

# Report on Joint Workshop of UK – Japan Civil Nuclear Research Program 2023/24

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## Introduction

The meeting and workshop attracted 87 delegates – 49 from the UK and 38 from Japan for two days of intensive knowledge transfer and collaboration building, from 15-16 January 2024. This report summarises the activities undertaken and the discussion and recommendations of the workshop activities. As per the previous two years, this year the preparation phase, meeting and workshop took place entirely online due to continued travel restrictions because of the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, delivery by video conferencing sustained the level of participation, with a slight increase in the number of participants compared to last year (82 participants for the 2022/23 event). This confirms the sustained interest and awareness of the joint research programme, with there being several new attendees this year from both sides. The overlap of time zones between the UK and Japan provided a small window for joint sessions, working from 08.00 – 11.00 UK time (17.00-20.00 Japan time). The final agenda is appended to this report. Attendance at the 2022/23 meeting and workshop peaked at ~90 delegates participating in the online meeting simultaneously.

## **Preparation phase**

The timetable for the preparation phase of the meeting and workshop was slightly advanced to that of 2022/23, to enable closure of registration before the winter break and a briefing session with discussion group chairs:

November	Meetings with UK and EPSRC sponsors to agree transfer of leadership of the network.
December	Meetings with the UK and Japan sponsors to refine agenda Identify and invite keynote and project speakers.
January	Pre-registration and save-the-date notification Develop and agree facilitation plan and workshop materials Set up registration portal Meetings with UK and Japan sponsors to finalise agenda Finalise facilitation plan, workshop materials and joining instructions Issue draft agenda and open registration Meeting with UK and Japan sponsors to review registrations and agenda Compile introduction pro-formas and discussion slides Issue final agenda and joining instructions Deliver meeting and workshop Draft and issue post meeting and workshop report Post meeting and workshop wash-up meeting Issue final pack of meeting and workshop materials

Prior to the meeting, UK and Japan delegates were invited to complete an introduction proforma to assist in networking and knowledge exchange. The pro-forma captured key research interests, contact information, and collaborations wanted and offered by the participants. New and amended pro-formas were added to the existing partner matching handbook which now has entries for over 90 programme participants. The feedback from



participants was that this had allowed them to both prepare for discussion in the joint workshop sessions and identify new potential partners for collaboration.

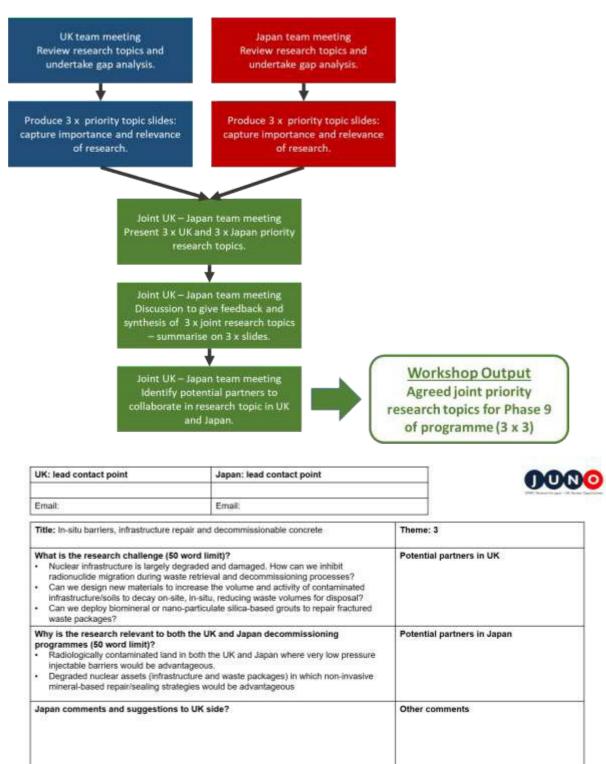


Some of the participants at the UK – Japan Workshop, 15-16 January 2024.

