

Silt lagoon project removal complete

A 12 month project to remove over 100 tonnes of silt from the lagoon in Sellafield's Separation Area has been completed this week by a team of 30 workers deploying entirely in-house solutions.

The 5000 m³ facility is used as a catchment for rainwater from buildings across the Separation Area. In the ten years since the facility was last cleaned, non active silt had built up and the Environment Agency asked the company to reduce the amount of silt that was being discharge to sea. A project to remove the material from the lagoon was therefore initiated.

"We got quotes from external suppliers to carry out this work which were in the region of £220,000, which was obviously very expensive. So we decided to see if it would be feasible to carry out the work in-house and came up with a solution to get this material out of the lagoon. On completion of the project, calculations showed a total expenditure of approximately £30,000 therefore saving the company £190,000 against original quotes," said Project Manager, Steve Adair.

The process of removing the non-active silt involved pumping the silt from the lagoon into large 'dumpy bags'. Nearly 100 bags were filled with the material at a rate of seven tonnes a week.

The silt then needed to be dried before it could be transferred to the Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) where it will be used as infill between the LLW skips.



Before and after: the team empty the silt, clearing out the lagoon to leave it empty.

"The team came up with a number of ideas of how we were going to dry the silt once we got it out the lagoon. However the one we went with involved us building temporary 'green houses' in order to dry the silt out. The bags were put in the greenhouses and silt was regularly turned which quickly dried out in the warm atmosphere." Steve added.

Having completed the project successfully, a regular three monthly clean-out programme has now been scheduled using the new solution.

Forklift truck competition winners

Sellafield Ltd has won the first ever Safe Site Award at the Fork Lift Truck Association's annual prize giving.

The announcement was made in front of a packed audience at the FLTA Awards for Excellence 2008 event, held at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole on 9 February.

Recognised as the materials handling industry's ultimate accolades, the FLTA Awards – or 'Archies', as the solid brass sculptures of Archimedes are affectionately known – are given out each year to reward and encourage achievement in raising industry standards.

"This special Award has been introduced to acknowledge the strenuous efforts made by truck users to make their working environment a safer place," said FLTA Chief Executive David Ellison.

"In the case of Sellafield, the work site is huge, the fork lifts are many and varied, and the lifting operations amount to hundreds of thousands each year. In response to a number of 'near misses' in 2006, the company acted decisively in implementing an improvement plan to ensure high standards in training of supervisors, assessment of operators and overall management of traffic.

"As well as making its own site safer, Sellafield Ltd was generous enough to share its experiences at the FLTA's national Safety Conference... thereby making a great contribution to the spread of best practice. That is the spirit of our Safe Site Award... and Sellafield Ltd is a very deserving first winner."



John Maguire of Award Sponsor Narrow Aisle Flexi (centre) presented award to (from left) Sellafield Ltd's Gary Wood (Process Operator), Andrew Ashcroft (Assistant Team Leader), Kevin Stilling (Safety Adviser and Deputy Leader, Forklift Safety) and Shaun Humphreys (Process Operator)

Over the last two years the number of incidents with the potential for injury has dropped from an average of four per month to just one in the past six months.

Behind that dramatic improvement has been a lot of hard work by the Maintenance Authority and Principal Lifting Engineer Mike Palmer, the Safety Adviser Kevin Stilling and the Fork Lift Teams themselves.

Prague conference for Press Officer Karl

The newest recruit to Sellafield Ltd's communications team, Karl Connor, flew off to Prague recently to attend the Public Information Materials Exchange (PIME) 2008 event.

The event was a gathering of nuclear communicators from over 30 countries across five continents.

Karl said: "I was both excited and apprehensive as I jetted off to Prague. I'm not usually a great flyer and I hadn't had a great deal of time to prepare for the trip, in fact I have to admit that I'd never heard of PIME until my line manager told me about it two days before I flew out.

"That said it was a wonderful experience – and I learned a great deal, both about the nuclear industry and communications in a wider and more general sense."

The programme revolved around a series of plenary sessions and interactive workshops. Among the key topics on the PIME debating table were communicating science, the perception and communication of risk, internal communications, education and training, new tools, crisis communications and a look at how other industries have communicated successfully where perhaps our industry has failed.

