

 UK Atomic Energy Authority	BOARD MEETING Meeting Reference UKAEA(25)1	
Date	Thursday 30 January	
Time	1015-1700	
Location	UKAEA Board Room, C7, Culham Campus	
Members	Bernard Taylor (Chair) Ian Chapman Ruth Elliot Tim Bestwick Eithne Birt Luc Bardin	Robin Grimes Stephen Hillier Richard Hookway Mary Ryan Sue Gray Lee McDonough (DESNZ)
Attendees	Edward Lewis-Smith (Sec) David Gann (UKIFS Chair) Justin Kingsford (UKAEA COO)	

Agenda Items

1. **Opening Remarks and Declarations** led by B Taylor.

Declarations: None.

2. **Minutes and Actions Review, UKAEA(24)M6** led by B Taylor:

Minutes review: Approved.

Actions review: None due for January. The Board agreed to slip action (24)6/1 from March to May and to receive a progress update at the next Board meeting on (24)6/3.

3. **Sub-Committee updates**, led by R Hookway and E Birt

UKAEA (24)6 ARAC report.

The Board took the report as read, and heard that the Portfolio Office is formalising UKAEA's approach to capturing and sharing lessons learnt. This was particularly in the area of commercial partnerships, where UKAEA CEO noted that a much more transactional approach to contract management could run counter to the UKAEA's mission to work collaboratively with UK industry. Chair UKIFS observed the importance of sharing lessons learnt on this issue in relation to ongoing UKIFS activity. UKAEA CFO flagged the ongoing work in relation to Group VAT registration and on Sandside.

UKAEA(25)1 PRemCo report.

PREMCO met only this week and so a note would follow subsequently. Chair PRemCo described the work on CEO and Directors' objectives, emphasising efforts to ensure objectives were comprehensive and stretching. Chair PRemCo also outlined ongoing work with the new UKAEA People Director, who has developed a draft operating model for the People department.

(circulate REMCO note by correspondence – n.b. completed as Board Intelligence update)

4. Corporate Reporting Documentation, led by R Elliot

UKAEA (25)1- Corporate Reporting Documentation

The Board tested efforts to make information flows and data more efficient and effective to support the proposed plan on corporate reporting. The Board heard that work was ongoing at DESNZ to move reporting systems and noted the potential implications for UKAEA.

5. UKAEA Group Executive Board Report, UKIFS Executive Report & Risk Report, led by I Chapman, T Bestwick, J Kingsford, R Elliot

UKAEA(25)1 - UKAEA Executive Board Report

The Board welcomed the recent visits by the DESNZ and DSIT Secretaries of State and noted the strong financial support from HM Government. The Board was disappointed however to receive the update on ITER and the position of the European Commission on UK access to ITER and discussed potential ways forward, recognising the increased risks around UKAEA retention. UKAEA CEO also provided an update on strategic discussions with Singapore and Canada.

The Board noted potential implications of the new US administration on UKAEA collaborations and opportunities with the US.

L McDonough agreed in principle that UKAEA should propose an appropriate approvals process for the campus development partner and Data Centre development for agreement by DESNZ as soon as possible.

UKAEA (25)1 - UKIFS CEO Report

The Board was pleased to hear that the STEP programme was rated AMBER by the IPA, which given the uncertainties involved in the programme was very positive. The Board noted the work upcoming to prepare for the MPRG session. Chair UKIFS described the challenges and risks involved in UKIFS resourcing and the plan in place to address these. The Board offered to support where appropriate.

West Burton Site Development report to be circulated [*Secretariat note – for information paper at UKAEA(25)2*]

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(25)1/1	Consider and arrange a Board discussion at higher security classification.	L McDonough	March 2025
UKAEA (25)1/2	Consider how best to present to HMG the risk and mitigation strategy around UKAEA technical capability in plasma physics.	I Chapman	March 2025

UKAEA (25)1 – UKIFS CSD Amendments

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(25)1/D1	The Board endorsed the four amendments proposed to the Corporate Structure Document: UKIFS (CSD) for UKAEA Board approval. The Board agreed that future minor administrative changes to the CSD should be delegated to UKAEA Group Executive Committee.

UKAEA (25)1 – Risk Report

The Board reiterated the value of the risk radar in providing a snapshot on risks facing UKAEA. The risk around recruitment and retention continues to worsen. The Board acknowledged that this risk – as well as other strategic risks – facing UKAEA cannot be sufficiently mitigated by UKAEA alone.

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(25)1/3	Finalise the identified risk appetite	R Elliot	March 2025

UKAEA (25)1 – Group Risk Appetite final

The Board noted the changes made as requested, subject to finalisation of the “Compliance with non-legislative standards and best practice” row in the table presented.

6. Finance and SR update, including budget planning, led by R Elliot and J Evans (attendee)

UKAEA (25)1 – Finance report

The Board welcomed J Evans to the post of Director of Finance and Business Systems, who summarised the report submitted.

