

News story: International experts share decommissioning expertise

Hosted by the NDA, the project was set up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the wake of the accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power station in Japan, but is also drawing lessons from decommissioning at other nuclear sites, including:

- Al Tuwaitha nuclear site in Iraq, damaged during conflict
- Three Mile Island Unit 2 in the US, damaged by a partial core melt
- Chernobyl in Ukraine
- the A1 reactor in Slovakia, damaged following incorrect insertion of a new fuel element

The workshop also looked at a number of historical facilities which can face similar challenges, including:

- Sellafield's First Generation Magnox Storage Pond (FGMSP)
- the industrial Uranium Graphite Reactors in Russia
- the redundant fuel cycle facilities at Marcoule, France

Three working groups are studying the above cases and their conclusions will feed in to a final report, providing guidance that could be deployed in the event of future accidents. Their focus is on the challenges faced by regulators, the technical challenges of managing physical and radiological hazards and the strategic decision-making processes.

Named DAROD (Decommissioning And Remediation of Damaged nuclear facilities), the project began in 2014 as a result of the IAEA's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, drawn up following the Fukushima-Daiichi accident.

John Rowat, from IAEA's Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, said:

The purpose of DAROD is to identify where existing guidance for normal decommissioning and remediation can be adapted to situations involving damaged nuclear facilities, and to identify how member states might be better prepared to manage such situations in the future.

At the Penrith workshop, a special session was held on Sellafield's FGMSP, introduced by Sellafield's Head of Programme Delivery for Legacy Ponds, Dorothy Gradden, who gave an update on progress at the facilities. Delegates were also given an opportunity to tour the FGMSP, enabling them understand the challenges and see the progress at first hand.

John Mathieson, the NDA's Head of International Relations, said:

The workshop brought together a diverse range of regulators and decommissioning practitioners from around the world, many of whom have first-hand experience of dealing with damaged nuclear facilities.

It was an honour for the UK and NDA to be asked to host this workshop for this important project, and the discussions were extremely valuable.

[Press release: Call for women to get life-saving smear test after uptake drops](#)

Public Health England (PHE) has issued a fresh appeal to young women to take up the invitation of a cervical cancer test as new figures published today show a fall in the number of 25 to 29-year-old women being tested.

NHS Digital statistics show a drop in the number of women of all ages being screened but worryingly only 62% of younger women took up the invitation for a test last year.

PHE is urging all eligible women (aged 25 to 64) who are invited for cervical screening (smear tests) to take the test.

Cervical screening currently prevents 70% of cervical cancer deaths. However, if everyone attended screening regularly, 83% of cases could be prevented.

Professor Anne Mackie, PHE's director of screening said:

It is of real concern that fewer women, particularly younger women are not being screened, with over a third of women under 30 not taking the test.

If women are embarrassed about having the test or worried about what the test results might say, they should talk to their GP who can explain why the test is important.

PHE is committed to improving screening attendance and has a programme of work which includes:

- supporting local services to encourage more women to attend screening by providing clearer information
- encouraging GPs to consider offering a variety of appointments earlier

in the morning and evening, making it easier for women to attend at a time that suits them

- developing an interactive database which informs individual practices about the numbers of women they are screening and how they compare with neighbouring practices

Women aged 25 to 49 registered with a GP are invited every 3 years and every 5 years if aged 50 to 64. The test detects abnormalities within the cervix that could, if undetected and untreated, develop into cervical cancer. Studies show if the proportion of women screened was raised to 84% it could save the NHS £10 million a year as well as women's lives.

The Cervical Cancer Screening Programme, recommended by the UK National Screening Committee, began in 1988 and the expert committee has reviewed the evidence every 3 years. The committee recommends the programme as it shows clear benefits and saves lives. Screening remains a choice, based on a woman's individual circumstances.

Background

1. Women over the age of 64 will no longer be invited for cervical screening unless they have had a previous abnormal result that requires a further follow up.
2. PHE's [interactive screening coverage tool](#) shows screening coverage for individual GPs and how they compare with neighbouring practices.
3. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

[News story: More detail provided on new settled status for EU citizens](#)

The Government has today offered further reassurance for EU citizens and their family members by setting out further details of how its new settled status scheme will operate.

Those applying to stay in the UK after we leave the EU will not have their applications refused on minor technicalities and caseworkers considering applications will exercise discretion where appropriate. We expect the majority of cases to be granted.

