itself, as well as of the continuing development of Government thinking on the issue of nuclear power throughout the consultation.

As a result of all these factors, the consultation took place in a uniquely contentious and challenging legal, political and policy context, which fundamentally affected elements of the design and delivery of the process.

10.2 Summary of key findings

10.2.1 Key findings on written and online consultation

The written and online consultation provided the overarching structure and content for the whole consultation on the future of nuclear power. It was focused around the production and dissemination of a 205-page Consultation Document (with printed response form) and a website to enable online access to documents and opportunities to provide online responses. Both online and printed documents used the same text and were focused around the same 18 key questions for the consultation.

The formal consultation was launched on 23 May 2007 and closed on 10 October 2007 (20 weeks), which is longer than the 12 weeks that is normal for such consultations. 5,200 copies of the Consultation Document were distributed (with versions in Welsh, Braille, large print and audio). 2,728 participants responded to the written and online consultation: 2,043 online and 685 in writing (by post, email and fax). There was also an extensive marketing and communications programme to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage responses.

A report was produced by the contractors responsible for the online consultation (Dialogue by Design), summarising the feedback from across the written and online consultation, and structured to answer the 18 key questions. This report was provided to policy makers alongside the full set of responses received; the data was presented by question, theme and participant name (except where the participant had requested confidentiality). This report, and the full set of participant responses, was published on the consultation website in January 2008, when the White Paper was published.

The evaluation of this strand of the consultation drew on the evaluation questionnaire responses: 198 questionnaires were returned from the 2,728 participants; a response rate of 7%. It also drew on documentary review and interviews with policy makers and the contractor. While the feedback from participants in the written and online consultation is not as extensive as has been received on other strands of the consultation, the 198 responses did provide a good quantity of data for analysis, especially taken alongside documentary review and evidence, even if it cannot be taken to reflect any more than the views of a minority of participants.

In terms of representation and diversity among those participating in the written and online consultation, analysis shows that the largest single category of participants was individuals: 65% responded as individuals. The second largest category of respondents was the energy industry (11%), which was almost twice as large as the next categories of participants: academic or consultancy (6%), local and regional government (4%), and voluntary or environmental organisations (4%). Overall, there was a good mix of participants that covered all the relevant interested parties.

Feedback from participants suggests that the best aspects for them were the Consultation Document itself, the website and that the consultation had happened at all. There was also positive feedback about the overall format and structure of the written and online consultation, including the opportunity for participants to go back and edit their contributions until the closing date. However, there was feedback from some participants that the questions and process overall were limiting, leading and/or biased, and there was a view that Government had already taken the decision, although these were minority views.

More widely, as evaluators, we noted that the best features of the written and online strand of the consultation included the open and transparent reporting (with all contributions being published openly on the website, unless individuals requested confidentiality), and the open access of this element so that anyone interested could participate which allowed for a good mix of participants that complemented those involved in the stakeholder events and the deliberative public events. In addition, there is feedback that there was effective team working in this strand of the consultation, both within Government and with external contractors.

One element that worked rather less well than expected was providing online access to the full responses and the final reports; several respondents to the evaluation said they did not have access to online facilities and so could not view the results. This lack of online access does need to be borne in mind in planning reporting back on future consultations.

Some respondents raised issues about the way the questions were structured, particularly in the online consultation. As is usual with online consultations, far more people answered the first question than the last (about 1,000 more). As the substantive question for the consultation was Question 16, this meant that far fewer participants answered that than answered Question 1: 2,395 answered Question 1 and 1,338 answered Question 16.

Although this was not a problem in capturing the points made by participants, as all points were analysed wherever they appeared, it would have been preferable to have the substantive question first (or at least flag up at the beginning which was the substantive question), so that as many responses to that as possible could have been obtained.

Overall, we can conclude that the written and online elements of the consultation did work well to create an open, transparent and effective process. The *quality* of participants' responses to the written and online consultations seems to have exceeded expectation. The *quantity* of input here was not enormous compared to some other national consultations. However, the mix of views and the quantity were quite appropriate to the objectives of this consultation, and sufficient for a good picture of public and stakeholder views to be achieved by policy makers, particularly as these were supported by other input from public and stakeholder events. Overall, the written and online strand of the consultation achieved all it set out to do and to appropriate standards of good practice.

10.2.2 Key findings from stakeholder events

The main focus for stakeholder engagement was a series of face-to-face consultation events held around the UK in July, August and September 2007. Stakeholders could also respond to the written and online consultation, and some were involved in other ways (see section 4).

21 stakeholder events were held across the UK: 12 covering the nine regions of England plus Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and nine events on or near existing nuclear power station sites to enable those living or working nearby to participate. These events involved a total of 625 stakeholders: 360 at the regional events and 265 at the site events.

Reports of all 21 stakeholder events were published on the consultation website. Once the events were completed, Henley Centre HeadlightVision produced a summary report drawing on all data from all the stakeholder events. This report was also published on the consultation website, alongside the White Paper, in January 2008.

After the White Paper was published, two reconvened stakeholder events were held, in London and Manchester, to report back to stakeholder participants on how the results of the stakeholder engagement events had been used to draft the White Paper, and where the main impacts on policy had been. 96 stakeholders attended these two events.

The evaluation of this strand of the consultation drew on evaluation questionnaire responses from stakeholder participants at the events. 271 out of the 360 participants at the regional events returned evaluation questionnaires: a 75% response rate; 200 of the 265 participants at the site events returned questionnaires: also a 75% response rate; and 71 of the 96 participants in the reconvened events: a 74% response rate. In addition, 24 evaluation interviews were carried out with participants in the regional stakeholder events, 9 with participants from the site events, and 6 with participants from the reconvened events. Evaluation observation took place at 3 of the 12 regional events, 2 of the 9 site events and 1 of the 2 reconvened events. This was supplemented by documentary review, and interviews with BERR staff responsible for the design and delivery of this strand of the process. The summary of findings below draws on all these elements of evaluation research.

An initial stakeholder analysis was undertaken, and invitations issued, which included asking for suggestions of others to invite; additional stakeholders were suggested and did ask to be invited, none of which were refused. In terms of the representation and diversity of those attending, the stakeholder events reached the numbers (625 overall) and types of stakeholders that were sought, with representatives from all categories of interested parties.

There was rather more representation from energy companies, and other business and industry, than other categories. However, all categories of stakeholder interests were represented including green NGOs and local community organisations, and some individuals without organisational affiliation at some site events who seem likely to have been local residents / public. Some respondents suggested that more information could have been made available on exactly who was invited and who attended, so that the actual representation was more widely understood.

There was some feedback from evaluation respondents about the small numbers of NGOs, particularly environmental NGOs at some stakeholder meetings. However, environmental NGOs were invited to all events and did attend some events, and all events had both pro- and anti-nuclear views expressed. The principle of open access to these events meant that a balance of views could not be guaranteed, but it did mean that any stakeholder who wanted to attend was able to do so.

