



Office for
Nuclear Regulation

ONR Report

**International Collaboration on New
Reactor Designs – Quarterly Update
March 2025**

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International Collaboration on New Reactor Designs – Quarterly Update March 2025

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1. Introduction

1. In accordance with our strategic framework for international engagement (Ref. 1), we are committed to collaborating with international regulatory bodies to align approaches to small modular reactors (SMRs) and advanced modular reactors (AMRs). We believe there are significant benefits in collaboration on reactor design assessment, including greater harmonisation and facilitating global deployment of standard designs, and reducing the burden on industry through lower costs and streamlined processes. We have taken a proactive and leading role in this through our work with key international bodies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA), as well as bilateral and multilateral engagement with international regulatory bodies.
2. As part of our openness and transparency agenda we will provide quarterly updates on our work with international regulators in the new reactors area. This is the first such quarterly report.

2. Key relationships

2.1. Bilateral engagement

3. We have formal information exchange arrangements in place to facilitate international co-operation with the nuclear safety regulators in a number of countries with civil nuclear power programmes. The full list of agreements is available on our [website](#). Some of the key relationships for our work on SMRs and AMRs are with the:
 - US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC);
 - Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC);
 - French L’Autorité de Sûreté Nucléaire (ASN) ;
 - Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland (STUK)
 - Japanese Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA).
4. Where we are assessing reactor designs concurrently with other regulators, or are assessing a design that has previously been reviewed by an established nuclear regulator, we will seek to leverage these relationships to accelerate our process, establish common regulatory positions to facilitate global deployment of new reactor designs and bring about cost and schedule benefits for reactor vendors and developers where possible.

2.2. ONR/ NRC/ CNSC memorandum of cooperation

5. In March 2024 we signed a trilateral memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with the US NRC and CNSC (Ref. 2) to collaborate on the assessment of SMRs and AMR designs. This agreement is a key enabler for the sharing of technical knowledge and judgments to facilitate streamlined regulation.
6. Terms of reference (Ref. 3) were signed in January 2025, to define administrative and governance arrangements and to facilitate establishment of a programme of work for specific activities under the MoC. Activities under the MoC are coordinated by a committee which is jointly chaired by representatives of all three regulators.
7. The MoC does not change the national regulatory or legal regime of each country or fetter regulatory decision making. The participants acknowledge the differences in each country’s regulatory frameworks and processes, while seeking to align approaches and expectations as far as possible.
8. We have undertaken work to benchmark the UK’s Generic Design Assessment (GDA) process against similar processes in the USA and Canada, considering the aims and objectives, the codes and standards basis

and indicative/typical timescales. The review concluded that expectations and timescales for deployment were broadly equivalent, and the UK is not an outlier.

2.3. SMR regulators' forum

9. The SMR regulators' forum operates under the auspices of the IAEA was established in 2014. The forum provides an opportunity for discussion among member states and other stakeholders to share regulatory knowledge and experience, with the objective of enhancing nuclear safety by identifying and resolving common issues that may challenge regulatory reviews of SMR designs. We currently undertake the role of vice-chair of the forum, with NRC as the chair.
10. In November 2017 the forum established working groups in the areas of licensing, design and safety analysis, manufacturing, commissioning and operations. These groups continue to the present day. The forum has published several reports which can be found on its [website](#).

2.4. IAEA nuclear harmonisation and standardisation initiative

11. We have supported the regulatory track of the [IAEA nuclear harmonisation and standardisation initiative](#) (NHSI) since its inception in 2022. The goal of the NHSI regulatory track is to develop harmonised regulatory approaches between national regulatory bodies that would enable the effective global deployment of safe and secure advanced nuclear reactors.
12. At the start of phase 1 the regulatory track established three working groups:
 - Working group 1, tasked with developing an international framework for licensing/ pre-licensing information sharing;
 - Working group 2, tasked with developing a process and reference framework for multinational pre-licensing regulatory reviews; and
 - Working Group 3, tasked with developing a processes that will enable regulators to share review findings and collaborate on regulatory assessments.
13. Over the past year our activity on NHSI has principally focused on supporting working group 3 (WG3), phase 1 of which was established to develop guidance on how a design review conducted by a mature regulatory body could be leveraged by a regulatory body in another country. The group has recently commenced phase 2, developing practical guidelines for developing a regulatory cooperation toolkit.