EU citizens will also be given a statutory right of appeal, in line with their current rights through the Free Movement Directive, if their application is unsuccessful.

In a [technical document](#) sent to the European Commission as part of negotiations, the government reiterates how the new system will be streamlined, low-cost and user-friendly, with EU citizens consulted on its design.

The Prime Minister has been clear that safeguarding the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and UK nationals in Europe is the first priority for negotiations and she said last month that an agreement is within touching distance. Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, David Davis said:

We have been clear that safeguarding the rights of EU citizens is our top priority in our negotiations. They make a huge contribution to our economy and society and we do not want to see that change as a result of our decision to leave the EU.

We will support everyone wishing to stay to gain settled status through a new straightforward, streamlined system.

The last negotiation round saw real progress in this area and I believe the document we have published today can facilitate the deal we need to guarantee the rights of UK citizens living in the EU27, and vice versa.

The document commits to:

- giving EU citizens plenty of time to apply, with a 2-year grace period after we leave the EU to make an application for settled status
- minimising the documentary evidence that applicants need to provide and enabling caseworkers to contact applicants to resolve minor issues
- keeping the cost of an application to no more than that of a British passport
- giving EU citizens a statutory right of appeal, in line with their current rights through the Free Movement Directive, if their application is unsuccessful
- making decisions solely on the criteria set out in the Withdrawal Agreement, with no discretion for other reasons for refusal
- introducing a digital, streamlined and user friendly application system
- not requiring EU citizens to have held comprehensive sickness insurance or to provide fingerprints
- a simpler, lower cost process for those who already have permanent residence documentation

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

I have been clear that EU citizens living in the UK make an enormous contribution to our country and we want them to stay.

Applying for settled status will be a streamlined, low-cost, digital process and EU citizens are being consulted on its design to ensure it is user-friendly.

We know that there is some anxiety among EU citizens about how the process of applying for settled status will work so I hope this document provides some further reassurance.

The document also sets out that applicants will be asked to declare any criminal convictions and be checked against UK security databases. This is a reasonable measure to keep the country safe from those who have abused our hospitality by committing serious crimes.

Press release: Love birds postpone Ouse Bridge inspection

Inspections are carried out on the bridge every two years but on discovering the pair of protected birds Highways England called in experts.

The nesting periods for birds vary from species to species and RSPB were able to offer the necessary advice about the peregrine pair.

Female peregrine.

The latest inspection was due to be carried out in October however engineers have waited until the peregrine chicks have left the nest before carrying out their regular bridge inspection.

Male peregrine.

Highways England service delivery team leader for Yorkshire and Humber, Mark Ramsden, said:

We have worked with the RSPB to make sure we do everything we can to not upset the chicks and their parents. We have now been able to schedule our work outside of fledgling period and hope that the pair will produce chicks for many years to come.

During peak times up to 23,000 drivers use the bridge each day and this is just part of the activity that goes on behind the scenes on this major Yorkshire landmark.

To carry out the inspections engineers need to be within touching distance of the bridge. They use a specialist underbridge unit which parks on the hard shoulder of the bridge and deploys a hanging walkway under the bridge and lowers workers beneath the structure.

Diving inspections are also carried out to assess the underwater condition of

the bridge structure. Ouse Bridge was opened in 1976 and was the last section of the main part of the M62 which stretches east to west from Liverpool to Hull.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Call for evidence on how to reduce the cost of energy launched](#)

Groups are being called upon to submit their views on how the cost of energy can be cut, following the publication of Professor Dieter Helm CBE's review

A call for evidence on reducing the cost of energy has been launched by the government today, following the independent review by Professor Dieter Helm CBE.

On 25 October, Professor Helm concluded his independent review which outlines recommendations on how to reduce costs in the power system, whilst ensuring the UK meets its climate change targets.

Building on the government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper, Professor Helm was asked to consider the whole electricity supply chain of generation, transmission, distribution and supply, and recommend how to reduce costs in each part.

The Government [is now calling on industry, businesses and consumer groups to give their opinions](#) on Professor Helm's recommendations to government.

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

Energy bills are too high for consumers. We have been clear that we are committed to bringing down costs, both for households and for businesses.

I commissioned this review to start a debate about the future of

our energy markets. Now I am opening up that debate, asking everyone with an interest to give us their views on Professor Helm's ideas for bringing down the cost of energy for consumers.

Any stakeholders who would like to comment on the findings should email their submissions to costofenergy@beis.gov.uk by 5 January 2018.