UK Government

Building Our Nuclear Nation

Government Response to the Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2026)

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Prime Minister's Foreword

People forget nuclear power is part of Britain's industrial heritage. Britain was the first civil nuclear power. Calder Hall, in Cumbria, the first commercial-scale nuclear power station in the world. But that was just the start. In the subsequent decade, we built 21 reactors. That's not a misprint. In the late 1950s and 1960s Britain built 21 nuclear reactors in just under a decade. We also built most of our motorway network and many new towns. And this in a Britain that had just established national parks in every corner of England and Wales, from the Lake District to the South Downs; Northumberland to the Pembrokeshire Coast.

The lessons of our history are clear: Britain can have a successful nuclear industry, we can build power stations quickly and it need not threaten our glorious natural inheritance. Unfortunately, over time, these lessons have been forgotten. The UK has struggled to bring new nuclear power stations online at the pace, scale or cost required to meet our future energy needs. Indeed, we have not completed a commercial nuclear reactor since Sizewell B in 1995. Our regulatory, environmental and planning processes have become too fragmented, too cautious and too slow, driving up costs. Projects are frequently delayed. And the way we protect nature has deteriorated into an adversarial system that sees building and nature as a zero-sum competition, with some participants that defend regulations not nature itself.

The overall result is that we become bogged down in processes that do not actually deliver additional nuclear safety or protections for nature. This slows development and the costs to working people could not be clearer: dependence on a volatile fossil fuel market that regularly throttles our living standards and economic security. We have seen that in Ukraine and we are seeing it again in Iran. The way forward is clear: energy independence through homegrown British energy. New nuclear power stations are a crucial part of this.

And the report by John Fingleton shows how we can deliver this vital objective quickly, return to our nuclear industrial heritage, and create thousands of jobs in the process.

This document sets out our response to that report. And I want to put on record my thanks to John Fingleton and the Taskforce for a frank and necessary assessment of our civil and defence nuclear programmes. Their message is clear and galvanising. Britain has deep nuclear expertise. Our nuclear industry is one of the safest in the world. It is low carbon. It supports our national security. It does not threaten nature, wildlife or the incomparable beauty of our landscapes. But we must do much better.

We accept that challenge. Last November, I issued a strategic steer to the nuclear sector. I asked them to modernise and expand our civil and defence nuclear sectors. My reasoning is straightforward. The world has become more dangerous and we face threats to our national and economic security that are unprecedented in recent memory. For strategic energy independence, national security and the climate, an

expanded nuclear industry is simply indispensable. We must maintain our nuclear deterrent, modernise our nuclear fleet and get off the fossil fuel rollercoaster. These are big strategic priorities for the United Kingdom. And I expect regulators and industry to now treat nuclear delivery with that in mind.

Furthermore, as our response makes clear – we have set an ambitious reform timetable to keep our side of the bargain. Delay has a cost, so we commit to implementing everything by the end of 2027, subject to legislative timelines. This is not deregulation. It is smarter regulation. It focuses on real risk. It is rooted in evidence. And it is designed to ensure that rapid delivery of our strategic priority speeds up at the same time as we protect nature more effectively.

But government cannot achieve this alone. As the Taskforce made clear, industry and regulators must now demonstrate leadership and ownership of their culture to make sure that we speed up delivery. Everyone in the system should apply a simple test: if a decision adds cost and delay with little meaningful benefit, it should not proceed.

That discipline is vital. Because the prize is tantalising. We can build a Britain that reclaims its place as a leading nuclear nation. We can protect our natural beauty. We can strengthen our national security. We can deliver clean and homegrown British energy. It can be safe, cheaper and more secure. We have done it all before and we can do it again. We can become a nuclear nation.

This plan is the first decisive step towards that goal.

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Executive summary

In January 2025, the Prime Minister commissioned an independent Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce, led by economist John Fingleton, to look at how to modernise and strengthen the UK's regulatory system for both civil and defence nuclear. The Taskforce published its final report in November 2025, setting out 47 recommendations. At the Budget, the Chancellor accepted the principle of all the recommendations, and we have begun to implement them already. This response sets out a comprehensive and ambitious programme of reform that will go much further. We will approach this programme through two objectives, each forming part of the report. Our mission is clear: to ensure the nuclear sector can contribute to our energy and national security and drive economic growth while protecting and enhancing nature and upholding Britain's alignment with international safety standards.

We are committed to implementing these recommendations as quickly as possible. Where legislation is required to give them effect, we will do so as soon as practicable and before the end of 2027, subject to parliamentary timings. If possible, whilst legislation is pending, we will implement interim measures to rapidly provide benefits to the sector. Whilst the Taskforce did not make recommendations for the Devolved Governments, we are committed to nuclear across the UK, as we have demonstrated with our plans for a Small Modular Reactor (SMR) fleet at Wylfa, and so we will work closely with them to ensure that they too can reap the benefits of these reforms.

Objective one: Reinvigorating Britain's nuclear sector.

We will lead the sector into a new era of proportionate, risk-based decision-making. We will streamline the complex regulatory structures to enable faster, clearer decision-making and strengthen accountability across defence and civil nuclear. We are giving the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) a statutory objective to further the delivery of our growth, climate and national security goals, and are rationalising the regulatory landscape – including by merging the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR) and the ONR, while still protecting national security and our international agreements. We will ensure safety standards remain in line with international norms whilst being applied proportionately, including in relation to cost. We will break down the inflation of regulatory guidance where it goes beyond the enforcement of legal duties on industry. Our nuclear ambition does not match the numbers of skilled workers we train, and we will ramp up our efforts through an expanded and improved Nuclear Skills Plan, with a greater focus on digital skills. We will also align our broader skills investment to ensure we have the construction workforce to keep pace with our Nuclear Nation ambitions. To hold ourselves and the sector accountable through this radical change, we will establish the Nuclear Regulatory Implementation Panel (NRIP), with the first meeting to be held in June 2026.

Objective two: Ensuring effective planning and environmental assessments.

We will implement new reforms to our planning system and improve ineffective and often duplicative compliance processes, while retaining our unwavering commitment to positive environmental outcomes. These reforms will be better for new nuclear and for nature. We will improve the application of the Habitats Regulations 2017, and explore bringing forward nuclear-specific Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) to accelerate delivery and secure better strategic environmental outcomes. We are also streamlining the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regime by publishing our roadmap to implement Environmental Outcome Reports by December 2027. We are intensifying our efforts to accelerate the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) planning process. Finally, we are building on existing reforms to judicial review, to modernise the costs regime for claimants to prioritise legal challenges with merit.

Objective 1: Reinvigorate Britain's nuclear sector

Organisational Structures and Culture

The Taskforce is blunt in its assessment: Britain's current regulatory model, and prevailing behaviours in the sector, will not support the scale and pace of nuclear delivery required. A culture of risk aversion stretches our application of the As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) principle beyond what is proportionate. The system cannot optimise for the social and climate benefits of low-carbon, safe nuclear energy. Where regulators disagree, no-one is empowered to step in. If we cannot stop climate change, the environment that well-meaning dutyholders and regulators seek to protect will suffer irreversible damage. Nuclear power is critical to our growth, clean energy, and environmental missions, and our nuclear deterrent is fundamental to our national security. Delay has a cost.

We are changing the system. We will rewire the regulatory framework and work with the sector to guarantee a more proportionate approach to safety and better protect the environment. This started with the Prime Minister's strategic steer to the sector on 26 November 2025 and continues with this response.

Streamlining nuclear regulatory structures

Our nuclear regulatory framework is unclear, duplicative, and does not incentivise the right outcomes. We will reform it through a three-step process: first, by ensuring the ONR has the right powers in legislation; second, by merging the ONR and the DNSR; and third, by setting up a new Nuclear Commission.

The ONR has five purposes set out in law covering nuclear and conventional health and safety on nuclear sites, security, safeguards, and transport of radioactive materials. But it does not currently have the ability to consider the significant wider social benefits of nuclear power in its decision-making. We will legislate to change that, giving the ONR the ability to consider strategic factors – national security, climate, and economic growth – when carrying out its functions. We will ensure that our reforms support both the ONR and the sector to continue an outcomes-focused approach to regulation (recommendation 1).

Currently, there are different regulatory frameworks for civil and defence nuclear. We will merge the DNSR and the ONR to form a single nuclear regulatory framework (recommendation 4). This will allow us to pool resources and expertise and achieve considerable efficiencies through this merger, while maintaining a firewall for critical national security. Final plans for the merger will be brought forward by Autumn 2026.

The problems go deeper than any single regulator, however. The ONR is one of several decision-makers on any nuclear fission programme, and there is no single body which can arbitrate between regulators. We will legislate to set up a Nuclear

Commission, establishing a single collective decision-making body empowered to resolve any regulatory issues which individual regulators cannot agree (recommendation 2). The Commission will have a mandate to act on contentious matters affecting both civil and defence nuclear. This will tackle the delays and avoidable cost escalation arising from the current setup.

Establishing the commission will take time if we are to do so properly. Because delay has a cost, the process of change will begin immediately. From March 2026, we will introduce a lead regulator model to the sector (recommendation 3). Where multiple regulators are involved in significant nuclear projects, the ONR will function as the single point of contact for developers and operators. This will address one of industry's most common criticisms: that no organisation leads on coordinating regulatory decisions, and developers are left languishing while regulators reconcile their positions. Our blueprint for the Commission will be informed by our experience from operating this model.

Restoring proportionality to the sector

The Taskforce is clear we need a reset on proportionality. Implementing recommendations 5 to 10 are core in achieving that, and success in delivering this reset will require government, regulators and industry to play their part. We will work together to develop, sign and publish a shared Proportionality Action Plan by Summer 2026. This will complement the recently published Ways of Working – principles to guide the application of ALARP and BAT in the nuclear industry. The Plan must be a genuine joint effort: Government will lead on the implementation of recommendations 6, 8, 9. We expect industry, dutyholders and regulators to own the implementation of 5, 7, and 10.

