

Major projects progress leads to milestone for SIXEP Continuity Plant

The new build SIXEP Continuity Plant (SCP) at Sellafield has achieved a major delivery milestone completing the manufacture and initial testing of 2 large pressure vessels.

Once operational, the plant will contain 7 of the bespoke stainless-steel vessels which help to treat liquid waste, acting as the 'kidneys' of the Sellafield site filtering out nuclear material before being safely discharged to sea.

Once manufactured, the vessels were loaded into a purpose-built rig to undergo a series of initial operating tests.

Manufacturing the 2 vessels, loading them into the rig, and the rig being ready to receive them, was the basis for the milestone. Testing will now continue for the remainder of the year and if successful, manufacturing of the project's remaining 5 vessels will go ahead.

The SCP facility is being delivered by the Programme and Project Partners at Sellafield and will ensure the existing Site Ion Exchange Effluent Plant facility, which has been running since 1985, can continue its vital work for decades to come, playing a vital role in Sellafield's purpose to create a clean and safe environment for future generations.

The project team worked alongside Carlisle based Bendalls Engineering to design and manufacture the vessels.

Simon Wilcock, SCP's project director, said:

The project has delivered its first project wide objective ahead of schedule which is a huge achievement for the team and our supplier Bendalls Engineering.

One of the benefits of the Programme and Project Partners approach is the ability to engage suppliers much earlier than would usually be the case if we followed a traditional client-contractor arrangement.

By engaging our suppliers earlier, we can put more time into working together to understand requirements and influence the design. We're then able to reach better outcomes and avoid issues arising during manufacturing.

Ben Carter, Bendalls Engineering project manager, said:

The Programme and Project Partners model has changed the whole dynamic of how a contract for Sellafield has been traditionally executed.

By engaging with the client throughout the design stage, and building a whole team approach throughout, we've delivered a highly demanding project on time and to the highest quality.

All children aged 1 to 9 in London to be offered a dose of polio vaccine

Following the discovery of type 2 vaccine-derived poliovirus in sewage in north and east London, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that a targeted inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) booster dose should be offered to all children between the ages of 1 and 9 in all London boroughs.

This will ensure a high level of protection from paralysis and help reduce further spread of the virus.

Nationally the overall risk of paralytic polio is considered low because most people are protected from this by vaccination.

Many countries globally provide an additional dose of polio-containing vaccine as part of their childhood vaccination schedule. The NHS in London will contact parents when it's their child's turn to come forward for a booster or catch-up polio dose – parents should take up the offer as soon as possible.

The programme will start with the areas affected, where the poliovirus has been detected and vaccination rates are low. This will be followed by rapid rollout across all boroughs.

This booster dose will be in addition to the NHS childhood vaccination catch-up campaign across London, where childhood vaccination uptake is lower than the rest of the country. It's important all children aged 1 to 9 – even if up to date with their vaccinations – accept this vaccine when offered to further strengthen their protection against the poliovirus.

Following the findings earlier this year of type 2 poliovirus (PV2) collected from the Beckton sewage treatment works, further upstream sampling undertaken by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has now identified at least one positive sample of the poliovirus, currently present in parts of the following boroughs:

- Barnet
- Brent
- Camden
- Enfield
- Hackney
- Haringey
- Islington
- Waltham Forest

The sampling has also detected the virus in lower concentrations and frequency in areas adjacent to the Beckton catchment area to the South (immediately below the Thames) and to the east of Beckton. However, it is not clear whether the virus has established itself in these areas or if the detections are due to people from the affected area visiting these neighbouring areas.

The level of poliovirus found and the high genetic diversity among the PV2 isolates suggests that there is some level of virus transmission in these boroughs which may extend to the adjacent areas. This suggests that transmission has gone beyond a close network of a few individuals.

A total of 116 PV2 isolates have been identified in 19 sewage samples collected in London between 8 February and 5 July this year, but most are vaccine-like virus and only a few have sufficient mutations to be classified as vaccine derived poliovirus (VDPV2).

VDPV2 is of greater concern as it behaves more like naturally occurring 'wild' polio and may, on rare occasions, lead to cases of paralysis in unvaccinated individuals.

