

 UK Atomic Energy Authority	BOARD MEETING Meeting Reference UKAEA(25)5	
Date	Wednesday 24 September	
Time	0930 - 1625	
Location	UKAEA Board Room, C7, Culham Campus	
Members	Bernard Taylor (Chair) Luc Bardin Tim Bestwick Ruth Elliot Claire Flint Sue Gray	Robin Grimes Richard Hookway Stephen Hillier Mary Ryan Lee McDonough
Attendees	Madhav Bakshi (DESNZ) David Gann (UKIFS Chair) Justin Kingsford (UKAEA COO) Heather Lewtas (UKAEA CDO) David Sandford (DESNZ) Nina Tomlin (Sec)	

MINUTES

Items

1. **Opening Remarks and Declarations** led by B Taylor.
 - 1.1. Board members joining remotely were welcomed, and apologies noted from Robin Grimes and Lee McDonough. David Sandford was attending on behalf of LMcD.
 - 1.2. Heather Lewtas, Interim Chief Development Officer, was welcomed as attendee.
 - 1.3. Congratulations were recorded to David Gann and Bernard Taylor upon their election as Fellows of the Royal Academy of Engineering.
 - 1.4. **Declarations:** none.
2. Minutes and Actions Review, UKAEA(25)M4 and UKAEA(25)EM Jul led by B Taylor:

Both sets of minutes were **approved**.

 - 2.1. Open actions were reviewed:

Action	Owner	Due	Status	Update
Consider and arrange a Board discussion at higher security classification	L McDonough	March 2025	Open	Update: to be scheduled at November Board meeting. JK to confirm with Department re security classification.
Invite regulators to present to UKAEA Board on	T Bestwick	September 2025	Open	SH confirmed ambition to arrange this for November

establishment of a fusion regulatory framework.				Board meeting; likely to arrange HSE first.
Bring granular detail of Group 5 risks to ARAC and Board	R Elliot	September 2025	Open	Covered in Sep 25 agenda. Close action.
L McDonough to liaise with HMG colleagues on progress of flywheels repurposing	L McDonough	September 2025	Open	Has been followed up on and clarified. Discussion with NESO to follow. Action going forwards.
L McDonough to review how HMG approvals can be streamlined (AIGZ)	L McDonough	September 2025	Open	DESNZ working to make approvals as efficient as possible; aiming for mid-October. Regular updates will be included in Exec Report to Board. Close action.
Group Risk register to include a risk explicitly related to the STEP programme	R Elliot	September 2025	Open	STEP has been embedded in all risks. Close action.
PM to advise on suitable time to bring update on technical challenges and impacts back to Board.	P Methven	November 2025	Open	
UKAEA should review approach to Harwell JV public sector participation in three years' time	E Lewis-Smith	July 2027	Open	

3. UKAEA Group Executive Board Report, UKIFS Executive Report & Risk Report, led by T Bestwick, R Elliot, J Kingsford, H Lewtas

UKAEA(25)5 - UKAEA Executive Board Report

- 3.1. TB expanded on safety items and lessons learned; and on the announcement of the UK-US "Technology Prosperity Deal" featuring fusion (within nuclear and AI) and actions to take the detail forward. DESNZ team would bring a progress report back to Board.
- 3.2. The Board discussed upcoming Fusion focused events as well as fusion companies.

- 3.3. The Board asked that further detailed information was provided on UKAEA's collaboration strategy and various collaboration agreements.
- 3.4. TB was asked to report back to Board on Chimera.
- 3.5. JK would report back to Board on a review of major programmes delivery.
- 3.6. The Board also discussed new ministers; the recent MAST-U success on disruption; cyber-security; welfare and wellbeing; innovation and spin outs; and UKAEA's exemptions for de-carbonisation in specific areas within its fusion-related activities. While UKAEA reported on all sustainability data and followed BREEAM in its construction, de-carbonisation targets did not apply across all UKAEA work.
- 3.7. It was reported that PRemCo was looking at Pay and Grading and contingent labour on a regular basis.
- 3.8. The Committee heard that Fusion Foundations had received a green/amber evaluation in the Gate 5 Review, with only benefits and impact cases logs flagged.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(25)5/1	DESNZ team would bring a progress report on implementation of "Technology Prosperity Deal" back to Board.	L McDonough	Jan 2026
UKAEA(25)5/2	Paper summarising output from securing value piece of work and details of collaborations across sub-system areas and types of organisation to be brought back to Board.	H Lewtas	Jan 2026
UKAEA(25)5/3	Include regular update on Chimera in Exec Report to Board.	T Bestwick	Nov 2026
UKAEA(25)5/4	Provide report on major programmes delivery review to Board.	J Kingsford	Jan 2026