Defining risk

A fundamental part of the Action Plan will be ensuring risk is assessed in a proportionate way. The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) 1988 Tolerability of Risk Framework sets out the concepts of 'broadly acceptable', 'tolerable', and 'intolerable' risks. The terms are defined broadly to provide flexibility and accommodate innovation, and the Framework is a well-respected tool for risk management. The nuclear sector's interpretation of the concepts within it, however, has drifted over time, erring towards excessive caution without meaningful safety improvements. The ONR's guidance combines this ambiguity with the Linear Non-Threshold (LNT) model of radiation exposure to define a radiation dose target for the public from nuclear sites as 0.02mSv. This is overly conservative considering the average annual dose for a person in the UK from all sources is 2.6 mSv.[1] This

[1] Radiation Protection Services - Ionising radiation exposure of the UK population, published June 2025.

guides regulators to impose safety upgrades where there are no health benefits, at significant cost to the nuclear sector and therefore the public.

To address this, we will convene an independent expert advisory panel to examine the nuclear sector's application of the Framework and to clearly define the terms for application in the sector. This does not mean revising the LNT model, which is the international standard, and the best toolkit we have available, nor are we reviewing the legal dose limits that are set out in the Ionising Radiation Regulations 2017 or the Tolerability of Risk Framework itself. The panel will report by June 2026 (recommendation 6). The nuclear regulators will consider and implement as appropriate the steer by the panel in their regulatory guidance, ensuring the UK maintains existing alignment with international norms. This statement will clarify the expectations for risks below the broadly acceptable region. If government considers this does not achieve the outcome intended by the recommendation, we will take additional action to ensure this is achieved.

In some cases, the legislation underpinning the regulatory regime itself is not clear. The Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) requires dutyholders to protect people against risks 'so far as is reasonably practicable'. Relevant case law refers to taking measures to reduce those risks which are both foreseeable and not insignificant, provided that the benefit in risk reduction is not 'grossly disproportionate' to the cost, time, or effort required to implement the measure. This term is not defined in law. We will define it in legislation to make it easier for employers in the nuclear industry to determine what it means in practice (recommendation 8). We will consult by Summer 2026 to ensure that any option we take forward maintains the level of protection of the public and workers and intend to finalise any changes before the end of 2026.

Finally, the ONR and Environment Agency (EA) will undertake an immediate review of their numerical guidance (recommendation 7) to restore a genuinely nonprescriptive regulatory system which aligns with the revised use of the tolerability of risk framework. The regulators will consider and implement the steer by the panel in their regulatory guidance ensuring the UK aligns with international norms. The review of the ONR's Safety Assessment Principles (SAPs) and Technical Inspection and Technical Assessment Guides, will clarify their use and ensure consistency. It will set a clear expectation for Relevant Good Practice (RGP), which outlines that it is for dutyholders to identify RGP, including from other high hazard industries. We operate an outcomes-focused approach to regulation, and the regulators should ensure their guidance is consistent with this. We will hold regular stocktakes to hold regulators to account, and expect the guidance to be published in December 2026. Guidance will be a flexible tool, not a checklist.

Turning clear guidance into proportionate practice

Setting a clear set of expectations through legislation and guidance is of paramount importance. We will go further, working with industry to make sure that

proportionality is embedded both within our own governance structures and industry processes.

Safety cases, produced by dutyholders to demonstrate understanding of hazards, risks and risk prevention and control measures, are excessively detailed and function as regulatory compliance tools. We will work with industry to reset how safety cases are produced. They will be concise practical statements of safety requirements, owned and understood by dutyholders, not developed by consultancies to tick boxes for regulators (recommendation 5).

Currently, nuclear risks, as defined by safety cases, are managed at a programme level: dutyholders are not required to consider how their risk mitigations impact other dutyholders' programmes. We will move to an integrated, enterprise-wide risk management approach (recommendation 9). The Ministry of Defence (MoD) will oversee the management of risks for the defence nuclear portfolio, and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) will manage risks for the civil nuclear decommissioning portfolio.

We want to see the end of nuclear regulatory processes applied to conventional hazards on nuclear sites where those hazards have no bearing on nuclear safety. Consistent with the Ways of Working (WoW) principles, dutyholders should not seek to make bespoke arrangements, for non-nuclear activities, such as scaffolding or lifting equipment, where nuclear risks are already covered in the nuclear safety case. We will support dutyholders and regulators to review their arrangements for radiological and conventional risks arrangements including disapplying nuclear licence conditions for facilities and activities where they are not relevant (recommendation 10).

By working together under a Proportionality Action Plan, we will collectively address these key recommendations, while maintaining safety and ensuring we remain in line with international standards.

Resetting organisational culture

Given these issues are crucial to ensuring efficient use of public money in government civil and defence projects, the Chancellor has written an open letter to the nuclear industry and regulators explaining how we will lead a sector-wide reset of organisational culture (Recommendation 45).

We expect regulators and industry operators to apply proportionate, risk-based regulation. We expect their leaders to assess the way their organisation approaches risk management, address gold-plating in the implementation of regulations and to challenge themselves on whether those tasked to manage risk are properly empowered to make sensible judgements on tolerable risk, or if the location or mandate of those decision-makers should change. We have asked them to report back within six months.

Through this approach, we are inviting Boards across regulators, industry and public bodies to treat culture as a core strategic asset, integral to performance and risk management, rather than a narrow compliance obligation. Boards will be encouraged to track cultural indicators systematically, commission regular independent assessments, and ensure leadership consistently models behaviours that drive both high-quality safety outcomes and efficient, predictable delivery. This is a first step in directly responding to the Taskforce's finding that entrenched behaviours – such as excessive risk aversion, proceduralism and an unwillingness to challenge – are major barriers to achieving safe, timely and affordable outcomes that effectively protect people and the environment. By embedding consistent expectations and a common toolset for measuring and improving organisational culture, we will embed shared standards, sharpen accountability and enable constructive challenge, strengthening operational discipline at every level (recommendations 38, 45).

Capability, retention and innovation

Sizewell B first achieved criticality in 1995. Twenty-two years passed before ground was broken at Hinkley Point C. In that time, our skilled workforce diminished: most retired, moved to new industries, or took their skills abroad. We are paying the price of retraining an industry and rebuilding a supply chain to support delivery at Hinkley Point C. We need to take bold action to close the emerging skills gap, including in our regulators, as we strive to once again become a Nuclear Nation. A failure to train and retain the workforce cannot be allowed to be a brake on our nuclear ambition.

To meet the emerging demand for skilled workers across the nuclear sector, we will expand the delivery of the Nuclear Skills Plan, which brings together government, industry, and education providers to deliver the diverse and skilled workforce and 24,000 additional jobs required in the nuclear sector by 2030, through:

- Expanding secondment programmes – including new pathways that enable movement across public, private and regulatory sectors;
- Enhancing structured knowledge transfer mechanisms for retiring specialists;
- Strengthening targeted mentoring schemes;
- Broadening training provision to include human factors capability, digital literacy, and other emerging skill areas (recommendation 39).

Building on the Nuclear Skills plan we will also seize the opportunity to accelerate the use of advanced digital technologies across the public sector, and consider how we can support the private sector as it does the same (recommendation 41). The Nuclear Digital Programme will drive the adoption of tools such as expert-led AI-enabled safety analysis, digital twins and modern data-centric engineering. It will include stronger collaboration with universities on digital nuclear research and structured opportunities to upskill both new entrants and existing professionals.

Our nuclear construction hiatus lost us not only the skilled workforce but expertise in the regulators. Pay for specialised regulatory roles has not kept pace with the level of technical skill required. We will work with regulators to improve remuneration and employment terms for highly specialised roles, so that organisations such as the EA, ONR, and Natural England can attract and retain the advanced technical expertise they need (recommendation 40). These changes will be contingent on substantial cultural change programmes, led by regulator leadership, to avoid a situation where pay at regulators escalates but the problems outlined in this response are not resolved.

The ONR's current cost recovery model is inflexible and creates budget uncertainty for both the regulator and industry. We will reform the ONR's charging model to give the regulator greater financial predictability, aligning fees more closely with inspector expertise and case complexity. We will allow the ONR to retain surpluses, within guardrails on which we will engage with the sector, to strengthen its own capability. This work is complex and is subject to legislative time. But because delay has a cost, the ONR will immediately begin to improve existing administrative processes to increase transparency and support more strategic financial planning.

Charging model reforms will proceed only in conjunction with the broader ONR cultural change programme, and close consultation with industry and government to ensure charges are necessary, proportionate, and transparent.

Holding Government and Industry accountable

We know that simply announcing reforms is not enough. We will establish a Nuclear Regulatory Implementation Panel (NRIP) that will hold industry, regulators and the government to account for implementing the delivery plans for each recommendation and driving the culture change required to build our nuclear nation (recommendation 47).

The NRIP will be a small, expert council established to provide authoritative challenge, strategic counsel and continuity from the Taskforce. It will be chaired by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), and bring together senior leaders and independent experts, to ensure that the intent and standards of the Review are preserved as delivery plans mature. The NRIP will report to the Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero and Defence Secretary, to ensure ministerial accountability at the centre of government.

International Harmonisation

Britain has an opportunity to become an exporter of nuclear technology. The first SMRs at Wylfa and the Advanced Nuclear Framework published in February of this year present opportunities we must seize. Fifty years ago, we failed to take

advantage of our status as a world-leader in nuclear technology. That mistake will not be repeated.

To that end, we will build on the ONR's existing Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with the US and Canada to establish an international regulatory strategy and delivery plan by Autumn 2026 (recommendation 42). This will look forward to the deployment of SMRs, cooperating with European regulators to minimise duplicative national licensing processes.

International alignment of regulation will reduce costs: we can do more by being more competitive internationally. Export licensing for nuclear related items is currently slower and more complex than it needs to be, hampering UK firms and preventing integration with global supply chains (recommendation 43). We will introduce a better export licensing approach – clearer and more proportionate. This will include routine use of five- and ten-year licenses, a dedicated point of contact for nuclear technology exporters, and quicker processing for repeat applications. We will also introduce a formal escalation route with clear timelines and ownership. Collectively, these reforms will deliver a more efficient licensing environment while maintaining robust security controls.

Objective 2: Streamline planning and environmental assessments

In just ten years, between 1967 and 1977, the UK refitted its entire domestic gas network from town gas to natural gas, paving the way for modern central heating. It has become impossible to imagine the same thing happening today.

The UK's environmental, planning, and nuclear regulation was designed in the service of sound goals: protecting the nature that is precious to us, ensuring that communities get a say over what is built in their neighbourhood, and making certain that our nuclear facilities are safe in perpetuity. Those goals stand.

