

SITE CLOSURE



Site closure programme

Manager:	Alastair Macdonald
Completion date:	2025
Cost:	£2.5 billion (undiscounted)
Supported by:	AMEC, CH2MHILL

Completion date and cost are current estimates, subject to NDA approval

In the 1990s, the UK government decided Dounreay had served its purpose and should close. Since then, the site has been in the decommissioning and closure phase.

This involves clearing out a legacy of radiological and chemical hazards from redundant facilities and putting these wastes into a form that makes them safe for long-term storage or disposal. Once the buildings have been cleaned out, they can be demolished.

All of the work needed to dismantle Dounreay is contained in a long-range programme called the Lifetime Plan. This sets out the scope of work, the schedule and its cost. It also identifies the manpower needed to see the clean-up through to completion.

Every site owned by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) produces a similar plan each year, and this allows the NDA to prioritise spending on the biggest hazards.

The major hazards at Dounreay are the liquid metals used to cool the two fast reactors and waste liquors from historic reprocessing of fast reactor fuel.

Currently, all the clean-up work is scheduled to be complete by 2025 when the site will look very different. Nearly all of the existing facilities (with the possible exception of the fast reactor sphere) will have been demolished. All that is likely to remain are secure stores housing the conditioned intermediate-level waste until this is moved to a final resting place, and storage for nuclear fuels that could be re-used.

Parts of the site are contaminated with radioactivity and other industrial pollution. In 2007, the NDA consulted the public, through the site stakeholder group, on the end state for the site. This is the physical condition of the site once decommissioning is complete – how it will look and how clean it is. The outcome of this will decide the degree of ground clean-up required. All of the options, except complete removal of the pollution, will require some restrictions on re-use of the land for a period after 2025.

The clean-up is funded by the UK Government through the NDA and is regulated by statutory bodies such as the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive and the Office of Civil Nuclear Security. They publish regular reports about their work at Dounreay.

As decommissioning progresses, fewer workers will be needed. At present, some 2000 people are employed by various companies at Dounreay, providing work for one in every five workers in the local economy. The site is working with development agencies to help staff make the transition to alternative employment.



View of Dounreay site at 2008



Proposed view of Dounreay site at 2012



Proposed view of Dounreay site at 2020



Proposed view of Dounreay site at 2025



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