



On the Level

News and views from the LLW Repository site

New bridge is key link for RDP

A steel bridge that will play a key role in facilitating the Repository Development Programme (RDP) for up to 50 years has been installed on site – on the day planned eight months earlier.

The installation across Drigg Stream will link a new haul road from the site's rail sidings, where construction materials for RDP will arrive, to the eventual workforce and stockpile areas.

The retro beam bridge, designed by Thomas Consulting, on behalf of our enabling works framework partner

Graham Construction, spans 19.3m and was lifted into place in three sections using a 300-tonne crane.

Paul Burns, Works Manager with Graham Construction, said: "Lots of preparation works went into ensuring that the bridge installation was successful, including ground investigations, design works and application for environmental licences.

"Construction works started at the beginning of winter 2021. We had numerous days and weeks with poor weather conditions, including days where we couldn't carry out lifting operations due to high winds, during the civil element of the bridge. The team were not fazed by this and continued to push on.

Big thanks go to all involved, this was another successful milestone achieved on the RDP Minor Civils Works.

The bridge modules have a design life of around 30-50 years and the abutments a design life of 100 years, taking them virtually to the end of RDP.

Maintenance will be carried out to ensure the bridge and abutments can support the programme for as long as safely possible.



Bridge being installed in sections using huge crane

19.3m

The retro beam bridge spans 19.3m and was lifted into place in three sections using a 300-tonne crane.

Hat-trick of honours in NDA Awards

We were delighted to scoop several accolades in the inaugural NDA group Employee Awards.

The PCM Drum Re-characterisation project, highlighted in the previous edition of our newsletter, won the Value for Money award, Sam Wilson, hailed for his work on Transformation, took the Rising Star honour, and Sue Trohear earned the Environmental Improvement Award.

Sue has long been at the forefront of sustainability issues on the Repository site and at Pelham House, often speaking to people individually to encourage them to act in a sustainable manner.

"I was quite shocked to win the award," said Sue, an Environmental Advisor. "It shows people have listened to and commended my message about sustainability, which means everything to me."

Sue championed the incorporation of an additive called MacRebur, composed of non-recyclable waste plastics which would have previously been destined for landfill, for use in resurfacing work on the site perimeter track. The initiative saved the equivalent volume of plastic used in over 2.8 million single use carrier bags.

Helen Cassidy, Head of Business Improvement (Operations and Services) spoke of her pride at Sam's award.

She added: "Sam has made a huge positive difference to Nuclear Waste Services, leading work and helping to drive the Transformation Programme and business change activities across Waste Operations and Services, with his enthusiasm, commitment and good humour. He's definitely one to watch for the future!"

2.8 million

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Responsible stewardship of the Repository site

Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) has responded to misinformation that land close to the Repository site may have been acquired to develop new facilities outside the current site boundary.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has entered into land agreements to formalise its access rights to maintain environmental monitoring equipment to the west and south-west of the Low Level Waste Repository site. Both areas of land will continue to be used by local farmers as arable farmland.

One of the agreements was a long-term lease from a private landowner, Muncaster Estates, for land to the west of the Repository site. This land includes an area designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is an important haven for wildlife, including the Natterjack Toad and Great Crested Newt, and varied flora and fauna.

Dr John Shevelan, Site Characterisation Manager at the Repository explained that: "This long-term lease formalises previous informal agreements with the landowners allowing Nuclear Waste Services to go on to the land to access and maintain our boreholes and marine pipeline. We have a series of long-established boreholes for groundwater monitoring on this land which is part of our environmental monitoring programme, as agreed with our regulator the Environment Agency.

"Although we are extremely grateful for the landowners' support, it was important that these access rights were formally documented given that the site could be operational until 2130.

"The long-term lease secures this access but crucially limits any development by NWS to the maintenance of monitoring infrastructure and boreholes, the marine pipeline and the security fence. It is anticipated that the lease would be surrendered when monitoring is no longer required.

"The current use of the land will not change with the existing tenant farmer continuing to graze cattle and sheep on it."

