

Press release: New era at Sellafield as Thorp reprocessing ends

Opened in 1994, Thorp is one of only two commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing plants in the world.

It has reprocessed more than 9,000 tonnes of fuel from 30 customers in nine countries around the world. It generated an estimated £9bn in revenue.

The last batch of fuel to be reprocessed began its journey through the plant at 11.32am on Friday 9 November.

There will be no redundancies as a result of the switch-off. All employees in roles no longer required have been offered alternative jobs in the business.

Thorp will continue to serve the UK until the 2070s as a storage facility for spent fuel.

Meanwhile, Sellafield is being reinvented as a centre of expertise for nuclear clean-up.

This will unlock 100 years' worth of opportunity for the site's workforce, supply chain, and community.

Paul Foster, Sellafield Ltd's Chief Executive Officer, said:

As we look forward to an exciting future, we want to celebrate the best of our past.

The end of reprocessing at Thorp is one of the most important events in Sellafield's history.

Thorp has been a West Cumbrian success story. It has delivered jobs, skills, pride, and prestige.

Our community came together in the fight to get it built, through the 'Trust Us' campaign.

Together we completed one of the largest and most complex construction projects ever undertaken in Europe.

And during 24 years of operations, we safely reprocessed 9,331 tonnes of fuel from 30 customers in nine countries.

We helped to keep the lights on in the UK and around the world and generated £9bn in revenue for the UK.

I'm immensely proud of Thorp's contribution and I'd like to thank the workforce for their unwavering dedication and professionalism throughout a period of unprecedented change.

Thorp (or the Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant) is one third of a mile long.

It dominates a huge central strip of the Sellafield site and is the largest structure on the site.

Costing £1.8bn to build, it was paid for by its future customers.

The decision to cease reprocessing was taken in 2012 in response to a significant downturn in demand.

The international market for reprocessing has shifted significantly since Thorp's construction, with the majority of customers now opting to store rather than reprocess their fuel.