The format of the discussion session followed the approach of 2023 ensuring a balanced presentation of topics from each partner country in the joint discussion session. The output report from the 2022/23 meeting and workshop was shared with participants ahead of the meeting; participants were asked to read this ahead of the in-country discussion meeting to inform a gap analysis, as in 2022/23.

The outcome of the in-country discussion session was the identification of three priority research topics, each summarised on a PowerPoint slide. In the second joint session, the UK and Japan teams alternately presented their topic slides with the aim of identifying and agreeing three joint research challenges. The process is summarised in the following figure, with an example of the style and depth of output expected, summarised on a power point slide.





Summary of facilitated discussion process and output to identify priority research topics for Phase 9 of the joint UK – Japan Civil Nuclear Programme, as has been adopted for Phase 11.



# Session1: Joint Review and Strategic Context of UK – Japan Joint Civil Nuclear Research Programme

The first part of the workshop was a joint review meeting of the UK – Japan Civil Nuclear Research programme. Joyce (Lancaster University) and Yamana (Nuclear Damage Compensation and Decommissioning Facilitation Corporation) presented the background to the UK – Japan joint programme, highlighting the importance of co-operative R&D to address joint challenges of decommissioning the Sellafield and Fukushima Dai-ichi sites. This was followed by two keynote presentations to set the strategic context for the joint research programme and workshop discussions, from the perspective of the UK and Japan. Cowton (Sellafield) presented the organisation of decommissioning activity and its progress on the Sellafield site, within a recently launched corporate strategy. Examples of successful R&D deployment were highlighted, including retrieval, packaging, and storage of wastes from legacy ponds and silos, and post-operation clean-out of facilities entering decommissioning. Sato (TEPCO) presented an update of the status of Fukushima Dai-ichi decommissioning, with a focus on recent work toward fuel debris retrieval and contaminated water management. The detailed short- and medium-to-long term plans for these activities were presented and discussed.

The joint project review session considered the projects funded in Phase 8 and 9 of the joint programme, with complementary presentations from the UK and Japan partners. Scott and Miwa (University of Bristol and the University of Tokyo) and Parween and Asama (University of Sussex and the University of Tokyo) presented progress on their Phase-8 projects, and Hale and Watanabe (University of Manchester and Okayama University) and Zhang/Chao and Tsukahara (University College London and the Tokyo Institute of Technology) presented progress on their Phase-9 projects.

#### Session 2: Discussion of UK decommissioning research priorities and ideas

This discussion and workshop session focused on the development of ideas and priorities for future research in Phase 11 of the joint research programme, within three parallel sessions, as described above. In advance of the discussion session, UK participants were offered the opportunity to produce a one-slide summary of research ideas, with a view to ideas of common interest, informed by consideration of NDA Strategy 4, Sellafield R&D Requirements 2022, the TEPCO Mid-to-Long Term Roadmap for decommissioning of Fukushima Dai-ichi, and Technical Strategic Plan 2022 for Decommissioning of the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station (links to documents provided to participants). The slides were provided to discussion participants in advance to enable identification of common themes and potential joint collaboration between UK partners and Japan.



The key topics identified for collaborative R&D from the UK side were:

#### Radioactive waste treatment, packaging, and storage

- Long-term management and disposal of degraded fuels
- Innovating application of the waste hierarchy to improve radioactive waste management

#### Remote handling, robotic, and autonomous systems in decommissioning

- Robotic deployment systems, surface and underwater, deployment through narrow access ports
- Digital technologies, digital twin, planning, and Al
- Inspection, in-situ characterisation and decontamination, and in-situ chemical analysis and mechanical testing, including underwater.
- Methods for collecting fuel debris and other materials

## Environmental behaviour and impacts of radionuclide release & management of risk and degraded infrastructure

- Leak detection, contamination countermeasures, and clean-up
- Data analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning
- Digital technologies, digital twin, planning, and autonomy to manage risk