There are particular challenges associated with encouraging NGOs to attend consultation events, given their lack of resources and pressures on time, as well as their complex role in stakeholder engagement on public policy more generally. This is a much larger problem than for this specific consultation, and may need further consideration and negotiation between engagement practitioners, green NGOs and Government to try to take this relationship forward.

Another issue raised was the need for Government to develop better stakeholder lists at regional and local levels. Although there was adequate representation at these events, there was (as always) the potential for a wider range of stakeholders to have been involved.

The design and delivery of events was undertaken by BERR with support from COI. The basic structure with its mix of presentations, discussions in small table groups and then feedback and further discussion in plenary, which worked well. The information provided to support the discussions was generally seen to be clear and useful.

The approach of BERR running these events worked well. BERR officials attended all events, made presentations and facilitated table discussions. Senior BERR policy makers took the view that similar numbers of officials would have needed to attend these events even if they had not been facilitating, to hear stakeholder views first hand.

It also worked well in this case for a senior BERR policy official to act as lead facilitator for the stakeholder events. However, this role may be less easy for other Government consultations to replicate as success depends to a large degree on the personal skills, experience and personality of the particular individual to create the right atmosphere of openness and trust in the process. In this case, the BERR official taking the lead facilitator role had all the necessary capabilities, but those skills may not be available in all government departments.

Feedback from participants about the design and delivery of the stakeholder events (on timing, information provided, recording and reporting, clarity and transparency) was largely very positive; participants were largely satisfied with the process and found the events useful and worthwhile. As evaluators, we noted that the recording and reporting of these events was open and transparent, with all comments carefully recorded and reports of each event published on the website, summarising who was there, and the main points made in table discussions and plenary sessions.

Criticisms in participant feedback focused largely around timing and clarity about how the results of the meetings were to be used. In terms of timing, the main issue was that some respondents would have liked the events to have gone on longer than half a day. Although most thought there had been sufficient time, some would have liked the opportunity to continue discussions for a full day. Another problem with timing was that the invitations to early meetings gave very little notice to participants (about two weeks), although invitations to later meetings gave more notice.

In terms of clarity among participants about how the results would be used, the main issue was essentially about lack of follow up communications between BERR and the participants. Although the reports of each event were published on the website (and participants were told at events that they would be), there were no follow up communications to tell participants when these reports were available and the evaluation found very few who knew about or had seen them.

It had also been good practice to run the two reconvened stakeholder events to report back to participants on the impacts of their input. These meetings provided a useful summary of how participants input had been used to develop policy, and what had changed as a result. However, no general communications were sent to stakeholder participants to inform them of the publication of the White Paper, nor of the impacts of their input on the final policy conclusions.

As a result, feedback from participants included some scepticism about whether the Government had listened to and taken account of their views. Given the feedback from BERR policy makers to this evaluation, describing the extensive process they went through to do that, the evaluators have concluded that this lack of clarity among some participants is the result of a failure of communications that could, and should, be easily remedied in future.

Overall, the stakeholder events did work well. Stakeholders were satisfied with the opportunities to discuss the issues and to input their views, and clearly found the events worthwhile. It was important in this case to be seen to be consulting very widely, and the spread of events, and the presence of senior BERR officials at all of them, did add to participant satisfaction overall.

Stakeholder engagement is now well established across government, and elsewhere, but the practice is still evolving and practitioners and those commissioning these processes are continuing to learn and develop good practice. This consultation process can provide further experience on which to draw in taking practice forward and can be seen as good practice overall.

10.2.3 Key findings on deliberative public events

The main focus for the involvement of the general public was the nine large-scale deliberative public engagement events held around the UK on 8 September 2007. The public could also respond to the written and online consultation, and some were involved in some site stakeholder events, but the main focus for the engagement of the general public in the consultation was these deliberative events. A total of 956 public participants were involved.

An extensive design and development process was used to prepare for these events, including a Citizens Advisory Board of 10 specially recruited members of the public (which met three times), a Stakeholder Review Group of 14 key national stakeholders (which met once), and a Development Event which piloted the proposed deliberative process and information materials for the events, which comprised 30 other specially recruited individuals designed to provide a representative cross-section of the public.

BERR officials attended all the deliberative public events to hear public discussions and views first hand. An end of event report, summarising the process and key points from the discussions, was produced and circulated to all participants soon after the events.

A detailed report of the key results from the public events, drawing on the detailed notes taken on proformas by facilitators during the table discussions (and separately of plenary discussions), and polling results, was produced for policy makers by the contractors responsible for the design and delivery of this strand of the consultation (Opinion Leader). This full report was published on the consultation website alongside the White Paper in January 2008. All public participants were informed that the White Paper had been published and that all the various documents were available on the website.

The evaluation of this strand of the consultation drew on evaluation questionnaires completed by public participants: 910 questionnaires were returned from the 956 participants: a 95% response rate. Questionnaires were also returned by observers at these events (96% response rate) and from

facilitators (78% response rate). This provided extensive quantitative and qualitative data for the evaluation. In addition, 30 formal interviews were undertaken with public participants, 4 of the 28 observers, policy makers attending the events, BERR and COI officials, and the contractors. Evaluators attended all the developmental events, and 3 of the 9 deliberative events, to observe the process first hand. Some documentary review has also been undertaken. The findings below draw on all these sources of evaluation research.

Overall, the design and development process for the deliberative public events worked well, and provided valuable input into the development of information materials, and valuable feedback on what was working well and less well in the design of the process. Much of this feedback was taken into account in new drafts of the materials and process design although, during the latter stages, timescales were so tight that the potential then for major changes was limited.

All these design and development activities were successful in their own terms. However, experience from evaluations of similar processes suggests that even more benefits could have been achieved if an extended role had been possible for the Citizens Advisory Board and the Stakeholder Review Group throughout the consultation process.

In terms of recruitment and diversity, almost 1,000 public participants took part (actually 956), with a good mix of backgrounds and across the UK. There was perhaps slightly less representation of black and minority ethnic communities in some locations where that would have been expected although the overall representation of BME populations across the UK was met. The recruitment process was effective and comprehensive, and the number and mix of participants was good.

The design and delivery of the deliberative public events worked well overall. The mix of activities between small group working on tables and plenary sessions, and effective facilitation, enabled all participants to make the points they wanted to throughout. There was a mix of information provision and time for participants to discuss the issues among themselves. The recording and reporting also worked well overall. There was some feedback that it was too much to expect facilitators to record all comments on laptops as well as facilitating group discussions and providing information (see below), although it did work reasonably well in most cases.

The information provision was more problematic, in spite of the effort put into developing and piloting the materials. Information was presented in a variety of forms. A video was used to introduce each topic for discussion, with presenter Anna Ford, which contained views from various interest groups. A pub quiz allowed table groups to work together to answer topic-based questions, followed by longer sessions considering key issues and questions, each with its own information introduction. There were 12 printed handouts, and 8 reference sheets, as well as access to BERR policy experts who were available to answer technical questions.

