UK Atomic Energy Authority

UK Atomic Energy Authority	**BOARD MEETING** Meeting Reference UKAEA(26)4	
Date	Tuesday 30th June 2026	
Time	1100 – 1700	
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 (UKFE Chair) Justin Kingsford (UKAEA COO) Heather Lewtas (UKAEA CDO) David Sandford (DESNZ) Nina Tomlin (Sec)	
Apologies	Lee McDonough	

MINUTES

Items

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

   1.1. Apologies had been received from Lee McDonough.

   1.2. No new **Declarations** of interest were received.

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

   2.1. The minutes UKAEA(26)M3 were approved subject to three corrections.

   2.2. The actions log was reviewed and all actions due by June and July were closed.

   2.3. Further details addressing the action on security governance and panels would return to Board at a future meeting.

   2.4. The action relating to a report back on safety incidents was updated to include detail on findings and follow up actions.

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

   3.1. The safety item within Executive Report was highlighted to the Board, with updates provided on recent incidents involving contractors working on site. Work is ongoing to improve safety processes and contractor management, including changes to internal processes.

3.2. The Board raised questions regarding the pay and grading project completion, contingent labour and the Away Day output. It was agreed that a further discussion on how to take forward concrete actions from the Away Day would be scheduled at Board.

3.3. The Board discussed the upcoming Spending Review 2027 and heard that near-term and long-term strategic benefits would be the focus of preparatory work.

3.4. The Board heard about potential risks relating to UKRI funding timelines and that a senior cross government board had been established. UKAEA was looking at ways to mitigate the potential risks.

3.5. An update was provided on STRIDE, including on the infrastructure works that will need to be completed on site.

3.6. The Board heard that the NAO audit had been completed, and the Annual Report and Accounts were on track to be laid in parliament prior to recess. It had been a demanding audit with large numbers of samples requested and the team were commended on the outcome of the audit. The ARAC had asked for a formal lessons learnt exercise to be completed, including on capability to manage more unusual transactions in-house. Implementation of any lessons learnt would likely require changes to behaviour and culture.

3.7. The Board discussed the various events that would be taking place during "UK Fusion Week".

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)4/1	ARAC to report back to Board on lessons learnt exercise post audit	R Hookway	Nov 26

4. UKFE CEO report, led by J Cowan

4.1. JC reported on the good progress made in-year and reported on the final audit position returned for 2025/26. The Board heard that UKFE was this financial year managing its own overprogramming.

4.2. The Board discussed the design, size and net power output of the prototype plant, with JC reporting a now overall better-balanced position.

4.3. Other items from the report that were highlighted were commercial progress; partners; regional activity; and the local supercluster.

4.4. Board members sought clarification on IP, the recent ITER visit, senior positions and investment expertise.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)4/2	Update the Board on IP position agreed with DESNZ following discussion at June Board	P Methven	Sep 26

5. Delegation of HMT package approval, led by J Cowan

5.1. The Board heard that UKFE was putting together a package covering the whole STEP programme cost range, schedule, benefits and investments for submission to Treasury in the autumn. DESNZ would be providing a "critical friend review" over the summer.

5.2. The Board asked that the full package be brought to Board before final submission, so that the numbers and risks underlying the future of this flagship programme could be fully understood. A working group would be established to work on the details between now and then – to include Chairs of both UKAEA and UKFE Boards and ARACs, CEOs of both UKAEA and UKFE and UKAEA CFO and UKFE CCO.

5.3. An extraordinary meeting of both Boards would be arranged for the afternoon of 17th September.

6. UKFE Annual Report and Accounts, led by J Cowan

6.1. The Board reviewed the Word version of the UKFE Annual Report and Accounts and **endorsed** the report for signature by the Accounting Officer.

7. Sub-Committee Updates

7.1. ARAC, led by R Hookway

The ARAC Chair reported on the 2025/26 internal audit and the "limited assurance" finding. The internal audit programme would be looked at again in September for the balance of the year in light of the imminent departure of the Head of Internal Audit.

ARAC had also covered SHE matters and recent contractor incidents; cyber security; counter fraud; risk; the Annual Report and Accounts; the NAO audit report and the move to Alpha Pensions.

7.2. PAC, led by R Grimes

The Programme Advisory Committee had made 20 recommendations after their recent meeting, with the Board paper highlighting the 6 key recommendations. Discussion at PAC had focused on technical detail, recent media interest and lines to take, and the creation of sub-groups. New candidates to join PAC were being sought and the autumn meeting would also look at regulation.

