

# Home building figures show increase in new housing starts

- Latest figures show a sustained period of growth in the number of homes being built.
- 11% increase in housebuilding starts in London.
- Houses make up 79% of all new builds – highest since 2000 to 2001 as the government demonstrates its commitment to building back better from the pandemic.

The number of homes being built since the lifting of the first period of national coronavirus restrictions continues to rise, latest housebuilding figures published today (18 March 2021) show.

New data shows new housing starts were estimated to be 42,110 in the latest quarter (October – December 2020), a 16% increase on the previous quarter (July – September 2020). New homes completed was at 46,950 in the latest quarter, a 4% increase compared to the last quarter, and the highest completions figure since its peak in the March quarter 2007.

Today's figures also show an increase in housebuilding starts in London with 13,460 in 2020, an increase of 11% from 2019.

In addition, the figures highlight that in 2019 to 2020 houses made up 79% of all new build dwellings – the highest proportion since 2000 to 2001.

The figures further reflect the housing and construction industry's resilience and measures they have taken to keep building sites open, in line with public health advice.

Housing Secretary RT Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Today's figures show a steady increase in the number of new housing starts and the number of new homes built, highlighting a sustained period of growth in the housing sector as it continues its recovery.

The government has continued to demonstrate its support for the industry throughout the pandemic by enabling construction sites to remain open and operate safely in line with important public health guidance. We've intervened to help the sector bounce back despite all the challenges we've faced.

The latest figures show new build dwelling starts (seasonally adjusted) were estimated to be 42,110 in the latest quarter (October – December 2020), a 16% increase on the previous quarter (July – September 2020). New build dwellings completed (seasonally adjusted) was 46,950 in the latest quarter. This is a

4% increase when compared to last quarter, and the highest completions figure since its peak in the March quarter 2007. This continued rise reflects increased construction activity following the lifting of the first period of the UK government COVID-19 national restrictions.

Recent government support for home building includes:

- Setting out an overhaul of the country's outdated planning system to deliver the high-quality, sustainable homes communities need. The proposed changes will be a boost to SME builders who will be key players in getting the country building on the scale needed to drive our economic recovery, while leading housebuilding that is beautiful and builds on local heritage and character. Recent studies show smaller firms feel the complexities of the planning process and its associated risks, delays and costs are the key challenges they face in homebuilding.
- We have set out an ambitious package of measures to ensure we build the right homes in the right places and level up opportunities across the country. This includes nearly £20 billion of investment in new housing as confirmed in the Spending Review, including over £12 billion of investment in affordable housing and our £7.1 billion National Home Building Fund.
- Our £400 million Brownfield Fund for 7 Mayoral Combined Authorities will deliver much-needed new homes on brownfield land – unlocking 26,000 high-quality homes.
- We have introduced a range of measures, such as allowing builders to seek more flexible construction site working hours with their local councils and extending certain planning permissions that would otherwise lapse, in order to keep the sector moving.
- We are also taking measures to support home buyers – for example stamp duty holiday on house purchases has been extended.

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# Quality and Continuous Improvement – First Generation Magnox Storage Pond (FGMSP)

The use of continuous improvement has long been associated with manufacturing organisations such as car producers. This approach is fairly new to the NDA group businesses and one of the main reasons for not adopting it before now has been a lack of recognition that a manufacturing approach would be beneficial. What is helping gain traction is the realisation that each of our businesses needs to be able to deliver products, as do manufacturing companies, whether that is quantities of waste for interim storage or demolition of facilities and clean-up of land. There are significant benefits from applying these techniques.

A collaborative approach to continuous improvement is being implemented across the NDA group. This has identified various levels of continuous improvement implementation, maturity and many different standards. In order to effectively manage implementation, experience from other sectors has helped define the priority improvement areas:

- ensuring that strategic objectives are cascaded at all levels in increasing detail throughout our businesses
- associated performance targets are clearly defined and applied on a daily, weekly and monthly basis
- a strategy is embedded to align capability in order to address gaps identified between actual performance and targets
- establish an expectation to expose and close performance gaps at all levels, in all departments.

Sellafield Limited has realigned itself to the approach described above, created a strategy, adopted a One NDA continuous improvement model, implemented a roadmap and created and started to deliver accredited industry good practice training to embed its strategy into the organisation. In addition, a baseline assessment tool to understand the maturity of continuous improvement across the organisation is now in use.

A good practice approach within the First Generation Magnox Storage Pond (FGMSP) shows how continuous improvement can improve performance. The mission delivery outcome to retrieve all Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) from FGMSP by the required end date (S031) has been cascaded through all levels of the team focussed on FGMSP using a range of appropriate measures and targets.

What this means in FGMSP is that the objective of removing all the sludge and pond contents has been converted to a reduction in the metre cubed (m<sup>3</sup>) of contents per year to meet the currently planned completion date. Figure 14 shows the required annual sludge removal and the cumulative lifetime cost of doing so, which is used to track performance.

The information on how much sludge has been removed can also be used to show the impact that more or less than planned sludge removal has on the estimated cost. In this example, each year the project is extended an additional sum of approximately £60 million would be needed showing how important it is to prevent timescales extending into the future.

In cascading the decommissioning objective, the annual target is broken down into a weekly plan within which daily throughput (beat rate i.e. two sludge batches a day) is identified and incorporated in a Master Production Schedule. Linking the annual target number of sludge removed to achieve the m3 retrieval targets allows individuals to clearly understand how they contribute to mission delivery and become involved in solving any problems to achieve the throughput and then record any changes to the way they work in operations, maintenance, engineering, commercial or people issues within their Quality Management System (QMS).