However, the Taskforce has shown that the way our regulatory system has evolved over time has led to a complex web of duplicative assessments without benefits to nature. A focus on process over outcomes. A judicial system that does not do enough to disincentivise unmeritorious claims. This is not just slowing down nuclear projects, but also the other clean power, housing, hospitals, airports, and railways we need to thrive. Delay has a cost.

We have already taken bold steps in the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (PIA) to streamline the system, including:

- Removing the statutory requirement for pre-application consultation;
- Introducing Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) and through the Nature Restoration Fund (NRF); and,
- Blocking 'meritless' Judicial Review appeals.

These reforms will make a difference. However, the Taskforce makes clear that we can and should go further for civil and defence nuclear and the broader infrastructure that underpins our future economic growth. And we will.

Many of the reforms in this chapter are vital for the build-out of nuclear infrastructure; but they have the potential to dramatically reduce the delays suffered by other infrastructure developments too. Where possible, we will therefore apply them economy-wide.

Protecting nature and the environment in a more strategic and proportionate way

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) regimes exist to protect Britain's unique wildlife and landscapes, and this government will not lower environmental protections. Some consider that there is a conflict between, on the one hand, protecting these habitats and our environment, and, on the other, delivering the infrastructure we so desperately need on time and to budget. The government does not agree. The room for improvement is so material that we can improve both environmental objectives *and* infrastructure delivery.

Habitats Regulations

HRA process should not be implemented in a way which imposes unreasonable burdens on developers, including having to prove that hypothetical risks do not exist, and conducting repeat HRA even when nothing on the ground has changed (recommendation 11). The government will therefore take significant steps to improve the application of the 2017 Habitats Regulations. This will include, but is not limited to, guidance on excluding hypothetical or speculative risks, and making explicit that HRA assessments can and should be reused. We will also legislate so that mitigation can, where appropriate, be considered at an earlier stage of the HRA process.

There is however a clear imperative to go further and to make it so that, where the government already knows the impacts of certain types of developments and the kinds of mitigations that work best to preserve our habitats at a strategic level, there are off-the-shelf solutions for developers. That is why we introduced the NRF, and why we are committing now to identify opportunities, by Autumn 2026, to accelerate the development of nuclear energy through targeted deployment of EDPs (recommendation 12).

We will also go further and take steps to identify and designate a zone for nuclear development using our existing levers, including spatial planning and proactive environmental assessment, and the NRF where appropriate (Recommendation 12/14).

For Defence Nuclear, we will go even further. The world has become more dangerous, and the recapitalisation of our deterrent must keep pace. We will therefore develop a bespoke regulatory pathway to allow rapid development on Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE) sites whilst managing environmental risk in a proportionate manner. This likely requires primary legislation, which we will do as soon as practicable.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Streamlining the HRA process so that it is quicker and more strategic is, however, just one part of the puzzle. We must do the same for the EIA regime (recommendations 13-15).

We are therefore bringing forward Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs) as a matter of urgency. We have published a roadmap for delivery, and the regime will be in place by December 2027. In bringing forward EORs, we can retain the value and rigour of assessments whilst addressing the issues of unnecessary duplication, risk aversion and inefficiency that have developed over the past 40 years. In developing a new approach, we will be able to tailor assessments not only to the unique characteristics of our environment, but also to support the wider planning and development landscape to reduce burdens and speed up delivery. This includes

ensuring that environmental assessments are proportionate and aligned to reduce unnecessary duplication.

Delay has a cost. So, in advance of the delivery of EORs, and their complementary equivalent in the NRF, the government will continue to work to ensure the better functioning of the existing system to provide developers and decision-makers with clearer expectations and reaffirming established principles for pragmatic assessment (such as the Rochdale Envelope).

To make it quicker and easier to complete relevant assessments, we will also improve access to environmental data for nuclear projects by publishing publicly available environmental datasets in a central repository within the next two years (recommendation 16). None of this will create environmental harms: necessary assessments can be done in a quicker and more proportionate way while safeguarding nature and the environment.

Protected landscapes and Biodiversity Net-Gain

We will also take forward two further reforms to our environmental regulations.

First, we will introduce a streamlined mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) framework for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). Details will be set out in the government response to the 2025 consultation. This will ensure infrastructure can be delivered to schedule while still driving nature recovery (recommendation 18).

Second, we will legislate to constrain the Protected Landscapes Duty amended by Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) to ensure major projects, including nuclear, proceed on time and on budget while maximising positive environmental outcomes for these nationally important places. To achieve this, we will clarify that developers of NSIPs are not required to pay financial compensation in order to comply with the Protected Landscapes Duty. This will reduce uncertainty and speed up the delivery of our critical nuclear, transport, and energy infrastructure (recommendation 19).

Reforming and accelerating the foundations of the planning system

Planning remains one of the most significant sources of delay for nuclear projects and the infrastructure our country needs. Lengthy assessments and inconsistency create avoidable uncertainty, discourage early investment and contribute directly to extended timelines and rising costs.

We have made clear strides in this area already, not least through the PIA, and those reforms need time to bed in. However, there is no need to wait to make further changes to the system where there is a compelling case to do so, and we are confident that any disruption in the short-term will pay far-reaching dividends. We are

therefore accelerating efforts to ensure the planning system more effectively enables both low-carbon energy projects and infrastructure as a whole. This includes:

- Consulting on a new **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** that would give substantial weight to smaller scale low carbon energy developments and apply a permanent 'tilt' in favour of granting permission for them (recommendation 24).
- **Streamlining the pre-application phase of the Development Consent Order (DCO) regime** to shorten early project timelines while maintaining public engagement (recommendation 25).
- **Strengthening the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAPI) process**, to speed up the overall consenting process, including examination and decision making by focusing on key issues earlier on in the process (recommendation 26).
- Encouraging greater use of '**minded to' letters** when extensions to ministerial decisions are required, improving transparency and predictability in the consenting process (recommendation 27).
- **Supporting the reinstatement and modernisation of model provisions as the standard baseline for DCO drafting**, including clear templates for powers, requirements and protective provisions (recommendation 28).
- **Exploring strengthened guidance to increase the uptake of secondary consents to be incorporated directly into Development Consent Orders (DCOs),** reducing post-consent delays while maintaining robust environmental and human health protections (recommendation 29).
- Establishing a new unit within DESNZ to coordinate post-consent **discharge functions** for nuclear power and electricity network projects (recommendation 30).
- Considering the use of **alternative planning routes** where these offer a more appropriate and efficient pathway for delivery especially for smaller scale development which does not require compulsory purchase of land through the consenting regime. Alongside the improvements to the DCO process, the PIA enables applicants to request that projects are directed out of the NSIP regime into alternative planning routes, including the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) regime, where appropriate (recommendation 31).
- Strengthening policy expectations on **socioeconomic benefits** within the NPS framework and providing further information section 106 of the TCPA 1990 to provide greater clarity for developers and communities (recommendation 36).

Judicial review reform

Judicial review (JR) plays a vital role in holding public bodies to account, but as the Taskforce highlighted, it can also enable repetitive or unmeritorious claims that delay critical national infrastructure, including new nuclear projects. Repeated challenges across multiple regulatory stages create uncertainty, increase costs, and risk undermining timely delivery of nationally important programmes.

An independent review by Lord Banner KC into delays to NSIPs in 2024 uncovered similar themes. That is why, through the PIA and targeted updates to the Civil Procedure Rules (CPR), we have already introduced reforms to ensure that challenges against NSIPs are managed more swiftly and proportionately.

Building on this progress, the government will now extend the recent judicial review reforms beyond NSIPs and progress further reforms to modernise the costs regime, ensuring proportionality (recommendation 20). These changes will prioritise genuine legal challenges, strengthen the integrity of the judicial review process, deter misuse, and maintain appropriate access to justice while supporting the timely deployment of infrastructure essential for energy security, economic growth, and net zero. We will also ensure that all measures are fully aligned with the UK's international obligations.

We will publish a working paper in Summer 2026 on the detailed proposals required to implement the Taskforce's recommendation to extend the recent NSIP JR reforms to environmental permitting and nuclear site licensing. We will also consider whether similar reforms would be beneficial for other major planning regimes. Following consultation, the government will legislate to extend the NSIP JR reforms and invite the Civil Procedure Rule Committee (CPRC) to make the relevant changes to the CPR. The government will also work with the CPRC to ensure the reforms operate effectively and invite them to make relevant amendments to the Environmental Costs Protection Regime (ECPR) via the CPR by the end of 2027.

Building on this, the government will bring forward proposals to offer targeted indemnification for nuclear projects where the planning consent is subject to judicial review, where this would materially support delivery and represent value for money. We will bring forward and publish proposals in Summer 2026 (recommendation 21).

Making the planning and environmental permitting system work for nuclear

The plans set out above are another step on this government's path towards a radical reworking of our planning system that delivers for the whole economy. They will apply economy-wide, but as the Taskforce made clear, our nuclear industry is held back by some nuclear-specific rules designed in a period when nuclear build-out was no longer a national priority and the technologies we now know to be safe were new. These rules are no longer fit for purpose, holding back nuclear build-out and decommissioning when there is no safety case to do so.

Fleet delivery and siting

In 2025, we delivered a major milestone for the UK nuclear fission sector by designating EN-7, which opened up the door to small modular and advanced modular reactors and nuclear development at a wider range of sites. We can and will go further.

Within the next 12 months, we will aim to update EN-7 to introduce a new criterion that supports fleet rollout, enabling developers to benefit from standardisation and repeated application of proven designs (recommendation 32). We will also finish revising the Semi-Urban Population Criterion to increase the number of potentially suitable sites for all reactor classes, while maintaining our uncompromising approach to public safety. These updates will give developers greater flexibility in identifying sites (recommendation 33).

We will update the approach to nuclear emergency planning zones based on evidence and a risk-based approach (recommendation 34). These changes will maintain robust emergency planning and response arrangements while providing proportionate flexibility for the adoption of new nuclear technologies e.g. SMRs.

We also want credible projects to have clarity on the availability of potential new nuclear land and to have quick routes to entering into commercial discussions with landowners. For available public-sector civil nuclear sites, we will ask the NDA and Great British Energy – Nuclear (GBE-N) to notify the government promptly of any credible approaches and we will provide an initial response within 28 days (recommendation 46).