Mike Pigott, Director of LLW Repository site notes: "These formal agreements ensure we continue to operate our

facility safely, securely and with environmental compliance at the forefront of our minds, as responsible stewards of our site."

Martin Walkingshaw, Chief Operating Officer of NWS, added: "I was sad to see speculation on social media about our motives around this land, so it is good to set the record straight. There have been informal land access agreements in place between the Repository and private landowners for many years. The completion of the formal agreements does not alter our use of this land or affect its SSSI status.

"I'm happy to meet anyone (local or not) to discuss any concerns they may have about the Repository site or our wider business. In my experience face to face engagement is always beneficial."



Sheep grazing on the SSSI area near the Repository site

Our helping hand in Australia

Two senior leaders at NWS have travelled across the world to undertake a two-week peer review around the deliverability of planned waste disposal facilities in Australia.

Technical Director Richard Cummings and Helen Cassidy, Head of Business Improvement (Operations and Services), were invited to complete the review by Sam Usher, Chief Executive of the Australian Radioactive Waste Agency (ARWA), which is responsible for the design, construction, operation and eventual decommissioning of Low Level and Intermediate Level Waste disposal facilities for Australia.

A site has been purchased in South Australia to house the nation's future LLW disposal facility and ILW storage, and ARWA are currently delivering



Helen Cassidy and Richard Cummings hard at work in Australia

work to progress towards obtaining the necessary licences they need, developing their safety case and Waste Acceptance Criteria, and undertaking design work.

Richard and Helen's extensive schedule included interviews with staff and contractors of ARWA involved in the programme, discussions with Australian regulators, a visit to the site of the future LLW disposal facility and discussions with staff there about the programme and community engagement, and production of a report and feedback meeting with ARWA staff.

Helen said: "Everyone was welcoming, honest and open."

We had many opportunities to share learning and good practice from the UK experience with them, whilst recognising that our situations are very different in terms of amount of waste, weather, physical space, local communities, etcetera.

"Learning about another country's waste system had also been really interesting for us, too."

Cath humbled to receive MBE



A delighted Cath Giel said being recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours with an MBE – Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire – for services to the nuclear industry and the West Cumbrian community was a "lovely way to end a career."

Cath retired from her role as Director of Communications and Stakeholder Relations with LLW Repository Limited in December 2021, after greatly strengthening local community relations during 16 years in charge.

She previously held public affairs roles at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd and Westlakes Science Park and was also active in the community as a Copeland Borough Councillor for eight years and a parish councillor for a decade.

"I'm absolutely thrilled, humbled and extremely honoured," Cath said. "I'm also very grateful for those who appreciated me enough to put me forward for the award. So many people do wonderful things, I would never have expected to be honoured like this."

"I've been lucky to work for some great bosses who provided strong leadership and had great teams working for me. That's how you achieve. You don't get there on your own."

Martin Walkingshaw, Chief Operating Officer of Nuclear Waste Services said: "I was delighted to hear that Cath's outstanding contribution to both the nuclear industry and West Cumbria has been recognised in the Queen's Jubilee Honours List."

"It was a privilege to work with Cath over the last 14 years, she played a vital role in the successful creation of LLW Repository Limited and our later transition to Nuclear Waste Services."

Helping young Stars shine

NWS is taking part in the Bright Stars Programme for 2022, partnering pupils from St Bega's C of E School in Eskdale to launch a 'business' in the best tradition of self-sustaining social enterprise.

Bright Stars is a collaboration between Centre for Leadership Performance, primary schools and local businesses across Cumbria that encourages leadership and responsible entrepreneurship from a young age.

Each school is partnered with a local business and receives £50, with a mission to set up their own mini business over the course of eight weeks and make a profit, whilst

making a positive difference to their world and the lives of those around them.

Kate Parr, Training and Development Officer at NWS, initially visited the school with three of our apprentices to help pupils get started on creating their business.

The St Bega's youngsters have opted to develop a 'Book Box' where people pay money to borrow a book to read, and books can also be donated. The apprentices are visiting weekly to offer guidance.

