

 UK Atomic Energy Authority	BOARD MEETING Meeting Reference UKAEA(26)3	
Date	Thursday 21 st May 2026	
Time	0930 – 16:30	
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) Nina Tomlin (Sec)	

MINUTES

Items

1. **Chair opening Remarks and declarations of interest** led by B Taylor

- 1.1. Apologies had been received from Heather Lewtas.
- 1.2. No **Declarations** of interest were received.

2. **Minutes, Actions and matters arising** led by B Taylor

- 2.1. The minutes UKAEA(26)M2 were approved, subject to three changes.
- 2.2. The actions log was reviewed and all open actions due by May were closed.

3. **UKAEA Executive Report**, led by T Bestwick, R Elliot and J Kingsford

UKAEA(26)3 – UKAEA Executive Board Report

- 3.1. Two recent safety incidents were highlighted and Board members' attention was drawn to further details contained in the Safety Dashboard For Information paper. The Board heard that safety was taken very seriously by UKAEA executives and discussed initial findings on supervision and contractor management. Board members agreed this was an area of particular risk, as the number of organisations UKAEA would work with in the future was increasing.
- 3.2. The Board agreed that solid foundations across safety and health were essential. The Board **requested** that more active day to day management of contractors should take place, that the focus should be on selecting, managing and working collaboratively with contractors, and that cultural alignment on safety management should be assured. The

Board heard that supervision arrangements within UKAEA Estates would be strengthened.

- 3.3. The Board noted the For Information paper on the innovation pipeline and discussed balancing value and speed in commercialisation. The Board heard that the commercialisation culture within the organisation had shifted with commercialisation now largely seen as a positive development. The Board suggested further analysis of attitudes to commercialisation within different parts of the organisation could take place.
- 3.4. Other specific items discussed were the upcoming Government spending review, tungsten, and the UKAEA's plasma programme. A detailed paper on tungsten would be brought to the next Board and the Board heard that the Programme Advisory Committee would evaluate proposals on the structure of UKAEA's plasma research programme, with additional external advisory expertise brought on as required to assist with this evaluation.
- 3.5. Updates were provided on Skills work, with a new Head of Skills providing a golden thread between strategic workforce planning and future skills needs. Updates were also provided on STRIDE, with final evaluation of potential partners expected in August, on contingent labour reductions and on the pay and grading project. PRemCo would look in detail at developing clarity on what elements of the People Strategy would be delivered with the resources available.
- 3.6. The Board heard that the UKAEA Finance team had narrowly missed out on being shortlisted for the Government Finance Function's team of the year award.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)3/1	Report back on safety incidents in more detail	J Kingsford	Sep 2026

4. Chimera Update, led by T Bestwick

UKAEA (26)3 – Chimera Update

- 4.1. An update was provided on Chimera. The UKAEA team confirmed that DESNZ was supportive of the work taking place.

5. UKFE CEO report, led by P Methven

UKAEA(26)3 – UKFE CEO Report – May 26 – OSC

UKAEA(26)3 – 2026 March STEP Slides

UKAEA(26)3 – UKFE Strategy launch day mailing list

- 5.1. The Board heard that a successful year had been concluded and that the majority of UKFE staff were focused on delivery and technology demonstration. The Board discussed questions around power and cooling, as well as whole programme costings and the investment strategy. The costings would be iterated and refined on a six-monthly schedule of meetings with DESNZ, with transparency on certainties and uncertainties. DESNZ was providing a critical friend review.

5.2. The Board agreed that ensuring solid investment knowledge within the team, as well as robust data, would be crucial. Conversations with potential investors would start taking place alongside formal gate approvals.

6. Group Concept and Purpose, led by T Bestwick

UKAEA(26)3 – Group Concept and Purpose

- 6.1. The Board noted the group concept and purpose as outlined in the paper, which focused on confirming and capturing group functions within existing functions.
- 6.2. Board members agreed that duplication and additional management layers should be avoided. They emphasised the importance of communicating the concept and purpose across the Group and signposting, and discussed potential changes to the arrangements over time.
- 6.3. The paper formalised the situation as it is today, with the principle being that functions should be kept local whenever possible, as a reflection of the reason why UKFE was set up on the first place, and that legal, statutory and regulatory requirements needed to be met.
- 6.4. The impact on specific individuals with Group coordinating functions would be managed now that the Board had **endorsed** this paper.
- 6.5. The Chair confirmed that the UKAEA Group Board had responsibility and accountability for holding the whole organisation – including National Fusion Laboratory and subsidiaries – to account.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)3/2	Implement next steps outlined in paper, including liaising with individuals with responsibility for Group functions	R Elliot	Jul 26

7. Finance Update, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(26)3 – Finance Update

7.1. The Board commended the UKAEA Group Finance Director on spend for 2025/26 being fully on budget. With half of all external expenditure being spent in March, a lessons learnt exercise was taking place across Finance and Enabling Functions.

8. Strategic Business Plan, led by T Bestwick

UKAEA(26)3 – Strategic Business Plan and High-level UKAEA Deliverables

UKAEA(26)3 – Strategic Business Plan 2026-29

8.1. The Board reviewed the final Strategic Business Plan for the National Fusion Laboratory, which contained a reasonable amount of detail that had not been made public before. They heard that the content’s boldness was in line with other recent strategic publications. The financial statements had been caveated as appropriate.

