

Sustainable Communities? Decommissioning and the Future of Sellafield and Dounreay.

This important conference, organised jointly by Westlakes Research Institute (a part of UCLan) and the UHI Millennium Institute was attended by almost 90 delegates.

The programme comprised 14 targeted paper insights from Government, industry, community and academic researchers.

Focussing on the Sellafield and Dounreay nuclear sites, and their host communities of Copeland in West Cumbria and Caithness in the Highlands of Scotland the event provided information, opportunities to compare and contrast activities and, especially, networking.

The following key points emerged at the conference.

- The impending decline of the nuclear sector in Caithness and Copeland has led to the urgent need to achieve the sustainability of both of these areas.
- The nuclear industry is embedded economically and culturally in both the Caithness and Copeland communities.
- Strategic planning is underway in both West Cumbria and Caithness to achieve sustainability for their communities.
- There are particular challenges of relying upon the nuclear industry for a future, sustainable community in both Copeland and Caithness.
- Diversification must be a key policy objective for the future of Caithness and Copeland.
- Best practice can be shared between communities and administrations of Copeland and Caithness.
- The changing nature of communities in the face of structural, cultural and social changes: the dynamics of individualisation and globalisation work against the maintenance of the communities of Caithness and Copeland in their present form in the future.
- That future, sustainable communities in Copeland and Caithness may be very different from the present communities, which are heavily dependent upon a single industry - nuclear.
- There is a special relationship of the Caithness and Copeland areas with the nuclear industry. This is in terms of their acceptance of the nuclear industry

(granting it a social licence to operate), the possession of manpower skills and their asset inventory.

- There is a mismatch between the scale of the issues confronting the Caithness and Copeland communities and the capabilities and resources of the organisations which seek to address them. Joined up working and partnerships are key to future strategies.
- Networked collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination between organisations in public, private and voluntary sectors is important in addressing the challenge of maintaining sustainable communities.
- The public must be engaged positively in discussions concerning the future of the community. The degree of engagement will impose limits on the possible delivery of strategic plans.
- An active research base, that develops and exploits growing knowledge capital embedded within these communities is fundamental to achieving a vibrant future for Copeland and Caithness.
- Education and training have an important role in securing a future for the current communities of Caithness and Copeland. But it is also recognised that education creates mobility in communities as the trained and skilled seek opportunities more widely.
- Sustainable communities are part of a global environment and economy.