

## **The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (United Kingdom) Nuclear Archive: The importance of stakeholder engagement**

**Simon Tucker**

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) Archives Limited  
United Kingdom

Over 70 years' worth of information from the UK civil nuclear industry will be brought together at a new archive to be established in the far north of Scotland. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) Information Governance team has been working on the project for the last nine years and, it is hoped, the facility will be operational in late 2016.

A vast number of records, plans, photographs, drawings and other important information and data, some dating back to the Second World War, are currently stored in various locations around the country, some at individual NDA sites which are in the process of being cleaned up and decommissioned, and others managed by specialists contractors, see below. Very few of these collections, however, are operated to the standards required by the NDA. The NDA's sites currently hold material in varying kinds of storage, some of it in buildings scheduled for demolition, while some is also stored in off-site locations. Sellafield, the NDA's largest site, is estimated to hold more than 50% of all the records in numerous separate stores, while in excess of 80 000 boxes are held in commercial storage facilities.

The NDA is legally accountable for managing this work and has been developing a solution to preserve the information and ensure it remains secure and accessible for the future, in line with legislation on maintaining public records. The facility will be operated as a "place of deposit" on behalf of The National Archives in Kew, London. The decision to proceed with the project, initially launched in 2005, follows a careful re-evaluation of the options and costs in the climate of ongoing economic constraint.

Once the decision was reached to find a single UK home for all the relevant material, the NDA focused on its four priority regions, where ageing nuclear sites have long been a dominant influence in the local economy and where, therefore, site closures will have greatest local impact. Caithness, with 2 000 people working in decommissioning, was selected as the region mostly likely to benefit, as the effective closure of its major employer, Dounreay, is set to become a reality circa 2025.

The new facility will be located near Wick Airport, not far from the Dounreay site, and will be built to all of the relevant archive standards in the UK today, with the aim of developing a base for training archivists and offering apprenticeships, linking up with the University of the Highlands and Islands, and North Highland College. Much of the information will eventually be digitised and made available for electronic research. Ultimately the Archive will also be responsible for the cross-estate Information Management Policies and Procedures on behalf of the NDA and recognised as a centre of excellence in this regard.

With a total project cost in excess of GBP 20 million, the site is being developed in partnership with The Highland Council, which currently owns the land, and will at the same time provide a permanent home for existing North Highland Archive which has

outgrown its current location in Wick Library. The archive is a popular attraction for visitors and tourists seeking information about their and others' Scottish heritage.

Around 20 full-time jobs will be created, while the construction phase is likely to generate dozens of temporary posts and should lead to opportunities for local contractors. The Archive will also house an enormous number of specialist records including microfiche and moving images, currently stored on all sorts of media across the Estate. This too will present one of the biggest challenges to the staff, one of standardisation and interpretation of best practice for managing these and other types of record.

The NDA is in the process of appointing both a Design and Build Contractor and a Commercial Partner to operate the facility once completed. The National Nuclear Archive project represents a major workstream in the overarching Information Governance Programme (IGP). This programme is being developed in order to meet a number of obligations and opportunities as defined in the Information Governance Strategy.

It was clear from the start that the Stakeholder Engagement plan for this project should not be underestimated. Six groups of stakeholders were identified and a plan to engage with each was (and continues to be) developed as part of the IGP:

- **UK government** – The decision makers have to approve the projects and their funding (sometimes at ministerial level).
- **Regulators, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) Authorities** – This is a key community in terms of setting the rules and offering advice. Includes, but not limited to: the National Archive, National Archives of Scotland, Office for Nuclear Regulation, Environment Agency (and their regional equivalents), British Library and the Digital Preservation Coalition.
- **Commercial organisations** – The supply chain who will build the facility and deliver the operational services.
- **Nuclear industry** – Considered the prioritised “customers” of the facility. Includes tier 2 and 3 suppliers.
- **Local communities** – Most of NDA's sites are located in areas where the nuclear industry has had, and continues to have, a significant impact on the local community. A decision was quickly taken to seek to co-locate the archive with a local Authority's archive to benefit both organisations in terms of engagement and funding. Accordingly, NDA's Archive will be co-located with the North Highland Archive – a collection of more than 400-year-old clan records. This community also includes local business groups, schools/colleges/universities.
- **The public** – NDA will be operating their Archive with “Place of Deposit” status which will allow them to manage UK government-owned records in accordance with the relevant legislation (Public Records Act and Public Records Scotland Act). This means the archive will be publicly accessible and able to be used by the local and wider communities.

### In summary

Do not underestimate the importance of effective stakeholder engagement.

- Programming stakeholder communication and events is critical to ensure consistency and frequency of message. Senior stakeholders like to be communicated with regularly. Do not neglect them!
- Engage with and involve the local community at every opportunity. An advisory panel is a good way to do this.

- Stakeholder engagement is an ongoing process. It does not stop so long as the Archive remains open for business.
- Contractual incentivisation is a good way to get what you want. Service level agreements and scheduled business plans will help to plan this.
- Always consider the staff as critical stakeholders. If they feel valued they are more likely to represent your business as you would expect them to.