The full PAC report would be circulated to Board and comments would be fed back before the autumn PAC meeting.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)4/3	Circulate full PAC report to Board	N Tomlin	July 26

7.3. PRemCo, led by C Flint

The Board heard that PRemCo had discussed Board succession; how to calibrate the Board skills matrix effectively; individual performance review and bonus recommendations; the senior annual pay increase; contingent labour; sickness levels and employee relations; and promotions in post.

The Board congratulated the Director of People & Culture on the progress made over the past year.

The PRemCo Chair reported that a focus at the next PRemCo meeting would be the funding available for People Strategy deliverables.

8. Finance update, led by R Elliot

8.1. The Board noted that Period 2 was early in the financial year and a more detailed forecast would be available at the next Board meeting.

8.2. Emerging risks and opportunities were being identified and underspends would be looked at again in detail in September.

8.3. The Board discussed collaborations in which partners had audit rights and the importance of effective document retention.

9. UKAEA Group Annual Report and Accounts, led by T Bestwick

9.1. The Board thanked everyone involved in producing the Annual Report and Accounts.

9.2. The Board **delegated** final authority to endorse the report for signature by the Accounting Officer on behalf of the Board to the Chair, so that any final changes and NAO responses could be reviewed before finalisation.

10. Estate Strategy, led by R Elliot

10.1. The Board noted that the Estate Strategy covered the whole UKAEA Group estate, looked ahead to 2035 and focused on three key priorities.

10.2. The Board discussed whether there was scope to realise value from some of UKAEA's land.

10.3. It was agreed that the Board would benefit from visiting the nuclear licensed site on Harwell Campus; a future Board meeting would be held at Harwell if possible.

11. Land ownership at West Burton, led by R Elliot

11.1. The recommendation to Board was that all foreseeable future land purchases at West Burton would be made by UKAEA, with land then leased to UKFE as required on terms to be agreed.

11.2. The Board **approved** this recommendation.

Decisions:

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(26)4/1	The Board approved all foreseeable future land purchases at West Burton being made by UKAEA Group

12. Technical Update: STEP magnets, led by B Taylor

12.1. The UKFE Chief Engineer provided a technical update on magnets; talking through the history of plasma devices, comparative sizes, and challenges of building at that scale.

12.2. The Board noted the Magnet Tech Development Roadmap for Tranche 2A and the completion of T2A Plan Magnet Challenges and progress over T2A.

12.3. The Board discussed supply chain capability, magnets manufacturing in the UK and whole programme objectives.

12.4. A technical update on blankets would be scheduled at a future Board meeting.

13. Materials, led by T Bestwick

13.1. Executive Director of Materials, Blankets and Research provided a presentation expanding on the paper submitted to Board on a key strategic material for the future of fusion.

13.2. The commercial model and funding were still to be determined.

14. Risk Report/Dashboard deep dive, led by R Elliot

14.1. The Board welcomed the new Head of Risk and Assurance.

14.2. The Board heard that work had now been completed to update the flight paths in the first part of the paper.

14.3. The Board cautioned against risk trends being amended on the basis of anticipated rather than actual activity and recommended that the cyber risk trend should be classified as flat.

14.4. The flight paths for safety and technical progress were discussed and requested a detailed discussion at Board on risk mitigations and appetite and their impact on trends. The Board heard that the top risks were aggregates of many “child” risks, which could make top level mitigations difficult to capture.

14.5. The CDO would review Risk 1 in detail and report back to Board

14.6. The Board would reconsider their appetite for individual risks at a future Board meeting.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Actionee	Due
UKAEA(26)4/4	Review Risk 1 and flightpath and report back to Board	H Lewtas	Sep 26

15. Innovation update, led by H Lewtas

15.1 A short update was provided on recent innovation activities, including on two new ventures which would soon be brought to Board for approval, on terms built into contracts and on securing value.

16. AOB, led by B Taylor

17.1 There was no other business.

For information papers:

1. **Forward Look**
2. **Safety Dashboard**
3. **ARAC Risk Report**
4. **Sustainability Update**

The meeting closed at 1655.

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	/	
	Heather Lewtas	/	
	Madhav Bakshi	/	
	David Gann	/	
	David Sandford	/	

End of Minutes