

 UK Atomic Energy Authority	<b>BOARD MEETING</b> Meeting Reference UKAEA(26)1	
<b>Date</b>	Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2026	
<b>Time</b>	0930 - 1635	
<b>Location</b>	UKAEA Board Room, C7, Culham Campus	
<b>Members</b>	Bernard Taylor (Chair) Luc Bardin Tim Bestwick Ruth Elliot Claire Flint Sue Gray	Robin Grimes Richard Hookway Stephen Hillier Mary Ryan Lee McDonough
<b>Attendees</b>	Madhav Bakshi (DESNZ) David Gann (UKIFS Chair) Justin Kingsford (UKAEA COO) Heather Lewtas (UKAEA CDO) Nina Tomlin (Sec)	

## MINUTES

### Items

1. **Opening Remarks and Declarations** led by B Taylor
  - 1.1. No apologies were received.
  - 1.2. The Board considered a question regarding the For Information paper on Supplier Relationship Management in relation to the approach to commercial contracts.
  - 1.3. No For Information item was brought forward for further discussion under AOB.
  - 1.4. No **Declarations** of interest were received.
2. Minutes and Actions Review, UKAEA(25)M6 and UKAEA(26)M-EM JDR, led by B Taylor  
 The minutes were **approved**.
  - 2.1. It was confirmed that the request made during UKAEA(25)6 Board for a briefing on China had been included as a late addition in today's agenda.
  - 2.2. The open actions due by January were reviewed:

Action	Owner	Due	Status	Update
A sub-section of the Board to meet to approve final Tritium JV agreement	H Lewtas	Dec-25	Open	Meetings took place in December and January - final approval pending.
Provide a briefing on	T Bestwick	Jan-26	Open	<b>Close action</b> as late addition to today's agenda.

UKAEA attendance at IAEA Fusion Conference.				
Confirm what approvals were required for NEDs being recruited onto the Board.	L McDonough	Jan-26	Open	It was confirmed that UKAEA NED roles have recently been added to the No.10 interest list, meaning that No10 approval is also required.  <b>Close action</b> on basis of this update.
Discuss power outage length and timing with National Grid.	L McDonough	Jan-26	Open	The national grid and subsequent UKAEA substations will be offline between May 2026 and August 2027. DESNZ have found a suitable contact in NESO and are engaging with them and UKAEA on the issue.  DESNZ and Board Chair will continue discussions.

### 3. Sub-Committee reports, led by R Grimes and R Hookway

#### UKAEA(26)1 – PAC(2025)M02 Report Final

- 3.1. RG took the Board through the interim PAC report, highlighting the calibre of the membership of the Programme Advisory Committee and confirming that linkages and conversations would continue in between the biannual formal meetings. The Committee is looking at how the guiding questions are iterated between PAC and UKAEA ahead of the next formal meeting taking place in June 2026.
- 3.2. The Board discussed engagement outside of the PAC schedule as well as what the first major topic for discussion would be at the next meeting, which was confirmed as “what next for a Plasma device” and a focus on technology being developed to de-risk UKAEA’s National Fusion Lab’s programmes.

#### UKAEA(26)1 – ARAC – January 2026

- 3.3. RH reported on December’s ARAC meeting, which included discussion on financial re-phasing of JET decommissioning. In addition, it was reported that no issues were raised regarding the review by NAO and planned submission of final Accounts ahead of July’s parliamentary recess.
- 3.4. The Committee had also reviewed a draft of the audit plan, which would come to Board for approval once finalised, the Fusion Partner Review, and the Blacksmiths report on cyber security.
- 3.5. The Board discussed the findings of the Fusion Partner Review and the importance of a shared language on the relationship, and this being embedded in cultures throughout the Group. Values at UKAEA’s National Fusion Lab and UKIFS Ltd were also discussed.

### 4. UKAEA Group Executive Board Report led by T Bestwick

### UKAEA(25)6 - UKAEA Executive Board Report

- 4.1. TB highlighted several items from within the report – that the option to buy West Burton site before the end of the financial year was exercised ahead of the Christmas break; the procurement of the SUNRISE computer; ITC notices being issued for the AI Investment Partner in early January; and that the LIBRTI approval process remained on track for construction starting soon on a 2-year timescale.
- 4.2. The Board heard from other Executive Directors on: progress on some negotiations for collaborations, the Q3 Forecast, and pay reform and contingent labour.
- 4.3. The Board affirmed that it would be important to ensure coherence across Fusion Strategies being developed within government the UKAEA’s National Fusion Lab and UKIFS Ltd.
- 4.4. The Board discussed trends related to the safety report, including CDM space, and the importance of accountability and learning from best practice. A more detailed report would be brought back to Board.