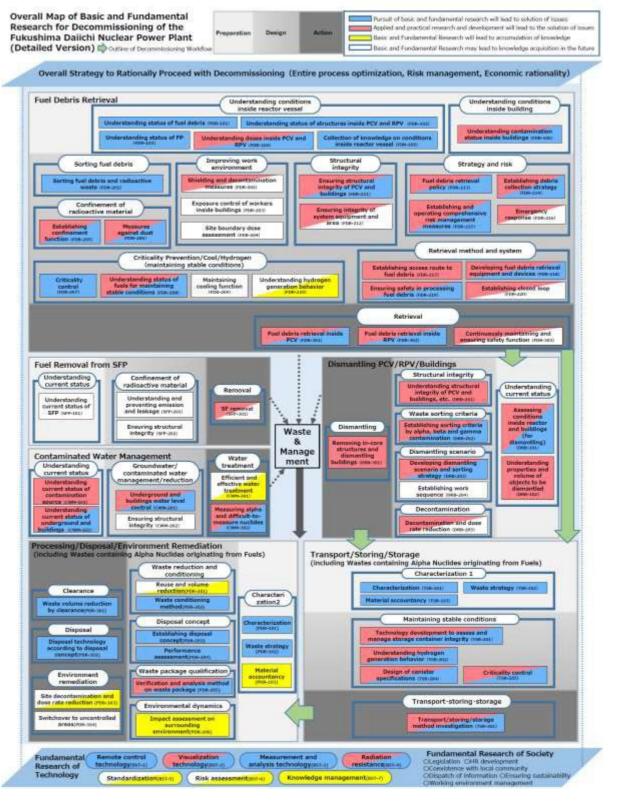
The summary of discussion was presented in a workshop plenary and a gap analysis undertaken. The detailed topic summaries were captured on slide presentations to inform the subsequent joint discussion session (available in final delegate pack).

# Session 3: Joint session to develop UK decommissioning priorities and ideas for research in Phase 11

This session opened with a presentation to outline the key research priorities identified for consideration and discussion, through the in-country meetings. Joyce presented the summary output of the UK and Japan sessions held the previous day, elaborating on the specific research questions to be addressed within the broad challenge areas highlighted above. Terai (Program Officer for NSRA) discussed the positioning of the research priorities within the Overall Map of Basic and Fundamental Research for Decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant (see below). The need to focus on fundamental research was emphasised, but with a clear route to practical implantation. It was highlighted that research proposed by the Japan side should be mindful of being complementary to the larger needs-led METI and MEXT funded in country programmes and avoid duplication.

The UK and Japan participants split into three parallel discussion groups to share their perspectives with the objective of defining a prioritised set of common research challenges and needs. The following paragraphs summarise the synthesis of those discussions.





Overall Map of Basic and Fundamental Research for Decommissioning of Fukushima Dai-ichi NPP



## Group 1: Radioactive waste treatment, packaging, and storage

#### 1.1 Long term management and disposal of degraded nuclear fuels

There is a need to predict the state of nuclear fuel prior to the Fukushima Dai-ichi accident and understand the behaviour of the degraded fuel under environmental conditions. The transition from wet to dry storage needs to be underpinned, including fuel drying, corrosion, radiolytic hydrogen production, and treatment to assure passive safety. Approaches to safeguarding of degraded fuels and potential recovery of nuclear materials may be required. The research will underpin Phase 3 of the Fukushima Dai-ichi Decommissioning Roadmap after fuel retrieval and will broadly support the management of UK nuclear fuels in a broader context.

#### 1.2 Development of analytical/evaluation methods for efficient characterisation

Radiochemical assay of solid radioactive wastes is required to enable segregation and management according to radiological risk, on both the Fukushima Dai-ichi and Sellafield site. There is a need to develop high throughput analytical protocols and technology, for example automated pre-treatment of analytical samples, triple quadrupole ICP-MS, and laser ablation ICP-MS. Statistical correlation techniques are required to enable estimation of radionuclides based on determination of, i.e., Cs-137, to reduce the number of samples required to be analysed. Application of machine learning and artificial intelligence models would enable automated identification of correlations and management of big data.

