UK Atomic Energy Authority	**BOARD MEETING** **Meeting Reference UKAEA(26)5**	
Date	Wednesday 23 September 2026	
Time	0900 - 1545	
Location	UKAEA Board Room, C7, Culham Campus	
Members	Bernard Taylor (Chair) Luc Bardin (remote) Tim Bestwick Ruth Elliot Claire Flint Sue Gray	Robin Grimes (remote) Richard Hookway (remote) Stephen Hillier (remote) Lee McDonough (remote)Mary Ryan (remote)
Attendees	Madhav Bakshi (DESNZ)David Gann (UKFE) Justin Kingsford (UKAEA COO) Heather Lewtas (UKAEA CDO) Nina Tomlin (Secretary)	

MINUTES

Items

1. Chair opening remarks and declarations of interest, led by B Taylor

1.1. The Chair noted remote attendance of the majority of Board members due to train disruption.

1.2. No new declarations of interest were received.

2. Minutes, actions and matters arising, led by B Taylor

2.1. The minutes of UKAEA(26)M4 were **approved**.

2.2. Board members noted the update made to the UKFE CEO report to UKAEA(26)4 in response to Board action UKAEA(26)4/2. The action was closed.

2.3. The Board agreed to close all other actions due by September as well as action UKAEA(26)4/1 regarding ARAC reporting back on lessons learned post audit.

2.4. There were no questions on the For Information papers.

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

UKAEA(26)5 – UKAEA Executive Board Report

3.1. The UKAEA Group interim CEO expanded on the Executive Report, highlighting the achievement of Cyber Essentials as an exemplar of how UKFE and UKAEA can and should work together. The Board thanked the team for their work, and members agreed that the landscape was continuously evolving and required continued concentrated effort. The question of whether to sign up to the Cyber Resilience Pledge was being investigated further.

3.2. The Board also discussed physical and personnel security, the UKRI/EPSRC grant, the newly established UKAEA PPL Computing Collaboration, the recently signed JDR contract with RAMCO for material salvage-based decommissioning, water de-tritiation, LIBRTI, the pipeline of spinout opportunities and JVs, and other key items from the report.

3.3. DESNZ would follow up to establish who within BIST was the most appropriate person to talk to about proposed endeavour.

3.4. The Board also discussed the success of the recent UK Fusion Week and possible tie in with other events in the future. Members agreed that it was important to capitalise on the momentum generated by the summit.

3.5. Members heard about progress being made on the HIF1 project and how this represented a real boost to Culham Campus as a site.

3.6. It was confirmed that the Executive Report to Board would from November include a dashboard and set of KPIs.

3.7. Board members would welcome additional training on the use of AI.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/1	DESNZ to establish who within BIST is the most appropriate person to liaise with on the discussed endeavour and let UKAEA Executive Office know.	L McDonough	October 2026
UKAEA(26)5/2	A brief training session on AI to be arranged for Board members.	J Kingsford	November 2026

4. UKFE CEO Report, led by P Methven

UKAEA(26)5 - UKFE CEO Report – Sep 26 – OSC

UKAEA(26)5 – STEP Programme Financials Sept 2026

4.1. The UKFE CEO updated Board on UKFE's financial position, expanded on breeding position and grid supply updates provided in the report and reported on Trent Supercluster developments and the Infinity Park in Derby.

4.2. The Board asked to examine where to focus effort within other regions, how to facilitate this discussion and how to encourage inward investment. UKFE CEO would report back on this.

4.3. The Board discussed arrangements for reviewing the package being submitted to HMT in October, which would include the investment proposition. DESNZ encouraged engagement with the incoming UKAEA Group CEO ahead of the joint board discussion on 14th October. A thorough discussion on investment took place.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/3	UKFE CEO to report back on how Board could support effort within other regions, to facilitate discussion and encourage inward investment.	P Methven	Nov 2026

5. Strategic Assets Protection Measures report, led by H Lewtas and J Kingsford

UKAEA(26)5 – UKAEA Strategic Assets Protection Measures

5.1. The Board were provided with additional context for the paper. Decisions would sit within existing UKAEA governance structures. Board endorsed the composition of the external panel.