Kate Parr said: "We were enthusiastically welcomed by the pupils, who enjoyed the interactive approach we provided through asking them questions and completing a team exercise to choose the business idea. We even gave them some sweets to top the day off!"

The competition is due to end on 24 June when a panel of judges will assess all businesses and decide winners in 12 categories.

Drigg and Carleton Gala 2022

Residents made up for lost time when the popular Drigg and Carleton Gala made a welcome return after a two-year break.

The annual highlight included all the usual fun attractions with craft stalls, children's art and fancy dress competitions and children's races.

Mike Pigott, Director of the LLW Repository site, was a guest judge for the children's art competition and enjoyed the experience.

He said: "It was rewarding to see so many of our team representing and supporting the local community – alongside RNLI, Wasdale Mountain Rescue, Young Farmers, Scouts, Civil Nuclear Constabulary dog unit and more."

And finally...



It has definitely been a busy few months since our last newsletter but I'm delighted to report that things are going well at the Repository site and across the wide range of waste management services that we provide around the UK.

One of the changes I wanted to implement when I took over last year was to increase the level of co-operation between our teams – the project to dispose of drums from the Treated Radwaste Store (TRS) at Winfrith was featured in our last newsletter and it's a great example of this.

This project shows how our organisation is developing to deal with the increasingly complex challenges associated with decommissioning and waste management in the UK.

Now that Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) is firmly established, our teams in Cumbria have been getting to know our new colleagues at Harwell and elsewhere in the UK who are responsible for delivery of the UK's Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). NWS has its core Operations and Services business 'lines' in West Cumbria, centred around the Repository site and our offices at Pelham House in Calderbridge, but

Cumbria is also vitally important to the GDF team.

I was delighted to join the mid-Copeland Community Partnership team at their recent GDF event in Drigg, to hear for myself some of the hopes and concerns that locals like me have about the prospect of a GDF in our area. A few people were worried by stories on social media that recent arrangements to secure access to land around the Repository site is linked to the GDF siting process.

As you will have read elsewhere in this newsletter, this simply isn't the case. Others were concerned that locating a GDF in our county would increase the volume of radioactive waste that Cumbria will receive. By far the most frequent concerns were around the suitability of the geology in our area and the impact that the construction of a GDF would have on our countryside.

On the issue of volume of waste, we need to remember two things; According to the latest estimate, more than 94% of the radioactive waste that will arise in the UK will fall into the Low Level or Very Low Level categories. Those are the categories we deal with safely and permanently today at our existing site, and by using the waste hierarchy (avoid, reduce, reuse, recycle) we are minimising what comes to us for disposal.

The second thing we should all remember is that the vast majority of the remaining waste (i.e. the last 6%), is already on our doorstep at the Sellafield site, either in surface stores or awaiting retrieval, treatment and packaging. Surface storage is safe but it isn't a permanent nor sustainable solution.

People quite rightly point out that work was carried out to investigate our geology by NWS's predecessors and questions were raised over the suitability of the areas concerned. I'd ask you to bear in mind that the areas being investigated now are not the same ones. The Lake District

National Park has been ruled out and the inshore area (i.e. up to 12km from the coastline) has not previously been investigated. We need to keep an open mind on our geology – it shapes several of the six siting factors we will consider throughout the siting process. They are: Safety and Security; Community; Environment; Engineering Feasibility; Transport; Value for money. We need the right mix of these measures to be confident we can proceed to the next stage of investigations.

The impact of construction is the one thing about a GDF that raises questions to me as a local person. And it's a topic that I know the GDF team are very well aware of. These impacts are many years away and I expect them to be the main focus of debate in the event that our geology is found to be suitable. As a community we will need to choose if the advantages of hosting this vital piece of national infrastructure outweighs potential disruption we'll experience during its construction.

And it is we the local community who get that choice – however, this isn't a debate we need to have yet. Our geology could prove unsuitable so we could be out of the running altogether. The survey work that will commence in a few weeks will begin to answer the geology question but if we are to proceed with a GDF anywhere in Cumbria, we deserve the improved infrastructure, continuing investment and new jobs that go with it.

Martin Walkingshaw
Chief Operating Officer

Nuclear Waste Services

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