A major problem arose when Greenpeace and some other green groups withdrew from the consultation process on 7 September 2007, the day before deliberative public events, as Greenpeace also withdrew permission to use the input they had made to the video. The video was re-edited but, although their views were covered in voice over, the lack of a representative from the organisation giving those views meant that the green NGO voice was perceived by participants to be very obviously missing.

The video was designed to be the main vehicle for presenting the diversity of views on the topics to participants. Although handouts and reference sheets also provided alternative and opposing views on various issues, these did not fully compensate for the loss of a clearly 'green' voice on the video.

There was a great deal of information, possibly too much for participants to absorb in the time available. Overall, there could have been a better balance of time, with less information provision and more time for participants to discuss issues among themselves in their table groups. As it was, some participants reported feeling rushed at times to get through all that was required.

In particular, there was feedback from some participants that they found the information repetitive, which led to a sense of being directed to certain specific conclusions. Feedback from participants on the information overall was fairly positive: 85% of participant questionnaire respondents agreed they could understand and use the information provided, and 64% agreed there was enough information to enable them to contribute fully. 58% agreed that the information provided covered the main different views on the issues. However, there was much less certainty about whether the information was fair and not biased: 49% were not sure, 39% agreed it was fair and not biased, and 18% disagreed.

The accuracy and fairness of the information provided to the public has been a key issue across the whole consultation. Almost none of the information around the issues of nuclear power is uncontested; the debates about scientific 'accuracy' challenge almost all the 'facts' from different and competing perspectives. In summary, as evaluators, we have concluded the following on the information provided for the public in the deliberative events:

- The process for developing the information materials was comprehensive: the Citizens Advisory Board, the Stakeholder Review Group and the Development Event worked well to pilot the process and materials. These activities engaged a wide range of interests, and the drafts of materials were changed significantly as a result of input from all of these activities.
- The information provided to the public was clear and accessible and it was sufficient in terms of quality and quantity: there was enough relevant information to enable participants to successfully complete the tasks, and answer the questions, they were given, and to fully participate in the deliberative process.
- There was perhaps too much information for participants to handle - physically (with so many pieces of paper) as well as mentally. The pub quiz approach worked well to get basic information across and build a sense of teams around tables, although it did perhaps go on too long. In addition, there was repetition of the same basic information (in the video, handouts and information read out by facilitators).

These methods of information provision were used to ensure consistency in information provided, and key information was clearly communicated. However, the repetition was clearly disliked by some participants and was observed by the evaluators to be counterproductive. In particular, the requirement for facilitators to read out (sometimes quite large) chunks of text did not work well to provide clear and usable information, took a long time and was seen by participants and others as patronising.

Overall this over-emphasis on information provision was understandable - not least because the previous consultation had been criticised for not providing sufficient information. In this case, a smaller quantity of information would possibly have helped the deliberative process work more effectively. However, overall, the design of the process did allow the information to be absorbed and considered by participants, so they could come to a view.

- There was clear and explicit recognition given to the existence of competing perspectives on the issues, and a range of different (and opposing) views was included. Information was provided in terms of references and sources of information, although more details on whether data originated from, say, Government, an academic source or a green NGO may have been useful.
- The materials were designed to support the overall consultation aim of testing the Government's preliminary view, and the evidence and arguments that led to that view. This created a very specific 'framing' to the consultation which was focused specifically around nuclear power, and around the Government's view. This framing was perceived by some participants as meaning that the process and the information were leading and biased. However, as evaluators we found no evidence that particular views from the public, or a specific conclusion, were being explicitly encouraged or sought.

It was entirely possible for the public to disagree with the Government's preliminary view if they wanted to, and to challenge the evidence and arguments being presented. Concerns were certainly raised, and noted, and fed into the final reports of the consultation. However, overall, feedback from evaluation respondents was that they were satisfied with the way the consultation was run:

- 93% of participant questionnaire respondents agreed that the event was worthwhile and they enjoyed taking part
- 89% agreed that they were more likely to get involved in public consultations in future as a result of taking part in this one
- 92% were satisfied with the way the event was structured and run.

From observation (by evaluators and other observers) the participants engaged fully and energetically with the issues, in spite of the long day. Their positive feedback shows that they gained a great deal from it - and they particularly valued the learning and the exchanges of views with other participants.

Overall, therefore, as evaluators we can conclude that the deliberative public events did work effectively to reach and engage a representative cross-section of the general public of the UK. Participants could learn about the issues, input their views and discuss the implications. There were elements of the process that worked less well (e.g. some aspects of the ways in which information was presented), and there are specific lessons for the future.

However, overall, the process was a sound approach to public deliberative engagement in difficult circumstances.

10.2.4 Summary of impacts and influence

The evaluation has reviewed and assessed the impacts of the consultation on the final policy conclusions, as published in the White Paper, and provided a summary of the positive impacts (benefits) for public and stakeholder participants, observers and policy makers (see section 8 for details). Interviews with participants, observers and policy makers have contributed to the evaluation analysis, alongside documentary review.

In terms of policy influence, the evaluation reviewed both the *process* for policy makers to listen to and take account of input from participants, and the *content* of that input and the extent to which it influenced the final policy conclusions.

In terms of the *process* for policy makers in dealing with the input from participants, the evaluation has found the following:

- Evaluators observed a sample of events and could therefore see first hand how participants' views were recorded and reported, and through documentary review could compare to some degree the extent to which key issues raised at events were covered in published reports, as well as asking participants in questionnaires and interviews how satisfied they were with the approach to recording and reporting.

Overall, recording and reporting worked well. Each element of the process (and each event in the case of stakeholder events) was separately reported, so views from different participants could be distinguished. All reports were published on the website, so could be challenged by participants if inaccurate. No evidence was found of any such challenge in the evaluation; on the contrary, those who had seen the reports agreed they were fair and accurate (even if they did not agree with the overall views emerging).

- An independent summary report of the input from all the stakeholder events was produced by Henley Centre HeadlightVision, which provides a further measure of independent scrutiny in the review and use of participants' views from all events.
- The evaluation has evidence from a range of sources (including interviews) that the process that policy makers went through to consider the input from participants was comprehensive (see section 8 for full details). Feedback from BERR policy makers was that policy teams all worked on and integrated data from all strands of the consultation: the written and online consultation, the stakeholder events and the deliberative public events.

Policy makers reported that they reviewed the summary reports from the contractors (Dialogue by Design and Opinion Leader) as well as reviewing the full set of responses from the written and online consultation, and detailed reports from all the events, as well as gaining insights from their attendance at those events in person.

Policy makers reported that the process for sharing the information internally ensured that all policy teams saw all data relevant to the consultation as a whole as well as to their specific policy area (e.g. all policy makers read the responses in the written and online consultation to Question 1).

- The White Paper is a summary of the 18 key consultation questions, of the input from participants, the Government response and the policy conclusions. It is a comprehensive approach to reporting back to participants, and more widely, on the influence of the participant input to the consultation.

In terms of the *content* of the policy influence, the evaluation has reviewed the reports from the various strands of the consultation. All strands identified similar issues; the five issues emerging from across all strands were around:

- waste management (and reprocessing)
- ensuring that investment in nuclear does not reduce investment in renewables and energy efficiency
- the safety and security of nuclear power stations
- the need for strong independent regulation
- the role of the private sector in the ownership and management of nuclear power stations.