Visualisation and reviewing performance against targets not just for quantities of material but for safety, quality, cost and skills availability on a weekly basis allows gaps in performance to be exposed immediately and then closed by embedding improved capability in the workforce to problem solve systematically. Any learning can then be recorded and used in a continuously improving QMS.

This approach is now accepted as good practice at all levels within FGMSF.

Adopting this approach has contributed to 2019/20 delivery where all sludge targeted for removal was achieved against its most stretching target, increasing confidence that all of the sludge will be removed by 2026.

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## [Ponds and Silos at Sellafield](#)

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## [Timing of the Magnox Reactor](#)

# Decommissioning Strategy

The previous strategy for decommissioning Magnox reactor sites was developed over 30 years ago and involved deferring reactor decommissioning at all sites for approximately 85 years from reactor shutdown (S042). In 2016, we committed to reviewing this strategy with Magnox Limited to take account of new experience and developments in the decommissioning landscape (ref 3).

Bradwell had previously been named as a lead site when the strategy was blanket deferral, and much of this new experience has come from placing Bradwell into an interim state suitable for long-term deferral. As well as developing innovative approaches to decommissioning (e.g. developing techniques to retrieve, condition and package ILW), the experience at Bradwell has improved our understanding of the costs and risks associated with preparing sites for deferral.

It has also demonstrated that some sites are unsuitable for longer periods of deferral. The work completed by Magnox Limited at Bradwell has helped to demonstrate that interim storage of waste in a dedicated facility is neither as complex nor as expensive as previously thought, albeit dependent on site-specific factors including the views of local stakeholders.

The review of the Magnox reactor decommissioning strategy (S042) is now complete. We have concluded that whilst the deferred decommissioning strategy continues to have benefits in some cases, it is not appropriate as a blanket strategy for all reactors in the Magnox fleet because of their different design, location, age and physical condition. Consequently, the NDA has endorsed a site-specific approach to Magnox reactor decommissioning which will involve a mix of decommissioning strategies.

For some sites this will result in their decommissioning being brought forward whilst for others a deferral strategy with varying deferral periods will be the chosen approach. Magnox Limited will now prepare a business case (or cases), informed by local and national stakeholder views, for implementing this strategic change.

We have worked with both local and national stakeholders to identify factors from the NDA Value Framework (ref 17) that will discriminate between strategies for each site. This engagement has included discussion at the NDA Stakeholder Summit and various Site Stakeholder Group meetings, as well as strategy development groups involving government, regulators and local authorities. In November 2018 a large joint stakeholder event expressed the Value Framework factors as discriminatory questions (see table 2).

<b>Value Framework Factor</b>	<b>Discriminatory question</b>
<b>Health and safety Risk and hazard reduction</b>	For each credible decommissioning strategy, what work (level of effort) is required to manage risks to people (workers and public)?

<b>Value Framework Factor</b>	<b>Discriminatory question</b>
<b>Environment</b>	For each credible decommissioning strategy, what work (level of effort) is required to protect the environment? For each credible decommissioning strategy, what is the volume and nature of waste arising?
<b>Socio-economic impact</b>	To what extent does the community and local supply chain depend upon work at the site? What opportunities (value and likelihood) exist for alternative use of land at the site? How great is the visual impact of reactors?
<b>Enabling the mission</b>	What is the potential for reactor decommissioning to generate learning of relevance to other reactors? To what extent will reactor decommissioning allow the trial of new technologies or other strategic opportunities?
<b>Lifetime cost</b>	What work is required to prepare the reactors for deferral, and how much of this could be avoided by progressing with reactor dismantling? What opportunities exist for aligning decommissioning on neighbouring sites and what are the associated benefits?
<b>Achievability (resources and logistics)</b>	What capacity exists for interim storage of waste? Will interim storage of waste be problematic? How easy would it be to maintain or acquire a suitably qualified workforce after a period of deferral?

Table 2: NDA Value Framework factors and their discriminatory questions

Magnox Limited has begun the process of selecting the optimum decommissioning strategy (S042&43) for each of the Magnox reactors and, based on a review using factors listed above and in the NDA Value Framework (ref 17), Trawsfynydd has been chosen as a lead site for Magnox reactor decommissioning.

This is primarily because the external structure has degraded extensively since it was shutdown in 1991 such that substantial amounts of work would be required to make it safe for a long period of deferral; work that would then need to be undone to complete reactor dismantling. Furthermore, the site is located in Snowdonia National Park and in an area with a relatively weak local economy that is strongly dependent on work at the site.

The intention is that together the site-specific strategies will result in a rolling programme of activity as the Magnox fleet is decommissioned. This will maximise the opportunity for sharing any lessons learned, developing and implementing new technologies and strengthening wider capability. As a whole, the programme will collectively be geared towards reducing risk, reducing lifetime costs and growing skills and knowledge to deliver benefits both nationally and to local communities.

While we expect the new site-specific decommissioning strategies to be defined over the next 12 to 18 months, they will be continually reviewed and optimised using the learning obtained from the sites being decommissioned (S042&43).

It is expected that the strategy for decommissioning Calder Hall (a former Magnox reactor on the Sellafield site) will also incorporate learning from the lead Magnox site, Trawsfynydd. The development of site-specific strategies at the Magnox reactor sites does not affect programmes at Harwell and Winfrith. Continued focus on safety and risk reduction will remain the overriding priorities across all the sites.