5.2. The Board requested that the Terms of Reference for the external panel were reviewed to clarify next steps upon identification of assets.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/4	Review TORs for external panel to bring out explicitly what next steps would be upon identification of assets.	H Lewtas	Oct 2026

6. Detailed report back on contractor safety incidents, led by J Kingsford

UKAEA(26)5 – UKAEA Board Contractor Safety September 2026

6.1. The Board discussed contributing factors to recent incidents. They heard of the success of the recent mock trial, with key take aways being the importance of raising awareness and engagement across the organisation.

6.2. The team would continue to monitor safety culture improvements and gather feedback on business partner interactions, reporting back in March 2027.

6.3. Members asked about contractor selection and how their attitude to health and safety could be assessed. Group Director of QSHERA would report back on whether a contractor had ever been rejected on that basis.

6.4. The Board requested more measurable data in safety reports.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/5	Group Director of QSHERA would report back on whether a contractor had ever been rejected on the basis of attitude to health and safety.	J Kingsford	Nov 2026
UKAEA(26)5/6	More data to be integrated into the Safety Dashboard and report for ease of tracking and measurement.	J Kingsford	Nov 2026

7. Risk Report/Dashboard, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(26)5 – Board Risk Report Sept 2026

7.1. The Board heard that there had been little movement in the top five risks.

7.2. A discussion followed on AI risks and opportunities, including Enterprise AI, and the level of investment required to address or support these.

7.3. The management system improvement programme and risk flightpath trends were discussed.

7.3. The Board acknowledged the importance of a high-performance culture for the organisation to be in a position to deliver on its objectives in the long term.

8. STRIDE Update, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(26)5 – UKAEA Board – STRIDE Update September 2026

8.1. The outcome of the NISTA review of STRIDE in August was amber; recommendations were being worked on.

8.2. The programme had moved to preferred and reserved bidder discussions, and a Business Case would be brought to Board for approval.

8.3. DESNZ confirmed that the Department continued to work with colleagues at BIST on this.

8.4. The Board **approved** delegating the final approval of the STRIDE Business Case to a Sub-Group of five Board members: Chair of Board, DESNZ member, Chair of ARAC, UKAEA Group CEO and UKAEA Group Deputy CEO/CFO.

Decisions

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(26)5/D1	The Board **approved** delegating the final approval of the STRIDE Business Case to a Sub-Group of five Board members: Chair of Board, DESNZ member, Chair of ARAC, UKAEA Group CEO and UKAEA Group Deputy CEO/CFO.

9. Sub-Committee Updates

9.1. ARAC (verbal update), led by R Hookway

9.1.1. ARAC had met on 17th September. Some of the items had already been covered in the Board discussion under earlier agenda items.

9.1.2. The Chair of ARAC reported that additional items discussed at the Committee included the EUROfusion audit and artefacts, as well as the lessons learned meeting held between management, the Finance Team and the External Auditor, NAO. A need was identified for good capability on complex accounting transactions as the UKAEA Group was getting into more complex arrangements.

9.1.2. ARAC had also discussed JDR, its size and importance and its work to ensure alignment of the programme with the lifetime plan. The Board discussed the tranched approach to JDR financing and requested more information on this.

9.1.3. The report on Cyber Security had been well received by the Committee.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/7	Provide a presentation to Board on tranched versus other possible approaches to JDR programme.	R Elliot	Nov 26

9.2. PRemCo (verbal update), led by C Flint

9.2.1. The Committee had met on 22nd September and had had a wide-ranging discussion, with some items covered elsewhere under today's agenda.

9.2.2. The Committee had discussed Board succession planning, which was in hand, as well as the re-grading programme and contingent workers. It had considered employee relations activity and approval for UKAEA's pay envelope.

9.2.3. PRemCo had also undertaken a deep dive into sickness absence, discussing work needed to understand the drivers on this and to identify what support was needed.

9.2.4. The Board agreed that it would be useful for UKAEA PRemCo Chair to meet with UKFE PCC Chair, as the two Committees touched on similar issues.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/8	The Board agreed that it would be useful for UKAEA PRemCo Chair to meet with UKFE PCC Chair, as the two Committees touched on similar issues. See also action UKAEA(26)5/11	C Flint	Nov 2026

10. Dennis Whyte introduction

10.1. The Chair welcomed Dennis Whyte, the incoming Group CEO, who attended to meet members of the Board and discuss his priorities and areas of focus once in post.

