

## Journey to Success 2008 – 2021

### 2. Construction of Vault 9

The low level waste landscape looked very different in 2008 when the PBO won the contract to run LLWR.

Only 5% of low level waste produced nationally was diverted from the Repository and Vault 8, the only disposal route for this material, was almost full, with no provision for further disposal vaults.

Little wonder that a key objective of the PBO's first five-year term was to eliminate the short-term capacity gap. The solution? **Deliver Vault 9.**

Construction of Vault 9, incorporating advances in technology, with multiple layers of protection, was accelerated to ensure continued and uninterrupted storage at the Repository.

Local stakeholders received regular progress updates, with more than 100 residents of Drigg & Carleton Parish accepting an invitation for a site tour, incorporating the Vault 9 construction area.

In July 2009, a collective sigh of relief was felt across the NDA estate when a completed area of the new vault, known as the 'island slab' was handed over to LLWR Site Operations team for use in storing low level waste.

A further two areas were handed over seven months later, resulting in capacity for a further two to three years, it was thought at the time. With Vault 9 nearing completion, the short-term capacity crisis was over.

Vault 9 was officially opened on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> July with LLWR employees, civic leaders, local authorities, community representatives, regulators, customers and other key stakeholders in attendance.

It had been delivered safely, within cost and schedule constraints whilst ensuring that exacting regulatory quality requirements were met.

At the time it was said that Vault 9 could be serviceable for between 10 and 15 years, though



The official opening of Vault 9 in July 2010

alternative waste solutions, pioneered under the PBO's leadership, have ensured this timescale has been extended considerably.

LLWR initially had permission for temporary storage only in Vault 9 and an agreement to dispose of low level waste in the vault would follow six years later. But that account will unfold in a later chapter of the PBO's success story.

When needed, further vaults will be constructed in line with National Waste Programme requirements, though based on current waste estimates, Vault 9 is now expected to be utilised for decades to come.

Phil Davies, then NDA's Head of Waste and Nuclear Materials, summed up at the time the importance of Vault 9's construction in the decommissioning landscape.

"The three-way partnership of the site operator LLWR Ltd, UK Nuclear Waste Management and NDA has been instrumental in delivering this impressive facility. Having this new Vault in operation is vital. Without Vault 9 important nuclear clean-up programmes and operations would simply stall."

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