

View from the top...

Over my thirty-year career I have had the privilege of working almost exclusively in the nuclear industry.

I realise that the industry has its share of critics and like any criticism, some of it is deserved, but much of it is given from an outsider's perspective without any real knowledge of the fact that there are reasons for doing what we do.

I am sure that individuals reading this who have worked in the industry will understand what I am saying, and for those of you who have not, maybe this insider insight might help. Here are just a few of the criticisms that I have heard, and a little perspective for each one:

"You guys make a mountain out of a mole-hill" – This one is true. We do make a big deal about small events. We do this because we want to learn from the small events to ensure that the big events never occur. Over the last 24 months, at LLWR alone, we have raised and investigated over 900 "learning events". In this period, we did not seriously hurt anyone nor did we do anything that damaged the environment; however, we are absolutely committed not to!

"You are so safety conscious that you can't get any work done" – Well I have to admit that sometimes this one feels true! However, our safety posture is uncompromising and we will gladly slow a job down if it means that we are not ready to perform it safely. We are about to complete our second 5-year term and in looking back, we will have completed everything we set out to do. The security fence is up, the PCM programme is nearly complete, the Grout Plant is in the best shape it has ever been, the leachate system is completely cleaned out, the site's electrical system has been upgraded, and so much more. All of this has been done safely.

"You use nuclear jargon that an average person does not understand to hide what you are really doing" – There is no excuse for this, and there have been times that I have seen this, and I am sure, without knowing it, I have been guilty of it too.

But there is nothing to hide, and it is my view that good, sound, descriptions in plain English goes a long way to proper communication and to building trust. If you see us doing this, then just shout out: "plain English, please!"

I acknowledge that it is a strange industry in many ways, but both the short and long term hazards that we are dealing with on your behalf are quite real.

Dennis Thompson,
Managing Director



New beginnings: top left, Owen Carver, top right, Jack Barcock, and above, Rachael Nicholson, left, getting to grips with a community event, aided by Danielle Boyd and Mike Gracey

More opportunities than ever for apprentices!

Three new West Cumbrian apprentices have joined LLWR, taking the number in the business to an all-time high of 8.

Rachael Nicholson, working in Business Admin within the Safety Case team, and Owen Carver, working in Low Level Waste Operations, are both based on our Site, while Jack Barcock is operating in Cyber Security, at Pelham House.

"We have a very good retention rate with our apprentices, many of who have gone on to improved roles and promotion within the business," said Training Manager Mel Scudamore. "We are showing we can 'grow our own' and the benefits are massive.

"As people leave the organisation, we can hopefully back-fill vacancies through the apprentice route. There are no guarantees of a permanent job at the end of an apprenticeship, but it has certainly worked for us so far."

Jack began his working life as a Business Management apprentice at Sellafield and Owen was an apprentice in the brewing industry before both opted for a change of career.

Rachael, who completed A-Level studies before moving to LLWR, said: "I'm from a non-nuclear background and I'm impressed with what I've learned so far. I'm working in a very good team and everyone is proving very helpful."

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Opening the doors to a bright future on Site

An Open Day on LLWR's plans for its Repository Development Programme (RDP) – which incorporates the biggest single period of construction undertaken on Site – attracted plenty of interest from the local community.

The LLWR management team, led by Dennis Thompson, Managing Director, and including the project team responsible for delivery, were on hand to answer a stream of questions about the forthcoming development.

After viewing an exhibition at Greengarth Business Park's Eskdale Court, visitors were given the option of a coach tour of the Repository Site, which included a walk on the trench cap, where the eventual height of the final cap over the trenches was illustrated by flag markers.

During development phases it was explained that sound barriers and dust suppressors would be utilised to minimise off-Site impacts and working times restricted. The capping of trenches and current and any new vaults, is a major part of RDP, and during the first decade of the Programme, Vault 8 and the northern

section of the trench cap will be capped, with landscaping of this area scheduled to be completed in December 2027.

Among the visitors to Eskdale Court was Councillor Keith Hitchen, Chair of the LLWR Working Group, which sits under the West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group, who was impressed with the exhibition.

"The day was very well-organised in a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere that allowed you to move around and talk to the management team," he said. "It was a good community engagement activity.

