



On the Level

News and views from the LLW Repository site

Submitting our vital ESC

In our March edition of *On the Level*, we shared that we have been preparing our Environmental Safety Case (ESC) for submission – and we are pleased to have submitted this to the Environment Agency (EA) on 1 May.



The team behind the ESC were proud to see years of hard work cross the finish line

For our local community, the ESC – consisting of a thorough set of reports – provides reassurance that strong environmental protections are in place for things like local water sources, air quality and wildlife.

It explains how the site is carefully monitored and managed, now and in the future, including as the coastline and landscape change over time. The comprehensive reports are a clear demonstration of NWS's commitment to protecting the environment and keeping the community safe for generations to come.

Sam Stead, our ESC Lead, said: "The ESC was produced over several years and touched every part of the business and the supply chain.

"It involves tens of thousands of pages of reports and evidence including dozens of technical experts from the UK and internationally, looking at areas including hydrogeology, geology, design, waste acceptance, radiological and non-radiological impact assessments and climate change.

"The last major submission was 15 years ago, and a lot has changed over that time, including operational experience, scientific understanding, regulatory feedback and our understanding of the waste inventory."

The EA will now begin their extensive review of the ESC, and during this time, we will continue to respond to feedback.

Repository site in the limelight!

Our LLW Repository site had a moment in the spotlight recently, with NWS being the topic of focus on the World Nuclear News podcast.

Mike Pigott, Executive Director of Sites and Operations, spoke on the podcast about the site's history, upcoming 70th birthday and our current projects.

Mike was joined by Howard Falconer, Senior Lead – Customer Management and Expert Support, who talked about how we continue to be more sustainable in reducing the amount of radioactive waste disposed of at the site. We do this by adopting the waste hierarchy: avoid, reduce, reuse, recycle and only dispose as a last resort.

You can follow the QR code to listen to the episode and hear from Mike and Howard about our work.



Scan the QR code to listen to the episode.

Laying liner while the sun shines

The spring weather has arrived and allowed us to restart laying the Geosynthetic Clay Liner (GCL) in our Southern Trench Interim Membrane (STIM) project.

We're currently replacing the protective membrane (liner) over the southern part of the legacy waste disposal trenches at the Repository site. This is known as the STIM project and needs to be done before capping of the northern trenches.

As this part of the project is weather dependant, it's carried out in seasonal campaigns, with the equivalent of roughly seven football pitches laid last year.

So far during this campaign, we have installed a further 21,400m². This season, we aim to install 54,000m² (the size of around eight football pitches), bringing the total up to just over 100,000m² by the end of the calendar year.

What is a GCL?

With a similar look and feel to a very large roll of carpet, a GCL contains a bentonite powder (the 'clay') which swells when it comes into contact with water.

When water meets the clay, it is absorbed until it can't take anymore at which point any more water is pushed upwards out of the liner and away from the waste.

This liner is key in our STIM project, acting as the critical low permeability

layer that limits the amount of water reaching the legacy waste, and in turn protecting the environment in and around the Repository site.



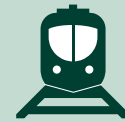
Aerial photo of the STIM project



The liner is laid during the drier months due to its efficient absorption of water

134,483 tonnes

Aggregate delivered to date during the third rail campaign.



144

Number of trains so far during the third rail campaign.



74,932m²

Total Geosynthetic Clay Liner laid so far to date.

Round of applause for our considerate constructors!

It's no secret that being a good neighbour is one of our top priorities, and we're proud to see our joint work with Southern Trench Interim Membrane (STIM) contractor GRAHAM recognised at the recent Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) Awards.

These awards recognise the constructors that go above and beyond the organisation's Code of Considerate Practice and show excellence in their work.

From working with NWS colleagues to minimise the impact of site activity on the surrounding area, to providing financial support to local community groups and more, GRAHAM have done a great job of being true considerate constructors while working on our site.

Christine Bradley, Head of Repository Site Projects, said: "We've welcomed GRAHAM onto the Repository site many times over the years, and their high standards have always stood out. The team's achievement in receiving the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) Bronze Award is a well-deserved recognition of the effort they put into being genuinely considerate contractors."



NWS colleagues were proud to join GRAHAM at the awards in Manchester

"It's fantastic to work with contractors who truly understand the importance of engaging with our local community and who always treat the Repository site and surrounding area with respect. Congratulations to everyone involved in achieving this well-deserved award."

Racking up miles and smiles

The Repository site's welfare track was full of energy recently as colleagues came together to support wellbeing and spend time outdoors, running alongside Gary McKee – also known as Marathon Man – as he completed one of his 100 consecutive marathons for Hospice at Home West Cumbria.

Colleagues joined Gary at various stages of this run and after completing the marathon, Gary passed on his thanks saying:

"This was a really good run because of the company I had. Thank you all for allowing me to run here and for getting behind me, it means a lot to continue having so much support and I really appreciate it."

