

# ON THE LEVEL

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE LLW REPOSITORY

## CONTROLLED RE-START UNDERWAY ON SITE

The phased re-start of operations on the Repository Site is underway with more employees beginning to return to work at company premises.

Around 20 people have maintained a non-permanent presence on the Repository Site during lockdown, to ensure essential work such as maintenance, environmental monitoring and receipt of low level waste containers continued to be carried out.

But a detailed Re-start Plan, put together over several weeks, ensured that Site could begin to be gradually re-populated from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 11 weeks after lockdown was introduced.

Paul Pointon, LLWR Managing Director, and senior colleagues conducted walkdowns of Site to ensure everything was in place to increase occupancy before the return began.

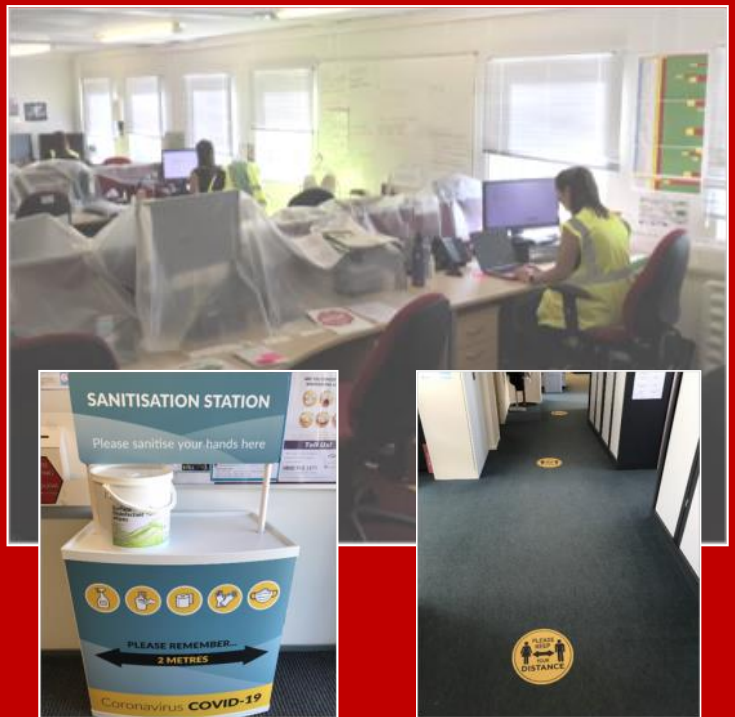
Paul said: "Our plan takes Government guidance into account and social distancing will be observed, including in our seating arrangements.

"Installation of physical control measures, to minimise the threat of contracting coronavirus, began in mid-May and if guidance is followed strictly, we can return to work safely. But we are all adapting to the 'new normal' and manning will not return to pre-COVID-19 levels for the foreseeable future.

"Our people have adapted well to remote working over recent months and this model will continue for many, who are not required to be based on Site or in an office environment to work effectively."

Paul has briefed employees over a series of video conferences. It is likely that in the current phase of the Restart Plan, Pelham House will remain closed.

### Ready for the 'new normal'



*Top photo: final touches before employees return to the Site, and above, hygiene measures and social distancing reminders in place.*

The return of employees to office roles in specified facilities on Site has seen LLWR move into Phase 2 of its three-phase Secure Restart Plan. They will focus on supporting ongoing essential operations and maintenance, in preparation for the next phase, when physical works will resume.

Almost 90% of the workforce has been able to work productively from home during lockdown and the majority will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

## RECORDABLE INJURY RATE AT ZERO FOR MORE THAN A YEAR

LLWR maintained its strong safety performance in the second half of 2019/20, ensuring its Total Recordable Injury Rate (TRIR) remained at zero, where it has been since April 2019.

More than 1.8 million hours, a period of over two years, has been worked since LLWR's last lost time injury of over seven days.

Some 271 Perfect Days were achieved in the year, equating to 74%, equalling the organisation's best figures since the scheme commenced.

Whilst the figures represent a significant Health & Safety

achievement through 2019/20, LLWR is maintaining caution as 21 minor injuries occurred through the year.

The severity of these injuries was very low, but the number of events has been of continuing concern, said Health & Safety Manager Elaine Burrage, who also noted the company's continued investment in the mental health of employees.