UKAEA (25)1 – Budget 25-26 and SR update

UKAEA CFO summarised the latest position on SR position and described the intended approach on the “UKAEA efficiency narrative”. The Board articulated the importance of behaviour and culture in delivering efficiency.

[organise JDR walkaround for next time]

7. F4E / Fusion Futures update and business case, led by S Wheeler and H Turnbull-Jones (attendees)

UKAEA (25)1 – F4E and Fusion Futures update

UKAEA (25)1 – Fusion Futures Industry Capability and Commercialisation business case

SW summarised the latest position with regards to the programme. The Board tested how funding is disbursed to enable a competitive supply chain for the future. The programme uses KPIs to ensure SMEs and a broad range of suppliers are engaged in the programme. SW outlined how the STEP programme is coordinated with the Industry Capability Programme, noting that where there is alignment in technical scope of test facilities STEP would fund and deliver with additional scope supported by the Industry Capability programme. The Board suggested greater emphasis on communicating the incentives for industries to participate, ideally in an increasingly strategic way with senior engagement.

The Board tested the IP position of the programme, agreeing that the programme should help UK industry to develop IP (to which the UKAEA should have access, potentially via licensing arrangements) but should not give away pre-existing UKAEA IP developed using public funding. The Board note the challenges in tracking benefits arising after the programme, particularly IP-related.

The Board discussed the approval process between now and FBC, noting the importance of avoiding a gap in the programme which would have adverse effects on industry capability and confidence.

Notwithstanding the decision points over the next 12 months, the Board asked for the programme to return to the Board in a year to assess progress and achievements thus far.

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(25)1/D2	Subject to the inclusion of additional text specifying the position on IP, the Board approved the business case for submission to DESNZ.

8. CHIMERA, led by S Wheeler (verbal)

S Wheeler outlined the latest position on CHIMERA and the nature of the processes that must be followed in such situations. The Board considered potential escalation routes.

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(25)1/4	Secretariat to review minutes of last few meetings with CFO related to this	R Elliot	March 2025

9. Alignment of campus development and data centre partner selection processes, led by T Bestwick

T Bestwick (TB) outlined the context behind the initiatives in question, namely to select a partner to develop the Culham Campus and a partner to develop an AI-HPC Data Centre, describing the role of the site in furthering UK industrial strategy and the need to move quickly to best leverage commercial capital available. The Board considered how the processes used to secure new investment in the Harwell campus could inform the proposed approach for the Culham development partner. TB reiterated the importance of UKAEA retaining strategic control in any arrangement. The Board agreed that the selection processes for both must be able to be decoupled, to ensure pace and value for money for each opportunity.

10. Computing Deep Dive, led by J Milnes, R Akers, A Hynes (attendees). UKAEA (25)1 – Computing Deep Dive

The Board strongly affirmed the need to move fast to secure the AI-HPC Data Centre opportunity. The Board tested assumptions involved in profiling options on ramping up capability, noting the vital importance of this capability building in exploiting what should be a world-leading national asset and sovereign capability. The Board also noted the risks around Spending Review and encouraged the Executive to work with the Government on clarifying approvals processes and funding routes.

11. Board Effectiveness Review, led by Sir John Parker (invitee) UKAEA (25)1 – Board Effectiveness Review FINAL DRAFT

Sir John summarised his report, noting the importance of organisational understanding and relationship-building in determining a Board’s effectiveness, particularly with regards to its non-executive directors. The Board heard that several issues highlighted are beyond the control of the Executive, with business case length¹ (frequently driving the size of the Board packs) and Board Appointments being determined by the Government. The Board noted that co-opted members and advisors could be brought in at Board sub-committee level to bring in additional skills and expertise which would not be possible due to restrictions at Board level.

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(25)1/5	Chair, CEO and Secretary to do plan	B Taylor	March 2025

¹ LM noted that the DESNZ 2nd Permanent Secretary has mandated business cases should be 20 pages or less.

UKAEA(25)1/6	DESNZ to provide a position on this	L McDonough	March 2025
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12. AOB and Closing Remarks, led by B Taylor

The Board flagged a potential opportunity for UKAEA to establish overseas subsidiaries in order to access commercial opportunities, noting that this would require government support.

Attendance record:

Position	Name	Present	Absent
Members	B Taylor	/	
	Eithne Birt	/	
	Ian Chapman	/	
	Ruth Elliot	/	
	Tim Bestwick	/	
	Richard Hookway	/	
	Luc Bardin	/	
	Sue Gray	/	
	Stephen Hillier	/	
	Mary Ryan	/	
	Robin Grimes	/	
	Lee McDonough	/	
	Attendees	Edward Lewis-Smith	/
Justin Kingsford		/	
David Gann		/	

End of Minutes