

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

**24.06.2025**

### **Government attendees**

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

### **Parliament attendees**

- Vaughan Gething MS
- Samuel Rowlands MS
- Mark Isherwood MS
- Rhun ap Iorweth MS
- Rhys Hughes, Office of Rhun ap Iorweth MS
- Edward Evans, Office of Samuel Kurtz MS
- Temmy Woolston, Office of Vaughan Gething MS
- Paul Cubitt, Office of Vaughan Gething MS

### **Industry representatives**

- Sasha Wynn Davies, Wales Nuclear Forum
- James Craig, Nuclear Restoration Services
- Alan Raymant, Cwmni Eginio
- Simon Bowen, Great British Energy Nuclear
- Ieuan Williams, Great British Energy Nuclear
- Robert Sedgman, Last Energy
- David Wallace, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
- Iolo James, Nuclear Industry Association
- Aru Kathegesu, Nuclear Industry Association
- Elfred Roberts, Trawsfynydd SSG
- Aled M Jones, Wylfa SSG

Vaughan Gething MS, the Chair, welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted that it was a timely discussion in light of recent announcements on Sizewell C and SMRs. He highlighted the outcome of the SMR competition which saw Rolls-Royce SMR selected as the preferred bidder by Great British Energy Nuclear. He also referred to a recent visit by the Cross-Party Group to Hinkley Point C. He explained that the session would primarily focus on siting and current policy developments relevant to Wales.

Aru Kathegesu, Head of Policy at the Nuclear Industry Association, gave a presentation on policy developments in Westminster relevant to Wales. He provided an overview of the Spending Review, which included significant investment in the civil nuclear sector through

Sizewell C, SMRs and fusion. Clarity was also provided for privately led nuclear projects through alternative routes to market.

He spoke about the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and EN7, outlining the implications for new nuclear development. On EN7, he explained that it will enable more sites to be designated for nuclear projects and allow for a broader range of reactor types to be located across the UK. It will also support co-location of different technologies, which he emphasised was particularly important for Wales.

He outlined the role of NESO, which is leading the strategic spatial energy plan to identify where energy infrastructure is needed and can be sited. The NIA is engaging with NESO to ensure nuclear requirements are understood.

Simon Bowen, Interim Chair of Great British Energy – Nuclear (GBEN) began by noting that GBEN was initiated three years ago and has been operational since July 2023. The organisation now has between 160 and 180 employees. GBEN has acquired two sites, Oldbury and Wylfa, and has announced a preferred bidder through its selection process as part of the SMR Competition.

He stated that GBEN, throughout the SMR Competition, always intended to support two technologies due to capacity requirements. However, affordability has limited them to one, with the funding figure close to £2.7 billion. This funding will support Rolls Royce in developing a UK-specific design. The primary assessment will tailor the design to the selected site. GBEN will own the reactor that is developed, establish the development company, and contract Rolls Royce for the design and supply. A commitment has been made for three units.

Simon Bowen highlighted the government's ambition to deliver the first fleet of SMRs in Europe. The plan is to commit to the first project, and then, subject to the next Spending Review, move forward with the second unit. The plan includes five units at Oldbury and eight at Wylfa, which are both significant infrastructure projects. Following these developments, GBEN will explore alternative sites, with EN7 becoming increasingly important. GBEN is currently in the procurement process.

Regarding site decisions, Simon Bowen stated that these are expected sometime between September and the end of the year. The delay is due to the need to further assess the technologies in order to identify the most suitable match for each site.

He noted discussions with Cardiff Parkway, which could become a skills hub. With Rolls Royce submarines setting up there and the AUKUS programme expanding, it could support skills and capability development for the civil nuclear sector too. He stressed that "there is no bad answer for Wales here."

Simon Bowen emphasised the benefits of Wylfa, highlighting that it is a well-established site with good transport links, an experienced nuclear community, and well-characterised land. He clarified that site decisions will ultimately be made by ministers.

Looking ahead, Simon Bowen said that the SMR programme is not the only approach to meeting the UK's baseload power needs. The government estimates a requirement of 18GW, and a single SMR will not achieve this. GBEN is working with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to support market-led projects, aiming to enable them to proceed independently of the government balance sheet. He noted that raising capital is not expected to be an issue, referencing Sizewell C as a project that exceeded financial commitments. The challenge lies in determining who will take on the risk.

Simon Bowen concluded by stating that GBEN has been asked to work with the National Wealth Fund to explore fiscal models for market-led projects, which will run in parallel with the SMR programme. He expressed his passion for the nuclear industry and described the recent Spending Review as a pivotal moment that will help create high-quality jobs.

The Chair thanked the presenters for their contributions, noting that they were both upbeat and developments seemed positive to Wales and its civil nuclear sector and ambitions.

Rhun ap Iorwerth MS first asked whether the scope for including more nuclear sites had increased, following recent decisions. He queried whether this might affect the status of Wylfa and Oldbury as development sites. In response, Simon Bowen gave his personal view that new nuclear development is generally easier to deliver on existing nuclear sites. He stated that Wylfa and Oldbury are definitely the sites that GBEN intends to develop first, and the priority is to prove the technology on these sites before expanding elsewhere.

Rhun ap Iorwerth MS then asked if the selection of Oldbury for development could potentially result in Wylfa being dropped. Simon Bowen acknowledged that this is a theoretical possibility but said the probability of that happening is very low.