Reviews of the content of the White Paper show that four of the five issues above are explicitly tackled, with new policy proposals particularly on waste management (and to some extent reprocessing), the future priority for renewables and energy efficiency as part of the energy mix in the UK, and ways forward on safety, security and regulation.

Policy makers point particularly to a much strengthened policy approach to waste management, in that the policy announced in the White Paper requires arrangements for waste disposal to be in place before development consents will be given for new nuclear power stations. Policy makers say that was not expected to be part of the expected policy framework until they heard first hand the strong feelings expressed in the consultation about waste management.

The issue of the role of the private sector in terms of ownership and responsibility was not an issue that the Government had expected to be raised, and it clearly has implications beyond this specific consultation. This was the one issue arising from the consultation that was not answered explicitly in the White Paper, although the White Paper does acknowledge that this had emerged as an issue in the consultation.

Overall, as evaluators, we can conclude that the *process* for considering and taking account of the input from consultation participants was rigorous and robust. We can also conclude that there was tangible influence in terms of policy shifts on the *content* of the final White Paper, especially on waste. The audit trail in this case is fairly strong.

The only caveat for the evaluation is that more could have been done to report back to participants how the policy process used the input, and the difference it made to the final policy conclusions. That was an unfortunate gap in what was otherwise good practice in reviewing and taking into account participants' views.

In terms of the impacts in terms of benefits for those involved, the evaluation received positive feedback from participants, observers and policy makers. From evaluation evidence overall, we can conclude that the process did provide benefits for all those involved, including the following:

- For public participants, the main benefits they identified themselves were learning, talking with and listening to the views of others (especially those who were different from themselves), and meeting others, and simply taking part and being able to have a say.

These individual and personal benefits were seen to have strong links to wider social benefits including increased awareness and understanding, social cohesion and active citizenship.

- For observers at the deliberative public events, the benefits were around gaining insight and learning about public / grassroots views on the issues, and learning about participatory processes. Feedback indicated the value of observation as a way of understanding the value (and limits) of deliberative public engagement processes.
- For stakeholders (at both the regional and site events), the main benefits were around hearing and understanding other stakeholders' views, increased knowledge on the subject, giving their own (and their organisation's) views, taking part, understanding the Government's position, and networking.

These individual and personal benefits were seen to have enabled the debate to have moved on, and enabled a better understanding between stakeholders who may not have met before face to face and who were then better able to understand each other's positions and very different viewpoints.

- For policy makers, the key benefits identified were around gaining greater legitimacy for decisions and decision-making, including through greater openness and accountability, and around testing and gaining feedback from the public and stakeholders on the Government's preliminary view, which was the main purpose of the consultation.

In particular, policy makers saw the benefit of gaining a real understanding of public hopes and fears around the issues more widely, and to have heard them direct by listening first hand to public discussions. Finally, there was a sense that policy makers had gained a new respect for participants, both public and stakeholders, as a result of having seen for themselves the energy and commitment participants gave to the process.

The evaluation can, therefore, conclude that there were benefits for all those involved in the process - public and stakeholder participants and policy makers. It can also conclude that the process for considering public and stakeholder input in developing policy proposals was comprehensive, and that there was tangible influence on the final policy conclusions that were published in the White Paper.

10.2.5 Summary of findings on meeting objectives and good practice

The evaluation analysed the implications of the objectives set for the process, and the detailed standards of good practice as outlined in the Cabinet Office Code on Consultation⁹¹. The evaluation then reviewed the whole consultation process and compared the process and outcomes with the objectives and standards of good practice (see section 9 for detailed analysis).

⁹¹ *Code of Practice on Consultation*. Cabinet Office Better Regulation Executive, London, 2004. This Code has subsequently been superseded but the 2004 Code was current at the beginning of the evaluation.

This analysis showed that the consultation fully met the objectives set for the consultation, and also fully met the standards of good practice in the Cabinet Office Code.

10.3 Lessons for the future

10.3.1 Lessons from the written and online consultation

The lessons we would propose for the future in relation to the written and online strand of the consultation are based on what worked well as well as what worked less well, and include the following:

- **Transparency of reporting.** The publication on the website of all the results of the written and online consultation, as well as the summary report produced for policy makers from that raw data, was open and transparent.

The only additional activity that would enhance this approach in future is to consider those that do not have online access, and find some way to provide them with easy access to the results.

- **Extending the numbers and mix of participants.** The open access of this strand of the consultation, so that anyone who wanted to could participate, allowed for a good mix of participants in the written and online consultation that was entirely adequate for the purposes; and policy makers felt that the quality and quantity of information they dealt with was more than sufficient. Policy makers did comment that, after a certain number, the issues were being repeated and that more would have been unlikely to have produced anything new or different.

However, it would be good practice to continually develop the range of participants so that there could be an even wider mix of views and perspectives available to policy makers in future. There is more on this issue below.

The development of better lists of national, regional and local stakeholders would help achieve that. Direct invitations will always be more effective than advertisements in terms of gaining more participants, although advertisements can be valuable in spreading awareness that the consultation is happening, and stimulating interest in taking part.

One problem with direct invitations to potential participants is that it is likely to take much more time for messages to spread about how people can get involved. Voluntary and community organisations communicate with their members at regular but not frequent intervals, and this will have implications for the speed of spreading messages about opportunities for involvement.

The mix of participants in the written and online consultation provided a good complement to the public and stakeholder participants in the various meetings, and provided information in a different form. Consultations that use all these methods, and ensure that policy makers attend meetings to hear views in person as well as reading written submissions, will have access to the richest sources of evidence. The approach used here was good practice that could be followed by others.

- **Appropriate information.** It is always difficult to get the information for consultations right, and this one was under particular pressure to provide comprehensive yet accessible information. The feedback from evaluation questionnaire respondents was that it did largely work, although the long list of issues that respondents felt were missing, but which were in fact covered in the Consultation Document, suggested that not all had read the entire document, or had forgotten, or actually wanted *more* information on those topics. In this case, the balance of information provided was about right. All issues were covered, to different degrees, so that there was sufficient relevant information for all participants to contribute fully to the consultation.
- **Structuring the consultation questions.** The questions provided to structure participants' feedback worked well to provide an overall framework. There were some complaints that the questions were too limiting or too narrow, but also significant evidence that those who wanted to make points outside the scope of the questions found ways to do so - either by sending in an additional document, or by simply giving their views on the issue they were concerned about within a question that was on something like the same point.

The point was also made in some feedback that there were a lot of questions overall (18). Certainly numbers of responses reduced as people worked their way through, with about 1,000 fewer responses to the last question than to the first. The lessons for future online consultation processes seem to be:

- make the first question the substantive question, so that if people just want to give overall views they can do so easily - and as many participants as possible do actually answer the substantive question
- provide an overview of the questions so that people can see the whole picture of the issues they will be asked about, and can see where they have got to as they go through the process of giving their views in answer to specific questions
- allowing people to go back and edit their contributions over the course of the consultation seems to work well for participants, although it has the potential to cause problems for those reading the responses as the issues raised may change over time; it may be that a 'parking lot' system could be used so that people who are not sure they have finalised their submission can leave it there and come back to it, and those reading responses will know that the ones they are seeing are final versions.