UKAEA(25)5 - UKIFS CEO Report

- 3.9. DG provided further context for the report, including Whole Plant Partner procurement progress and related communications planning.

Mary Ryan joined the meeting.

- 3.10. The Board also discussed work ongoing relating to the plasma scenario; and work related to the West Burton Site, including the creation of a West Burton Steering Group reporting into Group Executive Committee, with representation from both UKAEA PSRE and UKIFS.

4. Sub-Committee reports, led by R Hookway and C Flint

UKAEA(25)5 – ARAC Report

- 4.1. RH provided further detail on the written report; including export control, Chimera, cyber-security across the Group; and a review of the annual bonus audit.

UKAEA(25)5 – PRemCo Report

- 4.2. CF provided additional context; including recent senior appointments within the People Team, ambitions for future work, organisational culture, the Alpha pension move in October 2026 and the People Strategy being developed.

4.3. The DESNZ team would follow up on the suggestion that CF as Chair of PRemCo should meet with Alice Hurrell, Chief People Officer at DESNZ.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(25)5/5	DESNZ team to arrange for a meeting between Claire Flint and Alice Hurrell	L McDonough	Nov 2026

5. Finance update, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(25)5 – Finance update Sep25

- 5.1. JE provided updates since the report was circulated, with P5 figures now received. Q2 Review would be undertaken in October. The Board heard that efficiencies were being identified, including through corporate overheads challenge sessions.
- 5.2. Divisional Business Planning commissions had been issued across UKAEA last week and were due to be completed in December, with an organisation-wide UKAEA Business Plan to be produced and published in early 2026.

6. Spending Review settlement and DESNZ underspends, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(25)5 – SR

- 6.1. An update was provided on changes to SR settlement figures since the July Board, and their effect on benefit realisation and business planning. Detailed budgets for 2026/26 would be signed off by the Board in March 2026.
- 6.2. Annual profiles were still being reviewed.
- 6.3. UKIFS was asked to keep the UKAEA Board apprised of developments in generating investment.
- 6.4. RE provided additional information on overprogramming and on the use of DESNZ underspend funding.
- 6.5. The Board **endorsed** the direction of travel.

7. Output from ExCo Strategy sessions, led by T Bestwick

UKAEA(25)5 – UKAEA strategy focus and pace

- 7.1. The Board discussed the output from recent ExCo Strategy sessions on UKAEA's strategic direction. The sessions validated that UKAEA Group was focused on the right areas of work, while emphasising the importance of increasing the pace towards the achievement of clear outcomes.
- 7.2. The next step in this work would be rationalisation under the agreed headings, with Board members suggesting stating this more clearly in future reports.
- 7.3. The Board discussed AI, supply chains, and the UK Fusion Strategy currently being update – targeting finalisation by the beginning of 2026.

8. CEO Recruitment, led by B Taylor

UKAEA(25)5 – JD and Advert

- 8.1. Sarah John and Jack Bircher from Perrett Laver were welcomed to the Board.
- 8.2. The Board was asked to review the final job description and advert ahead of launch next week; the timetable for the recruitment had been included in the pack.
- 8.3. The Board discussed arrangements for approval of the CEO salary.
- 8.4. SJ reported on level of interest expressed so far and took Board members through plans for advertising and identifying suitable candidates.
- 8.5. As this was not a regulated public appointment, it would not be advertised on the gov.uk website.
- 8.6. The Board also discussed membership of the interview panel.
- 8.7. Perrett Laver would provide an update to November Board.
- 8.8. The Board **approved** the advert and brochure.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(25)5/6	Perrett Laver to provide an update on CEO Recruitment to November Board.	B Taylor	Nov 2026

Decisions:

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(25)5/D1	The Board approved the CEO advert and brochure for publication.

