



Improving **public engagement** & public **trust** for **nuclear** decision-making: A case study of the UK approach

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Our research

Our project

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Research team

- BU, HKU, CityU, Tsinghua
- expertise: energy policies, governance, trust

Project website

<http://www.kadinst.hku.hk/nuclear/>

Working Papers

- Improving Public Engagement and Public Trust for Nuclear Decision-making: A Case Study of the UK Approach*
- Risk perception, trust and public participation of nuclear decision-making: Results of a Hong Kong survey and policy implications*



Effective governance for energy security in Hong Kong: improving public engagement and public trust in nuclear decision-making

About us

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For general public
公眾人士資訊

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References

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What this study is (not) about

- This is not a study that supports or is against nuclear energy
- It is about – the *processes* of making **good energy decisions**
- Focusing on a **case** study of **nuclear** energy decision-making in **HK**
- We especially concern about how **public engagement** and **trust building** can bring us *better nuclear decisions*
- Current **limitations** of nuclear decision-making in HK?
- Are there **better alternatives**?

Concepts: Nuclear, trust, public engagement

Nuclear decision-making characteristics:

- Nuclear risks: a special kind of technological risks - “**Low level of occurrence**” but “**catastrophic and long-term** health impacts”; “**reluctant acceptance**”
- Nuclear concerns: technological; **life-cycle - radioactive waste**; regulatory and competence...
- Challenges: **Science/ data-intensive** but **value-laden**, **moral** and **emotional** concerns; significant uncertainty and **lack of complete knowledge** but have to **make difficult and complex trade-offs**

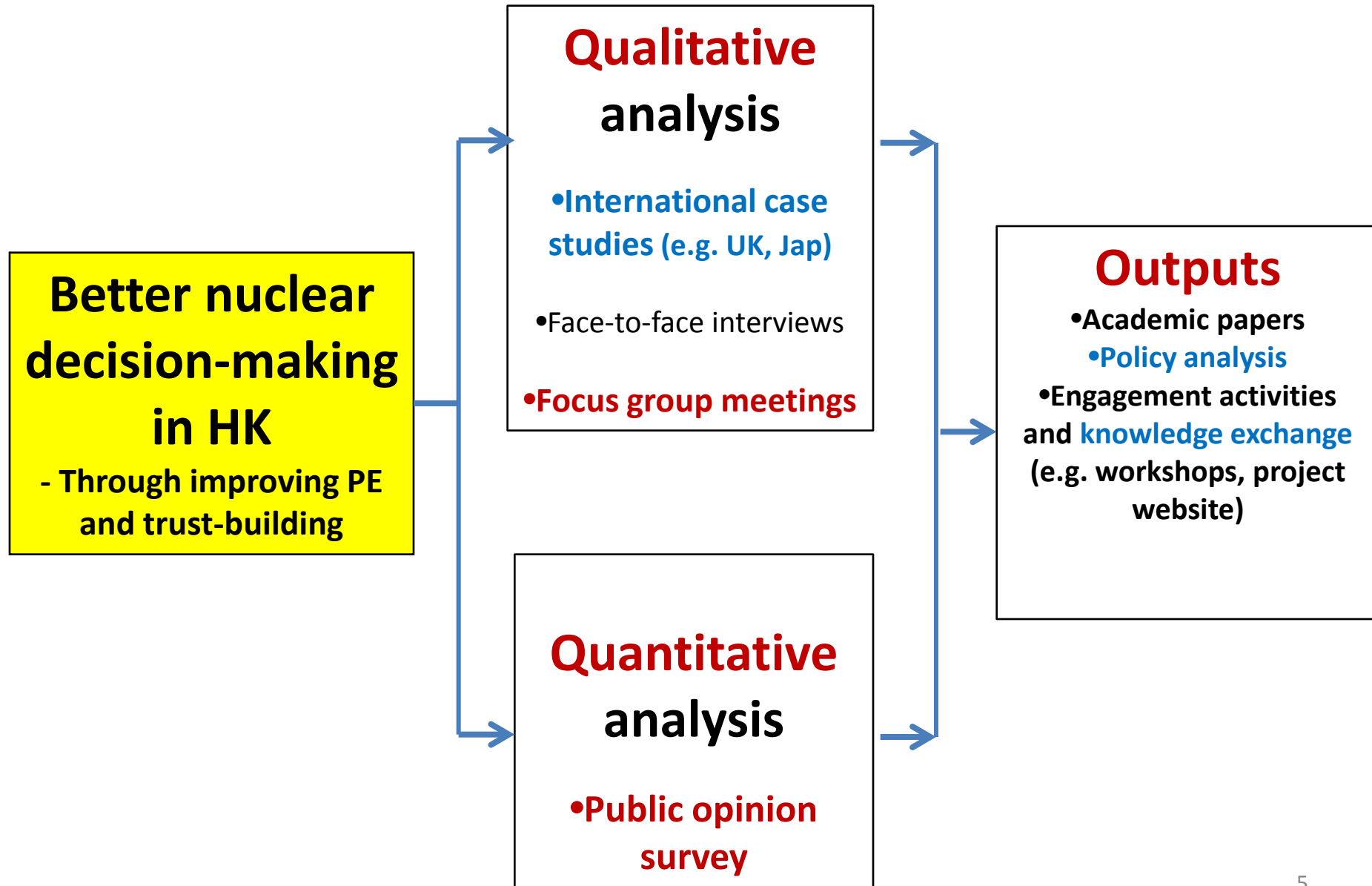
Trust - is very relevant to nuclear decision-making

