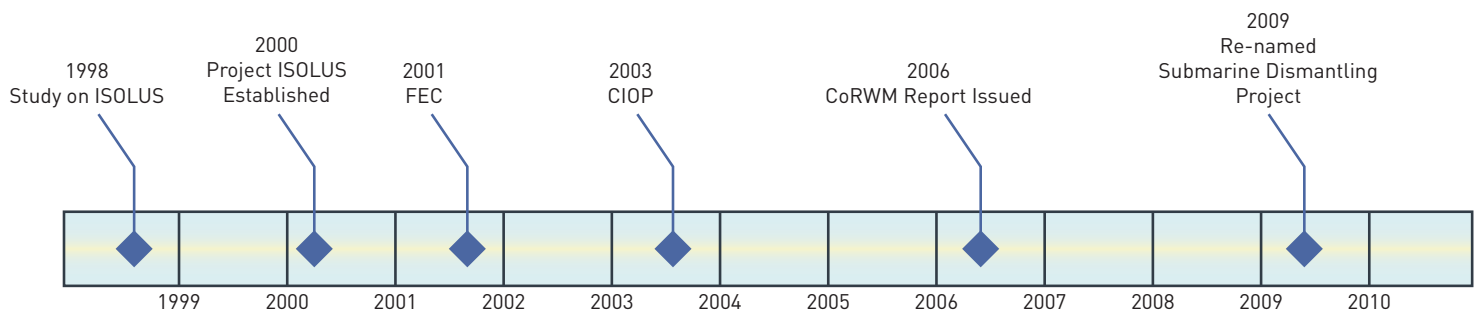


This factsheet summarises the history of the Submarine Dismantling Project, including previous consultations which have been undertaken.

Introduction

The Submarine Dismantling Project (SDP) – formerly known as the ISOLUS (Interim Storage of Laid-Up Submarines) project – is the MOD project to develop a safe, environmentally responsible, secure and cost effective solution for the disposal of 27 of the UK's nuclear submarines after they have left service with the Royal Navy.



Project ISOLUS

In 1998 the MOD undertook an in-house study ('Study on Interim Storage of Laid-Up Submarines') into the options for storing nuclear submarines after they had left service. This concluded that the Intermediate Level radioactive Waste (ILW) from the submarines should be stored on land. In 2000, this recommendation was accepted and project ISOLUS was established to explore the options for dismantling 27 defuelled submarines and storing the resulting ILW.

Two consultations were held, in 2001 and 2003 respectively, to provide early information to stakeholders and obtain feedback on issues of potential concern.

The Front End Consultation (FEC) explored factors that members of the public and key stakeholders believed should be taken into account when developing a solution for submarine dismantling. The MOD then invited commercial contractors to submit outline proposals for the management of the out-of-service submarines, which took into account the FEC findings and recommendations. These outline proposals formed the basis of the second round of consultation, the Consultation on ISOLUS Outline Proposals (CIOP). Over 100 recommendations from these two consultations have been assessed and taken into account in the option assessment process and in preparation for this, the Submarine Dismantling Consultation.



Front End Consultation

The FEC engaged the public and other stakeholders through eight discussion groups, four stakeholder workshops, a citizens' panel and a website, all overseen by a Steering Group. The eight discussion groups were intended to gain the views of members of the public, who would not normally contribute to traditional forms of consultation. They were held at a variety of locations both near to, and distant from, existing sites of nuclear and/or submarine activities.

The four workshops were held in London, Plymouth, Manchester and Edinburgh, to bring representatives of groups with different interests together, to generate discussion and to highlight concerns. The citizens' panel involved 12 members of the public from different backgrounds, who met together for four days over two weekends, to examine the issue, become informed, question expert witnesses and produce a report identifying their key concerns.

The 'Project ISOLUS Front End Consultation Final Report' made 65 recommendations covering a wide range of topics, including: influences and responsibilities; the role of the private sector; links to future submarine programmes; development of trust and understanding; risk management; technical and siting options; and future consultation and independent scrutiny. The report and the MOD's response are available on the project website.

Consultation on ISOLUS Outline Proposals

The CIOP sought the public's views on the outline proposals themselves. A National Citizens' Panel was formed, involving members of the public including some from each of the sites proposed, and a National Forum involved local authorities and environmental and peace groups associated with those sites. An exhibition and public meeting were held at each site and two discussion groups were held, each involving eight randomly recruited members of the public. The consultation was overseen by a Steering Group.

The CIOP made 50 recommendations both on process and on a range of factors likely to affect public views and confidence, including: roles and responsibilities; the technical and siting options; regulation and risk management; option assessment and justification of decisions; waste transport; communication; oversight; transparency; community involvement; and the relationship to future submarine programmes. The 'CIOP - Project ISOLUS - Final Report' and the MOD's response are available on the project website.

Transition to the Submarine Dismantling Project

In 2003 the UK Government set up the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) to consider how to manage the UK's higher activity radioactive waste¹ in the long term, protecting people and the environment. In 2006, CoRWM reported to Government recommending that geological disposal is the best available long term solution and that safe and secure interim storage of this waste is needed in the meantime. CoRWM's recommendations are now being implemented through the UK Government's Managing Radioactive Waste Safely programme.

As the development of this policy was a major factor in the MOD's considerations, some of ISOLUS's activities were deferred while CoRWM reported its recommendations. The project was then restarted with an updated strategy aligned to the recommendations and began a detailed programme of work refocused on assessing the options for dismantling and ILW storage. It was renamed the Submarine Dismantling Project to better reflect this objective.

Since then, the project has concentrated on a structured assessment of the options for submarine dismantling: how the radioactive waste is removed from the submarines; where the radioactive waste is removed from the submarines and which type of site is used to store the waste that is awaiting disposal. It has carried out a number of assessments of the performance of the options, an investment appraisal looking at cost and a Strategic Environmental Assessment to consider any environmental effects.

The current Submarine Dismantling Consultation presents the results of these analyses and the MOD's provisional proposals. The responses received during the consultation process will be fed, along with any recommendations that remain relevant from the previous consultations, into a further period of analysis before MOD forms its recommendations on the solution.

¹Higher activity waste includes both Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) and High Level Waste (HLW).