10.3.2 Lessons from the stakeholder events

The lessons we would propose for the future in relation to the stakeholder events strand of the consultation are based on what worked well as well as what worked less well, and include the following:

- **Representation and diversity.** The four main steps ensuring adequate representation and diversity stakeholder events are to undertake a thorough stakeholder analysis to assess who the main stakeholder interests are and how they might be reached, to establish comprehensive mailing lists of national, regional and local stakeholders to be invited, to ensure that invitations are sent in good time, and to build stronger relationships with NGOs that will allow for more effective joint working in future.

In this case, a stakeholder analysis was done at the beginning, but the time pressures reduced the ability of staff to research and develop fully comprehensive stakeholder lists at regional and national level, in spite of efforts to do so (see below). There was good coverage of interests in the stakeholders that attended, but more could potentially have been achieved.

- **Design and delivery of the events.** The basic structure of a mix of presentations, discussions in small table groups and then feedback and further discussion in plenary worked well. In addition, the role of BERR staff in presenting at and facilitating the events enabled them to hear the views of stakeholders first hand. This did work well.
- **Information provision.** The information provided was clear and largely reliable, although feedback was more positive on clarity than on reliability. An important part of the information needed for good stakeholder engagement comes from the stakeholders themselves and that also worked well in this case, as stakeholders were largely willing to engage in open discussions on the issues.
- **Sufficient time.** There was quite a lot of feedback that some stakeholders would have liked the discussions to have continued for a full day, rather than the half day of the regional events and the roughly two hours of the site events. However, there is a balance to be struck here between losing those that would not attend a full day event and pleasing those that want to meet for longer. One option for the future may be to run the main event for half a day, but offer a continuation of discussion for a given longer period for those who want to continue.
- **Information about stakeholder participants.** More information is needed about who attends stakeholder events, for internal learning purposes, to start to build up longer term stakeholder networks, for evaluation purposes and, most importantly, to reassure stakeholders that the process was robust and legitimate in terms of who was involved. We therefore suggest:
 - attendance lists are given to all participants at all events; these lists should show the individual's name, organisation and type of stakeholder by category (e.g. industry, NGO, local government, etc).
 - as these lists will be produced before the actual meeting, a final attendance list should be produced showing who actually turned up; this should then be used in final reports on the consultation to show the breadth and depth of stakeholder involvement
 - a summary by the lead facilitator of who is there, who was invited and how; this information should be included in the participants' packs along with the list of names (and categories).

This approach should reassure those who were unsure about who else was in the room and the legitimacy of the process in terms of the types and numbers of stakeholders involved. Some will still not know but this approach will demonstrate that efforts have been made to provide this data.

- **Better communication with stakeholders after events.** In this case, it was good practice to run reconvened events to explain to stakeholders what had been done with their input and what were the final Government decisions.

However, this could not cover all participants. We therefore suggest the following, whether or not reconvened meetings of participants are held:

- an explanation is given at the consultation event of what the next steps in the process are and what participants will receive next in terms of information
- a report of the meeting is produced and emailed to all stakeholders; or sent by post to those not on email (some community groups and members of the public may need this e.g. stakeholders at the local site events in this case)
- that meeting report is also published on the website, and available long term; the report should also be given to policy makers, even if there is also a summary overview, and feed into the policy process
- stakeholders are informed by email what the final decision is and be given online access to all the final documents; in this case all the documentation was published which was good practice, but few stakeholders knew about it
- at the time of the final decision, a short summary of how participants' input related to the final decision, and what was changed as a result of that input should also be sent.

This sort of approach should help stakeholder participants understand more about the policy development process and how their input has (and has not) influenced the final decision and specific policy proposals. That would help demonstrate to them (and wider audiences) whether the consultation has achieved valuable outcomes. All such information can help build understanding and (potentially) trust in engagement activities.

- **Better stakeholder contact lists at regional level.** Invitations for these stakeholder events depended on good lists of contacts, and these had to be researched and put together at very short notice and with few resources for research. We therefore suggest:
 - Each government department should invest in some stakeholder analysis and then research to develop a database of regional and local contacts that can be used for a range of stakeholder events around their subject interests.

Stakeholder lists go out of date very quickly but some initial investment and the development of a core database would at least provide something that can be updated when needed, rather than starting from scratch every time with the risks of missing out some particularly useful stakeholders and their input.

- Send invitations as early as possible, even if it is just to hold a date with an indication of location (e.g. Manchester city centre). At that stage there is no need for details but it would ensure that such an event gets into more people's diaries than leaving it until all the details are confirmed. This is not just practical good practice - stakeholders are suspicious of being told about events late and feel the process is not inclusive.

- It is not enough to know which organisation to invite; different organisations process such invitations in different ways. In some, the invitation needs to go to a named individual or it goes in the bin. In others, the invitation needs to go to the Chair, or Chief Executive, or it is ignored. It does need fairly deep knowledge of the field, and regular research, to update stakeholder lists in this way, and may require expert guidance.
- A broad mix of stakeholders, representing the range of stakeholder interests, can be invited but it is not possible to force people to attend and it is every stakeholder's right to decide not to take part. It is also every stakeholder's right to insist that attendance does not necessarily imply endorsement of the process or the proposition being put forward.
- Good practice in stakeholder engagement now recognises that, to be fully effective, a great deal of work is needed to build relationships between Government and stakeholders behind the scenes, in order for the 'set piece' face to face events to work at their best. Some stakeholders will simply turn up if invited, but others will need to be negotiated with over a period of time to be reassured that they can trust the process and that their role and status is protected.
- Some stakeholders simply have far greater resources than others. In this case, many of the industry, local government and academic stakeholder participants came as part of their job. Many NGOs have limited staff and cannot take part in every consultation that they are invited to. Indeed, for many NGOs the majority of their capability at local level is voluntary, and there are limits to the input such volunteers can make. One stakeholder interviewee raised this issue as follows:

"All the people who work in the nuclear industry are paid to be here but a lot of anti people are there in their own time and at their own expense." (industry stakeholder interviewee, Manchester).

NGOs have to very carefully prioritise those engagement activities where they feel they can make most difference, and where they have the greatest chance of meeting their own priorities. This does need to be taken into account in planning future stakeholder engagement activities.

10.3.3 Lessons from deliberative public events

The main lessons for public engagement processes of this sort in future, based on what worked well and less well in this consultation, include the following:

- **Time engagement to fit policy development.** Some guidance on public engagement suggests it should take place as early as possible⁹², and that is usually good advice. However, the best timing for public engagement is an area of some contention and there are differing views on what is the best point in the policy process for consultation to take place. For example, too early and there may be no clear policy targets for the results, and too late and the results may have no real influence.