**Actions:**

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)1/1	Provide a more detailed report and update on safety to the Board.	J Kingsford	Mar 2026

### 5. UKIFS Executive Report & Risk Report, led by P Methven

#### UKAEA(26)1 – 5. UKIFS CEO Report

- 5.1. PM reported to the Board on the pace of the programme; highlighting the recently published Annual Report and Accounts, the Justification of Practice submission (which would go to DEFRA), and the Development Consent Order consultation.
- 5.2. The Board discussed work package definition, the intelligent client model and integrated capability, the importance of ensuring commercial expertise within the organisation, and procurement approvals.
- 5.3. Progress on the Construction Partner selection process was reported to Board, as well as IP implications and potential risks of newly launched international collaborations.

#### UKAEA(26)1 – 5. STEP tech challenges

- 5.4. C Waldon, UKIFS Chief Engineer, presented STEP technical challenges, which are being worked through on an iterative basis. He reported on the development of capability to work through these challenges and described how an evolutionary approach to design had been taken. The Board were presented with a distillation of the main challenges.
- 5.5. The Board requested future more detailed discussions on sub-sections of the information presented.

**Actions:**

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
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UKAEA(26)1/2	Schedule future more detailed discussions on magnets, plasma, breeding, materials and other sub-sections of the presentation.	N Tomlin	Mar 2026
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**6. West Burton Site acquisition, led by R Elliot**

**UKAEA(26)1 – 6. Acquisition of land at West Burton**

- 6.1. The Board were updated on the practicalities of land acquisition at and around the West Burton site, which were being overseen by the Executive West Burton site Steering Group. The land would be leased by UKAEA to UKIFS Ltd once acquired.
- 6.2. The Board was asked to provide delegated authority to Group Executive Committee to take land purchase(s) forward as quick decisions will need to be taken. The Chair suggested setting up a Board ad hoc Committee for land purchases with BT, LMCD, TB and RE as members. This was **approved**.

**Decisions:**

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(25)6/D1	An ad hoc Committee for land purchases would be convened as and when required. Membership: BT, LMCD, TB and RE.

**7. Risk Report/Dashboard, led by R Elliot**

**UKAEA(26)1 – 7. Group Board Risk Report Jan 2026**

- 7.1. N Barber took the Board through the high-level top risks, described the project underway to simplify processes, and introduced the Board to the new flight path graphics based on planned interventions and how risks would reduce over time.
- 7.2. The Board discussed current risk ratings – based on likelihood and consequence – and whether these might need to be amended and asked for the top risks to be ranked with those most in red to be shown at the top of the list.
- 7.3. The Board heard that a significant amount of learning and culture improvement relating to risk had been achieved within UKAEA Group over the last few years. Risks could be escalated to Board via the Corporate Risk Review Board.
- 7.4. The risk posed by cyber-attacks and the risk relating to security were discussed by the Board in more detail, as well as the top risk relating to People, which was no longer listed in the top five.

**Actions:**

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)1/3	Provide a discussion paper on risk appetite for the March Board meeting.	R Elliot	Mar 2026

**8. Landscape of technical fusion challenges Part 3 and 4, led by T Bestwick**

**UKAEA(26)1 – 8. Fusion in Context - Cover Note**  
**UKAEA(26)1 – 8. Fusion in Context - Paper 3 Pilot and Deployed**  
**UKAEA(26)1 – 8. Fusion in Context - Paper 4 Next Steps**

- 8.1. W Morris, UKAEA Chief Scientist, presented his work on the future landscape in Fusion and took the Board through the main topics contained in the enclosed papers, which are those a national laboratory might wish to address over the coming years. For instance, the technical and scientific capability foundation needed for pilot versus deployed plants and the differences in required scope and scale, as well as the critical need for integration in all approaches. A project looking at future energy systems and scenarios more broadly is also underway.
- 8.2. The Board discussed risks and opportunities of future technological and scientific breakthroughs, emergent disruptions, the use of AI and models, and the importance of maintaining R&D programmes, as well as STEP as an important point on the journey to deployment.
- 8.3. The Board looked at the link to strategic planning and the importance of creating industrial benefits and value over the coming years and decades in the context of long-term developments.
- 8.4. The Board **agreed** with the recommendation that these papers should be used as one means to help review and guide the existing R&D strategy and portfolio, and inform emerging options for new initiatives over the next 12-18 months.
- 8.5. The Board suggested a full day additional board meeting to discuss these plans in more detail, to cover the value associated with new devices in the intermediate timeframe, the future roadmap, UKIFS development of a powerplant, securing value, and the future energy systems and scenarios project – all within the context of Spending Review 2027.