- Trust as a **context** of nuclear decision-making: public distrust
- Trust as **governing capacity**: enhance policy legitimacy, improves policy implementation, facilitate collective actions (Focht, 2005)
- Trust as a **governing process**: trust-building as an important process to strength the capacity to govern
- **Dimensions of Trust**: trust in “**motives**”, trust in “**transparency**”, trust in “**competency**”

Public engagement – a means of restoring trust (Wynne, 2006)

- Challenges: the public consist of a large **uninformed** and **not very concerned majority** (Sjöberg, 2006)
- Public engagement can **stall** decision-making when **decisions are needed** to be made.
- **Trust**, however, may be **destroyed** rather than enhanced in the PE decision-making process.

Our research plan and methodology



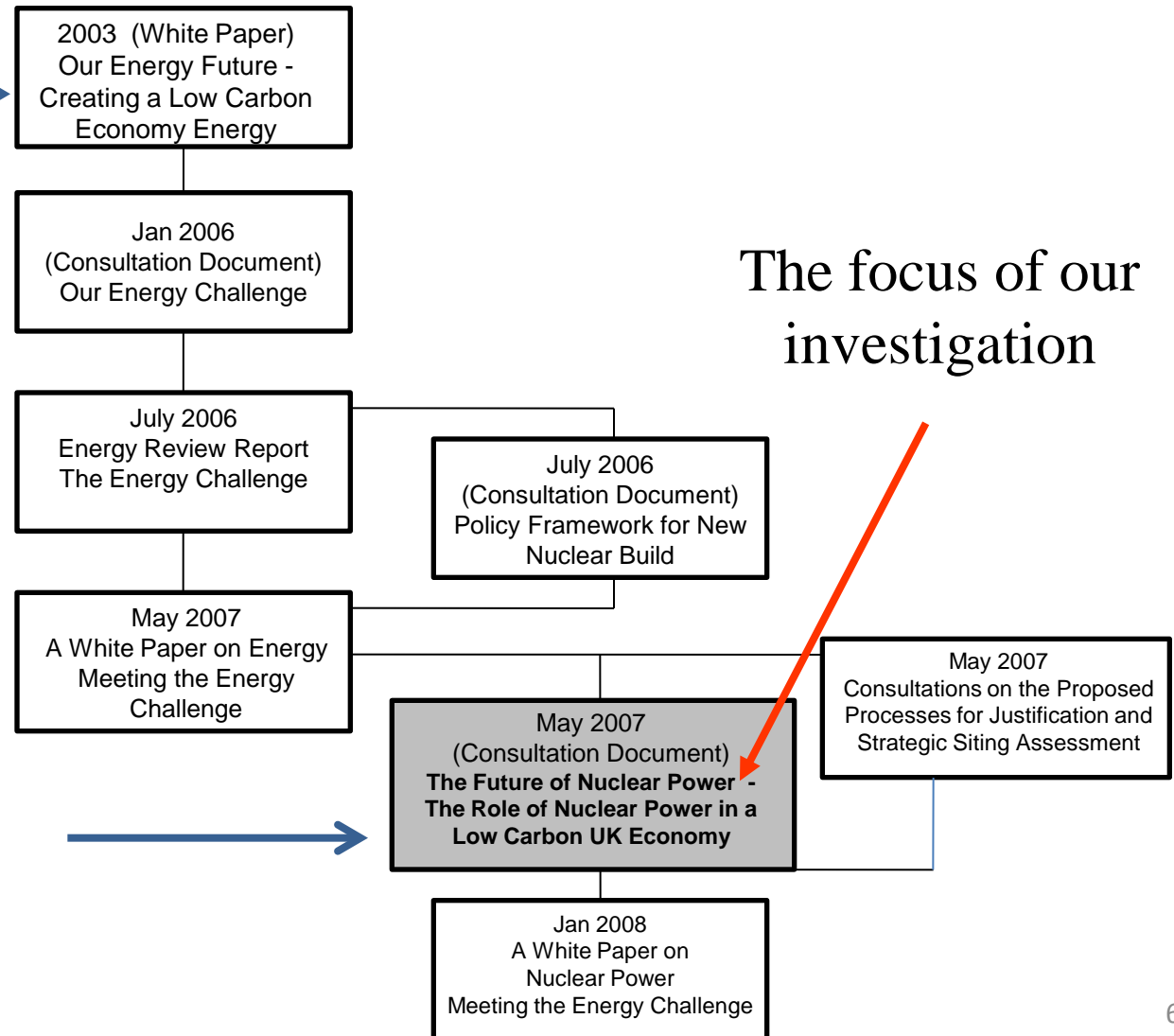
Why study the UK approach

Major nuclear-related energy consultation in the 2000s:

Disapproved nuclear option: New nuclear plants are an “unattractive options”

Re-opened the nuclear options: New nuclear build can be part of the UK’s energy plan

Government’s preliminary view (**a pro-nuclear** view): it would be in public interest to give private sector energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations



A **rare** case of consultation exercise under such **intense scrutiny**...

What happened in the UK

2003: **disapproval** of nuclear

2006: **1st nuclear public consultation** (“The Energy Review Consultation”)

2006: **Greenpeace filed a judicial review**: the govt’s conclusion that nuclear power had a “role to play” in the UK’s future energy supply is unlawful.

2006: **British High Court** made a judgment that the consultation was “**misleading, seriously flawed, manifestly inadequate and unfair**” because insufficient and “misleading” information had been made available by the government for consultees to make an “**intelligent response**”. As a result, the govt was obliged to re-consult comprehensively on nuclear power prior to making decisions to allow or support new build.

2007: **2nd nuclear consultation** “The Future of Nuclear Power”