Regulatory justification

Regulatory justification requires all uses of ionising radiation to be assessed to determine whether the individual or societal benefit outweighs the potential health detriment it may cause.

We agree with the Taskforce that there are options to address the costs in the existing process. First, we will work with GBE–N to secure an early determination that light water reactors are justified (recommendation 35). We will then move forward with plans to simplify the wider pathway for other reactor classes, cutting unnecessary duplication while preserving robust public protections.

Should process improvements not go far enough, we will consider legislative reform to ensure regulatory justification becomes a streamlined, proportionate and predictable step within the nuclear deployment pipeline.

Environmental permitting

We will deliver a series of reforms to speed up environmental permitting (recommendation 17), including, but not limited to, improving compliance with permitting timescales and empowering the EA to make risk-based decisions on

which activities should be exempt from permitting. This will mean certain low risk activities associated with construction will no longer require an environmental permit at all.

Decommissioning and waste management

The government also recognises the need to rationalise the planning process for decommissioning and waste management across the nuclear sector. These are non-negotiable parts of the nuclear process: safe decommissioning and waste management will not be compromised. Where we can however make this process cheaper and quicker without compromising safety, we will do so.

We have already commenced section 304 of the Energy Act 2023, and will convene the NDA, nuclear operating companies, and regulators to explore opportunities for more proportionate practices within current regulations (recommendation 22).

To increase proportionality in permitting and planning permission for decommissioning (recommendation 23), we will also:

- Consult on creating an exemption for stockpiling demolition materials on existing nuclear sites in England;
- Work with the NDA**,** MoD and regulators to speed-up decommissioning decision-making;
- Work with the EA to ensure the soon-to-be-published Guidance for Requirements for Authorisation is applied proportionately and;
- Work with the NDA to bring forward new permitted development rights for small scale development.

Finally, we will give the delivery body for the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) the powers appropriate to a major national project of this importance (recommendation 37). This includes granting it enhanced powers to access land for surveys, compulsory purchase powers, and bespoke permitted development rights that align it with other major infrastructure developers. We will also work with the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG), the NDA, the GDF developer and the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) to assess whether more appropriate and proportionate planning routes exist for deep-borehole investigations.

Conclusion

These reforms are the most significant reset of the UK's nuclear regulatory system in over 20 years. The actions we take from now will reduce the cost and time required to build nuclear power plants and maintain the nuclear deterrent. Today's fragmented, duplicative and ineffective processes will be replaced with a clear, proportionate framework for assessing risks and making decisions which can speed up development of new nuclear and better protect the environment. Our reforms to the planning system benefit the nuclear sector and beyond, accelerating infrastructure delivery across the economy.

Across civil nuclear, the reforms have the potential to materially de-risk deployment and increase delivery certainty for the UK's nuclear programme, affecting projects worth tens of billions of pounds, both in the short and long term. For our large-scale new builds at Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C, greater regulatory coordination, replication of proven designs and more proportionate environmental permitting could avoid months of delay and hundreds of millions of pounds in cost overruns. For SMRs, we expect these reforms could significantly improve delivery certainty, unlocking clean, firm power and strengthening the UK's first mover advantage in the global SMR market. Finally, for decommissioning and legacy sites, applying proportionate regulation as hazards reduce offers significant long-term value for money, helping to contain liabilities that otherwise risk escalating over decades.

For defence, these reforms will enable faster, more efficient, and more proportionate decisions, accelerating the delivery of the nuclear deterrent and its associated infrastructure. They will also allow greater operational flexibility in the management of nuclear assets such as de-fuelled submarines. Collectively, this will enhance the nation's defensive capability while enabling savings to be reinvested across the defence portfolio.

Combined with the steps we have already taken, including the Advanced Nuclear Framework published in February 2026, these reforms strengthen investor confidence and materially improve the UK's ability to meet net zero at lowest overall cost.

However, we will not stop here. We will ensure the reforms are implemented in as short a timeframe as possible so benefits are realised quickly and will work with industry and regulators to embed long-lasting culture change across the sector. We will continue to seek opportunities to improve the regulatory environment and correct deficiencies as they are identified. We will improve coordination across the civil and defence nuclear sectors to realise efficiencies. At every step we will remain laser-focused on ensuring a deterrent that keeps us safe, and a prosperous future underpinned by clean, safe, and cheap nuclear power.

Annex A: Implementation plans

Recommendation 1

HMG Strategic Steer to the Nuclear Sector

The Prime Minister issued a strategic steer to the Nuclear Sector in November 2025: Prime Minister's strategic steer to the nuclear sector - GOV.UK.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has also sent a letter to the nuclear industry and regulators, setting out nuclear as a national priority, emphasising urgency and the importance of safety and delivery as national priorities (see recommendation 45).

The government will legislate to provide the ONR with the ability to consider strategic factors – such as energy, national security and economic growth imperatives – in the delivery of its statutory purposes.

Recommendation 2

Establish a collective decision-making body for regulatory decisions with an internal challenge function within individual regulators

There is currently no standing mechanism to break through conflict between regulators, leading to delay and unnecessary additional costs. This government will bring this to an end and establish the UK's first Nuclear Commission. The Commission will formalise collective regulatory decision making and leadership for the sector as envisaged by the Review.

The government will legislate to establish this new commission, and it will be fully functioning by Summer 2028. However, to deliver immediate benefits, the government will put in place an early informal arrangement using the lead regulator model (recommendation 3) to support forthcoming projects and existing facilities, products and activities.

To develop the Commission, the government will scope out objectives of the commission and potential options for roles/ composition and overall set up –including mechanisms for Defence and benchmarking with Canada and Finland.

Recommendation 3

Pending enactment of recommendation 2, establish a lead regulator model for any incidence where multiple regulators are involved, with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) as the default lead regulator for the nuclear fission sector

The government has already taken steps to implement this recommendation. We are working with regulators to put in place immediately a formal lead regulator system. ONR has already written to other regulators to form the 'super six', arrangements will

be finalised during March and the lead regulator model will be in place by 31 March 2026.

This will take a site-based approach to ensure that both civil and defence sites are considered as we view the benefits of a lead regulator model encompassing the whole lifecycle of the nuclear sector portfolio.

Recommendation 4

Simplify the nuclear regulatory landscape by consolidating the majority of nuclear safety regulatory functions within a single organisation.

The government will consolidate regulatory activity for nuclear fission by merging the ONR and the DNSR. Initial changes will be delivered by Autumn 2026, with the merger completed by the end of 2028, both subject to appropriate national security and international commitment safeguards.

- MoD, DESNZ and ONR will work together to develop options for consolidations including testing this approach with international partners.
- Identify and deliver legislative changes.
- Identify and mitigate impacts on workforce, skills, recruitment and retention.

This phased approach protects safe delivery of current and future projects and programmes.

The government notes that this recommendation relates to streamlining of regulation relating to nuclear fission and excludes some other sectors using radiological material.

In combination with implementing recommendations 2 and 3 to establish a collective decision-making body for nuclear regulatory decisions and a lead regulator model, we will strengthen the existing collaboration between the EA and ONR to fully deliver the intended outcomes of recommendation 4. We will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in delivering a simpler nuclear regulatory landscape for industry stakeholders, and if not will make further changes to regulatory responsibilities once the outcomes delivered under recommendations 2 and 3 are clear.

Recommendation 5

Reset safety case development

The government will work with dutyholders and regulators to reset the approach to safety case development and assessment to eliminate duplication and embed simplicity, with the aim of shortening safety cases and focusing on their use by dutyholders to support operations. As part of the Proportionality Action Plan, the government will work with dutyholders and regulators to explore alternative safety demonstration methodologies and agree a strategic direction for nuclear safety direction by the end of Summer 2026. The sector will be required to determine the

underlying drivers of safety-demonstration complexity and propose a set of targeted corrective actions.

We will then make clear to industry how we expect the direction to be implemented. Under the Action Plan, organisations will be expected to incorporate these measures into their culture and operational practices. The new methodologies and practices should be fully embedded within nuclear safety documentation by Summer 2027.

The government will maintain oversight of the implementation of the Proportionality Action Plan through the Nuclear Standards Forum and the NRIP.

The defence sector will define and realign its approach with the Three Lines of Defence model, and the regulator will exist external to that structure.

Recommendation 6

Government should define the tolerability of risk for nuclear

The government will take responsibility for defining the Tolerability of Risk for the nuclear sector. To do so, the government will convene an expert advisory panel to hear evidence on the application of the Tolerability of Risk framework and its practical application in the nuclear sector. The panel will:

- Compare and contrast the approaches to risk and regulatory decision-making used by nuclear regulators with those used by (i) international nuclear regulators, and (ii) GB regulators in other high-hazard sectors and sectors regulated under the Ionising Radiations Regulations, such as the medical sector, considering underlying regulatory principles, proportionality, and the application of risk-informed judgement
- Evaluate whether the concepts and discussion provided in HSE's Reducing Risks, Protecting People (R2P2) framework are sufficient to adequately balance the risks in the nuclear sector, both societal and individual, against the benefits from nuclear technologies.
- Consider whether the use of the R2P2 framework to derive numerical targets for the range of risks in the nuclear sector is appropriate, and whether this is the optimum approach to proportionate nuclear safety decision-making.
- Consider whether it would be appropriate to direct ONR that risks at or below broadly acceptable levels are deemed to be ALARP and As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA) unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.

The review panel will conclude and make a statement on its findings by June 2026. This will include a commitment to periodic reviews of how the Tolerability of Risk framework is used by the nuclear sector. We will ensure ONR uses the outcomes in its review of its regulatory guidance (recommendation 7) which is due to be published in December 2026.

The panel will not consider changing HSE's Tolerability of Risk Framework and its indicative numerical boundaries which support consistent decision-making by Health and Safety at Work Act regulators for other sectors.

While this work is being delivered, regulators and operators will benefit from a more proportionate application of the legal requirement, as far as reasonably practicable, known as the 'ALARP principle' as a result of the embedding of the Ways of Working – principles to guide the application of ALARP and BAT in the nuclear industry.