**Actions:**

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)1/4	Articulate the questions to be addressed in a one-day Board meeting to circulate to Board	T Bestwick/E Lewis-Smith	Feb 2026
UKAEA(26)1/5	Confirm a date for a full day additional Board meeting on landscape of challenges	N Tomlin	Feb 2026

**9. Strategy session – strategic plan, led by T Bestwick**

**UKAEA(26)1 – 9. Strategy update and plan**

**UKAEA(26)1 - 9a. Current Strategy**

**UKAEA(26)1 - 9b. UKAEA 2026 Strategy - outline draft as of 9 January**

**UKAEA(26)1 - 9d. Outcomes 2030 summary tables**

- 9.1. E Lewis-Smith took Board members through the cover paper and enclosures, which focused on mission, strategy, and the different but complementary roles of UKAEA National Fusion Lab and UKIFS Ltd within the UKAEA Group whole.

- 9.2. The Board **endorsed** the broad approach, the mission, the draft outline and the use of “UKAEA’s National Fusion Laboratory” title in future communications.
- 9.3. An overview graphic of UKAEA Group was shared with Board members, which would be circulated after the meeting.
- 9.4. The Board considered points raised by members on ensuring alignment between the UKAEA National Fusion Lab and UKIFS Ltd strategies and the overarching UK Fusion Strategy. Members also discussed engagement of devolved nations in future work, values of the Group, and the importance of clarity on how public investments feed through to tangible deliveries.
- 9.5. The Board asked for illustrative examples of the scope of UKAEA Group’s work over the coming years to be included in the documentation, to address questions around prioritisation of work. Members agreed that articulating the interlinkages and coherence within the Group and across to HMG was particularly important and considered how a strategic function at Group level should work with existing capacity in UKAEA and UKIFS to achieve economies of scale and scope.

**Actions:**

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)1/6	Share the UKAEA Group overview graphic with Board members	T Bestwick/E Lewis-Smith	Feb 2026

➤ **Briefing on China**

- F Militello provided the Board with his reflections on the China fusion programme.

**10. Technology Prosperity Deal progress report, led by L McDonough**

**UKAEA(26)1 - 10. US Tech Prosperity Deal**

**UKAEA(26)1 - 10. Annex A - UK-US Global Fusion Policy Summit**

**UKAEA(26)1 - 10. Annex B - UKAEA US Collaborations Update Jan 26**

10.1.C Russo, DESNZ, introduced the update on the US UK Technology Prosperity Deal. The Board discussed the summit due to take place in March, organised to take place in parallel with the Fusion Industry Association Annual Policy Conference, which UKAEA was due to attend. Tracks for discussion would include AI, regulation and deliverables. This would be an opportunity to announce the new UK Fusion Strategy and other workstreams. Other opportunities were discussed by the Board.

**11. Innovation update, led by H Lewtas**

**UKAEA(26)1 – 11. Innovation Update Jan 2026**

11.1.L Young introduced the update report, highlighting that UKAEA were taking decisions to put spin out companies on as good a footing as possible when being set up from within UKAEA. This work was evidenced by successes over past months of the first three spin outs. The Board heard about new spin outs currently being developed and

entrepreneurial training that had been launched to upskill colleagues across the organisation, and that DESNZ was helping build support from potential NEDs for these spin outs and looking to others to support with this.

11.2.The Board discussed IP and know how, and asked for further information on a potential robotics spin out.

**Actions:**

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)1/7	Include detailed information on robotics spin out in March innovation paper	H Lewtas	Mar 2026
UKAEA(26)1/8	Include a technical session on Robotics in a future Board meeting	N Tomlin	Jun 2026

**12. Security Briefing,** led by J Kingsford

**UKAEA(26)1 – 12. DESNZ draft fusion security policy**

**UKAEA(26)1 – 12. Board Security Update Jan 2026**

**UKAEA(26)1 – 12. Cyber Acceleration Programme Update (Jan26)**

12.1.J Kingsford introduced the item being taken in three parts. The Board discussed protecting assets and enhanced protections. They heard about regular reviews that would take place, and **agreed** that an ad hoc Board Committee could provide assurance.

12.2.The Board noted that a Full Business Case for the Cyber Acceleration Programme would be considered by ExCo the following week. The Board supported an escalation of the pace of change and focus on this area and endorsed the required culture change. Board challenge the programme to include clear KPIs across the security pillars.

12.3.Both UKAEA and UKIFS ARACs would review the cyber acceleration programme plan.

**13. AOB,** led by B Taylor

**UKAEA(26)1 – 13. Admincontrol Transition**

13.1.The Board was briefed on the new incoming software for Board papers and requested clarification as captured in the action.

**Actions:**

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)1/9	Check whether Admincontrol is secure and whether licence is per person or per device	N Tomlin	Mar 2026

The meeting closed at 16.30.

For information papers:

1. SME Action Plan, SME Working Group Proposal, SRM Executive Summary
2. Update on data centre landscape
3. Sustainability Update
4. P8 Board Finance Report
5. Fusion Futures Update
6. Six-month review of Eni collaboration
7. Board Survey outcomes
8. Forward Look

**Attendance record:**

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

**End of Minutes**