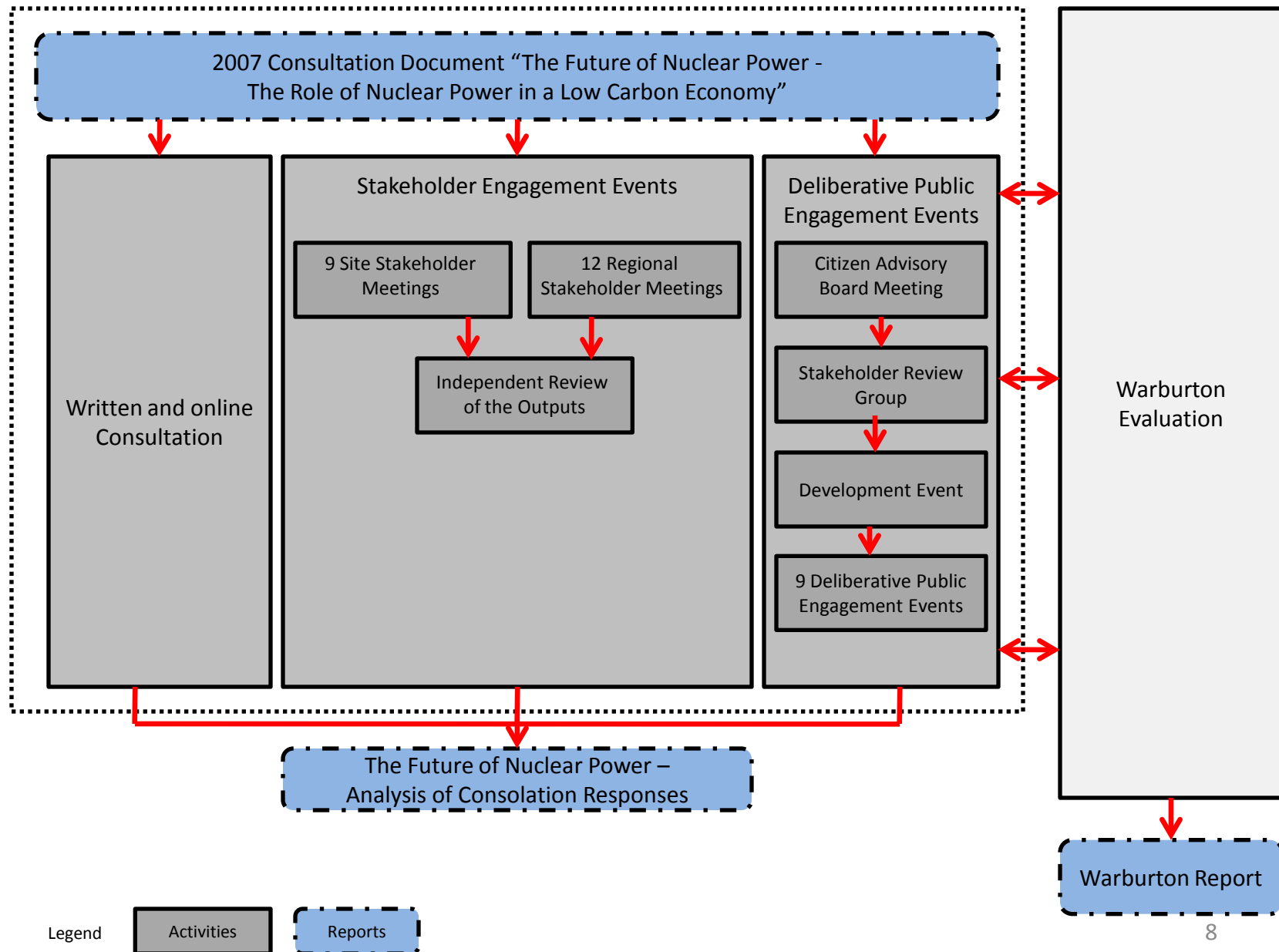
2008: **Nuclear consultation working group**

- the consultation was “conducted in a far less structured and transparent manner...significant “what if” issues were not consulted”; “decide-announce-defend” approach.

