

## **Senedd Nuclear Energy Cross Party Group**

**21.01.2025**

### **Government attendees**

- Richard James, Welsh Government
- James Gibbs, Welsh Government

### **Parliament attendees**

- Vaughan Gething MS
- Janet Finch Saunders MS
- Mark Isherwood MS
- Samuel Kurtz MS
- Rhys Hughes, Office of Rhun ap Iorweth MS
- Frederick Mead, Office of Janet Finch Saunders MS
- Mike Bryan, Office of Samuel Kurtz MS
- Temmy Woolston, Office of Vaughan Gething MS

### **Industry representatives**

- Sahsa Wynn Davies, Wales Nuclear Forum
- Gordon Bell, Hinkley Point C
- Jon Woodburn, NDA
- Simon Napper, NWS
- David Wallace, NDA
- Tom Hoyles, GMB
- Robert Sedgman, Last Energy
- Paul Gibson, Natural Resources Wales
- Iolo James, NIA
- Millie Beaver, NIA
- Joseph Ridding, NIA

Vaughan Gething opened the inaugural meeting of the nuclear energy cross party group (CPG) in the Senedd, welcoming civil servants, industry representatives and parliamentary colleagues. He highlighted the group's role as a forum to discuss the present and future of Wales' nuclear sector. Gething noted Wales' strong nuclear heritage, with ongoing decommissioning work alongside opportunities for new nuclear developments, including gigawatt (GW) and small modular reactors (SMRs). He emphasised the group's focus on energy generation, job creation, and community impacts, adding it was "about time Wales had a proper group on nuclear."

With support from his parliamentary colleagues, Gething was appointed the Chair of the CPG, to which Gething explaining that the Nuclear Industry Association (NIA) will function as the

CPG's secretariat. Gething explained that the CPG will aim to meet each term of Parliament to discuss a variety of topics.

Iolo James from the NIA gave introductory remarks introducing himself and the work of the NIA. He echoed points made by Gething about the purpose of the CPG, emphasising that there are huge opportunities for Wales in terms of nuclear, with these opportunities being historic.

James explained that nuclear energy is the UK's only clean, sovereign electricity source available 24/7, providing energy security, reliability, and predictable pricing. Nuclear generates large amounts of power with a minimal land footprint and low environmental impact, as recognised by the United Nations. The UK's current nuclear fleet displaces 15 million tonnes of carbon annually, and globally, 31 countries recently committed at COP29 to tripling nuclear capacity by 2050.

James also emphasised that Wales has an opportunity to lead in the UK's nuclear programme by being bold and ambitious. With world-class sites at Wylfa and Trawsfynydd, an experienced workforce, and a strong nuclear heritage in North Wales, Wales is well-positioned for significant economic, social, and environmental benefits. Key projects, such as SMRs and GW reactors, could create thousands of jobs, drive investment, and deliver clean, reliable energy for decades. However, this requires clear commitments from the UK and Welsh governments and timely decisions on technology for Wylfa to avoid missed opportunities.

Iolo introduced Sasha Wynn Davies, based in Anglesey, who volunteers with the Wales Nuclear Forum, a membership platform connecting stakeholders, the supply chain, and clients interested in Wales' nuclear sector. Davies highlighted her hope for 2025 to be a pivotal year for nuclear in Wales. She provided a brief overview of the Wales Nuclear Forum and shared details of a positive meeting she recently had with Rebecca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy, and Planning.

Davies then handed back to Iolo, who outlined key actions for MS' to maximise their impact as members of the CPG. These included raising questions in the Senedd about what the Welsh government is doing to engage with the UK Government on Wylfa and other opportunities in the sector, drafting a joint letter to the UK Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband MP, urging an urgent decision on Wylfa, and exploring the feasibility of a CPG paper on nuclear opportunities for Wales.

Gething thanked both James and Davies for their introductions and encouraged everyone present to introduce themselves. Once the introductions were complete, he emphasised that the discussion should now focus on the key asks highlighted by Iolo James, as these would help MS' coordinate effectively and operate strategically to achieve the best outcomes.