Karl added; "Perhaps the most interesting discussions were on using new media as a way of communicating.

"There are nuclear companies around the world who have used on-line programmes such as Second Life to get their messages across, and others who either have company pages on sites like Facebook and Myspace, or who at least encourage staff members to have them and to use them to promote what they do.

"The more mainstream way of using the web to promote is obviously to have a company website, but it was suggested at the conference that this should include a regularly updated blog.

"This is something we already do here at Sellafield, I was blogging from Prague, and there are many other blogs on the company website."

For more information please visit: www.euronuclear.org

CHP stacks dismantled

Impressive team working resulted in the safe dismantling of three chimney stacks at the Fellside Combined Heat and Power Station within twelve days of the first observation of damage to one of the stacks. The rapid and well co-ordinated response by teams from Sellafield Ltd, station operators DBpx, crane suppliers Ainscough and steeplejacks Baileys meant that the impact on Sellafield operations was limited to only a few days.

Fellside gas powered station generates electricity for the National Grid and supplies steam for processes and heating at Sellafield. Fast action was taken on 4 February when one of the chimney stacks was noticed to be leaning slightly. Two of the Fellside turbine units were shut down immediately and a thorough investigation begun. Full inspection over the following days showed that corrosion was present in all three chimney stacks.

A planned, progressive shut-down of non-essential operations was carried out over the weekend of 8 to 9 February so that demand for steam was well within the capability of Fellside's back-up boiler. Cutting began on the stacks on 10 February and within six days all three stacks has been cut and safely taken down, leaving shorter 6 metre sections in place.

Sellafield Infrastructure Director Mike Middleton led a multi-disciplinary team working closely with Fellside operator DBpx to manage dismantling operations. He also oversaw separate streams of work using expertise from across Sellafield Ltd to maintain essential operations at the site and to make longer term plans. Mike said: "I can't understate the massive achievement this has been for the teams involved. To carry out a project of this magnitude to such a tight timescale, whilst still keeping safety as the first and over-riding priority, is proof of what can be achieved by highly professional, focused and motivated teams."



Leading the Infrastructure project team was Head of Plant Services Peter Bonsall. He said: "Everyone really pulled together on this, working all hours to get the job done with as little disruption to site operations as possible. At one point we had five large cranes lifting bulky, heavy sections of stack within a very small space. The level of care, precision and skill displayed by all, especially crane operators Ainscough and steeplejacks Baileys, was superb."

Barry Snelson, Sellafield Managing Director said: "This was a quick, professional and extremely impressive operation. It took only six days from the first cut of the first stack to taking down the final section of the third stack. It highlights what we, as a Sellafield team, are capable of."

The Environment Agency gave permission for one of the Fellside units to restart with the shorter chimney stacks on 15 February following their assessment of environmental models prepared by DBpx and checked by Sellafield Ltd. We are now working closely with the DBpx and the regulators on full restart of Fellside at and the longer term replacement of chimney stacks.

West Cumbria carers visit

Eighteen children from the West Cumbria Carers Society were treated to an exciting day of fun-packed activities at Sellafield's Yottenfews Environmental Project and the Visitors Centre last week.

The trip was organised by a group of seven A' Level students from Whitehaven School who are putting together a portfolio unit as part of their A' Level in Leisure Studies.

The students had to design a series of games for the children including an orienteering task around Yottenfews and a musical quiz.

Deborah Vaughan, the West Cumbria Carers leader said: "The young carers enjoyed working with the teenagers in small groups. The students kept them entertained with a variety of fun and educational tasks and the children spent the day chatting and laughing. It was a great day which would be great to do again."

Judy Davidson, a teacher from Whitehaven School said: "It was a very successful day which helped the students complete one of their portfolio units. A big thank you goes to Millie Clarke and John Heywood for making the day possible."

Speaking after the visit, Sellafield Ltd's Millie Clark said: "It was nice to be able to support the work that the young carers are doing, by giving them a day out and a break from the day to day responsibilities that they face. We were happy to be able to provide a venue and welcome them here again."

VIP visits to Sellafield 13 February – 20 February 2008 included:

14/02/08 – CORWM

14/02/08 – DBERR Communications team

15/02/08 - Australian Nuclear Science & Technology Organisation

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