- Conclusion: “a **poor consultation** practice **undermined people’s trust in government**”

2009: a **government evaluation report** (“Warburton report”: 328-page)

The Case Study: the 2007 Nuclear Consultation (23 May- 10 October, 2007)



An evaluative framework for assessing public engagement in nuclear decision-making:

A content-process-outcome model

Dimensions	Parameters	Indicators
<i>Content</i>	Accuracy	•Remove error or provide more precise descriptions
	Comprehensiveness	•To exchange information on the knowledge, attitudes , values, practices and perceptions of interested parties concerning the issues
	Balanced-views	•A balanced inclusion of the variety of perspectives that exists within the stakeholder population, rather than biased/ partial information
<i>Process</i>	Timeliness	•Early involvement; adequate time provided to consider, discuss and challenge the information
	Representativeness	•Inclusion of all stakeholders rather than the selected few
	Capacity building of civic engagement	•Meaningful engagement supported by adequacy of resources
	Consensus building	•Participants' value/ opinion changed) rather than intransigence (refused to be persuaded)
	Adaptive decision-making	• Evolving process rather than pre-determined decisions
	Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Transparency in arriving at and implementing decisions •Be honest, candid, and open •Accountable to the decisions made •Be honest, candid, and open
<i>Outcomes</i>	Quality decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Policy quality is improved through informed decision-making and incorporating knowledge and ideas from the public •Policy changes are made that reflect inputs from the public
	Policy legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •People have trust in the motives, transparency and competency of the government •Working relationships are strengthened
	Trust enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To foster trust and confidence in the policy process •Mutual respect among all participants is strengthened
	Improved capacity of problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Access to expertise; improve competence, have adequate knowledge on the subject matter •To promote awareness and understanding of the specific issues under consideration during the policy process, by all participants

An Assessment on the UK Experience

Dimensions	Parameters	Performance	Illustrative Examples
Content	Comprehensiveness	√	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A broad range of stakeholders were engaged through its layered approach to engagement design
	Balanced-views	×	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Biased information was provided to the participants. ■ Green NGOs complained that alternative scenarios, trade offs and conditionality were not adequately discussed.

Dimensions	Parameters	Performance	Illustrative Examples
Process	Timeliness	×	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This consultation was conducted after a preliminary view of the Government was formed.
	Adaptive decision-making	×	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the consultation was completed and the White Paper published (in January 2008), a commissioner of the SDC openly criticized the process in the media, raising concerns that some of the most crucial questions around nuclear energy raised by the public in the consultation remained unanswered

Dimensions	Parameters	Performance	Illustrative Examples
Outcomes	Policy legitimacy	×	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a review study conducted by the Nuclear Consultation Working Group – an independent body comprised leading experts in the fields of environmental risks, radiation waste, energy policy, energy economies, political science, social science and environmental justice – concluded that the 2007 consultation “has failed”
	Trust enhancement	×	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Lack of trust in the motive</i> of the Government: The motive of the Government was questioned. After the consultation was completed and the White Paper published (in January 2008), two of the SDC Commissioners challenged the motives of the Government in the media, questioning the consultation was simply a disguised justification for a pro-nuclear decision that the Government already made, and criticizing the Government for ignoring the warning of its own advisor (Wartburton 2009): 28 <i>Lack of a respectful/ collaborative relationships</i> between Government and green NGOs. FoE-UK denounced the consultation as a “public relations stitch-up”. WWF-UK withdrew from the engagement exercise.

Policy Implications and conclusions

1. **Trust building and participatory governance** need to receive as much attention as **scientific inputs** in nuclear decision-making
 - If engagement is not properly done, trust can be easily eroded
2. **The context-process-outcome model:**
 - Can become the **principles** (check-list) and an **inventory** (a tool-box) of effective PE for nuclear decision-making
 - Public engagement which performs well only certain dimensions (content/ process/ outcome), or meet only certain criteria of under each dimension – cannot guarantee good outcomes.
3. **What NOT to do?**
 - Rely too much on the “**structural openness**” of consultation (govt: need to be responsive – e.g. explain why public views were not accepted)
 - Pre-empt decisions (e.g. nuclear – an absolute necessity?)
 - Present biased information; perceived as withholding information
4. **Reaching out: The role of independent advisors/ think-tanks**
 - **Sustainable Development Commission** (SDC) – was trustworthy
 - It played multiple roles, acting as knowledge broker, watchdog, and policy advocate