Magnox Reprocessing plant achieves final milestone

Staff at Sellafield's Magnox Reprocessing Plant have safely reprocessed the final box of spent fuel from the UK's fast reactor programme being stored in the plant's ponds.

It was announced in May that the facility will finish reprocessing on 18 July and enter a new era of decommissioning and clean-up.

This latest achievement marks its final major contribution to managing the UK's nuclear legacy in a journey that stretches back to 1964.

The UK's fast reactor, at Dounreay, was built during the 1950s when there was a world-wide shortage of uranium for electricity generation. It became the world's first fast reactor to provide electricity to a national grid before shutting down in 1977.

Fast reactors came to an end in the UK in the 1980s. But the programme left behind a legacy of spent fuel with a unique chemical composition.

This remained at Dounreay, on the north coast of Scotland, for 35 years until the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and nuclear regulators agreed it could be brought to Sellafield for storage and reprocessing.

Martin Chown, Sellafield Ltd chief executive officer, said:

> Throughout its history, the Magnox Reprocessing Plant has delivered on behalf of the UK.
>
> The current workforce has carried on this proud tradition by achieving another significant milestone in its final weeks of operations.
>
> It's a significant achievement and another demonstration of us delivering our purpose to create a clean and safe environment for future generations.

Reprocessing the final box of Dounreay fuel being held at the Magnox plant marks the completion of a 10-year programme. It was important to reprocess the fuel to minimise the amount requiring future dry storage.

The programme was a collaborative effort across the NDA Group, involving teams at Dounreay, Sellafield Ltd and Nuclear Transport Solutions.

Chris Wratten, Dounreay Fast React Reactor senior project manager, said:

> This has been a key project for the NDA and the entire UK nuclear

industry.

By blending and consolidating the material with routine Magnox fuel, the teams have also supported the UK’s non-proliferation and security objectives.

This has been delivered through hard work, determination and perseverance by all those involved, and they should be very proud of this achievement.

A small amount of fuel remains at Dounreay which will be transferred to Sellafield for dry storage before consignment to the UK’s Geological Disposal Facility.