Rhun ap Iorwerth MS further asked whether it is now safe to assume that gigawatt-scale new nuclear at Wylfa is no longer being considered. Simon Bowen responded that the government has not yet made a final decision. The absence of any announcement in the recent Spending Review suggests that a decision will come at a later date. He added that a market-led approach could still be taken. When announcements on sites are made, Simon Bowen expects they will include an indication of the proposed type of development for each location.

Finally, Rhun ap Iorwerth MS raised a concern that local community support for nuclear development could weaken if a gigawatt-scale reactor is chosen over a SMR.

The Chair expressed a strong interest in the skills aspect of the nuclear programme. He asked how skills needs will be identified, particularly from a devolution perspective, given that education policy is devolved. The Chair also asked how the planning for skills development will work in practice, and whether there will be collaboration with the Welsh Government.

In response, Simon Bowen explained that the Nuclear Skills Taskforce has reviewed the skills landscape across both the civil and defence nuclear sectors. The taskforce has identified several areas where skills development is essential. He stated that macro-level skills planning

has already taken place and is designed to be appropriate across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Simon Bowen noted that two regional hubs have been established, one in the South West and another in the North West. These hubs will provide access to skilled workers and training resources. He added that significant planning and recruitment work is already under way. With Sizewell C and Hinkley Point C now well established, they offer successful models that can be followed for future projects. Simon Bowen emphasised the need for GBEN to work closely with Rolls-Royce, particularly regarding manufacturing facilities. He raised the question of whether such facilities could be located near Port Talbot, suggesting this as a potential opportunity.

Simon Bowen also highlighted the need to train welders and pipefitters and noted that there is a desire to recruit workers from those industries into the nuclear sector.

The Chair then asked about siting policy. He stated that the Cross-Party Group wants to see investment directed towards existing nuclear sites. However, he acknowledged the challenge of introducing new sites, especially given the dichotomy between favouring established nuclear communities and encountering opposition to nuclear development in areas without a nuclear history.

Aru Kathegesu said it was positive that the government is developing EN7. He welcomed the development of the site selection process but emphasised that clear messaging and strong public support are essential. He highlighted the importance of communicating effectively about new technologies.

Simon Bowen stated that there is no debate about the criteria the government is using. He said the intention was to consult on the criteria to ensure it is suitable and fit for purpose. He noted that the government does not anticipate any major changes and that it is now only a matter of time. The Chair observed that it was encouraging the process had gone to consultation rather than being imposed as a fixed policy.

Aru Kathegesu added that there is not perfect alignment between Wales and England. He noted that the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has been working with the Welsh Government to ensure the frameworks are consistent.

Robert Sedgman, UK Development Director at Last Energy, stated that Last Energy has approached the government about EN6 and acknowledged there is no legal challenge to their siting under that policy. He said that EN7 confirms the current legal framework and expressed confidence that development can already take place on alternative sites. He welcomed the government's recent decisions regarding GBEN and Sizewell C, saying they strengthen the nuclear industry across the UK and support the development of a supply chain for Last Energy.

Alan Raymant, Chief Executive Officer at Cwmni Eginio, said that most people currently understand the government is focusing on eight designated sites and that EN7 provides

clarification on this point. He noted that regardless of what policy documents state, developers must reference the criteria and follow regulatory procedures. Referring to north Wales, he said Cwmni Eginio has been focused on decommissioning work already underway but is concerned that the debate is becoming binary, focusing solely on whether or not there is a new nuclear project in Wales.

Alan Raymant explained that the company has developed a prospectus for Wales that covers skills, supply chains, decommissioning and new nuclear. He said the existing business in this area is already significant and has strong potential to grow. While GBEN is not focusing on Trawsfynydd, he noted there is private sector interest in the site. Although the scale of this interest is uncertain, he said alternative routes to market will be important.

Sasha Wynne Davies, Chair of the Welsh Nuclear Forum, said the recent announcements are positive for the nuclear sector but she does not believe Wales is yet on the front foot in terms of jobs and skills. She asked who is taking the lead on developing a coordinated plan and said there is currently a gap that must be addressed. She stressed that the Welsh supply chain must be more prepared than it is at present.

David Wallace, Stakeholder Lead for Devolved Regions at the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, said decommissioning is an important part of the overall nuclear story. He emphasised that building on the decommissioning workforce is crucial and noted that the sector employs a significant number of people. The Chair commented that this is impressive.

The Chair then referred to Richard James, Nuclear Business Manager, from the Welsh Government and asked about the government's role. Richard James said he could not be specific at this time but was conscious of the recent announcements and the opportunities they present for Wales. He said that with or without Wylfa, Wales is going to play a role in nuclear development and it is important that it does so. He added that he would keep the Cross-Party Group updated but could not provide further detail at this stage.

The Chair suggested that the Cross-Party Group should consider writing to the Welsh Government to highlight the importance of focusing on skills. The letter could refer to the positive news regarding Sizewell C and express the view that Wales should benefit from such developments. The Chair proposed that the letter ask what action the Welsh Government is taking to develop the plans and skills required to support the nuclear sector.

Simon Bowen said that there is still everything to play for at each potential site and encouraged members to lobby the UK Government, making a strong case for Wylfa to be chosen.

Richard James said that Welsh Government ministers have already spoken to UK Government ministers to advocate for Wylfa as a preferred site.

The Chair thanked the attendees of the meeting and ended the meeting.