## **1.3 Innovating application of the waste hierarchy to improve radioactive waste management**

Application of the waste hierarchy will reduce the cost and timescale of decommissioning the Fukushima Dai-ichi and Sellafield sites, and improve sustainability outcomes, by ensuring maximum value is obtained from waste materials and minimising the use of national disposal facilities. A broad range of technological advances are required, in addition to improved analytical methods discussed above, including decontamination of surfaces to enable reuse or recycle of materials, or management at a lower classification; advanced ion exchange materials for decontamination of decommissioning effluents; and development of advanced waste treatment processes and materials to produce passively safe products, reducing the packaged waste volume, and number of packages, compared to current baseline.

#### Group 2: Remote handling, robotic, and autonomous systems in decommissioning

#### 2.1 Robotic deployment challenges and systems for inspection and in situ characterisation

Decommissioning of Sellafield and Fukushima Daiichi facilities requires remote inspection, radiation mapping and decontamination technologies. Research is needed to develop robotic platforms capable of underwater deployment and access through narrow ports and pipes. These systems will need to be equipped with suitable sensors for in-situ localisation and to undertake measurements and characterisation in high radiation level environments. There is a need for development of in-situ mechanical and chemical analysis tools, such as laser induced break down spectroscopy (LIBS), hyper spectral imaging and potentially active interrogation techniques, for contamination assessment and verification, enabling the effectiveness of decontamination to be assured. Digital capture and multi-sensor fusion of survey and radiological data is also desirable.

#### 2.2 Methods for collecting fuel debris and other materials during decommissioning

Retrieval of degraded fuels from the Fukushima Daiichi reactors and Windscale piles requires research to enable risk-aware planning methods. Robotic platforms are required with improved situational awareness in remote fuel debris removal (i.e., virtual reality), together with tactile and haptic interactions and anti-collision capabilities. There is a need to design light-weight end effectors for enhanced mobility, ease of deployment and improved dexterity. Consideration needs to be given



to the mobilisation and collection of underwater or air dispersed solids during retrieval operations. Hence, there is a need for the development of underwater and in-air machining to size-reduce debris prior to retrieval and for the maintenance and repair of critical infrastructures. The release and dispersion of contaminants during such activities must be characterised and efforts taken to minimise the disruption of material configurations to avert potential criticality risks. Intermediate and high reliability neutron detection devices, signal processing and transmission, including high dose tolerant and shielding free detectors, are required to monitor sub-criticality response of fuel debris materials. Automated sort and segregation technologies are required for retrieved wastes, potentially via the application of artificial intelligence, to minimise dose uptake and enable the most effective waste treatment solutions.

### 2.3 Digital technologies: digital twins, planning, and autonomy

A variety of digital tools are required to help inform and progress decommissioning plans. These include the construction and real-time adaptation. The development of real-time digital twins will support the planning and execution of decommissioning operations through linked sensor arrays and wireless data transfer. There is a need to deal with uncertainty effectively through optimisation, capture and the modelling of data. Colleagues from Japan showed the R&D project technologies that are currently being targeted to the decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. There are several basic and elemental research themes on the UK side that can be applied, and those interested in partner matching in this topic should reach out to interested persons using the partner introduction handbook.

## Group 3: Environmental behaviour and impacts of radionuclide release & management of risk and degraded infrastructure

#### 1.1 Monitoring and remediation of the environment and infrastructure

Understanding and controlling subsurface release of radioactivity is key to defining and demonstrating site end points and managing risk to exposed persons. Research is required to detect, monitor, and remediate radionuclides dispersed in the near sub surface, and understand their environmental behaviour. The migration and attenuation of radionuclides in sub-surface ground water, both on site and off site, requires investigation and understanding, to develop effective remediation methods. Both Sellafield and Fukushima Dai-ichi have degraded and high hazard infrastructure, condition monitoring and repair is required to ensure safe operation and decommissioning. Technology is required for the long-term monitoring and *in situ* repair of degraded infrastructure, waste stores, and facilities under care and maintenance, to assure their structural integrity until dismantling.

