

Senedd Nuclear Energy Cross Party Group

16.09.2025

Parliament attendees

- Vaughan Gething MS
- Samuel Rowlands MS
- Edward Evans, Office of Samuel Kurtz MS
- Temmy Woolston, Office of Vaughan Gething MS
- Paul Cubitt, Office of Vaughan Gething MS
- Stacey Goldsby, Office of Vaughan Gething MS
- Gwion Llwyd Jones, Plaid Cymru Economy, Energy and Local Government Researcher

Industry representatives

- Sasha Wynn Davies, Wales Nuclear Forum
- Mark Rouse, Nuclear Skills Plan
- Eiliw Williams, Cwmni Eginio
- Barry Lennox, CoRWM
- Paul Gibson, Nuclear Resources Wales
- Owain Lewis, Nuclear Restoration Services
- James Craig, Nuclear Restoration Services
- Simon Napper, Nuclear Waste Services
- Robert Sedgman, Last Energy
- Jon Woodburn, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
- Iolo James, Nuclear Industry Association
- Millie Beaver, Nuclear Industry Association
- Joseph Ridding, Nuclear Industry Association

Vaughan Gething MS, the Chair, opened the meeting by noting that there had been positive announcements about the civil nuclear sector in recent days and weeks. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss how Wales can benefit from new projects through skills opportunities. He then invited Sasha Wynn Davies to present.

Sasha Wynn Davies, Chair of the Wales Nuclear Forum, gave an update on the current state of civil nuclear skills in Wales and outlined what needs to be done in the future. She noted that important announcements were made yesterday, with further announcements expected soon, particularly regarding Wales. She highlighted that nuclear power generation is set to reach a new global record in 2025. She welcomed positive news from Last Energy in the recent UK–US announcements.

Sasha Wynn Davies emphasised that Wales must raise its game on skills planning and investment. She stressed the importance of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's role in

sustaining employment in Wales and referred to current employment and economic impact figures from Gardiner and Theobald and Cwmni Eginio in 2024.

As of 2024 the civil nuclear industry directly employed 827 people in Wales, a 39 per cent fall from 1,346 in 2014. On Ynys Môn, jobs at the former Wylfa site fell by 57 per cent between 2010 and 2024, while Trawsfynydd is expected to see an increase through accelerated decommissioning contracts. Despite the fall in jobs, the nuclear sector's contribution to the Welsh economy grew by 20 per cent in the three years leading up to 2024, reaching £850 million, largely due to Welsh companies winning supply chain contracts for English projects such as Hinkley Point C.

In February 2025 there were 345 Welsh organisations active in the nuclear supply chain, generating £160 million in annual sales. Most of these are SMEs, with 114 based in North Wales. Although new nuclear projects in England such as Hinkley Point C have provided significant benefits to Wales, Sasha Wynn Davies emphasised that the benefits could be much greater if Wales had its own new nuclear project. She explained that SMEs form the backbone of the Welsh nuclear supply chain, with 72 per cent being small or micro organisations, and that they need government support and confidence to invest. More than 10,900 Welsh companies have the potential to support nuclear sector activities. With the right investment Wales could capture up to £1 billion in annual supply chain spend by 2035 to 2040.

Sasha Wynn Davies stressed the importance of transferable skills across sectors, noting that alliances with offshore energy could support Tier 1 skills in nuclear. She highlighted the work of M-SParc in supporting younger people and encouraging them to pursue careers in low carbon sectors including nuclear.

Sasha Wynn Davies noted that the development of highly skilled specialists in the nuclear sector can take between five and twenty years, which makes it difficult to source the necessary workforce and highlights the need for long term planning and investment. The industry must also compete with other sectors for Tier 1 skilled workers in construction, project management, welding and electrical engineering, as well as in softer skills. She warned that much of the current nuclear workforce is nearing retirement, which makes attracting and retaining new talent urgent.

Referring to the Nuclear Industry Association's 2025 Jobs Map, Sasha Wynn Davies underlined that Wylfa is vital for Wales. She called for confidence from both the Welsh and UK governments to "invest, enable and lead," stating that Wales is open for business but cannot afford failure. She said that significant demand for skills is expected if new nuclear projects are secured in Wales, both for new build and for decommissioning.

She pointed out that Wylfa is the best site in the UK for a new gigawatt scale power plant after Sizewell C, and could also host Rolls Royce SMRs, creating thousands of high quality direct and indirect jobs. A February 2025 study projected that if new nuclear opportunities are realised, annual supply chain spend in Wales could reach £1 billion by the early 2040s.

Finally, Sasha Wynn Davies concluded that without clear skills planning there is a high likelihood of skills displacement if new nuclear projects are launched in Wales. The workforce must expand appropriately to meet industry demand, realise the opportunities of nuclear growth, and ensure delivery for Wales.

Mark Rouse, Skills Director of the UK National Skills Plan then presented, expressing he is proud to be leading the work of the Skills Plan. He explained that the Skills Plan is a business plan supported by the chief executives of the prime companies in the nuclear sector as well as by government. It is not simply a strategy but a plan of action to deliver outcomes. Companies have come together under this framework in order to address what he described as “the survivability of these companies.”

Mark Rouse highlighted that there is currently a gap of 10,000 people across the sector, which means every project is struggling to get off the ground and the industry is behind the curve. By 2030 the sector will need 120,000 people, and the plan assumes that previously announced projects will go ahead so that preparations are in place. To meet this challenge, an additional 40,000 people are required on top of current levels, and 10,000 have already been secured.

