

Sellafield Ltd: Still leading the conversation on the international stage

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference demonstrates the importance of international collaboration and cooperation and showcases our organisation as a leading voice on the global stage.

Now in its 64th year, the conference brings together officials and representatives from its 171 member states to consider a range of issues, share learning and exhibit new technologies and techniques.

Traditionally held in Vienna in Austria, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that this year's event included a combination of physical and virtual attendees.

Sellafield Ltd's head of external affairs, Roger Cowton said:

The UK plays a leading role in the IAEA and we were extremely pleased to take part in a number of virtual events to showcase the innovative work being done at Sellafield and demonstrate how we are performing with passion, pride and pace.

Sellafield Ltd's chief operating officer, Rebecca Weston, joined a high-profile panel of nuclear sector representatives and policy makers to discuss the second anniversary of the UK's Nuclear Sector Deal and its key objective of reducing costs in nuclear decommissioning and waste management.

The all-female panel discussed progress towards all the sector deal targets. Recognising one of those is 40% female nuclear workforce by 2030, from 22% today.

Rebecca has been speaking about the significance of this target and the importance of inclusivity starting at the top, as part of National Inclusion Week.

Rebecca said:

Female representation on our executive is not quite 50/50 but we're now not far off with new recent appointments. I think people are more motivated when they see a diverse mix that includes people like themselves in top positions.

Gender is but a proxy for all forms of diversity and the most important thing is delivering diversity of thought by encouraging different personalities and ideas. Inclusivity helps deliver a breadth of thinking and allows everyone to recognise they can be

the best they can be.

Rebecca also appeared at an IAEA scientific forum event discussing innovation in nuclear spent fuel management; showcasing the innovations being applied in Thorp's storage pond to enable decades of safe interim wet storage of spent fuels.

The changes being made to Thorp's pond chemistry, accessibility and inspection techniques will help support the UK's wider long-term nuclear waste storage strategy and help create a safer, cleaner environment for future generations.

Elsewhere in the conference Sellafield Ltd's Gina Vickers from The Site Ion Exchange Effluent Plant (SIXEP) Technical Team shared a platform with representatives from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and National Nuclear Laboratory to talk about innovation in decommissioning and the challenges of asset care in nuclear facilities.

Gina demonstrated the collaborative work we've been doing with [Gamechangers](#) – an initiative providing support to early-stage research and development – and Rawwater – a technology company that specialises in alloys and application techniques for high-integrity seals – in support of improving repair techniques in SIXEP.

Rawwater were able to build on similar work they'd done with the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) in Japan, and TEPCO's willingness and ability to share development work it had already undertaken saved the organisation considerable rework.

Gina said:

This serves as a powerful example of the opportunities for mutual sharing and spirit of international nuclear community and cooperation that makes events like the IAEA Conference so valuable and vital, even against the backdrop of a global pandemic.

We should be proud of our continued presence at such events and the due recognition we receive from our peers for the progress we are making in our unique and internationally significant mission.