⁹² Rowe, G. and Frewer, L.J. (2000) 'Public participation methods: a framework for evaluation', in *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 25 (1), 3-29.

In this case, the timing was difficult but there was still room for considerable influence: if there had been a significant public mood (and polling) against any future for new nuclear power stations, it would have been extremely difficult for Government to go ahead. Also, where strong feelings emerged (e.g. on waste), they could be built into the drafting of the White Paper.

- **Frame the engagement honestly, simply and clearly.** The underlying question for any public engagement needs to be simple and clear. In this case the framing was honest - the Government had 'taken a preliminary view' and wanted feedback on that view. However, this did not create a positive atmosphere because the distinction between 'taken a view' and 'made up its mind' is quite subtle. Given a general environment of some distrust between Government and citizens, such subtleties are likely to translate into suspicion. Some of these suspicions were overcome in this case, but the atmosphere was less positive than in many similar engagement activities as a result.

In addition, the substantive question for the public deliberative events was very complex and included so many sub-clauses that participants felt rather 'herded' towards a particular answer. Keeping consultation questions as simple and direct as possible reduces pressure on participants to grapple with such complex choices in a single answer, and thus reduces unease and distrust.

- **Focus the engagement on the types of questions to which the public can best contribute.** Deliberative public engagement of this type can be very valuable in identifying deeper public values, concerns and aspirations. It is participatory, developmental and educative. It is not designed to simply identify a 'top of the head' public view on a set of given questions.

In this case, a greater emphasis in the design of the process on discussion of conditions for acceptance or rejection may have provided further valuable feedback to Government about where the public was willing to go ahead, and where it had real concerns and would draw the line. Some of this did come out, and there was a final session on conditions. Unfortunately it was a very short session, at the end of a long day. Even more valuable feedback could have been achieved with a shift of emphasis in the design of the day.

- **Take time to plan and deliver public engagement.** There is never enough time for the planning and delivery of public engagement processes to be relaxed. In this case, significant changes were made to initial plans to the programme for the day and the materials as a result of the valuable inputs of the Citizens Advisory Board, the Stakeholder Review Group and the Development Event. However, the timing became very tight at the later stages of the design and development process, which reduced the opportunities for further changes. A little extra time at that stage could have been very valuable in enabling the delivery team to iron out some of the remaining difficulties.
- **Design events to prioritise participant discussion.** The balance of time in any deliberative public engagement should usually aim to prioritise discussion over information provision. The purpose of public deliberation is public discussion so that participants can articulate and develop their views; the information is there to stimulate and resource that discussion. There needs to be time for participants to take in, reflect on and discuss the information they receive in a reasonably relaxed way.

Too much information not only takes time away from the limited time available overall, it also makes participants feel they are being 'sold' something and they start to resist and resent the process. Also, there is only so much information they can absorb in a short time; too much and they get tired and resentful.

There are no hard and fast rules but, as a rule of thumb, no more than one third of the time should be spent providing information - ideally less. In this case, there was too much information overall, particularly too much for participants to take in and deal with in the time and, as a result, discussions were rushed and participants felt bamboozled. Less information could have achieved as much participant knowledge with less negativity.

- **Participants learn from each other.** Participants learn as much from sharing ideas and listening to each other as they do from formal information provided. Participants particularly value the interest and challenge of talking with people with different backgrounds and views in a safe and supportive environment. The questioning and discussions in small groups is a very effective learning process in which people take on new information and formulate and refine their views. There needs to be enough time and a relaxed enough atmosphere for this to be really effective.
- **Participants want to hear opposing views.** The ways in which opposing views can be brought into deliberative public engagement can vary. On the day, they can include presentations in person, filmed presentations, written summaries of arguments for and against and who thinks what, and expert panels covering diverse views. They can also include involving stakeholders with opposing views in the planning and drafting processes leading up to the deliberative events.

In this case, significant efforts were made to ensure that the main diverse arguments were presented, following a stakeholder analysis which identified the range. The plan had been to cover opposing views in the video, with filmed presentations from Greenpeace and others, and in some of the written handouts. Several green NGOs were also involved in the Stakeholder Review Group that considered the plan for the day and the materials, to ensure that opposing views were included.

Three lessons emerge from the problems that arose in this case when Greenpeace and some other green groups withdrew:

- Methods are needed to ensure opposing views are presented to participants in forms which do not rely on the continuing goodwill of others (e.g. written summaries of the arguments for and against, and who believes what)
- If there is a good reason why opposing views are not presented in the way that was planned, the organisers should say so very clearly and openly (e.g. in this case that some green groups withdrew the day before). Participants respect honesty and openness, and are more likely to forgive any small reduction in the quantity of opposing views as a result.
- Further consideration is needed of the role of NGOs in deliberative public engagement, by Government, by engagement practitioners and by NGOs themselves, to contribute to more effective public engagement in future (see section 3 for more details on this issue).

- **Provide the right sort of information.** Information for deliberative public dialogue needs to be designed to stimulate and resource discussion, not simply to 'educate' the participants, which means that the information has to be trusted and practical.

The scrutiny of the information materials to stimulate public discussions in this case was so intense that some valuable lessons have emerged, including:

- **Participants want information that comes from a range of sources,** and they want to know what comes from where. They tend to trust Government and private sector information less than information from universities, NGOs, independent researchers etc. That does not mean no information should be provided from Government; just that a larger proportion could be provided (and shown to have come) from elsewhere.
- **They want to know about the process.** Participants ask for information about how many events are taking place, when and where, and how many people are involved (some of this was in the end of meeting report in this case). They also appreciate having a written summary programme of the day, showing lunch breaks etc.

Also, participants often want to know how and why they were chosen, and something about the demographic representation. Finally, they want to know what will be done with their views, next steps and when they will hear more about the results. A paragraph on the programme for the day can explain all this.

- **Written information can focus on facts and figures.** Ideally, it should be very brief and concise and presented in tables, bullet points, diagrams etc, rather than too much text. In the field of nuclear power, in which almost nothing is uncontested, the written information should perhaps only cover the basic background to the subject, free of opinion (except where different views are explicitly summarised - see below).
- **Different opinions can be presented by individuals,** chosen to reflect the diversity of views. This does not have to cover every possible view, but should certainly cover the main different perspectives.
- **International examples.** Participants often want details of how they do it in other countries. This came up quite often in this debate as participants had heard that countries such as France and Sweden were developing new nuclear power stations.
- **What those most directly affected think.** In this case, the unions were among those providing views on the video, with their clear interests around skills and jobs. There was also interest among participants in what people who live and work around existing nuclear power stations thought.

In this case, the site stakeholder meetings did provide this input. It may have been possible for these events to have been held earlier and the results of those, and other data, could have been provided to public participants. At the least, public participants could have been given more information about these site stakeholder events, and who was participating in those.

- **Information in advance.** In this case, 72% of participant questionnaire respondents said they would have liked more information in advance; only 19% said they did not want this. Not all participants in public engagement events are so keen on information in advance, so this needs to be managed carefully, and it is important to avoid negative impacts.