Gary completed his '100 to LDN' marathons in 100 days challenge at the London Marathon on 26 April, raising more than £72,000 for Hospice at Home West Cumbria, and we're pleased to have hosted one of his many runs during this latest feat.



It was great to welcome Gary (left) back to the Repository site for another marathon



To follow Gary's various marathon challenges, visit his Facebook page by scanning the QR code.

Learning about site's species in the sunshine!

It was a pleasure to welcome members of West Cumbria U3A (University of the Third Age) to a very sunny Repository site last month, where we shared more about our varied ecology with the group.

The visit followed a presentation with the group in 2024, hosted by our dedicated on-site ecologist, Chris Arthur, during which he introduced members to our variety of insects, animals and flora.

With great interest shown during the initial presentation, the visitors enjoyed learning – and seeing – more on their tour of the site, with lots of questions covering how rare certain species of dragonfly and other insects are, why plants such as Pennyroyal mint grow in specific areas of the Repository site, how big the badger sets we have are and more.

The group thoroughly enjoyed their visit, and many members commented on how informative Chris's presentation was, and how fascinating our Repository site's ecology is – and spotting two prancing deer in a patch of woodland was the cherry on top!



The group enjoyed watching dragonflies explore one of the Repository site ponds



The new Aspire Academy classroom

Supporting future careers

Investing in young people's futures is always important, and we are very proud to have supported the creation of Aspire Academy Cumbria CIC's new classroom, which provides a valuable resource for pupils to gain construction skills and experience in a purpose-built environment.

Designed for students who may find traditional classrooms challenging, Aspire Academy's base at Westlakes Science Park, Whitehaven, offers practical bricklaying training alongside opportunities to develop teamwork, communication skills, and confidence – supporting their progression into further education, apprenticeships, or employment.

The classroom – which we've supported through our Cumbria Community Foundation LLWR Grassroots Fund – features a seating area, desks and chairs, a large interactive screen, and a glass wall at the front of the building to allow pupils to look out on to the building site, merging theory and practical work.

Samantha Ward, Community Engagement Manager, said: "Supporting Aspire Academy aligns strongly with our commitment to investing in people and communities across West Cumbria. Aspire is tackling real barriers to employment by providing practical skills, personal support and genuine opportunities for progression.

"Programmes like this make a lasting difference – not just to individuals, but to families and communities as a whole."

The Aspire Academy partnership consists of West Cumbria Learning Centre, Rachel Holliday (Time to Change CEO) and William King of William King Construction, and we're delighted to have helped the team to provide young people with a safe, supportive environment to learn skills that will benefit them for life.

A message from Mike

It's been another busy period for the Repository site, and I'm proud of how our teams continue to deliver while keeping safety and our community firmly at the forefront.

In our recent Annual Review of Safety, regulators – the ONR and Environment Agency – expressed confidence in our operations, recognising both our strong safety performance and the progress being made in managing legacy waste.

That safety culture doesn't happen by chance; it is built and sustained by everyone across the site, and it underpins everything we do.

I was also very pleased to hear that our STIM contractor, GRAHAM, has received a Considerate Constructors Scheme Bronze Award. Being a considerate neighbour is a key priority for us, and it's just as important that every contractor working on our site shares that commitment.

This recognition is clear proof that those expectations are being met in practice, and that we are working together to minimise our impact while supporting the communities around us.

As some of you will have seen, we've restarted laying the liner on the STIM project and recently submitted our Environmental Safety Case – both significant milestones. But alongside these major projects, there is a huge amount of day-to-day activity happening across the site.

For such a busy operation, maintaining strong relationships with our community is something we never take for granted, and we work hard to sustain that as activity continues to ramp up. Our ongoing investment in local initiatives, like Aspire Academy, remains just as important as the work we carry out on site, helping to ensure we create a positive and lasting impact both within and beyond our boundary.

Mike Pigott
Executive Director
of Sites and Operations



Martin's tribute to former LLW Repository Managing Director, Dick Raaz

Martin Walkinshaw, our former COO and now Senior Advisor, remembers Dick Raaz, who passed away recently.

Mr Raaz, a former US Navy nuclear submarine commander, was Managing Director of LLW Repository Ltd between 2008 and 2011 and a charismatic character who made an impression on all who met him.

Martin's tribute:

I have fond memories of working alongside Dick Raaz – the man that led LLW Repository Ltd through its early years as a standalone business, and the first Managing Director of an NDA Nuclear Site Licence Company owned by an international Parent Body Organisation (PBO).

Dick really understood the importance of good community relations, was a great leader and a good friend to many of us up here in West Cumbria. He was proud of his achievements in the Navy, in civilian life and especially at LLW Repository – he had every right to be.

On behalf of everyone at NWS, and the members of our community who remember him so fondly, we send our condolences to his family, and we wish Dick 'fair winds and following seas'.

Martin

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