

# The Nickel Institute's Approach Health and Environmental Issues

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***Membership: primary nickel producers (>90%)***

***Mission: Support, defend and develop appropriate nickel use.***

***History:***

***NiDI: Nickel Development Institute***

***NiPERA: Nickel Producers Environmental  
Research Association***

# NIPERA

Peer-reviewed science input to regulators and company specialists  
Scientific advocacy

Aim:

regulation based on sound science  
support good workplace practice

Original priority:

issues related to workplace  
regulation, especially carcinogenicity

**Target Audiences:**  
**Regulatory  
scientists, indep.  
expert/academia,  
(member co. EHS  
specialists)**

# NiDI

Development and communication of knowledge on effective nickel use in existing and emerging uses

Aim:

ensure continuing growth of nickel use

Original priority:

knowledge needed by material specifiers  
eg data books, fabrication guides,  
workshops, case studies

**Target Audiences:**  
**Engineers,  
Designers,  
Architects,  
Standards &  
Code orgns.**

Need to generate and communicate  
extensive and integrated data,  
communication and advocacy support on:

- >positive contribution of Ni to society
- >behaviour of products in use and end of life

**context: sustainable development; resource efficiency**

- >life cycle impact on health
- >life cycle impact on environment

**context: human health and environmental quality**

Science

Use support

**Sustainable Business**

Science

Use data

**Business strategy:**  
**Future licences to operate and**  
**market**  
**Risk assessment & risk**  
**management strategies**  
**Communication and advocacy**

**NiPERA:  
Health and Environmental  
Science Support Group**

**Sustainable Business  
Support Group**

**Nickel Use Support  
and Development Group**

**Risk Management and  
Process Stewardship**

**Sustainable  
Development and  
Product Stewardship**

**Sustainable Business  
Advocacy**



*knowledge for a brighter future*

***Budget: \$9.3 million***

***Aim split approx 1/3 - 1/3 - 1/3 between  
Science, Sustainable Business and Use  
Support***

# **Familiar audiences .....**

## **Product Use**

**Engineers**

**Architects**

**Designers**

**Materials Specifiers**

## **Production**

**Local regulators**

**Local workforce/unions**

**Local Community**

# New audiences ...

High  
interest

**NGOs, Academics, Consultants**  
**Regulators (national/international)**  
*– Environment, Health, Sustainability policy*

|

**Green politicians**

|

**Companies interested in SD**

**“Gatekeepers”**

*(eg major retailers, brand manufacturers, architects)*

|

**Mainstream Politicians**

|

**General Business**

**Consumers**

Growing  
Interest

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## **The new audiences ....**

- **Our familiar audiences know our products and us well.**
- **But our new audiences usually know little about our products or us. They understand still less.**
- **Yet their influence over our future is growing – sometimes dramatically.**
- **When these new audiences do know something about us, it is usually negative, associated with problems**
  - **“Heavy metals”, “toxic metals”, “smokestack industry”**

# The New Agenda: Ideas/Ideologies

## **Precautionary Principle:**

Data gaps invite use of Precautionary Principle

## **Restrictions/Bans:**

Control products not processes

Control use of hazardous substances

## **Green market measures**

Eco-procurement

## **Reverse burden of proof**

**“Polluter pays”**

# The Integrated Approach

- **Fill all the priority data needs**
  - and as much of the rest as practicable
- **Communicate positive contributions to society**
  - in their terms and their language
- **Fight for a fair hearing**
  - Press for appropriate regulation based on sound science
  - Discourage excessive precaution on basis of benefits to society of balanced approach
  - Neutralise enemies, motivate & mobilise friends

# The Integrated Approach

## **Role of the industry**

- Generate high quality data on emissions, recycling, socio-economics**
- Help develop the benefits message**
- Pass the benefits message through the supply chain and to local stakeholders, politicians, unions**
- Use local political leverage in concerted way**

## **We need to communicate more**

**We must put more effort into communicating a balanced view of our industries to these audiences.**

- explain what we do and what our products do.**
- communicate our strengths and the positive contributions that our products make.**
- But we also need to acknowledge our problems and challenges, and to explain how we are responding to them.**
  
- Need to target messages to audiences, but ensure that they are coherent and credible**
- If we just accentuate the positive and ignore the negative, our messages will not be persuasive.**

# Messages

NGOs, Academics, Consultants

Regulators on SD policy

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Green politicians

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Companies interested in SD

“Gatekeepers”

|

Mainstream Politicians

|

General Business

Consumers

**Complex messages**  
Needing good data,  
Sound methodology,  
Validation, Transparency

**Simple, targeted  
Messages**

**“Branding”**

# Using the Sustainable Development Agenda

The best framework for these communications is provided by the Sustainable Development agenda.