UKHSA is working closely with health agencies in New York and Israel alongside the World Health Organisation to investigate the links between the poliovirus detected in London and recent polio incidents in these 2 other countries.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Consultant Epidemiologist at UKHSA, said:

No cases of polio have been reported and for the majority of the population, who are fully vaccinated, the risk is low. But we know the areas in London where the poliovirus is being transmitted have some of the lowest vaccination rates. This is why the virus is spreading in these communities and puts those residents not fully vaccinated at greater risk.

Polio is a serious infection that can cause paralysis but nationally the overall risk is considered low because most people are protected by vaccination. The last case of polio in the UK was in 1984, but decades ago before we introduced the polio vaccination programme around 8,000 people would develop paralysis every year.

It is vital parents ensure their children are fully vaccinated for their age. Following JCVI advice all children aged 1 to 9 years in

London need to have a dose of polio vaccine now – whether it's an extra booster dose or just to catch up with their routine vaccinations. It will ensure a high level of protection from paralysis. This may also help stop the virus spreading further.

Jane Clegg, Chief Nurse for the NHS in London said:

While the majority of Londoners are protected from polio, the NHS will shortly be contacting parents of eligible children aged 1 to 9 years old to offer them a top-up dose to ensure they have maximum protection from the virus.

We are already reaching out to parents and carers of children who aren't up to date with their routine vaccinations, who can book a catch-up appointment with their GP surgery now and for anyone not sure of their child's vaccination status, they can check their Red Book.

UKHSA, working with MHRA, has already increased sewage surveillance to assess the extent of spread of the virus and are currently sampling 8 sites across London.

A further 15 sites in London will start sewage sampling in mid-August, and 10 to 15 sites will be stood up nationally to determine if poliovirus is spreading outside of London.

[Suzy Davies appointed as a Member of the S4C Board](#)

News story

The Secretary of State has appointed Suzy Davies for a four year term from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2026.



A qualified lawyer, Suzy followed careers in arts marketing and as a senior solicitor with ten years service as a Member of the Senedd, which included a term as Shadow Minister for Culture, Heritage & the Welsh Language.

Since then, she has been an advocate for tourism in Wales, as Chair of the Wales Tourism Alliance, and continues to campaign on greater equality as a board member with Women's Equality Network. She is also a member of Colegau Cymru board and the Children's Commissioner's audit and risk board. A founder member of the Wales International Film Festival, she is now a member of the Iris Film Festival Board.

Born in Swansea, Suzy was raised in Bridgend, the Cynon Valley, Cardiff and Brecon. After working in Swansea, Newton and Aberystwyth, she settled in the Dyfi Valley where her family has a farm and tourism business, and where she learnt Welsh.

Remuneration and Governance Code

Members of the S4C Board receive £9,650 per annum. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Suzy Davies has declared that she was a Member of the Welsh Assembly from 2011 until 2021 and was Chair of the Conservative Women's Org/Women 2 Win Wales.

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[Social care staff to benefit from improved career options and training](#)

- Government working with adult social care sector on plans to support

staff development and wellbeing

- Workforce Development Fund to continue throughout 2022/23 helping staff to improve their skills

Hundreds of thousands of training opportunities will be available for social care staff to develop their careers over the next three years as part of the government's £500million support package.

This comes as the Workforce Development Fund is confirmed for an additional year (2022/23) offering stability ahead of new and improved training opportunities.

In 2020/21 the Workforce Development Fund, financed by the Department of Health and Social Care and disseminated by Skills for Care, helped more than 14,000 care workers from more than 2,300 establishments to progress their careers despite the pressures of the pandemic.

The government is working in partnership with the social care sector on plans for staff training and support including creating a new knowledge and skills framework to ensure clear paths to progress.

As part of this the government will be speaking to training suppliers and the social care sector about potential contracts to develop the best possible learning and development opportunities from April 2023, using some of the £500 million announced in the Spending Review.

These learning and development opportunities will include:

- New financial support to help adult social care employers with the costs of continued professional development (CPD) for registered nurses and other allied health professionals
- A brand new Care Certificate qualification, ending the need for care workers to repeat this training when they move roles. The government will fund more than 100,000 training places for new care workers to complete this new qualification
- Developing a digital hub and skills passport for the workforce. This will help provide a voluntary register of staff and verified records of skills and qualifications when moving between providers

By better supporting careers and staff wellbeing potential care workers are more likely to apply and current workers are more likely to want to remain in the profession.

Minister for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan said:

Dedicating your life to caring for others is not just a job, it is a calling but it also needs to be a career.