"I didn't take the Site tour, but speaking to several of those who did, they felt they learned from it. It wasn't just people from Drigg and Holmrook. There were probably more from Seascale, Gosforth and Muncaster. It was good to spread the message."

The stage covering the next decade of works is known as Tranche 1 and there will be 8 tranches in total, up to 2051.

Enabling Works will begin in 2018 and will include limited tree clearance to the west side of Site and the start of Site investigations.

"We will ensure that all those directly affected by any of our forthcoming works on Site are kept fully informed of developments," Dennis Thompson said.

Packing 'em in: left, local councillor David Moore and family taking a strong interest, right, top and middle, learning more at Eskdale Court, and right, visitors on the trench cap, on Site.





Lead role: Keith Hitchen, third left, chairing a meeting of our quarterly Working Group

Working Group holds us to account

Keith Hitchen's move into public service as a Drigg & Carleton parish councillor in 2007 more or less coincided with the formation of LLWR Repository Ltd – and in the intervening decade the fortunes of councillor and company have been closely linked.

Councillor Hitchen, a former Mayor of Copeland, is Chair of the LLWR Working Group, a sub-group of the West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group, which scrutinises the activities of the Repository Site.

He takes a strong interest in the workings of LLWR and every 3 months chairs a public meeting of the Working Group in Drigg Village Hall. The Environment Agency and fellow industry regulators Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) present reports at these meetings of their interactions with the Site and anything considered notable over the period. County, district and parish councillors are all members of the committee and free to question the senior LLWR managers who attend, including Dennis Thompson, Managing Director.

Each meeting includes presentations from LLWR personnel or supply chain personnel on elements of the business. It could be an

update on commercial activities or the latest project on Site, or plans for a new community initiative.

"I like it that we have the 'top brass' from the business coming in to share with us," Keith said. "But LLWR also brings in its contractors and suppliers to talk to us. The Environment Agency and ONR attend our meetings and are able to explain any issues arising and actions taken.

"The Site's life has been extended by reducing the amount of material coming to it. There's a more collaborative relationship, which is educational on both sides. To be honest, there was a time when the Site was only a hole in the ground, but it's now much more than that. Good things have happened over the last 10 years.

"It's now our national facility for the disposal of low level waste, and its people are in discussion with government at the highest level over nuclear waste policies. To me, it's very important that we have that in West Cumbria."

The next meeting of our Working Group will be held in Drigg Village Hall, 2pm-4pm, Wednesday, 17th January, 2018.

How a computer model can help us be good neighbours

The computer model highlighting the evolution of the LLWR Site under its long-running Repository Development Programme (RDP) proved a popular element of the recent Community Open Day at Greengarth.

Visitors viewed digital terrain models showing how Site topography will change during Tranche 1 Project that will happen in the first decade of RDP. This project will deliver the final cap over Vault 8 and adjacent legacy trenches at the north of the site. The model, creating a digital representation of ground topography and terrain, excluding features such as buildings or vegetation, was produced by LLWR Earthworks Engineer Ian Sherwen, who said: "It will play an important part in the design of Tranche 1.



Screen test: Ian Sherwen, seated at his laptop, showing what the new model can do, at the recent RDP Open Day

"It will enable us to assess what the area will look like during the construction process and will have many benefits including assist design mitigation methods, so we can

minimise impacts and continue to be a good neighbour. It enables us to design key steps of the project, assess the effectiveness of our control measures and also look at the visual impacts to nearby properties.

"It allows everybody to see what we are planning, rather than looking at a drawing or sketch. It's the modern way of presenting and demonstrating future plans and proposals."

To create the 3D models LLWR used the Land Survey Systems (LSS) digital terrain modelling software package which allows the combination of the existing land features normally obtained by aerial survey techniques, with proposed designed changes, to create future representative models of key stages of development. This in turn can be used to assess the visual impact of proposed designs from any view.

Waste on track to return to Sellafield

Shipments of legacy nuclear waste from LLWR to Sellafield have resumed after a four-year break following the delivery of high-precision new Novapak packaging.

The return of drums of waste to Sellafield had been put on hold while suitable packaging was developed, and the resumption of operations is a milestone for LLWR.