Using Hinkley Point C as an example of successful nuclear development, where many workers have come from Wales, Gething highlighted the importance of collaboration. He noted that the proposed joint letter on Wylfa was particularly timely, given the upcoming UK Government

Spending Review. He suggested that the group should discuss which areas to prioritise for a paper at their next meeting.

Samuel Kurtz expressed support for the three proposed action points, noting that when a question is raised in the Senedd, the NIA could assist in spreading the word to encourage debate. He voiced his agreement with the idea of a joint letter and a feasibility paper and welcomed the opportunity to involve more Welsh Government representatives in the CPG formally to facilitate informal questioning of the Welsh Government. Finally, highlighting that his constituency includes many workers at Hinkley Point C and heavy industry, he suggested that a site visit to Hinkley Point C would be valuable. Such a visit, he explained, would provide insight into the opportunities nuclear projects could offer. On this point, Iolo James stated that the NIA is the secretariat for the Nuclear Energy All-Party Parliamentary Group in Westminster where a visit to Hinkley Point C is planned in the coming weeks.

Janet Finch Saunders expressed her frustration at seeing all the work that has been done on Wylfa, emphasising how disappointing it is to see projects stall, particularly given the global energy insecurity we are facing. She stated that she is willing to do anything she can to help move things forward.

Rhys Hughes from the Office of Rhun ap Iorweth, stated he would follow up on the three action points and emphasised the importance of avoiding a false dawn. Hughes noted that the community in Ynys Môn is hopeful but stressed that any project must have lasting impact. Finally, Hughes highlighted the need for Wylfa to remain community-focused, as this would be essential for its success.

Gething highlighted the importance of ensuring sufficient housing for workers, emphasising it as a vital consideration. He suggested that a visit to Hinkley Point C would be beneficial. On this point, Gordon Bell from Hinkley Point C noted that the site currently hosts an average of 12,500 workers daily, rising to 15,000 this year.

Sasha Wynn Davies from the Wales Nuclear Forum shared that she visited Hinkley Point C in May 2024 and was struck by the extensive infrastructure surrounding the site, including bus services and housing. Gething added that there was a great deal to consider, even down to the need for new electricity connections to support the workers.

Richard James from the Welsh Government conveyed apologies from Rebecca Evans' special advisor for their absence. He expressed his willingness to attend future meetings, participate in informal discussions as part of the CPG, and assist in steering conversations where needed.

The discussion shifted to education, with Gething noting the importance of involving government representatives focused on education in conversations about Wales' nuclear sector.

Mark Isherwood added that while many regions already have strong skills in the nuclear sector, these need to be nurtured to prevent a decline in expertise. He stressed the

importance of the UK Government making a decision on Wylfa but emphasised the need for a unified Welsh voice on the matter. On the key asks, he advised the CPG to remain mindful of timescales, noting that election mode would soon begin, which could impact the timing of a proposed paper from the group.

David Wallace from the NDA addressed the CPG, expressing his enthusiasm for the group's existence, noting it is similar to one in Scotland, and highlighting the value of discussing these important issues. He stressed the need to recognise the decommissioning industry in Wales, which currently employs 500 people and has decades of work ahead. David emphasised the importance of maintaining the necessary skills for this work, involving colleges, and universities. Gething added that it would be beneficial to receive further information from the government on decommissioning efforts.

Gething noted that there seemed to be broad agreement on the key asks presented earlier in the meeting. Sasha Wynn Davies suggested that the CPG should prioritise its focus by splitting the year into key priorities. She emphasised the importance of addressing imminent issues, particularly in relation to the UK Government and its upcoming consultation releases, such as siting.

At the end of the meeting, Iolo James shared a story about a Welsh engineer working at Hinkley Point C who he spoke to where expressed a desire to return to Wales, build his career there, and settle with his family, highlighting the personal connections and opportunities tied to the sector. On this note, Gething closed the meeting, stating that minutes would be shared imminently and a date for the next meeting would be agreed, to take place some time in Easter.