He noted that Lee McDonough from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has signed onto the Plan and the same applies for the Ministry of Defence. Both civil and defence sectors will collaborate, think differently, and act in the common good. The Plan is structured around three themes: attracting talent, retaining talent, and enabling the sector to perform at the highest level. The focus is on rotating between these priorities in order to achieve the 40,000 additional people required.

Mark Rouse emphasised that the Plan has secured both funding and people supplied by industry, which he said is rare in the skills agenda. The team is focused and working actively with industry and academia, including through the formation of a high-level education group. Bangor University, for example, has played a leading role.

Delivery will be achieved through regional collaboration. Several regional skills hubs have already been established, starting in the South West and North West, moving into Scotland with Babcock and NRS, and expanding into the East. Plans for Wales are currently paused while awaiting positive developments, but establishing a regional hub in Wales is seen as the next step.

Mark Rouse was candid in saying that the nuclear sector has often been made to feel “very special,” creating several barriers to entry, but acknowledged that these need to be loosened. Destination Nuclear is helping with this by running advertising campaigns aimed at young people to demystify the sector and raise awareness of the opportunities available.

Finally, he explained that the Plan is enabling work to pilot new approaches and schemes, such as reforms to safety case processes that have been in place for decades. He concluded by saying that the sector is now beginning to turn the corner and take tangible action.

The Chair stated that in Wales there is a clear desire to see new investment both in nuclear and in decommissioning. He then asked, from the perspective of the UK programme, how the sector should approach the process of opening a regional hub in Wales, and whether the Skills Plan currently has good links with the Welsh Government.

Mark Rouse responded that, to be frank, he does not currently have the necessary links with the Welsh Government. He noted that the Cross-Party Group in Scotland has been able to make significant progress and confirmed that the Skills Plan will seek to establish links with the Senedd Cross-Party Group as a means to engage more effectively with the Welsh Government.

The Chair highlighted the importance of emphasising the transferability of skills, pointing out that skills developed through the nuclear sector are valuable across a range of industries.

Sasha Wynn Davies stated that the Wales Nuclear Forum and the Skills Plan should work together to take the discussion forward. She suggested that the next step should be to map out the skills plan to ensure duplication is avoided and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Mark Rouse added that the Plan is deliberately trying not to be too narrowly focused on nuclear. Instead, the emphasis is on ensuring that the workforce has the right skills to meet future demand. He underlined this point by saying that the sector will need a very large increase in skilled people.

The Chair encouraged Sasha Wynn Davies to approach him directly on matters of coordination between the Wales Nuclear Forum and the Skills Plan.

The Chair then asked for a broader perspective on Wales from Eilw Williams from Cwmni Egin. Eilw explained that Cwmni Egin has historically concentrated on Trawsfynydd but is now moving towards a more agnostic position, focusing on opportunities for nuclear that stem from place-based and regional benefits. She stressed the importance of bringing together key strategic leaders in North Wales and highlighted regional skills partnerships as an important success story.

The Chair then invited questions from Conservative Party staff. Edward Evans from Samuel Kurtz MS' office, asked about the numbers of people required for the sector and what work is being done to meet that demand. He asked whether the focus is on attracting workers from other industries or building skills through colleges.

Mark Rouse responded that there are concerns about relying too heavily on accelerated recycling routes. Sasha Wynn Davies added that the challenge is not about displacement but about additionality. She explained that, through the Wales Nuclear Forum, discussions have already begun with representatives from the agricultural sector, noting that it is important to think outside the box and be more innovative. Mark Rouse emphasised that this is where regional skills hubs can be most effective.

Gwion Llwyd Jones from Plaid Cymru asked whether there are staged approaches to achieving the large workforce numbers required. Mark Rouse explained that this is a ten-year programme, with projections showing a need for 135,000 people. He noted that the numbers continue to grow and that both industrial capacity and academic support will be essential to meet this demand.

Barry Lennox from CoRWM observed that during a visit to Trawsfynydd he heard that it is a very different environment to work for an energy producer compared with working in decommissioning. He asked how the sector could make decommissioning sites more attractive as workplaces. Sasha Wynn Davies suggested that greater engagement with local communities and joint communications would help.

Owain Lewis from Nuclear Restoration Services said that the organisation struggles to recruit local people into the industry. He explained that this is not due to a lack of advertising but rather because people perceive decommissioning roles as short-term, even though in reality the work will span many decades. He stressed that these roles are long-term and secure, not temporary.

Jon Woodburn from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority noted that in the coming weeks a significant announcement will be made at Trawsfynydd which will generate significant numbers of new jobs. He confirmed that there is continuing investment in Wales and highlighted the project to reduce the height of the reactors at Trawsfynydd.

The Chair commented that the word "decommissioning" may give the impression of short-term work, but in fact the opposite is true. Mark Rouse agreed with this point.

Robert Segman from Last Energy said that this conversation highlights the disconnect between the industry's needs and the pace at which small modular reactors are being deployed, as well as how skills gaps are being addressed. He explained that Last Energy has designed courses with Bridgend College to support the skills pipeline with the people they want to recruit. He added that Last Energy is keen to be involved in the Skills Plan and noted that, following the announcement made the previous day, there will be significant short-term demand for skilled workers, which means the sector must move quicker.

Robert Segman also confirmed that Last Energy is still hoping to build a factory in Wales, provided that they can persuade their board to invest and the Welsh Government to support the project. The Chair responded that there is a clear appetite for greater investment in the sector.

The Chair then closed the meeting.