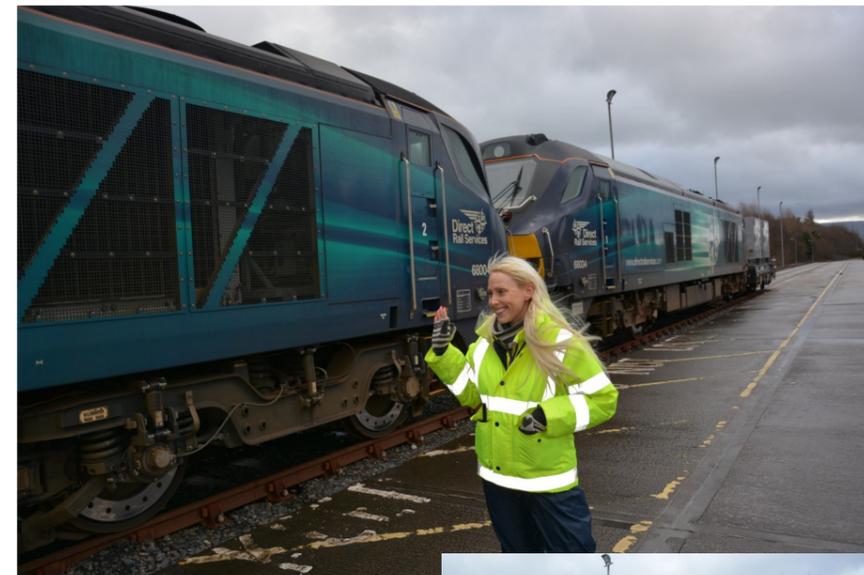
LLWR's Katie Atkinson, one of the key personnel behind the operation, said: "We did it. Months of training, updating procedures and writing operational documentation and we finally shipped our first consignment to Sellafield using the new Novapaks.

"I am delighted to have played a role in getting this export route up and running it was such a relief to see the first pair of Novapaks on the train.

"Everyone involved has worked hard, training and familiarising themselves with the new containers, from old hands with lots of experience to new enthusiastic team members. I'd like to say a massive thank you for all the time and effort and let's hope we can reduce the drum population significantly over the next few months."

The packaging was developed under LLWR's multi-million pound Type B Packaging Capability Programme and manufactured by Cumbrian firm Bendalls Engineering, in Carlisle.

Rob Yetts, Programme Delivery Manager, said: "After losing the Type B fleet back in 2013 it was an extremely difficult time for



the Decommissioning teams, we really didn't know whether the Programme would continue or not.

"However, with the support of just about every single stakeholder both internal and external we managed to keep going. Updated storage arrangements were made for our waste and the creation of the Type B Programme under Alan Jackson gave us our milestones back.

"The final push as we have transitioned to 'Business As Usual' has been extremely challenging, at the last count we had reviewed and in the majority of cases updated, over 116 documents to get things moving again. The people who have supported this know who they are and my thanks go out to all of them."



On its way: Above, some final checks on the boxes, and top, Katie Atkinson waves off the first shipment

Alan Jackson, Programme Manager, said: "This first shipment signifies a huge amount of LLWR teamwork, integration and many months of preparation incorporating lessons learned from introducing the first assets into service at Harwell during August, 2017."

Creating opportunities for smaller businesses

Representatives from across LLWR's Commercial and Contract Management department joined over 300 exhibitors at the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's Estate Supply Chain event in Manchester. Businesses flocked to EventCity, right, to take part in one of the world's largest nuclear decommissioning supplier events, including delegates from all across the UK and overseas.

The day provided a unique opportunity to hear leading figures from across the nuclear sector, including LLWR's Head of Commercial, Alex McCarthy, and enjoy an unrivalled opportunity for networking with businesses suppliers and clients.

Alex said: "Every time I looked over at the LLWR stand it was busy, with people from lots of different organisations taking an interest, from key suppliers to new supplier contacts. We had 10 of our



people there working and they all mucked in to produce a good team effort." The event was first set up with the aim of creating greater visibility of opportunities for suppliers and in particular for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Around half the 1,600 visitors were drawn from the SME community.