

# Social research study

## Historical, present and future impact of the nuclear industry in the community of Thurso and vicinity

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

ELFRIEDE DERRER-MERK 2023



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

# Social research in Thurso and Vicinity

## Team

- ▶ **Elfriede Derrer-Merk** currently PhD student (awaiting viva) (Institute for risk and uncertainty, Psychology), MA Gerontology, teacher for nurses (BA), geriatric nurse. Employed at the University of Liverpool (research assistant). Highly experienced in qualitative research.
- ▶ **Dr Liz Thomas** is a Research Fellow at the University of Manchester in the School of MACE, a member of The Beam, and an Affiliate Researcher (Institute of Cultural Practices), BA in Heritage Studies, MA and PhD Archaeology. Highly experienced in working with communities
- ▶ **Professor Richard Taylor** University of Manchester, BNFL Chair in Nuclear Energy Systems and Associate Director of the Dalton Nuclear Institute, co-founder of The Beam nuclear and social research network. Highly experienced in linking the nuclear technology with social research.



# Social research in Thurso and Vicinity

## Background

- ▶ This study is funded by the project “Defining a Draft for a Zero Power Reactor Experiment for Molten Salt Reactors” (EPSRC EP/V027239/1). This project aims to develop new nuclear technology to enhance the aim of affordable, sustainable and reliable energy for all.
- ▶ For more information please contact Prof. Bruno Merk [b.merk@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:b.merk@liverpool.ac.uk).



# What we aim for?

- ▶ **We want to explore the historical, present and future impact of the nuclear industry in the community of Thurso and vicinity of people aged 18+**
- ▶ Why?
  - ▶ We recognised that this area has undergone huge challenges and changes in last 50 years
  - ▶ We recognised that the recent process of depopulation causes concern for individuals and businesses.
  - ▶ We want to explore how these changes impact peoples lives
  - ▶ We want to gain knowledge and provide evidence for researchers, policy and practise
- ▶ Ethics approval number: 12114



# What do we do?

- ▶ We would like to interview people aged 18+ via phone, zoom or face to face (~30 min) (£10 Voucher)
- ▶ If you agree to take part you will receive an information sheet and a consent form to sign
- ▶ Date and time of the interview will be arranged to your convenience
- ▶ All interviews will be audio recorded and during the transcription process anonymised.
- ▶ Participants can withdraw up to two weeks after the interview (before the analyses starts)

# What we are interested in:

- ▶ **Demographics (age range, gender identity, occupation)**
- ▶ **Biographical life** (Are you from Thurso/local area? Where your parents/family from area too? If not, where were they from? What brought your family to this area?)
- ▶ **How you feel connected Thurso and vicinity**
- ▶ **Working life** (Have you/family worked in any of the industries?)
- ▶ **Domestic Life** (What are some of your childhood memories; What do your children think about their future in Thurso?)

# What we are interested in:

- ▶ **Availability of Institutions (church, school etc.)**
- ▶ **Physical landscape (possibility to use a map here)** (Would you be able to describe to us what your home/streets/buildings/shops in area were like?, How has the area changed?)
- ▶ **Community Traditions** (What were the main community traditions?)
- ▶ **Changes** (How do you feel Thurso and local area has changed?)
- ▶ **Dounreay site** (How would you feel about a new use of the Dounreay site? Or other industrial sites in Thurso and Caithness?)
- ▶ **Support** (What could the local community or central government do for you to support you?)
- ▶ **Voluntary additional information / advice**

# What do we do?

- ▶ Personal information will be kept separate and secure at the University of Liverpool's password protected M-drive, only the research team will have access to it.
- ▶ The fully anonymised interview data will be made public available for other researcher at a data depository.
- ▶ The information will be analysed with qualitative methods such as constructivist grounded theory and prepared for dissemination.
- ▶ The prepared reports and scientific articles are open accessible and participants can be informed about publications.



## Are you interested to share your lived experiences from Thurso and vicinity?

This study is funded by the project “Defining a Draft for a Zero Power Reactor Experiment for Molten Salt Reactors” (EPSRC EP/V027239/1). This project aims to develop a new nuclear technology to enhance the aim of affordable, sustainable and reliable energy for all. For more information please contact Prof. Bruno Merk  
[b.merk@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:b.merk@liverpool.ac.uk).

### ► This social science project (University of Liverpool) aims to explore the historical, present and future impact of the nuclear industry in the community of Thurso and vicinity

We want to explore the connection to Thurso and vicinity, working and domestic life, availability of institutions, how you feel connected to the physical landscape, what traditions in the community you are enjoying most, how you experience the changes over time, views about Dounreay site, what support would you like to get, and what advice would you give .

We are inviting you (aged 18+) to be interviewed via phone, zoom or face to face; it will take approximately 30-45 min. The interview will be audio recorded. The anonymised and analysed information will be used to inform researchers, policy and practice about the lived experiences in the area.

If you want to take part, please contact:  
Elfriede Derrer-Merk  
[e.derrer-merk2@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:e.derrer-merk2@liverpool.ac.uk)

£10 Voucher

Confidentiality and anonymity are assured; ethics approval from the University of Liverpool (12114)