9. Risk Report – dashboard and update, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(25)5 – Board Risk Report

- 9.1. The Board heard additional detail on the submitted report, including how scores were worked out; and discussed wording to be used to describe various levels of risk, preferring the suggestion of “strategic, tactical and operational” for future use.

10. Landscape of technical fusion challenges – Part 2, led by T Bestwick

UKAEA(25)5 – Frameworks for Progress Cover note

UKAEA(25)5 – Frameworks for Progress

- 10.1. The Board heard that the paper focused on measuring progress in UKAEA’s work and what metrics could be used, with the paper outlining how this could begin to be tackled.
- 10.2. The Board discussed concepts in the paper and the related work being completed, including the difference between deployed plants and pilot plants, tools to substantiate the concept, steps on the path to progress, and the link to strategy development.
- 10.3. Members also discussed the importance of the target audience, discovery, UKAEA’s distinct role in the global Fusion sector, and the competitive landscape.

10.4. Papers 3 and 4 of the “Landscape of technical fusion challenges” would come to Board in January 2026.

Stephen Hillier left the meeting.

11. Singular Machines Spin Out, led by H Lewtas

UKAEA(25)5 – Singular Machines Cover Note

UKAEA(25)5 – Singular Machines Proposal

UKAEA(25)5 – Singular Machines Business Case

11.1. The Board were provided with further detail on the Business Case presented and the process that developed the valuation, as well as the potential market for the services being developed.

11.2. Potential conflicts of interest were discussed.

11.3. The Board **approved** the Singular Machines Proposal

Decisions:

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(25)5/D2	The Board approved the Singular Machines spin out proposal.

12. STRIDE OBC Update, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(25)5 – STRIDE OBC Update

12.1. The Board were provided with an update on the OBC approval route; Board members emphasised the importance of bringing out what was uniquely possible at Culham Campus.

12.2. 19 EOI responses had been received, with scores being moderated early next week.

12.3. RE provided further detail on the approval route.

12.4. Approval of the OBC had been provided via written procedure; the decision was **endorsed** and update was noted.

13. AOB, led by B Taylor

UKAEA(25)5 – St Ives Property Purchase

13.1. The Board **approved** the purchase of this property adjacent to the main West Burton site.

Decisions:

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(25)5/D3	The Board approved the purchase of the St Ives property adjacent to the main West Burton site.

UKAEA(25)5 – TAE

13.2. The Board were provided with detail on this proposed JV, in preparation for a final decision coming to Board in November. Additional information was requested on why a JV structure was proposed.

UKAEA(25)5 – forward look

13.3. The Board asked for further detail on the landscape of data centres, i.e. who is building what where.

13.4. The DESNZ team would provide an information paper to Board

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(25)5/7	DESNZ team to provide an information paper to Board on the landscape of data centres.	L McDonough	Jan 2026

UKAEA(25)5 – UKIFS CPMS

13.5. The Board noted approval for the UKIFS CEO to make minor in-year changes to UKIFS CPMS owners and due dates.

Meeting closed 1615

For information papers:

1. UKAEA(25)5 - BER Actions Update
2. UKAEA(25)5 – Fusion Foundations Programme Close Out Report
3. UKAEA(25)5 - Frameworks for Progress Metrics Annexes

Attendance record:

Position	Name	Present	Absent
Members	Bernard Taylor	/	
	Ruth Elliot	/	
	Tim Bestwick	/	
	Richard Hookway	/	
	Luc Bardin	/	
	Claire Flint	/	
	Sue Gray	/ (remote)	
	Stephen Hillier	/ (remote)	
	Mary Ryan	/ (remote)	
	Robin Grimes		/
	Lee McDonough		/
Attendees	Nina Tomlin	/	
	Justin Kingsford	/	
	David Gann	/	
	Madhav Bakshi	/	
	Heather Lewtas	/	
	David Sandford	/	

End of Minutes