

Important work in tackling future risks restarts at Sellafield

Sellafield Ltd is now carefully reintroducing operational work on a phased basis after ramping down operations at the start of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Chief Executive Martin Chown visited the First Generation Magnox Storage Pond to see first hand the restart of work preparing for the maintenance of a Skip Handler crane which will be vital for getting nuclear waste out of the legacy pond once more work restarts later in the summer.

A nuclear site which normally has more than 8,000 people working on it was reduced to around 1,500 key workers in late March as an initial protective measure.

Now the number of workers is being carefully and cautiously brought back up, with the current restart trajectory expected to reach 3,000 people on site by mid-June. Initial plans have imposed a cap of 3,500 on the site at any one time and then review that situation, to allow people to more readily socially distance themselves from other workers.

It means thousands of employees have adapted to working differently and remotely and the company putting in place a process of prioritising the work packages where people need to come back to work.

Three high-profile areas of work have restarted in the last week, marking a significant step forward in Sellafield Ltd progressing its core mission of environmental remediation and safely storing nuclear material.

These are:

- restarting the work on commissioning the Silo Emptying Plant (SEP2) waste retrievals machine inside our highest hazard legacy storage facility, the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo
- restarting the work to repackage cans of plutonium into new containers.
- maintenance work on the Skip Handler Crane in the First Generation Magnox Storage Pond, with similar work starting next week in its 'sister' legacy pond, the Pile Fuel Storage Pond.

Allied to this have been the recent restart of construction work on the The Box Encapsulation Plant Product Store Direct Import Facility (BEPPS-DIF) major project – a key facility needed to store legacy waste in the future – and the return of some specialist nuclear designers into offices.

Of course, all along, around 1,500 key workers have been doing their vital work to keep the Sellafield site safe and secure throughout the global crisis.

Sellafield Ltd Chief Executive Martin Chown paid a visit to the legacy pond to meet those who have been continuing to go to work throughout the COVID-19

pandemic and learn more about the safety measures being put in place following the risk assessment work the business has been doing to allow people to work safely.

Martin also visited the BEPPS-DIF site, the first of our project construction sites to bring people back in.

The site was used as a test bed for a number of safety initiatives designed to keep people safe, with learning from that restart used in further project construction restarts over coming months.

Martin said:

I really enjoyed my time spent on the major construction sites and within our nuclear operations,

The preparations we have made in plants enable everyone to come back to work with confidence. I was most impressed with the commitment and positive attitude from all of our staff, who are an asset to our business.