"We now have seven Mental Health First Aiders in place and more awaiting training, with positive feedback from the workforce on the measures taken to bring mental health into focus and reduce the historic stigma associated with mental health concerns," she added.

## A great workforce in deed!

Almost 90% Of LLWR's workforce was able to work productively from home during lockdown – but the organisation pulled out the stops to ensure no one felt isolated during their time apart from colleagues.

Video conferencing was utilised extensively, with department holding daily meetings to discuss business developments but also to check on the wellbeing of staff.

A Staying Connected campaign was launched, with bloggers in the workforce detailing their everyday experiences during lockdown, and Paul Pointon, Managing Director, communicating extensively, keeping everyone up to date with the latest developments.

Mental Health Awareness Week fell within the lockdown period, and events were organised each day that employees could link up with and contribute remotely.

The theme for the week was 'kindness' and employees were invited to detail Random Acts of Kindness they had given or received.

Cath Giel, Head of Public Affairs, said: "Effective communications have been more important than ever during lockdown, in large part to maintain team spirit and ensure the wellbeing of our people.

"The Random Acts of Kindness feature elicited a big response and included some wonderful acts including everything from adding a couple of extra bags on the weekly shop to donate to a homeless hostel, to pulling a stricken sheep out of a bog on a fellside, to receiving a box of birthday goodies from colleagues that included a bookmark made up of family photos, including one with their late grandma.

"Sparing a thought for others can make their day, and the

NWS/008/2020



*Kind of great: Operations Manager Russell Beckwith and his children Nyla, 10, and Jack, 7, drop off some essentials at their local foodbank in Egremont*

added bonus is that it can also make the kindness giver feel good, too. Staying Connected has also been a big success, with many people stepping forward to detail their experiences of working from home, sometimes for the first time.

"From this feedback, it appears many have enjoyed the challenging circumstances, but we are always mindful that this won't be the case for everyone. We've ensured that the contact details of our Mental Health First Aiders have been available for those who want to talk or be directed to health services."

# Three PPE donations for medics

Members of LLWR's stores team played their part in the pandemic response by ensuring that every possible item of spare personal protective equipment (PPE) on the LLWR Site was available to donate to protect medical personnel.

LLWR had already made two donations to the fight against COVID-19 when a further 170 Tyvek suits were identified as spare capacity following the recent completion of demolition work on Site.



Ben Wilson and Gareth Crooks went on to the Site during lockdown to gather protective suits and deliver them to the Cumbria Resilience Forum, at Lillyhall, and their effort was recognised by Alison Fotheringham, Site Infrastructure Operations Manager.

"All credit to them, they worked really hard. They were more than happy to go in, collect the suits and then deliver them," she said.

"The guys had a lot of information to gather so we knew exactly what we had, so the right decision could be made on what we could donate."



During the coronavirus crisis LLWR donated 3,652 items of PPE to assist medics, comprising 1,763 Tyvek suits, 1,800 gloves and 89 respirators. Tyvek is a durable yet light material that acts as a barrier against fine particles and fibres

The company's final two donations were made to the Resilience Forum, which is co-ordinating local efforts., while the first 560 Tyvek suits went to the North West Ambulance Service, for use in Cumbria and further afield, after an appeal for help

The hooded coveralls, a type used routinely on the Repository Site, were delivered to LLWR's local station by Martin Walkingshaw, Deputy Managing Director, after an appeal for help.

"It was an urgent request and we were really glad that we were able to respond to it," said Martin.

Rhonda Stanger, Acting Sector Manager, NW Ambulance Service NHS Trust, *pictured left, with our donation*, said: "We were struggling to procure PPE at the time of LLWR's donation. It gave us quite a bit of resilience and we are really appreciative of that."

## Assisting Andy with his boxes of goodness!

Our volunteers have linked up with a fresh food delivery business to ensure vulnerable people across West Cumbria receive essential supplies.

Staff at Holmrook-based Andy Pratt Ltd



*Stepping up: LLWR volunteers Donna Glasson, above, and Jane Hornsby, packing boxes for delivery.*

have been working around the clock to fulfil orders, since offering their free delivery service to GP practices and local authorities amid the coronavirus outbreak, to accommodate people who are self-isolating or shielding due to ill-health.