Any information sent in advance should be minimal and not include anything complex that could dissuade less confident participants from taking part, and it should only be provided once participants have agreed to take part, so that self-selection of those with an interest in the subject is avoided.

It may be that advance information simply needs to provide enough to explain what is the issue and / or main question that the event will be addressing, what is the purpose of the engagement, what participants will be doing and how it will work (e.g. small group discussions), what will happen to the results, what information they will be given at different points (e.g. they will be told when the final decision is made and what difference their input made), and possibly how important their involvement could be.

- **Information afterwards.** As mentioned above, participants want to know what happens as a result of their involvement. They need to know what is being recorded from their discussions, what results or conclusions are being taken forward to policy makers on their behalf, and what happens to that input.

In this case, the end of day report (sent soon after the events) effectively summarised the key results from across all nine deliberative events. Participants were then also informed about the final decision and the publication of the White Paper. This was good practice.

It is also helpful for the final communication to participants to explain what difference participants' views made. It is valuable for the policy makers themselves to go through the process of articulating what policy details have changed as a result of public input. It is also valuable in generating greater public trust in public policy making and in engagement activities to demonstrate where and how a difference to policy has been made.

In this case, the White Paper provided a detailed summary of input from all participants and a detailed response by Government. However, feedback to the evaluation suggests that few participants in any part of the consultation had seen, let alone read, the whole White Paper.

Shorter summaries (ideally one page for public participants) may help here; separate summaries may be needed for each group involved (e.g. public at special events, stakeholders at specific events).

- **Mix of methods of information provision.** In this case, the pub quiz, the video and handouts provided a good mix of methods. Additional methods that can enhance information provision include ensuring that a sufficient number of experts are available to answer detailed questions (on policy or the science), and that there is time in the process to allow for such questions and answers.

- **Do not read out large amount of information.** The mechanisms of facilitators reading out information was an experiment used in this case, designed to avoid excluding anyone with literacy problems, and to ensure consistency of information provided (partly on legal advice). However, it did not work on any level, and should be avoided in future.
- **Credible development process for information.** Information is more likely to be trusted by participants if it can be shown to have the support of a group of stakeholders with different views. This helps convince participants that the information is fair and balanced. Obviously, participants need to know what the development process is for it to make a difference to their trust in the information.
- **Remember that participants learn from each other.** As mentioned above; formal information provision will only ever be part of building greater knowledge and understanding; participants learn as much from each other.
- **Integrate stakeholder engagement, citizens' advice and piloting processes throughout the planning and delivery.** In this case, each of the parts of the development process worked well on their own terms, but could have provided greater and more valuable input if links had been maintained, such as a Steering Group of key stakeholders and a continuing Citizens Advisory Board. Those could have provided wider support as well as demonstrating greater independence and integrity in the information materials and process design.
- **Recording and reporting needs to be comprehensive and transparent.** In achieving the most comprehensive reporting, recording needs to be comprehensive. In many cases, it is too much to expect facilitators to lead and support discussions, take notes and give information.

Additional recorders, who can support facilitators, would be ideal; digital recording can also be used as a backup (although this can be difficult given the levels of background noise at large events). Also, final reports need to be comprehensive to allow the nuances of public views to be fully covered and available as part of the evidence base. Summary reports and presentations to policy makers of key findings may also be needed.

- **Logistics matter.** At some of these events, some people were waiting around for over an hour at the start, which had meant an early start for them and bad temper at the beginning of the day. That does not help create a positive atmosphere. In this case, apart from this problem in the morning, logistics generally worked well throughout the day: lunch, refreshments, chocolates and fruit platters put on tables mid-afternoon etc. Those did all help create a good productive mood among participants.
- **Invite the Minister.** From observation, there is a frisson when a Government Minister is present throughout and listening first hand to what the public are saying. Some Ministers are excellent at these events and that can create a highly positive environment where participants feel Government is taking their views seriously and values their input.

A Minister adds gravitas and status to these events, and can strengthen trust in the whole process. It is also usually valuable for the Minister to hear public views first hand.

- **Media coverage.** Media coverage often focuses on the polling results from these events, which never communicate the nuances of the debate and the positive results. An ideal situation in future could be to involve the public participants in the media strategy in some ways, for example through a continuing Citizens Advisory Board that could talk directly to the media about the process and results of the consultation.
- **Trust and respect participants.** Participants are surprisingly willing to commit their energy and effort to these processes, even when they have no previous personal interest in the subject. Discussions among participants, especially in small groups, are almost always of much higher quality than policy makers and observers expect.

It helps to plan on the basis that participants have a great deal to contribute, will want to talk, will want to engage at a deep level, and will want to see their input taken seriously as a result. They can be trusted to respect and engage with the process and to contribute a great deal.

10.3.4 Overall lessons for the future

In addition to the lessons from each strand of the consultation, some overall lessons from the consultation as a whole have emerged, including:

- **Publicise consultations and their results more widely.** In future, it would be valuable for policy makers to publicise the results and the impacts of participant input on policy conclusions much more widely.

There was considerable scepticism throughout this process about whether Government would take any notice of what the public and stakeholder participants said. When, as here, there are clear messages about what has and has not changed, a simple statement about both the process and content of participant influence on policy may help build confidence in the consultation process, and in Government decision and policy making on the issues.

A summary of the overall results of the consultation, and how they were used to draft the White Paper may answer this problem. Such a summary would, of course, need to be printed and sent to participants by post as well as being available online. This sort of communication, to participants and wider audiences, may help build wider understanding of consultation, what it can achieve and what are the limits. Done well, such communications may also help to build trust and understanding of Government policy and decision making processes.

- **Independence.** It was suggested by a few respondents to this evaluation that consultations should be run by organisations independent of Government; by this they do not simply mean independent private contractors but by organisations that can guarantee the independence of the process while, presumably, also delivering the objectives of the Government department commissioning the consultation for its own policy development processes. This may be an issue that merits further consideration and research.
- **Stakeholder engagement in public engagement events.** While stakeholder engagement has become widespread throughout Government, there are difficulties integrating some stakeholders into deliberative public engagement processes, particularly pressure and campaign groups.

It may be that new types of relationships between stakeholders and government are required; for example, to put a proposition to the public to test the public views, or to engage the public in an idea, or to offer opportunities to the public to take further action on an issue. This is a challenging idea that potentially conflicts with the traditional relationships between Government and some stakeholders. Again, this may merit further consideration and research.

- **Do public consultations as well as possible first time.** This deliberative public engagement process took a great deal of work to get right, showed real courage and commitment from those commissioning and delivering the engagement activities and succeeded well in the circumstances.

All the circumstances constraining the greater success of this public engagement could have been avoided if there had been no Judicial Review. The original timing would have been easier as no statements would have been made about the Government's preliminary view, and the consultation planning could have been free of many of the media and legal pressures that surrounded this one.

Even in these difficult circumstances the public engagement here achieved a lot; but it was a struggle for all concerned. Doing it right first time would have made it much easier. As one policy maker in interview for this evaluation said: these processes need the freedom to take risks to get the most out of them.

