

Journey to Success 2008 – 2021

9. PCM Decommissioning Programme

The final chapter is about to be written in the history of a series of concrete bunkers on the LLWR site that have played a key role in the service of the nation for more than 80 years.

The bunkers, or magazines as they are known, for so long a focal point of the site, have been prepared for demolition, bringing to a close one of LLWR's most successful programmes to date.

These magazines, disguised beneath soil and grassland to avoid enemy attention, were used to store munitions during the Second World War and went on to host plutonium contaminated material (PCM) from nuclear sites around the UK in the 1950s and 1960s.

Whilst the bulk of this material was removed in the 2000s to be stored at Sellafield, the structures had become contaminated. So in 2013 a 10-year programme was launched at an estimated cost of £100 million to decommission the five remaining magazines. However, working on an accelerated schedule the PCM Programme team achieved their task in just six years, saving around £20 million in the process, and delivered on a commitment to the local community.

This remarkable success story was made possible by the collaborative approach adopted by LLWR, PBO and contract partner NSG Environmental. A leadership group was formed in the programme's early days, that included senior managers from both organisations, and a project team was established comprising PCM partners from Nuvia, PC Richardson, Atkins, Hertel and Studsvik, in addition to LLWR, PBO and NSG personnel.

The results tell their own story. Upon completion of this stage, the programme moved into a demolition phase and this project team was demobilised in March 2020, their task achieved, with the five remaining magazines, and retrieval facilities, ready to be pulled down.

Yet still, their 'service' continues with phased reuse



Magazine Retrieval Facility (MRF) being demolished



A magazine on the LLWR site is prepared for demolition

to meet the requirements of LLWR's Repository Development Programme.

This spoil material will be used as infill for the final engineered cap over the vaults and trenches, in line with the Waste Hierarchy.

The land on which the magazines stand will then be available for future development projects.

The PCM programme was notable for saving time and money, but one statistic stands out proudly from the rest. More than 400,000 person-hours were spent at the workface, with over 11,500 air fed suit entries, over the life of the programme without suffering a single Lost Time Accident.



PCM Operator in an Air Fed Suit

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