

First waste removed from old nuclear Sellafield store

Standing in the oldest part of the Sellafield site, the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo has stored nuclear waste in its water-filled chambers for the last 60 years.

Once a vital part of the nation's nuclear energy generation, the building stored the casings removed from used fuel rods from Magnox reactors so that the fuel inside could be reprocessed.

The Magnox Swarf Storage Silo under construction back in the 1960s

Now, due to the age of the building, the contents held inside, and the fact that it was never built with decommissioning in mind, it is one of the most hazardous nuclear facilities on the Sellafield site and in the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) estate.

Today, teams at Sellafield are starting to remove the waste held inside, putting it into purpose-built stainless steel waste containers and moving it to modern storage on the site.

[The Magnox Swarf Storage Silo](#)

Head of programme delivery for Magnox Swarf Storage Silo, Chris Halliwell, heads up the team and explains some of the challenges they have faced. He said:

This is the culmination of decades of preparation by hundreds of people across our Sellafield Ltd and supply chain.

As well as maintaining the original concrete structure of the building, we have designed and are installing purpose-built retrieval machines.

The first of our 3 retrievals machines has now started the job which will take another 20 or so years to complete. Our teams use this machine to reach down into the compartment of the silo, grab waste from inside, and put it inside containers that have been designed and manufactured for the job.

Eventually those metal waste boxes will be held safely inside a new highly engineered store currently being built on site. So that we can get waste out as soon as possible, we are making use of existing stores at Sellafield until the new one is ready.

All of the waste will eventually be sent to a geological disposal

facility when that becomes available.

Once empty of waste, our attention will turn to decommissioning and ultimately knocking down the silo building.

David Peattie, group chief executive of the NDA, said:

The start of retrievals from Magnox Swarf Storage Silo is a major milestone in our decommissioning mission and an excellent example of the pioneering work taking place on our sites.

It is testament to the years of hard work to safely, securely, and cost-effectively manage the UK's nuclear legacy.

Sellafield Ltd chief executive, Martin Chown, said:

This first step towards emptying the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo is a huge step towards delivering our purpose of creating a clean and safe environment for future generations.

Everyone involved, whether they are at the front line of this retrieval work or building the new facilities that we need to safely store the waste retrieved, should be proud of what they have achieved. I am proud of them.