

News story: D-day as evaporator starts its mission

The £750m plant is needed to clean out the site's reprocessing plants.

Sellafield's newest plant is up and running, supporting the site's clean-up mission.

Evaporator D has been set to work reducing the volume of Sellafield's most radioactive waste product – highly active liquor.

The £750m plant is the only evaporator on the site able to process high-level liquid waste created during the clean-out of the Sellafield's reprocessing plants.

It acts like a giant kettle, reducing the volume of liquor so it can be turned into glass form and safely stored.

The facility was switched on at 8am on 8 December and is going through a 12 month process to prove its capability to regulators.

Once fully operational, Sellafield's two older evaporators will retire.

Steve Bostock, Sellafield Ltd chief operating officer, said:

Cleaning up the Sellafield site safely and securely is our mission. Evaporator D is a critical part.

It will enable us to clean out our former reprocessing plants; no other facility could do this.

It will also allow us to retire our oldest evaporators. We've worked these evaporators hard and they are nearing the end of their useful life.

Sellafield Ltd operates on behalf of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA).

Duncan Thompson, the NDA's Sellafield programme director, said:

Evaporator D provides important capability required to complete our mission in a safe, secure and cost-effective manner.

It's a complex piece of nuclear engineering and I thank all those involved from Sellafield Ltd and the supply chain for their hard work and commitment.

The project to design and construct Evaporator D was challenging. It was the first project of its size in many years. The building includes 23,000 tonnes of concrete and 22km of pipework. It also required the construction of other facilities, such as cooling towers.

The evaporator modules were so large they had to be transported by sea. A docking platform was constructed on Sellafield's beach. Bridges and street furniture were removed to clear its route from shore to site.

Lessons learned have shaped how Sellafield Ltd will manage future projects. A project delivery directorate has been created alongside the 'Project Academy', which provides training for the company's workforce, supply chain, and people from the local community, in association with University of Cumbria.

Evaporator D was delivered by Sellafield Ltd and principal contractor Costain on behalf of the NDA, as part of its work to reduce the hazards left from the UK's civil nuclear legacy.

[News story: Foreign Secretary arrives in Moscow](#)

During face-to-face talks in Moscow with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, Mr Johnson will encourage cooperation on joint international challenges, including preserving the Iran nuclear deal and the threat posed by North Korea.

He will say that as permanent members of the UN Security Council the two countries should work closely together – as they historically did in the Second World War and, more recently, on the Iran nuclear deal.

But he will stress the UK will continue to defend its interests where they, and those of its allies, are threatened amid concerns that hostilities between Russia and the West are the highest since the end of the Cold War.

During the discussions, Mr Johnson will say our relationship with Russia cannot be 'business as usual' while it continues to support destabilising activities in Europe.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK and Russia are permanent members of the UN Security Council, and it is right that we continue to talk to each other.

Our relations with Russia cannot be 'business as usual' whilst Russia continues to attempt to destabilise European states,

including Ukraine.

However, it is vital for international security that we do talk to each other – as the consequences of miscommunication or misunderstanding are grave. My visit to Russia comes at a critical time as we need to work together to solve the world's most pressing global challenges.

We have a relationship with Russia that spans over 450 years. Our similarities and historical links far outweigh our current political disagreements.

The Kremlin has positioned Russia in direct opposition to the West, but it doesn't have to be that way.

The visit will also be an opportunity to discuss important areas of cooperation, such as our security preparations for next summer's World Cup.

The UK and Russia share a common goal of a safe, secure World Cup. Thousands of fans from the UK are expected to travel to Russia. The UK is already working with Russia to help ensure the safety of British

Press release: Blue UK passport to return after EU exit

After Brexit, the UK travel document will no longer be required to conform to EU standards. So in a move to symbolise our national identity, the cover will be changing from the standard EU burgundy colour to a blue and gold design.

The new, unique blue passport will be one of the most secure travel documents in the world, with a raft of new and updated security features and technologies to protect against fraud and forgery. For example, the current paper-based picture page will be replaced with a new, super-strength plastic polycarbonate material that will be more difficult to alter.

Immigration Minister Brandon Lewis said:

Leaving the EU gives us a unique opportunity to restore our national identity and forge a new path for ourselves in the world.

That is why I am delighted to announce that the British passport will be returning to the iconic blue and gold design after we have left the European Union in 2019.

It will also be one of the most secure travel documents in the

world, with a raft of new security measures to protect against fraud and forgery.

To save the taxpayer money, the newly designed passports will be introduced in a phased approach.

After the UK leaves the EU, burgundy passports will continue to be issued but with no reference to the European Union.

New blue and gold passports will be issued from October 2019, when the new passport contract begins, to those renewing or applying for a new passport.

There is no need for British passport holders to do anything ahead of their current passport renewal date.

The blue cover is a return to the original appearance of the British passport, with the colour first used in 1921. It remained the colour of choice until the UK joined the EU and the burgundy common format colour was agreed and adopted.

More details about the new passport will be announced when a supplier is appointed in spring next year.

[Press release: Shingles vaccine programme reduces cases and chronic complications](#)

First evidence of the shingles vaccine programme shows a substantial reduction in cases and long-term complications.