Recommendation 7

Review nuclear regulator guidance in line with revised tolerability of risk

Regulatory guidance will be thoroughly reviewed to ensure it is consistent with a primarily non-prescriptive regulatory system and drives proportionality within the sector.

ONR is currently reviewing its Safety Assessment Principles (SAPs) and plans to consult in Summer 2026. Some of the Basic Safety Objectives (BSOs) in ONR's Numerical Targets, such as those on radiological protection for workers and the public, are included in this review. The SAPs review will also consider structural integrity, software reliability, and seismic analysis. ONR will clarify the use of its guidance documents, ensuring consistency and set a clear expectation for Relevant Good Practice which outlines that it is for dutyholders to identify relevant good practice, including from other high hazard industries. ONR will consider and implement the outcome of the expert advisory panel from recommendation 6 in its review of its guidance. ONR will publish its review in December 2026.

The EA is in the process of reviewing a number of areas of guidance, including broader structure and content. This will include consideration of how tolerability of risk outcomes from Recommendation 6 impact the 2016 Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 and Best Available Techniques (BAT).

The government will maintain oversight of progress on this recommendation through the Nuclear Standards Forum and the Nuclear Regulatory Implementation Panel. This work is expected to form part of the Proportionality Action Plan.

Recommendation 8

Define the meaning of proportionality in the Health and Safety at Work Act

The government will introduce secondary legislation under section 15 of the HSWA to clarify the legal definition of proportionality in relation to an assessment of different risks, having regard to the suggested changes in recommendation 8. In Summer 2026 we will consult with industry and trade unions to ensure any options we take forward to legislate do not reduce the level of protection of the public and workers against health risks.

Recommendation 9

Establish an enterprise-wide system of portfolio risk management across the defence and decommissioning sectors

To enhance coherence and accountability, government will establish pan-enterprise safety systems which will provide the highest level of portfolio risk management. This will include establishing mechanisms for ultimate decision-maker for risk and top-down risk apportionment.

These forums will eliminate programmes from working in isolation, and facilitate timely decision making, informed by a strong understanding of interdependencies.

We will deliver these changes incrementally, through policy and legislative reform, by the end of 2027. In doing so, we can maintain progress on in-flight programmes.

Recommendation 10

Review arrangements to prevent conflation of nuclear and conventional risks

The government will work with the industry partners, ONR, DNSR, and EA to ensure that recommendation 10 is implemented in full. This work will focus on distinguishing radiological and nuclear risks from conventional risks and ensuring this distinction is applied appropriately.

As a first step, the Chief Nuclear Inspector (CNI) has agreed that the next cross-industry CNI themed inspection will be on nuclear site health and safety with focus on construction. By focusing on construction practices, contractor management, and leadership, the inspection ensures that conventional hazards are assessed against standard health and safety expectations, preventing them from being conflated with nuclear risks and supporting proportionate, targeted regulatory oversight.

The ONR will set-up a forum for regulators and dutyholders to explore perspectives, previous challenges, and opportunities for avoiding nuclearisation of low hazard, non-nuclear hazards.

To support this work further, the Safety Directors Forum will be considering industry led initiatives that can be brought forward to address this recommendation.

Recommendation 11

Amendments to the Habitats Regulations

We are taking forward this recommendation through a combination of legislative and non-legislative measures.

At the earliest opportunity, we will legislate to modify the regulations governing the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process to allow appropriate consideration of mitigation measures, where their efficacy is proven, at an early stage of the HRA process, reducing time spent on unnecessary assessment and encouraging early

agreement to resolve issues and differentiate clearly between addressable concerns and significant problems.

Where the current regulations can be better applied, we will update guidance to make clear where flexibilities exist and allow decision-makers and project proposers to push back on over-application of the regulations.

In particular, guidance changes will:

- clarify that hypothetical or speculative risks should be excluded;
- clarify that compensation need not be 'like-for-like' provided that the coherence of the national site network is protected;
- emphasise that de minimis effects (i.e. effects too insignificant to risk a negative impact) do not constitute an adverse effect on integrity including where a de minimis effect results from in-combination effects with other projects; and
- clarify that HRA assessments can, and should be reused, as far as possible.

We will work with Arm's Length Bodies, including Natural England, to implement these changes. This will be in the context of the upcoming publication of Strategic Policy Statements for Natural England and the Environment Agency, which will set out the government's strategic priorities for each regulator, and the approach they should take to delivering these priorities when ensuring focus on outcomes.

We expect these changes to guidance will solve the issues raised in the Taskforce report. By using guidance where possible, we can make these changes more quickly and effectively. If upon review these issues remain, the government will consider legislating to ensure effective and appropriate application of the HRA regime.

Recommendation 12

Alternative pathway to comply with the Habitats Regulations

We agree that developers of nuclear projects should have an alternative way to comply with the Habitats Regulations.

We will therefore identify opportunities, by Autumn 2026, to accelerate the development of nuclear projects through targeted deployment of EDPs under the Nature Restoration Fund. For the environmental features and impacts they cover, EDPs remove the requirement for project specific surveys, HRAs and bespoke mitigation. Instead, developers can make a single payment that discharges relevant obligations, as envisaged by the Taskforce.

For defence nuclear, we will establish an alternative pathway for Habitats Regulations Compliance, when necessary to secure our national security interests. We will therefore develop a bespoke regulatory pathway to allow rapid development on DNE sites to ensure that process requirements do not result in unacceptable

delay. This likely requires primary legislation, which we will do as soon as practicable. Through this discrete and targeted change, we will explore optimal approaches to reducing cost, increasing pace of delivery and protecting the environment simultaneously. We will set out more detailed plans in the Summer.

Recommendation 13-15

Proportionality in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regime; Allow the development of Modular Low-Carbon Acceleration Zones; One and done assessments and reversal of the Finch judgment for low-carbon electricity projects

As part of the ongoing move towards a more strategic, outcomes-based approach, the government will use new tools such as Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) and Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs) to support the delivery of low carbon development. We have published a roadmap for the introduction of the EORs regime by December 2027.

Once in place, EORs will allow for the streamlining of environmental assessment to reduce the burden of unnecessary duplicative assessment at the project level, where appropriate upstream assessment has taken place – with scope to legislate for bespoke procedural requirements for defined development outcomes and/or geographies where appropriate. In parallel, the powers secured through the Planning and Infrastructure Act allow for EDPs to be put in place covering specific geographies – for example, zones as suggested by the Taskforce – and development types to address the impact of development on protected sites and species at a strategic scale.

Where in place, the combination of streamlined EORs and relevant EDPs will ensure that overall levels of environmental protection are maintained, while speeding up delivery of much-needed development. Natural England are developing the first EDPs and the government will work with Natural England to prioritise where EDPs are put in place to support the delivery of housing and infrastructure, including nuclear, whilst unlocking better outcomes for nature.

In respect of the judgment in the Finch case, the government will continue to support the appropriate application of the judgment, recognising its limited focus on the consideration of the downstream emissions of hydrocarbons extracted as part of the development as opposed to nuclear schemes. Consideration of the judgment and wider case law will form part of the development of EORs to provide clarity as to the nature of assessment required for different types of development.

The government will use the new system of EORs to drive procedural proportionality whilst ensuring the substantive rigour and value of assessment is maintained. As part of the development of EORs, the government will look to tailor them to meet the needs of different types of development.

In parallel to bringing forward EORs, the government will continue to look for opportunities to improve the functioning of the existing system, including as part of the DNE plans to be published in Autumn 2026.

Recommendation 16

Increase data-sharing, and transparency on environmental data

There are clear benefits to having increased access to environmental data. We expect that publicly available datasets for EIA will be published on a central depository, and how this works will be explored as we develop EORs in line with the roadmap. We will take forwards the recommendation that any additional data that developers collect as part of the EIA process is added to this central repository through implementation of EORs. This will allow for a simpler, faster and more effective environmental assessment process and will help us understand the effectiveness of assessment and any mitigations secured as part of the assessment process.

The NDA already engages closely with those interested in developing its land no longer needed for its mission so we will work with them to make data available where possible.

We agree with the recommendation that developers should publish high-level cost estimates of the assessment process and any mitigations that are reasonably capable of costing more than £500,000, together with an explanation of why this is proportionate. We will explore ways in which this can be achieved to facilitate transparency and adoption of cost-effective and proportionate mitigations, including through use of EORs.

Recommendation 17

Implement statutory timelines for environmental permitting

Nuclear developers should have greater assurance around permitting timelines and confidence that the EA will process applications efficiently. We will reduce permitting determination timelines by simplifying and speeding up processes, we will:

- Exempt certain low-risk construction activities from requiring a permit altogether, subject to appropriate conditions.
- Make regulation more proportionate and coherent by modernising industrial permitting.
- Improve the effectiveness of permitting timescales. Performance will be tracked and Ministers notified when determinations cannot be made in time to help accelerate decision-making.
- Support quicker timeframes and flexible decision making through EA’s new Priority Tracked Service for complex multi-permit and NSIP sites

- Roll out a new digital ‘apply and manage’ service, providing an easy-to-use platform to reduce determination times and information requests.
- Further improve alignment between planning and permitting by piloting a Lead Environmental Regulator model as a ‘single front door’ to major projects.

Building on the launch of the Priority Tracked Service in January, we will implement these improvements at the earliest opportunity.

It is the government’s view that new statutory timelines, while in principle a good idea, can lead to unintended outcomes, including the rejection of reasonable permitting applications where only a little more time is required.

Recommendation 18

Implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The government will introduce a proportionate and streamlined BNG framework for NSIPs. This will include measures addressing all the taskforce’s recommendations on BNG for NSIPs (18 A-D). DEFRA will shortly set out the detailed package of measures in the government response to the 2025 BNG for NSIPs consultation.

The government has recently announced reforms to BNG to simplify planning requirements whilst retaining our commitment to nature recovery. Working alongside any new Permitted Development Rights, this will remove the need for smaller decommissioning activity under 0.2 hectares to deliver BNG. Larger sites, made up mainly of hardstanding or existing buildings where little or no habitat is impacted, are also exempt. DEFRA, DESNZ and NDA will continue to work together to gather evidence about how BNG is working for nuclear decommissioning activities and make improvements where necessary.

DEFRA and Natural England will work with MoD to implement biodiversity net gain, seizing the opportunities presented from recent proposed reforms. This will better enable MoD to strategically and flexibly manage biodiversity enhancements across its estate, driving efficiencies and maximising wider benefits.

