

Audits, Assessments and Inspections

During its twenty-five years of operation from 1965, Hunterston 'A' in Ayrshire was routinely ranked as the world's best performing nuclear power station. Since operational shutdown in 1990, Hunterston 'A' has helped the British nuclear industry lead the way in safe and efficient nuclear decommissioning and environmental restoration. We were therefore delighted when Hunterston 'A' agreed to host the NucSIG's third networking event this year.

Beautiful autumn sunshine greeted the forty or so delegates who made the trip - some from as far away as Bristol and Belfast. The delegates were welcomed to Magnox North's Hunterston A site by Stephen Price, Deputy Site Director, who outlined the excellent work being undertaken to decommission the former operating station.



Debbie Thornton at Hunterston A

The theme of the event was billed as 'Audits, Assessments and Inspections'. It was organized by NucSIG Steering Group member Paul Murphy and Debbie Thornton, a NucSIG member and Hunterston QA Engineer. In his introduction, Paul reminded the audience that, whilst the quality world lately seemed more involved with and attentive to topics such as process integration and improvement, lean manufacture, six sigma, etc., the nuclear industry, like other heavily regulated industries, still placed great emphasis on the perhaps less sexy and old fashioned audit and inspection activities to obtain internal, regulator and public confidence.

Presentations were given by senior representatives of the Nuclear Installation Inspectorate (NII) and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA). Craig Lavender from the NII and Byron Tilly from SEPA left the audience in no doubt that their overriding objective was to confirm that nuclear sites complied with relevant health, safety and environmental legislation. This would continue to be achieved through prioritized and effective regulatory oversight primarily based on inspection, audit and assessment.



Above: James Bryson leading discussion on certification.

Mark Whale from Dounreay nuclear site gave a presentation on the development of self assessment arrangements in the operational facilities at Dounreay. The ownership by line management of their own arrangements was emphasized as being key to compliance and ongoing improvement.

PROQUIS Director, Bill Best gave a demonstration of the software tool that they have developed for managing audit and inspection programmes, non-conformances and corrective actions and for the effective review of findings and other feedback.

Quality Scotland's Alaine Sommerville gave a presentation on benchmarking against the EFQM and demonstrated the use of their computer- based assessment tool.

While around half of the delegates went on a guided tour of the site's new Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) Store, the other half participated in a workshop to examine what organizations get from third party certification. Split into groups, they were presented with marketing material taken from the websites of some of the big certification bodies. The room rang with righteous guffaws at some of the more outlandish claims and marketing hyperbole presented. The general consensus was that whilst third party certification provides a level of product assurance, some of the claims made by the certification bodies in this regard were fanciful. Further, third party certification was no longer the great marketing badge that it may once have been - everybody has it!



Many thanks to Magnox North for hosting this event , providing a venue, a buffet lunch and excellent organization and marshalling by Debbie and the Hunterston team.



Alec Boughey of NDA, Lionel Westall of LRQA and Mike Underwood of MxN.