#### 1.2 Risk: assessment, prioritization, perception, and communication

The assessment, prioritisation, perception and communication of risk underpin all decommissioning and remediation activities. There is a need to understand the perception of risk among social stakeholders which is critically important for the acceptance of technology and policy development. Therefore, methods and tools are required to define and assess objective (expert) and subjective (lay) assessments of risk and to manage risk flexibly under uncertainty. Understanding objective and subjective perceptions of risk (and how these map on to psychological constructs such as trust, values, attitudes), is necessary to inform and develop effective communication and engagement programmes. The application of these methods, tools and understanding to the management of environmental wastes arising from the Fukushima Dai-ichi accident, such as contaminated soil, water, wood, and concrete, is essential for their minimisation during clearance and confidence in



the remediation end point by residents. To enable the most effective management and outcomes, quantification, and decontamination of radionuclides in environmental wastes must be achieved, and disposal at an earlier stage than anticipated in the current baseline plan.

#### 1.3 Data analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning and simulation

Site decommissioning will produce large data sets that can be more effectively used to improve decision making with application of advanced data analytics methods. However, there is a challenge in the quantification of uncertainty and automation of analytics, and model validation is essential. Enabling use of data in real time, with analytics and high-level simulations, could improve operational decision making and risk management. High fidelity and fast models for detection and monitoring of radioactive releases are required. Through life asset management could be improved by application of analytics to legacy data and purpose designed and built sensor arrays.

## Session 4: Presentation of Phase-11 Call Opportunity

The planned Phase-11 Call Opportunity was presented by Tull (EPSRC) and Washiya (JAEA/CLADS). For planning purposes, the arrangements are summarised as follows:

- The overall timetable will be approximately the same in the UK and Japan, as for Phase 10. The call is expected to be open for proposals in April, with a deadline of submission in July.
- The proposals will be submitted according to the guidance provided by EPSRC and NSRA, which with the format expected to be similar to that in Phase 10. The proposal review will have the same format on the UK and Japan side as in Phase 10.
- It was emphasised that proposals would be gated by an interview on the Japan side, with successful proposal proceeding to the joint assessment panel.
- The expectation is for two joint projects to be funded, with a budget of £1M on the UK side.
- The expectation is for two joint projects to be funded, with a budget of ¥120M on the Japan side.

Further details are available in the slides provided in the final delegate pack.

## Synthesis of workshop output – priorities areas for Phase-11 Call

The joint workshop discussion sessions were successful in producing detailed research challenge statements within each thematic area. Following the workshop, the outputs from the discussion groups were synthesised to define the prioritised areas for joint research and collaboration three research themes in Phase 11, which were harmonised with input from JAEA/CLADS. There is some significant evolution in the thinking and priorities in each of the themes, compared to those proposed for the Phase-10 Call.

#### Theme 1: Radioactive waste and fuel debris management

- Waste and fuel debris characterization, to include both radiometric and non-radiometric characterization with the objectives to assess the risk of re-criticality, and to imply the fissile content and physical stability of the waste/fuel debris.
- Treatment and immobilization of radioactive wastes, to include techniques and processes necessary to treat the wastes prior to and following retrieval, and to identify the optimum approach(s) to immobilize the wastes prior to interim storage.
- Sludge and slurry treatment, to include methods for the retrieval and stabilization of sludges and slurries in order to simplify transport and storage.

#### Theme 2: Robotic and autonomous systems for decommissioning



- Remote handling and inspection, to include both long-reach manipulator systems and remote autonomous solutions.
- Radiation-hardened detector systems, to include radiometric characterisation approaches able to withstand in-core radiation environments and the associated challenges of managing high-level wastes and fuel debris.
- Integrated robotic systems, to enhance safe working in facilities and process plant designed for clean-up activities.
- Digital twins, complementing the use of digital plans and to enable the virtual operation of for example waste processing facilities.
- Automation technology and the potential benefits of AI.