Recommendation 19

Remove or constrain the National Park Duty in Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA)

The government will legislate to constrain the Protected Landscapes Duty amended by the LURA.

Our National Parks and National Landscapes are our most iconic and inspiring places and play a critical role in delivering our national priorities for nature recovery and access for all. The government recognises that developers and planning authorities may be unclear on the expectations for complying with the Protected

Landscapes duty, and that in some cases this has led to extended negotiation around compensatory payments.

To address this uncertainty, we will legislate to clarify that developers of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects are not required to pay financial compensation in order to comply with the Protected Landscapes Duty. Relevant authorities must still seek to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes, meaning that landscape and nature considerations and better environmental outcomes remain an important consideration for development in these special places.

Recommendation 20

Amend the cost cap for judicial reviews and limit legal challenges to Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) to a 'single bite of the cherry'

Judicial review plays a vital role in holding public bodies to account, but as the Taskforce highlighted, it can also enable repetitive or unmeritorious claims that delay Critical National Infrastructure, including new nuclear projects. Repeated challenges across multiple regulatory stages create uncertainty, increase costs, and risk undermining timely delivery of nationally important programmes.

An independent review by Lord Banner KC into delays to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in 2024 uncovered similar themes. That is why, through the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and targeted updates to the Civil Procedure Rules (CPR), government has already introduced reforms to ensure that challenges against NSIPs are managed more swiftly and proportionately.

Building on this progress, the government will now extend the recent judicial review reforms beyond NSIPs and progress further reforms to modernise the costs regime, ensuring proportionality (recommendation 20).These changes will prioritise genuine legal challenges, strengthen the integrity of the judicial review process, deter misuse, and maintain appropriate access to justice, while supporting the timely deployment of infrastructure essential for energy security, economic growth, and net zero. We will also ensure that all measures are fully aligned with the UK's international obligations.

The government will consult in Summer 2026 on the detailed proposals required to implement the Taskforce's recommendation to extend the recent NSIP judicial review reforms to environmental permitting and nuclear site licensing. We will also consider whether similar reforms would be beneficial for other major planning regimes. Following consultation, the government will legislate to extend the NSIP JR reforms and invite the Civil Procedure Rule Committee (CPRC) to make the relevant changes to the CPR by the end of 2027. The government will also work with the CPRC to ensure the reforms operate effectively and invite them to make relevant amendments to the Environmental Costs Protection Regime via the CPR by the end of 2027.

Recommendation 21

The Government should commit to indemnifying nuclear developers against any damages they incur as a result of proceeding with their project while a judicial review is being decided

The government recognises that judicial reviews can add uncertainty, costs and delays to nationally significant infrastructure, including nuclear, which is central to our clean energy and growth ambitions. Through the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and court reforms, we have already taken steps to tackle meritless judicial reviews and to ensure that cases are dealt with promptly.

Building on this, the government will bring forward proposals to offer targeted indemnification for nuclear projects where the planning consent is subject to judicial review, where this would materially support delivery and represent value for money.

We will set out proposals in Summer 2026. If legislation is required, this will be undertaken as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 22

Proportionate regulatory control of radioactively contaminated structures and infrastructure

The government has already begun implementation of this recommendation, commencing section 304 of the Energy Act 2023 in December 2025.

To ensure full implementation of the recommendation, DESNZ will convene MoD, the NDA, nuclear operating companies, and regulators within 6 months to explore opportunities for more proportionate practices within current regulations.

In addition, this government will continue to explore options to allow for the commencement of Section 303 of the Act, and a more proportionate regulatory regime for nuclear sites in the final stages of decommissioning.

We are also already working on solutions to speed up delivery during the final stages of decommissioning, as reflected in other areas of the Nuclear Regulatory Review, such as permitted development rights, proportionate working arrangements and changes to permitting regulations. We will continue to commission NDA and regulators to support this policy formation in DESNZ.

Recommendation 23

Proportionality in permitting for decommissioning activities

We accept recommendation 23. We will:

a) Create an exemption for stockpiling materials on existing nuclear sites in England subject to conditions to be determined in collaboration with the NDA.

If necessary, following consultation, DESNZ and Defra will amend the Environmental Permitting Regulation 2016 to enable such an exemption.

b) Work with NDA, MoD and regulators to develop arrangements to speed-up decision making in decommissioning, in line with the spirit of Task Force recommendations 3 and 4.

c) Work cross-government with local authorities, the ONR, and nuclear site operators through existing forums to ensure roles and responsibilities for different environmental assessments are clear and there is no risk of duplication. This ensures the distinct functions of the Nuclear Reactors (EIA for Decommissioning) Regulations 1999, and wider environmental impact assessment regulations, are implemented as intended. In the longer term, MHCLG will change Town and Country Planning EIA to an EOR system – a new reformed type of environmental assessment.

d) Work with the EA to ensure the refreshed Guidance for Requirements for Authorisation (GRA) is clear, fair and proportionate for nuclear operators, and to embed the recent publication Ways of Working – principles to guide the application of ALARP and BAT in the nuclear industry.

e) Work with the NDA and MoD to develop proposals for new permitted development rights for small scale development to support decommissioning and undertake public consultation on these proposals. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, changes would be made to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended via secondary legislation.

Parts b-d will be completed before the end of the year, and parts a. and e. will be completed before the end of 2027.

Recommendation 24

Improving the application of Critical National Priority (CNP)

We have made changes to strengthen the policy presumption of Critical National Priority in both the new National Policy Statement (NPS) for Nuclear Energy Generation (EN-7) and the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1), and these changes are in line with the recommendation. Prior to designation and publication of the NPSs, we updated the policy to clarify that the need for low carbon energy infrastructure will likely outweigh any residual impacts in all but the most exceptional circumstances. These changes are already in force in EN-1 and EN-7.

Consultation on a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is open until 10th March 2026. The draft would give a similar degree of policy support to low carbon energy, within the context of the wider approach to considering development proposals which the new Framework would create. Proposed policy W3 would give substantial weight to the benefits of low-carbon energy development and electricity

network infrastructure, which is the highest level of weighting proposed in the document. Such development would also benefit from a revised presumption in favour of sustainable development, operating through policies S3-S5; these would apply a permanent 'tilt' in favour of granting permission, such that any adverse effects would need to substantially outweigh the benefits, if permission for low-carbon development were to be refused. We will respond to the consultation in the Summer.

Recommendation 25

Guidance issued by MHCLG is updated to streamline the Development Consent Order (DCO) regime

We will introduce new National Infrastructure Planning Guidance by Summer 2026 which will deliver the principle of Recommendation 25. This will follow analysis of responses to our Streamlining Infrastructure Planning consultation. In particular, we will:

- Update pre-application guidance to reflect the PIA's removal of the statutory requirement to undertake pre-application consultation under the PA08.
- Not assess consultation as part of the acceptance test (in accordance with the removal of statutory pre-application consultation requirements).
- Generally, aim to further minimise instances where an application for a DCO is not accepted for examination, across all NSIPs, rather than only those identified as CNPs.
- Generally, seek to provide clarity on how the acceptance test should be applied, focusing on whether the information provided within applications is adequate at a high-level, while retaining the Planning Inspectorate's ability to refuse to accept applications that are not of a 'satisfactory standard' for effective examination.
- Set out expectations with applicants that time spent at the pre-examination stage should not generally exceed 4 months.
- Seek to bring greater clarity and focus to examinations, in particular by ensuring greater focus on the principal issues arising on an application and strengthening the Examining Authorities' Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAPI). We will trial new approaches to the IAPI, which can address many of the issues raised here, by:
    - Making clear the key planning issues;
    - Identifying where further evidence is not expected to be required, with reasoning;
    - Highlighting relevant national policy, and

- Referring to general approaches taken to similar issues which have arisen before.

This should minimise the re-examination of issues, improving consistency across examinations and timeframes including with reference to similar technologies. Supporting guidance will set out the purpose and role of the IAPI and how this will contribute to streamlining.

As part of our implementation plans, we will communicate clearly and transparently the government's expectations on the Planning Inspectorate's role in making these reforms a success.

Recommendation 26

Interim Development Consent Order (DCO) Recommendation Report

We agree with the intended outcome of this recommendation, which aligns with our planned reforms to the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAPI) undertaken by Examining Authorities ahead of examinations on NSIP schemes.

Under the Planning and Infrastructure Act (PIA), the government has given greater weight to the IAPI, with a new requirement (once commenced) for Examining Authorities to make procedural decisions relating to examinations in the light of their assessment of the principal issues arising on an application. Their assessment will be reflected in an IAPI, which alongside setting out the focus areas for examination, will explain those issues which will not be examined further unless further information comes to light. While the IAPI would not be determinative, it will perform a role similar to an 'interim report' and be better able to shape the subsequent examination, recommendation, and decision stages. This will streamline examinations, ensure effort is directed to matters of true significance, and reduce potential legal challenges.

Over the coming months, we will work with the Planning Inspectorate to trial new approaches, including to the format and content of the IAPI, within the current legal and policy framework.

Recommendation 27

An amendment to the Planning Act 2008 to require 'minded to' letters

The government agrees that extensions at the decision-making stage should be exceptional and that where appropriate 'minded to' letters should be utilised more frequently.

By Summer 2026, we will issue new guidance which encourages the Secretary of State to issue 'minded to' letters, where appropriate, where decisions are delayed and where doing so will support closing down outstanding issues which require further input. This guidance will also provide clarity on the publishing of the Examining Authority recommendation reports. Guidance will be quicker and more

flexible than amending primary legislation, and so it is the government's view that introducing a requirement to issue 'minded to' letters would introduce an additional bureaucratic hurdle and divert resource from areas where it is needed.

Recommendation 28

Reinstatement of the Infrastructure Planning (Model Provisions) (England and Wales) Order 2009

The government agrees with the recommendation. Greater use of model provisions will support the consistent handling of emerging issues on NSIP applications and that their use would bring greater focus and clarity to the overall examination and decision-making process.

We will update guidance to set out clear expectations for applicants about when model provisions should be used, and what those model provisions are. We welcome the recommendations provided around which specific issues should be targeted through model provisions. We will use these as a basis for engaging with stakeholders who can help us design model provisions and bring forward new guidance before the end of Summer 2027. Given technological advancements, guidance provides a more flexible tool than legislation to ensure consistency across the infrastructure consenting system without stifling progress and innovation.