We know how hardworking social care staff are and they deserve our support in developing their skills through training.

Better training ultimately means better care for residents and a

better future for staff.

The new framework will set out the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours people need to work in adult social care.

It will also set out career structures and clear pathways for development within roles, as well as creating more routes for progression.

For level 5 managers there will be additional funding to assist with further qualifications.

All registered managers who do not hold a level 5 or equivalent qualification will be able to access a funded Diploma in Leadership and Management in Adult Care.

The government will also invest in level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications to ensure individuals working across social care have the option of taking up qualifications.

Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care Deborah Sturdy said:

A key priority when I took on this role was to improve training and career opportunities for our hard working staff.

Providing care is a skill which requires nurturing and if we want to retain the best of the profession we need to care for them too.

The skills framework will offer progression and improved opportunities which all our staff deserve.

For those who wish to remain in their existing roles but develop new skills there will be professional development opportunities.

Additional training will include developing skills to help with diabetes, stroke awareness, mental health and care for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

Leadership training will be available to build a culture of continued professional development across all sizes of care providers.

The Workforce Development Fund will continue this year to provide funded training to adult social care employers in England to support the development of their staff at all levels, offering funding for a wide range of qualifications, learning programmes and digital learning modules.

Student Loans Interest Rates and Repayment Threshold Announcement

The Department for Education (DfE) today (10 August 2022) confirmed annual updates to interest rates and repayment thresholds for Income Contingent Student Loans, and the interest rates and deferment threshold for Mortgage Style Student Loans.

Income Contingent Student Loans

Undergraduate loans

Income Contingent Student Loans for pre-2012 (Plan 1) loans

The interest rate on pre-2012 income-contingent repayment student loans is RPI or the Bank Base Rate + 1%, whichever is lower. The low interest rate cap is in effect, and therefore the rate to be charged from 1 September 2022 will be the Bank Base Rate (1.75%) +1%, that is, 2.75%. This rate may be adjusted during the year, if and when the Bank Base Rate changes.

If the low interest rate cap no longer applies during the year the interest rate on Plan 1 Income Contingent Repayment Loans during the period 1 September 2022 until 31 August 2023 will be 9%, the applicable rate of RPI for the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023.

Please monitor this website regularly as the rates may change during the academic year.

From 6 April 2023, the repayment threshold for pre-2012 (Plan 1) loans will rise to £22,015.

Income Contingent Student Loans for post-2012 (Plan 2) loans

Interest rates for post-2012 income contingent student loans vary between RPI and RPI +3%, depending on your circumstances. These rates are subject to any caps to reflect the Prevailing Market Rate.

Prevailing Market Rate cap:

From 1 September 2022 until 31 August 2023, the interest rate for borrowers on a post-2012 (Plan 2) loan will be a maximum of 7.3%, as announced by DfE Ministers on 11 June 2022.

From 1 September 2022 to 30 November 2022:

The interest rate will be 6.3% for all post-2012 (Plan 2) loans, reflecting a further reduction of the Prevailing Market Rate.

From 1 December 2022 to 31 August 2023:

The interest rate will be 7.3% as announced on 11 June 2022.

The income threshold for post-2012 (Plan 2) from April 2023 will be £27,295.

Postgraduate Loans

The Interest rate for Postgraduate Master's or Doctoral loans is RPI plus 3%. This rate is subject to any caps to reflect the Prevailing Market Rate.

Prevailing Market Rate cap:

From 1 September 2022 until 31 August 2023, the interest rate on a Postgraduate Master's or Doctoral loan will be a maximum of 7.3%, as announced by DfE Ministers on 11 June 2022.

From 1 September 2022 to 30 November 2022:

The interest rate will be 6.3% for Postgraduate loans, reflecting a further reduction of the Prevailing Market Rate cap.

From 1 December 2022 to 31 August 2023

The maximum interest rate will be 7.3% as announced on 11 June 2022.

The income thresholds for Postgraduate Masters and Doctoral Loans to apply from April 2023 will be announced in due course.

Mortgage Style Loans

From 1 September 2022 until 31 August 2023, the interest rate for mortgage style loans will be RPI, that is, 9%.

The deferment threshold for mortgage style loans will be £35,092.

Any queries from borrowers who have mortgage style loans should be addressed to their loan administrator.