



# ON THE LEVEL

Edition 27 March 2021

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE LLW REPOSITORY

## Our PBO's 13-year success story chronicled in campaign

LLWR has launched the countdown to its move to subsidiary status within the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) with a campaign to celebrate the successful journey of its Parent Body Organisation (PBO) over the past 13 years.

Under the management of the PBO, UK Nuclear Waste Management (UKNWM), LLWR has transformed the low level waste industry, and its achievements are being marked in a 13-part weekly series of articles, videos and photos titled 'Journey to Success', based around the company website and its social media channels.

"We've had some great feedback on the campaign to date, and there's so much material to follow," said Cath Giel, Director of Communications & Stakeholder Relations.

The campaign launched in early March by going back to the PBO winning the 17-year contract to manage LLWR in 2008, *captured below in our campaign*.

The following chapters chart LLWR's subsequent rapid progress, starting with the construction of Vault 9, the opening of which ended a capacity crisis in the UK industry. Included on our social media channels is a remarkable time lapse video

capturing the construction of Vault 9.

Chapter 3 looks at how LLWR's unwavering community commitment has paid off, from a low point in relations in 2008 to today, when the organisation is at the heart of its community.

The campaign will end in June, a month before the PBO contact concludes and the LLWR story begins a fresh chapter.

Cath said: "UKNWM has delivered a complex, multi-stranded 17-year contract in 13 years. It leaves behind a positive legacy of innovative solutions, partnership working, community engagement and a reputation for doing the right thing. And it has provided a solid foundation for the next phase of integrated radioactive waste management."

\*UKNWM consists of Amentum, a premier global government and private-sector partner supporting delivery of nuclear and defence missions worldwide, Studsvik Ltd, who provide recognised expertise in the treatment and management of nuclear waste, and Orano, the world's largest nuclear service provider.

### Follow us on our journey



LLW Repository Ltd

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UK NDA

Journey to Success 2008 – 2021

1. International Consortium awarded Contract to operate LLWR

LLWR's Parent Body Organisation (PBO) has transformed the low-level radioactive waste industry since its inception in 2008 – after less than a year of operation, the PBO had secured contracts for more than 1000 customers, at a time when the industry was facing a capacity crisis, generating more than 700 containers per year. The company's success has continued to grow, reaching 2200 customers by 2010.

The original solution was to create a type of consortium for the industry to take advantage of economies of scale. The PBO, UK Nuclear Waste Management (UKNWM) won a 17-year contract to manage LLWR in 2008, and the first 17 years of the contract saw significant improvements in the industry. The national low-level waste disposal facility had become the first of its kind in the UK, after less than 10 years of operation, generating more than 700 containers per year. The company's success has continued to grow, reaching 2200 customers by 2010.

In addition, major problems existed around the industry's ability to manage radioactive waste in a safe and sustainable manner, and the PBO's recognised expertise in the treatment and management of radioactive waste has been key to the success of the industry.

The contract level was to provide solutions to the industry's challenges, and the PBO's approach has been to work with the industry to find sustainable solutions while continuing to serve the needs of both the UK and UK-wide radioactive waste producers.

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Follow our journey over the next 12 weeks at [www.gov.uk/llwr](http://gov.uk/llwr)

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Journey to Success 2008 – 2021

2. Stakeholders celebrated

A capacity shortage was just one of the issues that LLWR's Parent Body Organisation (PBO) had to address when it took over the management of the low-level radioactive waste industry in 2008. After less than a year of operation, the PBO had secured contracts for more than 1000 customers, at a time when the industry was facing a capacity crisis, generating more than 700 containers per year. The company's success has continued to grow, reaching 2200 customers by 2010.

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3. Stakeholders celebrated

Community relations were at a low ebb when the PBO took over the management of LLWR in 2008. The PBO's determination to improve relations with the local community and the expression of wider stakeholder interests has been key to the success of the project in the USA.

The process began with Managing Director Chris Morris, who worked closely with the local community to understand their concerns and aspirations, and the company's first Head of Stakeholder Relations, Cath Giel, who worked to build positive community relationships and the requirement for local input into the project, making it a 'good neighbour' by local residents.

The York 8 construction project was a high-profile project, with many local businesses involved in the work that was beginning to take shape in the surrounding area. The PBO's approach has been to work with the local community to find sustainable solutions while continuing to serve the needs of both the UK and UK-wide radioactive waste producers.

The project started at LLWR's Yorkshire site of over 150,000 cubic metres of radioactive waste, which was brought to the site by rail. The PBO's approach has been to work with the local community to find sustainable solutions while continuing to serve the needs of both the UK and UK-wide radioactive waste producers.

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## New Group Leadership

### Team at the NDA

NDA has formed a new Group Leadership Team (GLT) to drive improved leadership, assurance, collaboration and the transfer of learning and skills across the group.

