

Case Study 15

Development of a Masterplan for Winfirth Site

July 2020

“A masterplan: one successful way to undertake long-term strategic thinking that is needed to deliver site-wide decommissioning in the public interest.”

The Winfrith Team, 2019

1: Background

Winfrith was established as a civil nuclear research site in 1959. The site contained 9 experimental reactors and the associated laboratories, stores and ancillary facilities. Operations ceased in 1990 and the site went through a period of rapid decommissioning until 2000 followed by a period of quiescence. In 2012 the site began accelerated decommissioning as part of a 'lead and learn' approach to decommissioning by Magnox. It is now intended that the site will be the first to accommodate in-situ disposal of radioactive waste, and because of this it is destined to become a waste disposal site.

The aim is to restore the site to heathland with public access, and it will be the first full site closure of a nuclear licensed site.

2: Process

In order to facilitate the decommissioning of the Winfrith site, Dorset County Council (which subsequently became Dorset Council, a unitary authority, in April 2019) and Magnox, worked together in consultation with other regulators and stakeholders [see slide 17 in the presentation listed in Information Sources] to develop a masterplan for the decommissioning of the site.

Magnox and Dorset County Council identified three key points to make a successful masterplan. It needs to be:

Visionary

- Created from a shared and informed clear vision of the purpose and the direction of decommissioning
- A vehicle for high quality decision making, consensus building and implementation
- Outward looking and flexible

Participatory

- Based on the spirit of collaboration
- Provide a structure for identifying resource and time management requirements
- Be in a format that can be used as a communication tool

Deliverable

- It must be used: it's a waste of time and energy if it just sits on the shelf
- Fully integrated into the land use planning system, but flexible enough to allow for changes
- Provide information which will help reduce risk and cost
- Kept up to date reflecting internal and external changes
- Based on realistic implementation strategy – reviewed and realigned

The need for a masterplan for the site is supported by the Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole Waste Plan which was adopted by Dorset Council on 31st December 2019. Policy 10 relates to the decommissioning and restoration of Winfrith Nuclear Licensed Site and states: *'b) Proposals should be supported by a masterplan to provide a clear and consistent framework for the development and in order to put each waste management proposal in the context of the overall decommissioning for the Winfrith site.'*

Magnox and Dorset Council identified the following as key lessons, and the challenges in taking these forward:

Key Lesson	Type
The need to have the right team, both at the collaborative working level and internally.	Managing relationships and responding positively to change.
The need for clear communication and leadership. The vision must be shared, planning policy must be supportive, and there needs to be understanding of the aims and issues on all sides.	Dealing with the fluidity of the process – the masterplan constantly evolves. Embedding early, inclusive engagement with the local community, and managing uncertainty.
The management of resources, both people, financial and time. What is required needs to be recognised and supported by early engagement, and sufficient time needs to be allocated to effective engagement at all stages.	Local government restructuring and austerity planning, restructuring of Magnox, getting agreement for a Planning Performance Agreement to resource local government participation

3. Comment

Nuleaf believes there are significant advantages to a Masterplanning approach to nuclear site decommissioning and remediation. We believe that Magnox should engage with local planning authorities to develop this approach at all sites.

Information sources:

1. Presentation by Dorset County Council and Magnox Ltd, January 2019.¹

¹ <https://www.nuleaf.org.uk/meetings-events/other-meetings/>