11. Spending Review Update, led by R Elliot

UKAEA(26)5 – SR27 update

11.1. The Board heard that UKAEA was waiting for confirmation of when the SR would launch; scenarios and arguments were being pulled together in the meantime.

11.2. The Board reviewed and discussed the principles proposed to inform planning; agreed that UKFE and STEP should be differentiated; as well as discussing the national lab component of the scenarios and minimum viable figures. The principles should include the nature and purpose of the national laboratory.

11.3 DESNZ expressed support for the approach and the scenarios outlined.

12. Finance Update, led by R Elliot

12.1. The Board were presented with the current P4 position, with explanations provided of the overprogramming positions within the National Fusion Lab and UKFE.

12.2. Spending was on track for people and external expenditure, currently avoiding the hockey stick seen in past years.

12.3. Phasing and profiling of budgets would be important in future years.

13. LIBRTI Presentation, led by T Bestwick

13.1. Executive Director of Materials, Blankets and Research presented the latest progress on the LIBRTI facility and science behind the facility. This included details of the experimental engineering, on collaborators, and on future plans.

13.2. The Board discussed the importance of a record keeping strategy to protect know how being developed.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/9	Organise a team session on the effective use of log books and record keeping to protect know how	H Lewtas	Nov 26

14. People Strategy, led by J Kingsford

14.1. The Board heard about progress in developing and including more of a performance culture in the People Strategy, which outlined expectations on line managers, leaders and the organisation's staff and people. This would be consulted on and then be taken to ExCo for sign off. Members discussed the importance of communicating with employees on what was expected of them, how the People function could help with this and how a dialogue with staff should be developed.

14.2. Members had specific suggestions for how to take this forward, which would be followed up on.

14.3. The Board also heard that strategic workforce planning had been included in the People Strategy delivery plan.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/10	R Hookway to meet with Director of PC&S regarding performance driving tools.	R Hookway	Nov 26
UKAEA(26)5/11	Chair of PRemCo, Chair of UKFE PCC and Director of PC&S to meet to compare approaches to performance and expectations from employees. See also action UKAEA(26)5/8.	C Flint	Nov 26

15. Innovation New Ventures and IP principles, led by H Lewtas

15.1. The Board received an update on new ventures in the pipeline, including in robotics, and commended the continued ambition to commercialise. Members stressed the important balance to be struck between commercialisation and long-term value.

15.2. The Board then discussed issues raised in the IP principles paper. The Board **endorsed** the proposal to fix the typo relating to "sub-contractors" contained in the Fusion Partnership Agreement so that the intended meaning at the time of drafting was accurately reflected. Additional discussions would be taken offline.

15.3. Members agreed that these principles should be reviewed periodically.

Actions:

Reference	Action	Owner	Due
UKAEA(26)5/12	Further discussion on IP principles to be taken offline on how this will work in practice and how the Board can support. An updated proposal will be brought back to Board in November.	H Lewtas	Nov 26

Decisions

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(26)5/D2	The Board **endorsed** the proposal to fix the typo relating to "sub-contractors" contained in the Fusion Partnership Agreement so that the intended meaning at the time of drafting was accurately reflected.

16. AOB, led by B Taylor

16.1. The Chair closed by thanking Tim Bestwick for his work as interim CEO and for all he had done while in post. The interim CEO reflected on his time in post and thanked the Board for their blend of challenge and support.

16.1. Appointments, led by N Tomlin

16.1.1. The Board **approved** the two recommendations:

- Dennis Whyte to have authority to authenticate affixing the seal or sign UKAEA deeds as an alternative to the Board Chair
- Dennis Whyte to be appointed as Director of UKAEA dormant subsidiary company UKAEA Ltd

Decisions

Reference	Decision
UKAEA(26)5/3	The Board approved Dennis Whyte to have authority to authenticate affixing the seal or sign UKAEA deeds as an alternative to the Board Chair
UKAEA(26)5/D4	The Board approved Dennis Whyte to be appointed as Director of UKAEA dormant subsidiary company UKAEA Ltd

For information papers:

Forward Look

Safety Dashboard

2025 Board Survey Follow-up
Multi-year Programme Performance reports

The meeting closed at 15:20.

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	/	

End of Minutes