- All our new audiences are committed to SD.
- They don't always agree what it means, but they are committed to it.
- If we explain ourselves in SD terms, they are obliged politically to listen to us.

SD has been described as meeting the needs of current generations without reducing the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

We should welcome this agenda. We have a lot to offer.

## What we offer ...

- Our industries generate wealth.
- Our products deliver major benefits to society.
- They have long lives and are recycled intensively.
- Our products are not “consumed”. They are used, and are then available for reuse – over and over again.
- They are in essence a renewable reserve for future generations.

**But ..... our processes (and sometimes our products) have possible environmental and/or health impacts at each stage of the life cycle.**

**Hopefully we have the confidence to say that these impacts are small and are being well managed.**

***If we cannot say that, then we need urgent internal action to put our house in order.***

# Communication: perception?

Positive

Neutral/-ve

Negative

Adequate  
risk control?

Low release  
in use?

Low release  
end of life?

Dispersed  
products?

Composite  
Products?

**Non-  
renewable  
inputs**

**Production  
impacts**

**Contains  
Hazardous  
substances**

# Communication: getting the balance

**Positive**

**Uses that  
Benefit SD**

**Long Life  
Products**

**Highly  
recycled**

**Neutral/-ve**

**Adequate  
risk control?**

**Low release  
in use?**

**Low release  
end of life?**

**Dispersed  
products?**

**Composite  
Products?**

**Negative**

**Non-  
renewable  
inputs**

**Production  
impacts**

**Contains  
Hazardous  
substances**



# The issue of “hazardous substances”

**Society’s attitude to hazardous substances and the long term effect of accumulating them in the earth’s systems – air, water and soil – is of particular relevance to our industries.**

**Responses to “hazard” can include emotion, especially if accompanied by NGO lobbying & media comment**

**We are pressed for “proof of innocence” rather than given the benefit of any doubt.**

- “no risk” rather than “acceptable risk”

**Precautionary pressure can be very influential politically – especially in Europe.**

- nuclear waste, BSE, GMOs
- CMRs, POPs, PBT, sensitisers ...

## Importance for us ....

- some of our products have properties that are hazardous. Or at least which lead them to be classified as “hazardous”.
- some of our processes – eg melting, slag processing, welding – generate hazardous substances.
- some of our products might release hazardous substances either in use or as waste.

**Any general movement to restrict the use of hazardous substances will have a direct effect on us**

**– on our ability to produce and on our ability to market our products.**

## **The Political Challenge: getting a fair hearing**

**Industry always stresses the need to base market access regulations on risk assessment, not on hazard classification.**

- But industry has usually talked about risk assessment but failed to actually do it to required standards, or to provide enough data on which others can do it.**
- This is now changing as more risk assessments – official or voluntary - are being undertaken, including for nickel.**

**Policies such as REACH will require all industries to provide the data as a condition for market access.**

# Lessons from this?

## Engage member company senior management

- These are key business issues – they should not be left to specialists acting in isolation
- Ensure provision of resources – co., association, external

## Engage with the whole life cycle

- Encourage them to organise as effective partners

## Engage with our critics directly, not through our customers.

- But let customers know what we are doing. Work with them to generate coherent communication positions.

## Anticipate threats

- Don't wait until opinions have hardened and the battle has started
- Develop proactive and reactive communications positions – especially on topics with potential media interest.
- Don't let weak science from our critics go unchallenged – it could come back to bite us later.

# Lessons from this?

## Be self-critical.

- Are we as good as we like to think we are?
- Is the data that convinces us also convincing to others?

## Implement effective Product Stewardship

- If we have dark corners in our product's life cycle, sort them out before someone else shines a light on them.

## Issues are seldom settled; prepare for the long haul

- Someone will always be unhappy and will revive issues.
- Prepare for the next time.
- Rehearse communication positions well in advance so that we can react quickly if an issue becomes hot.



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