Recommendation 29

Consider repeal of section 150 of the Planning Act

The government has considered the case for repeal and discussed it with the Taskforce. There may be potential for increased incorporation of secondary consents in development consent orders which could reduce post consent delays to infrastructure construction.

The secondary consents and authorisations prescribed under Schedule 2 of the Infrastructure Planning (Interested Parties and Miscellaneous Prescribed Provisions) Regulations 2015 are wide ranging in purpose and application.

We plan to explore opportunities to make operational and service improvements. We will support these changes through revised guidance, ensuring we unlock infrastructure delivery while maintaining safeguards to the environment and human health.

Recommendation 30

Establish a unit to discharge Development Consent Order (DCO) requirements

The government accepts this recommendation. DESNZ will establish a new unit within its Infrastructure Planning Delivery team to consolidate and deliver post-consent discharge functions in consultation with Local Authority Planning Departments. This will speed up decisions on the meeting of post-consent

requirements. This will be focussed initially on nuclear power and electricity networks projects, with a view to extending this to other types of energy projects if evaluation of its effectiveness supports its expansion.

Recommendation 31

Streamlining the conventional planning regime via Special Development Orders (SDO) for nuclear power and automatic approvals

It is already the case that nuclear development and decommissioning projects can apply for SDOs, and it is our view that they are not always the best route for nuclear projects.

Further, through the PIA, we are introducing a power to enable NSIP applicants to request that their projects be directed out of the NSIP regime into an alternative consenting regime. Where appropriate, this could include SDOs or other routes depending on what is necessary (noting, for example, the needs of a project). Decisions would be reached on a case-by-case basis.

The second part of the recommendation proposes introducing an ‘automatic consent after eight weeks’ mechanism to decisions made by local planning authorities on applications supporting nuclear development and decommissioning. We fully support ensuring local planning authorities make faster decisions and are not unjustifiably refusing these applications, but do not believe automatic consenting will achieve these aims. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government also has call in powers to intervene in planning decisions. We will consult on expanding the consultation direction so local planning authorities have to notify the Secretary of State if they are minded to refuse applications for such development.

Recommendation 32

Encouraging fleet approaches in EN-7

Our international peers have achieved significant time and cost savings in nuclear delivery by adopting a fleet approach. Britain on the other hand has historically underestimated a fleet approach’s positive impacts.

We will therefore introduce a criterion for developers hoping to build fleets of reactors in full as part of the next update to EN-7. We propose that a new criterion could favour impact mitigations that do not require functional design changes to reward standardisation and support fleet build. We will publish the new criterion for consultation as soon as practicable and aim to deliver all updates to EN-7 within 12 months, subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Recommendation 33

Creating a new pathway to allow semi-urban power stations

We do not accept the recommendation because we intend to go further. We will work with the ONR to bring forward alternatives to the current criteria with the aim of increasing the number of potentially suitable sites available for *all* classes of reactor – not just light water – whilst maintaining rigorous public safety. We aim to implement this recommendation within 12 months, subject to parliamentary scrutiny and public consultation.

Recommendation 34

Proportionate Outline Planning Zones and Detailed Emergency Planning Zones under Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information Regulations) 2019 (REPPIR19)

We agree with this recommendation and policy delivery is already underway. Experts commissioned by DESNZ have identified alternative arrangements for determining outline planning zones (OPZs). We will discuss with relevant stakeholders, and are already preparing options, each designed to ensure our approach is robust, evidence-based and appropriate for both Gigawatt Reactors (GW) and SMR/AMRs and work with MoD for their assets.

We will also amend REPPIR19 and its associated guidance. This work is already underway as part of a broader programme of improvements. Doing this, as well as introducing an appeals process, will require amendments to legislation. Changes to guidance to encourage site operators to take advantage of existing regulatory options to propose site-specific OPZs can be delivered in parallel, assisting operators while amended legislation is delivered.

Recommendation 35

Streamlining regulatory justification

We agree with the intent of the recommendation and will address the issues the Taskforce raises on Regulatory Justification as quickly as possible. We believe there is a better way to do this. We will work with GBE-N to submit a regulatory justification application to DEFRA within the next 6 months seeking a determination under Regulation 12 for all Light Water Reactors. We will also go further than the Taskforce's recommendation and use our experience with the Light Water Reactor application to streamline the process for the sector to follow when seeking justification for other classes of reactor in the future. If that is not possible, we will consider legislative change.

Recommendation 36

Proposals in relation to community benefits

The government recognises the importance of community benefits and their potential role in ensuring that nuclear infrastructure providers benefit the communities around

them and encouraging community support for schemes. Making all community benefits a material planning consideration is not however necessary or always appropriate to achieve this aim. New nuclear projects already provide significant community benefits separate to the planning process. For example, Sizewell C's Regulated Asset Base funding model will facilitate greater investment in training and apprenticeships in the region, as well as reducing long-term energy costs for UK households.

We are concerned about legislating to make all community benefits, including those which do not serve a planning purpose, material considerations in planning decisions. This would risk novel routes for additional legal challenge and delay, and would undermine the long-established principle that planning permissions should be based only on factors that relate directly, fairly and reasonably to the relevant development. Baking community benefits into the planning process could also result in less flexibility to ensure that the benefits are really what the community wants, from time to time.

We will instead strengthen policy expectations on socioeconomic benefits within the NPS framework and consider any relevant changes to s106 guidance to provide further clarity to the sector. We will aim to update EN-7 and publish any relevant changes to guidance on s106 within 12 months.

Recommendation 37

Equalising the position of the NDA for the benefit of the GDF

We have considered the recommendation and agree with its intent and most of its substance. It is our view however that we can take a more strategic approach than suggested by the taskforce, maximising benefits and allowing for greater cohesion with other relevant workstreams. We will therefore:

- As recommended, give the GDF and associated infrastructure Critical National Priority (CNP) status as part of an update to the Geological Disposal Infrastructure (GDI) National Policy Statement (NPS);
- Pursue primary legislation to allow the NDA and members of the NDA Group to be granted Statutory Undertaker status in England, with an agreed set of compulsory purchase powers. This is in addition to recent amendments to the Planning Act 2008 by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, which will enable provisions to provide easier access to land for surveys for DCO applicants;
- Introduce secondary legislation to amend the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) following public consultation to introduce specific PDRs in England for the NDA and the GDF developer;
- Carry out further analysis and engagement with MHCLG, NDA, the GDF developer and CoRWM (among others) to assess whether an alternative

planning route for the deep borehole investigations may be more appropriate and proportionate.

We will complete all the actions outlined above by December 2027.

Recommendation 38

Boards should assess their organisation's culture, including safety culture, and take decisive steps to align it with delivering their strategic objectives with radical efficiency and effectiveness

Government wholly supports this recommendation, including the approach to Boards taking responsibility for culture change. Action must be taken by senior leadership within all organisations in the sector, regulators, dutyholders and their supply chains, to implement the ownership, management, and monitoring needed to drive the culture change needed to deliver strategic objectives safely and efficiently.

A key theme identified by the Taskforce was a deeply ingrained culture of complacency and extreme risk aversion across the sector; a 'status quo mindset' which perpetuates the cycle of inefficiency and is a fundamental barrier to progress and delivery. This culture can be found across the sector and must be overcome to ensure the successful implementation of the other recommendations.

Through the letter from the Chancellor to industry (see recommendation 45) we are sending industry and regulator leaders a clear message to assess the way their organisation approaches risk management, and to challenge themselves on whether those tasked to manage risk are properly empowered to make sensible judgements on acceptable risk, or if the location or mandate of those decision-makers should change. We have commissioned the sector to set out within four months:

- How each organisation plans to support the timely and cost-effective delivery of the government's nuclear programme while maintaining safety.
- Identify changes to processes that could improve pace, proportionality and coordination, as well as measures which could increase risk appetite within the law.
- What measures each organisation will take to respond to the cultural issues identified within the Taskforce's report.
- Where relevant, how contractual arrangements can be modified to ensure incentives are aligned to the prompt delivery of new nuclear.

We will ask the Chief Executives of the relevant regulators and industry to attend meetings of the Nuclear Review Implementation Panel in Autumn 2026 to set out how they will take forward this recommendation.

Recommendation 39

The Nuclear Skills Delivery Board should accelerate efforts to build knowledge and experience into a diverse workforce with greater focus on non-technical skills, alongside technical expertise, to meet future needs

We accept this recommendation. With the UK's nuclear sector entering a period of rapid expansion, the Nuclear Skills Plan (active since May 2024) is funded and resourced by government and industry, to deliver the diverse and skilled workforce and 24,000 new roles required across the civil nuclear and defence sector by 2030. We will use the Plan to implement Recommendation 39 in full.

The Nuclear Skills Plan will ensure co-ordinated delivery of the elements within Recommendation 39 and the report reinforces the need to continue to deliver these interventions at pace:

- Scaling up the Interchange programme over the next five years, targeting an increase from 20 placements per year in 2026-27 to 160 per year by 2029-30.
- The Sector Experts into Training programme (contract due to be let in April 2026) and an Industry Associates scheme (under development) for senior workers and retirees will harness knowledge from senior workers and retirees, passing expertise to early-career staff through mentoring and coaching.
- Working with the Nuclear Institute to pilot sector-wide leadership community events in FY 26/27.

Other elements of Recommendation 39 (e.g. creating focused interventions on developing risk tolerance, digital and human factor capability across the wider workforce) will now be brought into the Nuclear Skills Plan's scope. We also recognise that outcomes from Recommendations 6 and 41 will likely result in new training requirements. The Nuclear Sector Skills Team (NSST) will collaborate with a range of skills bodies, owners of these recommendations, the Nuclear Skills Delivery Board and Nuclear Skills Executive Council, to assess and integrate these proposals into the governance of the Nuclear Skills Plan by September 2026.

Recommendation 40

Enhance the terms and conditions for regulatory roles that require strong technical judgment so that skilled professionals are attracted and retained.

We accept this recommendation. Work is underway to gather the data related to roles and remuneration with a view to having an implementation plan in place by Summer 2026.