## Theme 3: Management of decommissioning risk

- Aerosol monitoring and characterization, to include prediction and assessment of perceived risks of discharge during waste and spent fuel retrievals, waste processing operations and continuous monitoring of aerosols in plant and facilities affected by the accident.
- In-situ repair, to include repair of broken systems and components damaged in the accident to be brought back into service, and components and machines developed for the purposes of clean-up and damaged or degraded in use.
- Risk management, to include the assessment of risk associated with retrievals, processing, and operations for clean-up.
- Sustainability and resilience, to include the management and integration of long-term implications of processing and waste management options as a factor in their selection or otherwise.
- Anti-degradation, to include the design of solutions resistant to long-term degradation in harsh environments.
- Advanced data analysis and modeling, to enable more to be gained from the significant guantities of data available currently and in the future, and to integrate the potential benefits of AI in this approach.

## Agenda: UK – Japan Meeting and Workshop 2023/24

### Monday 15 January 2024

Japan	UK	Activity	
15.30-		Japan Session only.	
16.45		Greetings: Koji Okamoto, CLADS (5 min)	
		Instructions for UK-Japan workshop(15 min)	
		Nuclear Safety Research Association	
		Explanation of the call for proposals(10 min)	
		CLADS	
		1F Decommissioning information	
		$\cdot$ Possibility of joint research between UK research seeds and the needs of 1F	
		decommissioning	
		Takayuki Terai (PO), Institute of Applied Energy (30 min)	
		• Explanation of the current status of 1F decommissioning work	
		Gaku Sato,Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, Inc. (15 min)	

Japan	UK	Activity		
17.00-	08.00-	Joint UK - Japan Session		
20.10	11.10	Co-Chairs: Malcolm Joyce (UK) and Takayuki Terai (JPN)		
		Link to join meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82615429350		
		Please join up to 15 min before the start so we can begin promptly.		



17.00	08.00	Opening remarks			
		Malcolm Joyce, Lancaster University, UK			
		Hajimu Yamana (PD), Nuclear Damage Compensation and Decommissioning			
		Facilitation Corporation, Japan			
17.15	08.15	Keynote: Progress in Sellafield and UK nuclear decommissioning			
		Roger Cowton, Sellafield Ltd			
17.35	08.35	Keynote: Overview of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear decommissioning			
		Gaku Sato, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, Inc., Japan			
17.55	08.55	Questions for keynote speakers			
18.00	09.00	Tom Scott, University of Bristol and			
		Shuichiro Miwa, The University of Tokyo (Phase 8)			
18.15	09.15	Rizuwana Parween, University of Sussex and			
		Hajime Asama, The university of Tokyo (Phase 8)			
18.30	09.30	Comfort break – 15 mins			
18.45	09.45	Matthew Hale, Manchester University and			
		Minoru Watanabe, Okayama University (Phase 9)			
19:00	10.00	Yiwei Zhang and Cong Chao, University College London and			
		Takehiko Tsukahara, Tokyo Institute of Technology (Phase 9)			
19.15	10.15	New partner matching talks			
		40 min: 10 x 4.5 min introduction talks with 1 slide per person (4 min talk, 0.5 min			
		changeover); 5 x UK talks, 5 x Japan talks.			
		10 min: plenary feedback and advice session.			
		Hanwool Woo, Kogakuin University, Japan			
		<ul> <li>Andrew Buchan, Queen Mary's University, London</li> </ul>			
		Tetsuo Sakamoto, Kogakuin University, Japan			
		Farid Aiouache, Lancaster University			
		Yosuke Yamashiki, Kyoto University, Japan			
		Claire Corkhill, University of Bristol			
		David Harbottle, University of Leeds			
20.10	11.10	Close of first Joint Session (Malcolm Joyce, UK)			