The announcement includes the intention to create a single waste division with Corbyn Parr, (*pictured*), previously Director of Integrated Waste at the NDA, now representing the waste division on the GLT as designate Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The waste division, will integrate the waste management capabilities of LLWR and Radioactive Waste Management (RWM), the organisation responsible for delivering a Geological Disposal Facility, and will be operational from 2022.

LLWR and RWM will continue to be distinct legal entities with their own boards and remain the duty holders for the NDA group's nuclear licensed sites.

NDA's transport organisations are now combined into Nuclear Transport Solutions and are also represented on the GLT.

Meanwhile, work on LLWR's transition to a subsidiary within the NDA group by 12<sup>th</sup> July continues, with all workstreams on target to deliver the programme schedule.

# Our site tour puts you in the driving seat

Guided virtual tours of the LLWR site are now available without 'visitors' leaving the comfort of their homes.

The tours, via Skype, have a live voice-over from an Executive team member, who is on hand to answer questions.

"We can no longer do 50 to 60 live visits per year, but we can still provide an authentic experience for visitors," said Visits Co-ordinator Donna Glasson, who explained that all virtual tours for stakeholders must be arranged in advance and approved by LLWR.

Work on LLWR's Repository Development Programme (RDP) rendered coach tours around the entire perimeter of the site impossible, so the first virtual tour was introduced two years ago for viewing from the main Conference Rooms on Site and in Pelham House.

This footage was updated last year when COVID-19 made in-person visits impossible and the live, interactive element has now been added as an additional feature.

The tour, which lasts up to one hour, starts with visitors viewing an interactive map of the site, with photographs, video and 360-degree views of key areas, including internal views of Magazine



*A still from the virtual tour, including video and 360° views*

Retrieval Facilities, that have now been demolished but were present when the original filming first took place in 2019.

It then progresses to a full virtual tour of the site, using footage captured by a camera perched on the front of a coach, with stops at key points on the site, for the LLWR host to provide additional information, as they would on a live visit.

Donna added: "The site's appearance has changed greatly over the past two years, and it's good that we were able to capture some brilliant archive footage of some structures that are no longer there.

“It is still an entertaining and informative experience.”

A camera crew will return to site this month to chart the changes since their last visit to ensure guests receive an up to date experience when viewing the tour. Regular updates will be scheduled as skyline changes occur.

The tours are also being utilised to introduce new members of the workforce for whom the regular site tour at the start of their employment is no longer available due to COVID-restrictions, to site based activities.

## **Donation to Food Pantry shines light on pandemic poverty**

Waberthwaite Primary School's new Food Pantry initiative which is supporting 20 local families through the COVID pandemic, has received a £500 helping hand from LLWR.

Additional families will be reached thanks to the donation, which will also help enable the school to include perishable goods including fresh fruit and vegetables, bread and eggs, to the boxes it distributes to local people in need.

For a £3.50 donation, families receive boxes of food worth around £20, resulting in part from kind assistance from



## *Waberthwaite Primary food boxes ready for distribution*

Morrison's supermarket in Whitehaven and the Food Bank in Millom.

Yvonne Hey, School Secretary, said that COVID-19 had highlighted the issue of struggling families.

"This situation has been going on for a long time," she added.  
"There is a need, from some families with children at school  
and some in the wider community.

**"It's amazing how many people have come forward. Some have been put on furlough or lost their jobs, or money has just got a bit tighter in general.**

**"We are a food pantry, not a food bank. People pay a little for the food, so it's not seen as charity.**

**"We are at the heart of this community and we know who needs help. We want to stop people getting to crisis point, so we're very grateful for LLWR's donation."**

Waberthwaite Primary pupils were regular visitors to the Repository pre-pandemic, to learn about the site, and Yvonne is looking forward to the day when visits can resume for the youngsters.

"We visit most years and the children love it," she said.



This bird's eye view, captured by our Engineering team, shows some of the progress made by contractor Graham Construction on the RDP haul road. The majority of the materials used for the construction and final capping of Vault 8 and the adjacent trenches 1-7 will arrive to site by rail and be stockpiled in one of the prepared areas on site, until required for use. The picture also captures the rail sidings area and laydown area for unloading operations.

## No stone unturned in our community commitment!

A 'rock crusher' machine, pictured right, has been moved on to site to dismantle stone slabs from the site's wartime spell as a Royal Ordnance Factory that were unearthed during preliminary work on the Repository Development Programme (RDP).

The stone has no historical significance and must be moved to allow the enabling phase of RDP, LLWR's largest ever programme, to continue.

But the stone will not be leaving site as the machine will crush it to a specific size to enable its reuse in the construction phase of the multi-decade programme, which will see the final engineered cap placed over the trench cap, existing vaults and any future vaults.

Noise and dust monitors, stipulated in planning conditions for RDP, will ensure that any temporary disruption beyond the Repository security fence, caused by the rock crusher, is minimised. And LLWR has added additional monitoring as an extra precautionary measure.