This will complement ongoing improvements in DEFRA to attract and retain skilled professionals in relevant planning roles, which will accelerate processes for nuclear.

Within Defence, work on this recommendation will be completed in conjunction with implementation of the merger (Recommendation 4).

Recommendation 41

Government and industry should establish a nuclear digital programme to accelerate the take up of digital technologies, including AI, as tools for experts to modernise approaches to whole-life safety and regulation

Government will establish a nuclear digital programme to increase take-up of digital technologies (including AI), which will modernise approaches including on safety, regulation and engineering.

A key element of this approach will be the establishment of a network of universities, focused on applying advanced digital technologies to nuclear safety and regulation. The network would collaborate with research and innovation groups to draw on existing digital training and development capability.

We will go further. During 2026, the Nuclear Skills Plan will be developed further to place a stronger emphasis on digital skills, supporting the upskilling of both the current and future nuclear workforce in support of this recommendation. Delivery will be aligned with existing mechanisms and initiatives to ensure that digital skills are embedded across workforce attraction, training and retention activity for the sector.

Workforce capability will be strengthened through a combination of doctoral training, post-doctoral research and short-course provision. This would include the introduction of a training programme to rapidly upskill both students and existing nuclear professionals in the application of AI and advanced digital methods to nuclear safety and regulation.

Recommendation 42

Develop and fund a joint Government and Regulator International Strategy and Action Plan

The government agrees with the recommendation and will establish a joint government-regulator international strategy and delivery plan by Autumn 2026. The international strategy will focus on supporting and enabling the ONR to engage internationally to support HMG’s domestic deployment and export ambitions, reducing market barriers and accelerating licencing where possible.

This is supported by targeted £1.3m of funding for ONR and the EA to develop a framework that will enable mutual recognition of assessments where appropriate, underpinned by due diligence. This approach will be used as a template for closer collaboration with European regulators to accelerate deployment of new technologies, including SMRs.

ONR has already initiated a sprint project to put in place the framework to deliver commitments under the Atlantic Partnership and establish the baseline for broader international collaboration. This will manage and control risks to ensure there is no

dilution in standards or outcomes and no loss of independence. This is targeting delivery in Spring 2026.

Recommendation 43

Government should ensure risk-based proportionality in export licences and establish a dedicated point of contact for nuclear export licensing issues

Companies exporting nuclear-related items are already encouraged to request that five-year licences are granted when submitting export licence applications, to reflect the nature of the nuclear sector. Companies should request these as standard. Consideration will be given to granting ten-year licences if appropriate.

Our approach will be risk-based and proportionate. The information required to support a licence application needs to be sufficient for government to make a robust and informed decision on whether the licence should be granted, on a case-by-case basis, but does not need to go beyond this unless specifically requested. The requirements for record-keeping are regularly reviewed, and companies exporting nuclear-related items have been asked to feed in their views on this issue in previous years and changes have been made accordingly. It is envisaged that similar reviews will take place in future years, but we welcome feedback from the nuclear sector on any issues that they may be experiencing.

Applications which are identical to previously granted licences are generally processed promptly, but if there have been several such iterations, it may be necessary to renew the assurances required from government of another country and this will increase the time taken to process the application. Other changes in circumstances may also need to be taken into account, but all applications are processed as promptly as possible. We will look to learn from ECJU's 20 day target and apply it across the system with different appropriate timelines for each regime.

Government is willing to issue licences with a ten-year duration for ONR and EA to support their regulatory activities and will implement this when relevant licence applications are submitted and the decision taken to approve the licence. In addition, government is considering how to further improve the processing of these applications by securing the necessary assurances from government of the regulatory partner as MOUs are negotiated.

The Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) in DBT has identified points of contact for nuclear companies, and these representatives will be introduced during regular meetings that are already held between DESNZ and the nuclear companies.

Recommendation 44

ONR should revise its charging model to give duty holders greater cost certainty and support self-investment in capability and international engagement

ONR will revise its charging model. Any changes will need to ensure that ONR's ability to effectively regulate the nuclear industry is maintained and future-proofed while delivering greater financial certainty and clarity to dutyholders. Any change to ONR's charging structure will require amendments to multiple pieces of legislation.

A reformed charging model will deliver the following outcomes:

- for ONR, it should ensure it has financial independence, considering an increasingly challenging economic and political climate and be flexible to enable ONR to react to new activities and work, allowing for more accurate forecasting, provide more financial resilience, and make the charging model less resource-intensive to run;
- It should provide assurance about ONR's financial governance and reduce the need to support ONR with working capital loans;
- It should increase the predictability and transparency of fees and charges and give more flexibility to support new nuclear vendors and technologies;

Delay has a cost. While work is done to establish a new charging structure, the revision and clarification of existing administrative processes, which can be done more quickly, will go some way to delivering significant improvements to provide greater predictability and clarity for stakeholders.

Recommendation 45

Public and private efforts to reduce gold-plating and risk aversion

The government will explore contracting mechanisms that incentivise more proportionate solutions for delivering nuclear projects to ALARP.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has sent an open letter to the nuclear industry and regulators stating unequivocally that nuclear power and the renewal of the nuclear deterrent are strategic national priorities for the United Kingdom. The Chancellor has set out the government's expectations of proportionate, outcome-focused regulation, and a shift to a focus on reducing unnecessary complexity and excessive conservatism in nuclear decision-making. Leaders of these organisations have been asked to set out plans within six months to support the timely and cost-effective delivery of the government's nuclear programme while maintaining safety. Further details are set out in the published letter.

Recommendation 46

Government should reduce uncertainty on the release of sites for future nuclear projects

Government wants credible projects to have clarity on the availability of potential new nuclear land and to have quick routes to enter commercial discussions with landowners. The Advanced Nuclear Framework's Pipeline process should help

developers demonstrate credibility to landowners, and government will not object to approved UK Advanced Nuclear Framework Pipeline projects entering commercial discussions to explore access to available land.

For available public-sector civil nuclear land holdings, government will ask the NDA and GBE–N to notify government promptly of any credible approaches and government will provide an initial response within 28 days. Government will monitor interest closely to ensure engagements progress swiftly. For privately owned land, it is right that landowners determine their own approach. However, government would encourage constructive engagement, particularly with Pipeline projects whose position in the pipeline can help demonstrate the credibility of their proposals to landowners.

These steps aim to reduce uncertainty, give developers firmer signals earlier, and support more timely progression of credible projects.

Recommendation 47

Government should establish a delivery plan and corresponding oversight to ensure timely delivery of the recommendations set out in this report

This document sets out our implementation plan across all of the Taskforce's recommendations.

Delivery will be overseen by a Nuclear Regulatory Implementation Panel (NRIP). This small, expert council chaired by DESNZ will provide continuity from the Taskforce and embed a strong challenge function throughout implementation. NRIP will be made up of senior figures from across government, regulators and industry alongside independent representation from the Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce and will:

- Hold regulators to account for shifting to proportionate, enabling regulation; aligning timetables; using joint and parallel reviews; reducing duplication; and applying ALARP/BAT consistently.
- Hold government departments to account for delivering the legislative and regulatory reforms required, modernising planning, permitting and environmental processes, and removing unnecessary sources of delay.
- Hold dutyholders and companies across the sector to account for taking up the opportunities created by reform: standardising evidence, learning once and replicating many times, avoiding gold-plating and over-specialisation, and stopping activity that adds cost and time without mitigating risk.
- Ensure cultural change across the sector, learning from Haddon-Cave, reflecting the Prime Minister's instruction that delivery is essential and that time is a risk factor in its own right. NRIP will ensure dutyholders and other companies adopt the enabling, risk-based behaviours required to succeed by working with them in close partnership across the sector.

NRIP members will be empowered to challenge, advise and directly support delivery teams, drawing on deep experience from across the nuclear, regulatory and defence communities. Government will establish a blended delivery team beneath NRIP, drawing on officials from Other Government Departments (OGDs), and seek support from industry, to drive progress.

NRIP will meet at least twice a year and provide regular updates to the Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero and Defence Secretary. It will publish a final report when implementation concludes, providing a transparent assessment of delivery against the ambitions set out in this plan.

Annex B: List of abbreviations

ALARA – As Low As Reasonably Achievable

ALARP – As Low As Reasonably Practicable

AMR – Advanced Modular Reactor

BAT – Best Available Techniques

BNG – Biodiversity Net Gain

BSOs – Basic Safety Objectives

CNI – Chief Nuclear Inspector

CNP – Critical National Priority

CoRWM – Committee on Radioactive Waste Management

CPR – Civil Procedure Rules

CPRC – Civil Procedure Rule Committee

DESNZ – Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

DBT – Department for Business and Trade

DCO – Development Consent Order

DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs

DNE – Defence Nuclear Enterprise

DNSR – Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator

EA – Environment Agency

ECJU – Export Control Joint Unit

EDPs – Environmental Delivery Plans

EIA – Environmental Impact Assessment

EN-7 – National Policy Statement for nuclear energy generation

EOR – Environmental Outcomes Report

GBE–N – Great British Energy – Nuclear

GB – Great Britain

GDF – Geological Disposal Facility

GDI – Geological Disposal Infrastructure

GRA – Guidance for Requirements for Authorisation

GW – Gigawatt Reactor

HMG – His Majesty's Government

HRA – Habitats Regulations Assessment

HSE – Health and Safety Executive

HSWA – Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

IAPI – Initial Assessment of Principal Issues

JR – Judicial Review

KC – King's Counsel

LNT – Linear Non-Threshold

LURA – Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

MHCLG – Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government

MoD – Ministry of Defence

MoU – Memorandum of Understanding

NDA – Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

NPS – National Policy Statement

NRF – Nature Restoration Fund

NRIP – Nuclear Regulation Implementation Panel

NSIP – Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project

NSST – Nuclear Sector Skills Team

OGD – Other Government Department

ONR – Office for Nuclear Regulation

OPZs – Outline Planning Zones

PIA – Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025

R2P2 – Reducing Risks, Protecting People framework

REPPIR19 – Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information Regulations) 2019

S106 – Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

SAPs – Safety Assessment Principles

SDO – Special Development Order

SMR – Small Modular Reactor

UK – United Kingdom

WoW – Ways of Working

This publication is available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-our-nuclear-nation-government-response-to-the-nuclear-regulatory-review-2025

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