

Landmark day for major drum disposal project

A major project to dispose of more than 1,000 stainless steel drums of waste at Nuclear Waste Services' Low Level Waste Repository site from the Winfrith Magnox site, each weighing around one tonne, has successfully completed its initial rail transfer.

The project, which has been several years in the planning, is a prime example of the One NDA approach, through working in co-operation across the group, safely enabling an early, fit-for-purpose transport and disposal solution to support ongoing decommissioning activities.

The drums, which originated from the Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor (SGHWR) at Winfrith, were placed in the Treated Radwaste Store (TRS) awaiting transfer to the Harwell Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) facility. However due to a period of radioactive decay, they have been reclassified from Intermediate Level Waste to Low Level Waste, allowing early disposal at the Repository site with significant financial savings to the UK taxpayer.

A significant achievement

Andrew Munro, Winfrith Site Director, commented:

The shipment of these drums is a significant achievement for the site and is another step closer to completing our decommissioning mission and returning the site to heathland with public access. Many thanks to all parties involved who have made this possible, a great example of a collaborative approach.

The drums will be transported by rail in cabriolet containers and will arrive at the Repository site in multiple consignments. Planning and preparation were key to the success of this project. The construction of a new haul road has been undertaken to transport the drums to their final resting place in Vault 8.

A drum posting system will be installed on the vault floor, which aids location of the drum stacks, making best use of available space. Disposal of the waste in single drums enables Nuclear Waste Services to utilise otherwise unusable space within the vault, reducing the amount of in-fill material required to close it.

Eleven consignments, each transporting 10 cabriolet containers of 10 drums, will arrive on site by rail transfer provided by Nuclear Transport Solutions (NTS), approximately every 13 weeks, depending on the retrievals process at Winfrith.

The train leaves Magnox, Winfrith.

Five years in the making

Howard Falconer, Head of Customer Management at Nuclear Waste Services (Operations and Services), said:

Seeing the first train depart Winfrith and arrive at the Repository is an exciting moment for everyone involved in the project.

It is the result of over five years of collaborative planning and preparation by Nuclear Waste Services, Magnox Ltd, Nuclear Transport Solutions and our extensive supply chain partners involved in the delivery of this work, including Cyclife, React Engineering, PDL and Stobbarts, to mention but a few.

However the work does not stop there, and whilst the project team will take a pause to enjoy the moment, and capture learning to optimise future deliveries, the Magnox team will continue to retrieve drums, and Nuclear Waste Services will start the preparations for the first emplacements to take place later this year – there is still lots of hard work to be safely delivered.