Some of the dust monitors installed around Vault 8 and the trench cap as part of RDP have been temporarily relocated so we can check on levels within the current construction areas to



capture dust from the rock crusher. In addition hand-held monitors will also be in use.

Lisa O'Neil, Project Engineer, said: "We'll get real time monitoring with baseline levels set for dust, and if there is any cause for concern at any point we will be alerted.

"Impact on the community is always at the forefront of our minds and if we think there could be any disruption caused by our activities, we like to go the extra mile and keep on top of it.

"There could also be a little disruption caused by noise, but we have arranged some additional monitoring, on top of our routine monitoring, to ensure we remain in line with the relevant Planning Condition."

The rock crusher is expected to be on site until the end of March. None of the uncovered material came as a surprise to the RDP team as colleagues in the Characterisation team had identified where the material would be uncovered.

The site was a Royal Ordnance Factory producing munitions during WWII, transforming into a low level waste Repository in 1959.

## *Paul's Points ...*

These are exciting times for LLWR with the switch to NDA subsidiary status in just four months time and the opportunity to be part of a new waste division with Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) in 2022.



I am pleased to announce that Martin Walkingshaw has been appointed as CEO designate and will succeed me on 12<sup>th</sup> July. In the meantime, I have begun a gradual handover of responsibilities in readiness for share transfer to the NDA and the PBO's exit on the same day (12<sup>th</sup> July 2021). I'd like to publicly congratulate Martin on his appointment.

We now have a Government Road Map out of lockdown, so we can start to consider with more clarity, the return to a more regular work routine post-June and the end of pandemic restrictions. Work has commenced on plans to increase occupancy levels at our facilities. However, no changes to current homeworking arrangements will be made until advice to business from Public Health England is updated.

We've adopted a cautious approach throughout lockdown, with more than four in five of our people working productively from home during this fraught period. This has ensured minimal disruption to planned business activities.

A blended approach will be adopted in our return to work outlook, in common with the direction received from both Government and the NDA, and we will report back to you when we can say more. But 'caution' will remain our watchword.

Those working from home, in the main, have coped well with the new normal, as seen in our second pulse survey to assess the wellbeing of our people in the strained circumstances. We are of course putting additional measures in place to assist those not coping so well and have introduced measures to stop, slow or defer certain work streams to ease pressures on our people.

Similarly, members of the workforce who have returned to site have adapted to the COVID-safe measures LLWR has introduced around issues such as face coverings and social distancing.

Workplace testing continues for all attending site. Indeed, in late February we were delighted that for the first time since March 2020 we recorded no cases of infection or self-isolation due to the virus.

This was tremendous news and reflected our workforce's high level of compliance. But this is no time to let down our guard.

After stating our 'policy of patience' consistently in this column and elsewhere over the past 12 months, I'm sure you would expect me to say nothing less!

**Paul Pointon**  
**Chief Executive Officer**



## Safety conclusions accepted

The Environment Agency has accepted the conclusions of an extensive LLWR review carried out to justify the safety of continuing to dispose of low level waste at the Repository until it produces its next Environmental Safety Case (ESC) in 2026.

The Agency had asked that an Enhanced Periodic Review (ePR) be produced by LLWR in response to the company's request that the next ESC, due to be submitted in May this year, be delayed until 2026.

The ePR, completed on time in October 2020, consists of eight reports and runs to more than 800 pages, setting out changes to the ESC since 2011. Following its review, the Environment Agency concluded that LLWR has demonstrated that continued use of the site is appropriate against its regulatory requirements.

LLWR had requested the rescheduling of the Safety Case due to a series of factors that caused delays in its ESC update programme, including its work on the NDA's emerging Near Surface Disposal (NSD) programme. There are two main concepts being considered for NSD in the UK: at surface level and at depth, 10s of metres below the surface.

Data from 400 points in and around the Repository has been collected to support feasibility studies to inform potential Near Surface Disposal (NSD) options in the future. The geophysics monitoring work to image the subsurface will help decide the best location for a potential NSD facility and inform the design optimisation process.

NDA is exploring the benefits of developing NSD for disposing of a proportion of Intermediate Level Waste (ILW), but no decision has been taken on whether UK Government will pursue this option or whether LLWR, will in time, host a NSD facility. Optioneering studies are required to understand what's possible on the site before any decision is taken on how to proceed.

An NSD facility could bring benefits to the estate, for example by freeing up space in Sellafield's Intermediate Level Waste stores, which could then be used for high hazard waste. The latest phase of the work sees the deployment of multiple wireless geophones along roadsides and the use of a specialist vehicle to generate vibrations into the ground,

### Pelham House Offices:

LLW Repository Ltd  
Pelham House  
Pelham Drive  
Calderbridge  
Cumbria  
CA20 1DB

### Low Level Waste Repository Site Offices:

LLW Repository Ltd  
Old Shore Road  
Holmrook  
Cumbria  
CA19 1XP

Tel: +44 (0)19467 70200