Around 500 new customers were added to the business, prompting LLWR to give its employees the chance to step in to give the seven-strong workforce a well-earned break from preparing and delivering fresh fruit and vegetables, salads and dairy products.

"It helps having volunteers as it makes the workload of staff more manageable," said Andy. "We had to take down our website as the demand was coming thick and fast.

"People have been really grateful for the deliveries and said they didn't know what they would have done without us."

Demand has eased a little of late for



Andy, who also delivers extensively to NHS personnel, and there is now scope to add new customers.

LLWR provides a maximum of 14 days paid leave annually to staff to support emergency volunteering. Most employees have been working from home during lockdown.

Some employees have joined NHS Volunteers to deliver essentials to vulnerable members of their community while others have been producing face coverings for medics in their own time.

## Paul's Points . . .

It has been 3 months like no other at LLWR, in common with the rest of the nation, and I would like to begin by expressing my thoughts and sympathies to all those affected by COVID-19, on behalf of the organisation.



In our previous newsletter, in mid-March, there was an indication of what was to come when we decided to call off the official opening of our new Site Emergency Control Centre (SECC) due to growing concerns about coronavirus.

But the LLWR workforce has risen to the unique challenges posed by the pandemic and embraced new ways of working.

Co-operation between departments at LLWR has been outstanding, and improvements made to our IT systems and hardware over recent years have paid off, enabling the vast majority of our people to continue to work productively from home.

Remote working has been new for many at LLWR, and we have been acutely aware of maintaining effective communications with a dispersed workforce to maintain health and wellbeing during a period of lockdown which has brought its own pressures. And we will continue to prioritise mental health as we continue with our measured and safe return to the workplace.

The restrictions meant that several activities due to complete in the final weeks of the financial year were paused, though preparations are in place to ensure they are carried out when we resume Site works.

We have delivered £190.1 million of cost avoidance against the contract to date, from the diversion of low level waste away from disposal at LLWR.

These savings exceed the contract commitment of £150 million and would have been closer to £194 million but for COVID-19.

PCM decommissioning activities were completed and demolition progressed significantly. The Magazine Retrieval Facilities of Magazines 3, 5, 9 and 10 have been demolished and the PCM Support Facility is ready for demolition operations to commence when Site entry conditions allow.

Good progress was made pre-lockdown on contractor mobilisation activities under our Repository Development Programme (RDP) Enabling Works contract, and LLWR and contractor Graham Construction's Project Teams have been working from home where possible.

The impact of stopping physical work will be developed through 2020/21 to determine whether the schedule can be recovered by the end of March 2021.

We will continue to exert vigilance during our measured return to work, and many colleagues, including some members of my Executive team, have been advised that they will continue to work from home at present.

Only those whose presence is deemed essential will currently return to Site.

The 'new normal' will be a phrase we'll be using for some time to come.

**Paul Pointon,**  
**Managing Director**

## Doing our home-work

Given that LLWR has been promoting change in the management of lower activity waste for more than a decade, it is no surprise that its workforce has proved flexible in converting to the 'new normal' brought about by coronavirus.

A large majority of the LLWR workforce has been working productively from home during lockdown, enabling the nuclear industry to continue its decommissioning mission during the period of remote working.

Within LLWR it's the role of Waste Management Services business unit (WMS) to help customers manage their lower activity wastes at every stage of the waste lifecycle, and when the lockdown call came in late March, they were prepared.

Damian Seath, Head of WMS Operations, likened the

response to that of a military task force. With a business continuity plan developed, staff began obtaining the equipment



required to operate remotely, tested their IT equipment and created electronic copies of Visual Management Boards used to coordinate service operations.

They even packed grab bags containing vital documents and management system forms required to perform Business As Usual activities remotely for customers, in case the IT network was unavailable.

The teams were quickly restructured into 'cells' and new virtual meetings and communication routes were put in place so that everything remained coordinated.

Once mobilised, home working quickly became the norm, ensuring business continuity for LLWR's customer base.

"WMS have always been at the forefront of change and are constantly looking for new innovations and efficiencies to stay ahead of the game and deliver a better quality service for its customers," Damian said.

"I believe that one of the many success factors was due to the passion and enthusiasm for the work we perform, along with a key desire to obtain customer excellence through delivery."

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