		Hailong Wang, Waseda University, Japan				
		Jie Zhang, University of Bristol, UK				
		Yogarajah Elakneswaran, Hokkaido University				
		Farid Aiouache, Lancaster University, UK				
		Ren Komatsu, The University of Tokyo, Japan				
		Walter Villanueva, Bangor University, UK				
		<ul> <li>Hyoe Takata, Fukushima University, Japan</li> </ul>				
		Bill Nuttall, Open University, UK				
		Colin Boxall, Lancaster University, UK				
20.10	11.10	Close of first Joint Session (	Malcolm Joyce, UK)			
Japan	UK	Activity	• • •			
	11.30-	UK Session only.				
	12.45	Discussion of UK decommissioning research priorities and ideas for Phase 10, in four key				
		themes. Delegates will have the report from the joint meeting and workshop in 2021-22,				
		circulated in advance, and focus on prioritising research areas and identifying gaps to				
		address. Results are captured on a PowerPoint template to form a summary				
		presentation for second joint session. Each session produces 3 x power point slides.				
		Link to join meeting:				
		https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82279731379?pwd=MENaRWxPNnVhUFBGOWhQbzJOSyt2Zz09				
		Please join up to 15 min before the start so we can begin promptly.				
	11.30	Introduction to parallel dis				
		Malcolm Joyce, Lancaster U				
	11.40	1. Radioactive waste	2. Remote handling,	3. Environmental behaviour		
		treatment, packaging,	robotic, and autonomous	and impacts of radionuclide		
		and storage	systems in	release & Management of		
		Michael Rushton, Bangor	decommissioning	risk and degraded		
		University, UK	Michael Aspinall, Lancaster	infrastructure		
			University, UK	Malcolm Joyce, Lancaster University, UK		
	12.25	Plenary discussion and fee	dback – 5 min per group			
		Discussion chairs will summarise key research priorities and ideas.				
		Opportunity to identify gaps / further consideration by participants.				
	12.45	Wrap up and close of UK Only Session (Malcolm Joyce, UK)				

## Tuesday 16 January 2024

Japan	UK	Activity		
17.30-	08.30-	Joint UK – Japan Session		
20.15	11.15	Discussion of UK and Japan decommissioning priorities and ideas for research in		
		2024, in three key themes. The discussion will use the input captured in the		
		PowerPoint templates from the UK only sessions as a starting point.		
		Link to join meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86347826961		
		Please join up to 15 min before the start so we can begin promptly.		
17.30	08.30	Welcome and orientation		
		Malcolm Joyce, Lancaster University, UK		
17.35	08.35	Summary presentation of UK - Japan decommissioning priorities and ideas for		
		<b>research</b> , in three key themes		
		Malcolm Joyce, Lancaster University, UK		
		Takayuki Terai, Institute of Applied Energy, Japan		



17.55	08.55	Introduction to parallel discussion sessions and task Malcolm Joyce, Lancaster University In each parallel session: the UK session leaders introduce last year's discussion points. There will be research introductions from both UK and Japanese researchers. The group will discuss how the research topic could be shaped and focused to best meet the joint research needs of the UK and Japan. The main points of the discussion, and points that could be matched in UK and Japanese will be organized and summarized in a single PowerPoint.		
18.00	09.00	<ol> <li>Radioactive waste treatment, packaging, and storage Michael Rushton, University of Bangor, UK Tetsuo Iguchi, Nagoya University, Japan</li> </ol>	2. Remote handling, robotic, and autonomous systems in decommissioning Barry Lennox, University of Manchester, UK Michitsugu Mori, Hokkaido University, Japan	3. Environmental behaviour and impacts of radionuclide release & Management of risk and degraded infrastructure Andy Cundy, University of Southampton, UK Tadafumi Koyama, Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry, Japan
19.15	10.15	Plenary discussion and feedback (with English to Japanese translation) Session leaders will summarise key research priorities and ideas (3 x 5 min). Opportunity to identify gaps / further consideration by participants (3 x 5 min) Note: there will be consecutive translation between English and Japanese available in this session. If required, this will be provided.		
19.55	10.55	Presentation of 2024 Call and Q&A EPSRC & CLADS		
20.15	11.15	Close of second Joint Session, Meeting and Workshop (Takayuki Terai, Japan)		