In the circumstances, BERR succeeded in commissioning and running an ambitious and extensive consultation, with many elements of good practice which worked well in the circumstances. However, given the resources and personnel available here, in different circumstances there could have been greater experimentation, innovation and sparkle. Legal challenge is not the best context within which to design and deliver innovative public engagement.

- **The need for greater understanding of good practice in engagement.** This consultation process resulted from a legal challenge to the quality of an earlier process, and was itself the subject of a complaint to a professional body. However, as experienced evaluators of engagement, we are aware that there are no overarching quality standards of good practice in public and stakeholder engagement. For this evaluation, we used the Cabinet Office Code on Consultation (current at the time of the consultation) to provide a framework of good practice against which to assess this consultation, as the most widely accepted and appropriate framework, although it was not ideal for the range of engagement activities undertaken within this consultation.

The focus in the engagement field to date has generally been around principles and guidance on engagement, including on deliberative public engagement. However, there may also be a need for broader quality standards. This is a subject of some controversy among academics and practitioners, but one that may benefit from further discussions between Government and relevant practitioners and academics.

- **The need for learning.** The observers at the deliberative public events in this consultation valued the opportunity to learn about how these types of processes work in practice, to develop greater understanding about what these processes can and cannot achieve. That worked well in this case and further opportunities for learning by observation could be developed in future.

However, there are relatively few major national engagement processes of this sort, and few opportunities to learn through observation. Sharing learning among those experienced in engagement, and between them and those new to the field, is a valuable option, although there are currently few resources available to develop those opportunities. Here too, there may be benefits in further discussions between Government, practitioners and academics in the field to identify new opportunities for learning about engagement.

- **Opportunities for taking other issues forward.** All consultations throw up issues and strong views from participants that do not entirely fit within that discussion but which are important for other parts of Government to consider, or that need to be borne in mind at a later date. In this case, the role of the private sector in the ownership and management of nuclear power stations was one such issue.

Mechanisms may be able to be found for future consultations to recognise that such issues may arise, and allow for these issues to be specifically identified, with ideas for how they will be passed on.

It may be that these points are simply passed on to another part of Government, but it will reassure participants that, even though the points they want to make are not relevant for the current consultation, they will not be lost or ignored. This is likely to require minimal resources and may provide significant reassurance and help build trust. The issues identified in this way, and who they have been passed on to, could usefully form part of the report back to participants about what has happened to their input.

There may be numerous ways that this feedback on broad public values and attitudes, beyond the specific consultation, can best be captured and made available to other policy makers and researchers. Again, further discussions between Government, academics and practitioners may be able to identify appropriate ways forward on this.

- **Ensuring appropriate legal advice.** In this case, the role of lawyers in the design of the consultation process did have positive and negative impacts: it did increase rigour throughout the process, but it also created anxiety and reduced opportunities for creativity and innovation, and resulted in a less relaxed atmosphere.

It may be that the ideal role for legal advice in consultations is two-fold: advice on the 'top level' legal requirements for the consultation process at the beginning, and then close but not extensive involvement to give advice throughout as part of the team to enable everyone to ensure that the final design is in the best spirit of consultation.

- **Importance of a strong team,** both internally and with contractors. Here there was a very strong internal team, motivated by a charismatic, highly experienced and skilled senior civil servant who drove the whole process. Everyone involved put a great deal of effort and commitment into the consultation, which was essential in keeping going in occasionally very difficult circumstances, and to cope with the legal, political and media, and often short timescales, pressure throughout.

- **Start early.** A thorough consultation on the big issues early on in the policy process can be followed by more detailed consultations on specific issues later on. In this case, the consultation started where it started and it was not possible to go back: Government energy policy had been agreed but the nuclear element had been challenged and needed to be reconsidered. Although this consultation worked well, the circumstances were not easy. Earlier consultations on the broad issues may have made it easier.
- **Take advice.** In this case, the BERR team leading the consultation took advice from other Government departments (e.g. Department of Health, Department of Work and Pensions), other Government bodies (e.g. COI, Sustainable Development Commission) and various academics with experience of running and evaluating engagement processes. They also took advice from the experienced contractors they commissioned to deliver the consultation. None of this is usual and has contributed to a well-founded consultation process overall.

10.4 Overall conclusions

Overall, the consultation process did engage a wide cross-section of the population: the interested parties (stakeholders) and the 'interested public' through the written and online consultation, and at the stakeholder events, and a demographically representative sample of the general public in the UK through the specially recruited sample for the deliberative public events.

The quality of participants' responses to the consultation seems to have exceeded expectation. The mix of views and the quantity have been appropriate and sufficient for a good picture of public and stakeholder views to be achieved by policy makers. The recording and reporting worked well and, overall, the consultation has achieved all it set out to do, and to appropriate standards of good practice.

The process did have difficulties that affected its effectiveness, largely created by the timing and context, which were mainly beyond the control of the organisers. The process was also affected by a great deal of politics, in public and behind the scenes, which affected the overall mood and style. However, the positive results of the legal and political pressures seem to have been that a major, open, transparent, rigorous consultation process did take place, even if there were some negative consequences in terms of flexibility, creativity and overload of information in some cases.

The framing of the debate was challenging, and very much Government controlled, but did not restrict what the participants could say. The objectives of the process, and why it was taking place, were clear, although that did not overcome a sense among some participants that the Government having a 'preliminary view' actually meant that the Government had 'made up its mind'. However, this did not stop participants joining the debate enthusiastically, and it was clear that if the public and stakeholder participants had overwhelmingly rejected the Government's preliminary view on nuclear power, it would have been extremely difficult for the Government to go ahead.

The consultation was undertaken at a time when the results could influence policy conclusions, and there is evidence that the issues of greatest importance that arose in all strands of the consultation did influence Government policy as stated in the White Paper.

There was clear and observable commitment among the BERR team of policy makers to take the results seriously, and evidence that they conscientiously listened to and considered participants' views in drafting their policy proposals, including that they synthesised the results from all strands of the consultation to ensure the relevant details were covered.

There was sufficient information for participants to understand the issues being raised and to participate fully in the consultation process. Feedback from the public and stakeholder participants suggests they did feel that there had been a good debate, and this was confirmed by evaluation observation. The majority of participants agreed they had been able to have their say and to raise the points they wanted to. There is evidence, including feedback, that the process provided benefits to all those involved: participants, observers and policy makers.

The contractors were experienced and professional and were appointed and managed appropriately, given the tight timescales. There were adequate resources and a reasonable timescale overall (although more time would have eased pressures). The process was appropriate to the context and the nature of the issues to be addressed, although improvements can always be made.

The process fully met its own objectives and all principles of good practice. As a result, the process has provided a degree of legitimacy for the Government policy conclusions published in the White Paper.

Overall, in spite of the difficulties experienced, largely created by the context within which the consultation took place, and although there is always potential for improvement, this was a good process that has provided many detailed lessons that could improve consultation in future.

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URN 09D/791 - Evaluation of BERR's engagement of the public and other interested parties in the future of civil nuclear power in the UK.