- 8.2. Key deliverables outlined in the plan would be monitored and reported on to Board on a regular basis as a dashboard appended to the Executive Report to Board.
- 8.3. Subject to several suggested additions and amendments, the Board **delegated approval** of the final version for publication of the Strategic Business Plan 2026-29 to the CEO.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)3/3	Integrate update on key deliverables into the Executive Report to Board	T Bestwick	Sep 26

Decisions:

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(26)3/D	Subject to several suggested additions and amendments, the Board delegated approval of the final version for publication of the Strategic Business Plan 2026-29 to the CEO.

9. Annual Report and Accounts, led by T Bestwick

UKAEA(26)3 – ARA Cover Note

UKAEA(26)3 – ARA Report DRAFT Part 1

UKAEA(26)3 - ARA Report DRAFT Part 2

UKAEA(26)3 – Annual Accounts 2025-26 – draft v1 – CONFIDENTIAL_as at 20260508

- 9.1. The Board asked whether analytics could be used to review which parts of the ARA had been accessed once published. Members discussed the report’s target audience and consistency of tone, as well as using available tools to ensure effect was balanced against effort.
- 9.2. The Board requested that the “Authority” heading was changed in the Financial Statements to be consistent with the rest of the report.
- 9.3. Some hard copies of the Annual Report and Accounts would be printed.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)3/4	Ensure some hard copies of the Annual Report and Accounts are printed	N Tomlin	Jul 26
UKAEA(26)3/5	Liaise with Communications Team on use of analytics to review annual report reach	N Tomlin	Dec 26

10. Risk Report / Dashboard, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(26)3 – Board Risk Report May 2026

- 10.1. The Board noted the update report. While key risks had not been amended, some of the emphasis in the wording had.
- 10.2. Board members discussed the importance of the organisation maintaining a world leading position as well as the importance of achieving a performance culture as the organisation's capability continued to be built.
- 10.3. The Board requested sight of the longer form risk report that was usually only submitted to ARAC.
- 10.4. The Board also requested a longer discussion on risks, risk appetite, and flight paths at their next meeting, focusing on trends and levels.
- 10.5. The Board noted updates on UKRI funding and the cyber acceleration programme.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)3/6	Submit longer form ARAC risk report to Board for information	R Elliot	Jun 26
UKAEA(26)3/7	Hold a longer discussion on risks, risk appetite, and flight paths at their next meeting, focusing on trends and levels	R Elliot	Jun 26

11. CEO update, led by B Taylor

- 11.1. The Board received an update on recruitment for a new Chief Executive Officer.

12. Photo for Annual Report

13. EA and HSE Presentation, led by S Hillier

- 13.1. SH welcomed Rick Brunt and Jane Lassey from the Health and Safety Executive and Stewart Davies and Andy Mayall from the Environment Agency to the UKAEA Group Board.
- 13.2. The Board and visitors noted updates on UKAEA's work with regulators on proportionate regulation and on the safety of UKAEA's "product" – overseen by the Board and independently assured by the HSE and EA. They heard about the different hazard profile of fusion compared to fission and the interactions and activities that had taken place so far between the UKAEA Group and regulators.
- 13.3. The EA representatives emphasised the duties and mission of the EA – protecting and enhancing the environment and contributing to sustainable development and growth. The Board heard that the regulatory roadmap was due to be published in the summer, which would be a good opportunity to map out an efficient regulatory journey. The Board heard that the UK Government was taking a proportionate approach to fusion regulation.

- 13.4. The HSE representatives emphasised their overarching strategy for health and safety and proportionality in relation to fusion regulation.
- 13.5. Both organisations expressed appreciation for the engagement and collaborative approach taken so far and emphasised that the regulators' role would be to challenge and assure.
- 13.6. The Board and visitors also discussed capability and where resources would be focused in future.
- 13.7. The Chair thanked the HSE and EA representatives for coming and looked forward to maintaining a regular dialogue.

14. MAST-U visit

- 14.1. The Board visited the MAST Upgrade facility and were provided with an update on the recent campaign and future plans by Executive Director Fulvio Militello.

15. Security Governance, led by T Bestwick

UKAEA(26)3 – Security Governance

- 15.1 The Board endorsed the paper's proposed principles of accountability and governance.
- 15.2 The Board discussed detail that would need to feed into this work and requested detailed timetables and finalised content to be brought back to Board in June.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)3/8	Security governance details and panels to be formulated and implemented; content and timelines to be brought back to Board.	H Lewtas	Jun 26

16. Robotics Optioneering, led by T Bestwick

UKAEA(26)3 – Update Robotics

- 16.1 The Board considered the three main tracks outlined in the paper – individual focused spinouts; fusion engineering consultancy; and immediate opportunity in nuclear robotics.
- 16.2 The Board discussed the broad potential applications of robotics and potential partners, market analysis, investment and potential disruptions, as well as the best models to use for various opportunities.

17. AOB, led by B Taylor

- 17.1 There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 1630.

For information papers:

1. Innovation Pipeline Overview
2. People Strategy Delivery Plan
3. Contingent Labour
4. Safety Dashboard

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