A new study in the [Lancet Journal of Public Health](#) shows a substantial decrease in shingles cases and associated complications in the first 3 years since the introduction of the shingles vaccination programme by Public Health England (PHE).

Despite these very positive results, uptake of the vaccine has declined, with a 13% decline in people aged 70 since the start of the programme and an 8.4% decline in people aged 78 years since 2014.

PHE is urging adults aged 70 and 78 to protect themselves by taking up the offer for vaccination from their GP or booking an appointment if they missed out. Shingles is a painful condition and can be especially debilitating for older people.

The new analysis of the shingles vaccine programme, which was introduced in

England in September 2013, estimated that the vaccine was 62% effective against shingles and between 70 to 88% effective against post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN), or long term pain, which is one of the main complications associated with shingles.

The study estimated that GP visits for shingles and PHN reduced by 35% and 50% respectively, in those aged 70 during 2013 to 2016.

An estimated 17,000 GP visits for shingles were avoided amongst the 5.5 million individuals who were given the vaccination in the first 3 years of the programme across England.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisations at PHE, said:

I encourage all those who are 70 and 78 to make an appointment with their GP practice to get the shingles vaccine, as well as those under 80 who previously missed out. It's the best way to avoid this very nasty disease and the long-term complications that can develop from having it.

Our population is aging and the risk from getting shingles and complications is higher as you get older. Immunisation is the best way to protect yourself from this painful, sometimes debilitating condition. Taking up the vaccine is an important part of staying healthy as you age.

Shingles is characterised by a skin rash on one side of the body resulting from reactivation of chicken pox virus that has been lying dormant in the body. It can last on average for 2 to 4 weeks and be significantly debilitating, causing loss of sleep and interference with day-to-day activities. Symptoms can include sharp stabbing pain and burning of the skin in the affected area, feeling unwell, a bad headache and a fever.

Over 50,000 cases of shingles occur in people aged 70 years and over each year in England and Wales, with approximately 50 cases being fatal.

The likelihood of getting shingles increases with age and adults aged 70 and above are more at risk of developing serious complications from it, such as PHN, a severe nerve pain that lasts for several months or more after the rash has gone.

Though many recover from PHN, symptoms can last for years or can become permanent. It is therefore vital for every individual eligible to get their vaccine.

In England, the shingles vaccination programme now targets adults aged 70 and 78 with a catch up programme for those aged 71 to 79.

PHE is encouraging healthcare professionals and the public to be aware of the complications surrounding shingles and to encourage those within the eligible groups to get vaccinated.

1. Those who are eligible for the free shingles vaccine include people in their 70s who were born after 1 September 1942 and people aged 79 years.
2. To get your vaccine, contact your GP or pharmacist for more information. If you are within the eligible group, your doctor will recommend the shingles vaccine during general GP visits or your annual flu appointment. Further details on the [shingles vaccination programme](#) are available on NHS Choices.
3. PHE's [shingles eligibility calculator](#) can help determine whether or not you are eligible for the vaccine.

[Press release: Government proposals on puppy welfare](#)

Plans under consideration include:

- Ensuring that licensed dog breeders must show puppies alongside their mother before a sale is made.
- Tightening regulations so that puppy sales are completed in the presence of the new owner – preventing online sales where prospective buyers have not seen the animal first.
- Insisting licensed dog breeders can only sell puppies they have bred themselves.
- Regulating adverts, including on the internet, by ensuring licensed sellers of all pets, including puppies, include the seller's licence number, country of origin and country of residence of the pet in any advert for sale.

Legislation introducing these proposals could be brought forward early in the New Year.

Measures to tackle unethical and cruel puppy smuggling across borders will also be explored. And plans will also address the breeding of dogs with harmful genetic disorders.

These proposed reforms will apply tighter requirements to more breeders and sellers and will tackle the sale of weak underage puppies, the breeding of unhealthy dogs and dogs with severe genetic disorders, requiring much veterinary treatment and causing much angst, cost and upset to the new owners.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Any unscrupulous mistreatment of animals is disturbing – so in our drive to achieve the highest animal welfare standards in the world, we continually look at what more can be done. The arrival of a happy, healthy puppy, as I know myself, is a memorable time for a family – but it's absolutely right we do everything we can to eradicate animal cruelty from our society. The proposals my government is developing will be an important step forward.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

At this time of year it is all too easy to be moved by images online or adverts in the local press advertising new born puppies looking for a home for Christmas. But what we don't see is all too often a sad history of mistreatment and malpractice. That is why we are looking at how we can go further to crack down on unscrupulous breeders so pet owners will have no doubt their new dogs have had the right start in life.

This is one part of our efforts to ensure we have the highest animal welfare standards in the world. We have also ensured CCTV cameras will be mandatory in all slaughterhouses and will increase prison sentences from six months to five years for animal abusers.

In addition, the Government can today confirm it will take forward proposals put out for consultation earlier in the year to improve how the pets are bred and sold. This included a ban on the sale of puppies and kittens under the age of eight weeks, which will now extend to include rabbits, as well as compulsory licensing for anyone in the business of breeding and selling dogs.