14. A new security working group is being established for phase 2 and will meet for the first time in April 2025.

2.5. NEA working group on new technologies

15. The working group on new technologies (WGNT) is one of the five working groups under the Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities (CNRA). CNRA is responsible for the NEA regulatory activities that support nuclear safety with emphasis on future nuclear reactors. The WGNT focuses on the regulatory approaches to ensure safety of new technologies deployed or being considered for deployment. The aim of the group is to share information, develop common understanding and explore opportunities for harmonisation. We currently chair the group, with good representation from NEA member countries.
16. There are two task groups currently operating under WGNT: control and instrumentation (C&I) and structural integrity. Two new task groups were approved in December 2024: lessons learned from nuclear construction and regulatory approaches to non-electric applications of nuclear energy.

3. Ongoing projects

3.1. Generic design assessment

3.1.1. Rolls-Royce SMR

17. In March 2022, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy asked ONR, the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to begin a three-step Generic Design Assessment (GDA) for Rolls Royce SMR Ltd's 470MW SMR design. The 12-month step 1 to agree the scope and schedule for future technical engagements commenced in April 2022 and successfully concluded March 2023. In April 2023, the regulators started a 16-month assessment of the fundamental acceptability of the Rolls-Royce SMR design for deployment in Great Britain. In July 2024, the regulators issued a Step 2 GDA statement (Ref. 4) and Rolls-Royce SMR entered Step 3 of the GDA process. More information can be found on our [website](#).
18. During GDA we have extended invitations to five European nuclear safety regulators to observe our routine GDA interactions with Rolls-Royce SMR Ltd: STUK; the Polish National Atomic Energy Agency (PAA); the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority (SSM); the Dutch Authority for Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection (ANVS); and the Czech State Office for Nuclear Safety (SÚJB). This is the first time in the history of GDA that our work has been observed by other regulators and it aims to build knowledge, promote harmonisation and bring about efficiency benefits should design assessments subsequently be taken forward in those countries.

3.1.2. GE-Hitachi BWRX-300

19. In January 2024, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) asked ONR, the Environment Agency and NRW to begin a two-step GDA for GE-Hitachi's BWRX-300 reactor. Step 1 successfully concluded in December 2024, whereupon the regulators started step 2 which is expected to conclude in December 2025.
20. In April 2022, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Ontario Power Generation (OPG) announced plans to jointly work to help develop and deploy the BWRX-300 design in the United States and Canada. Since March 2023 NRC and CNSC have been engaged in cooperative work on regulatory and safety issues in their respective licensing reviews of the BWRX-300.
21. Since commencing GDA we have been increasing our participation in these joint regulatory engagements, ranging from one-off meetings for information exchange to observation of regulatory interactions with GE-Hitachi and TVA/OPG. This helps to build our knowledge and target our effort appropriately.

22. We have identified a number of specific topics for further engagement and collaboration with NRC and CNSC; these will be subject to agreed workplans detailing scope and expected outputs.
23. The willingness of NRC and CNSC to share their evaluations of aspects of the BWRX-300 with us has significantly benefited our assessment activities. Significant examples include a joint review by both regulators on the advanced construction techniques, and CNSC’s detailed review of the claimed reliability of the reactor’s diverse shutdown systems.
24. Collaboration between the three regulators is facilitated by the tripartite MoC, however the technology vendor and utilities are engaged in setting the direction and monitoring the progress of collaboration. A six-party grouping has been established involving the regulators, GE-Hitachi, TVA and OPG, with PAA and the Polish developer Orlen Synthos Green Energy (OSGE) observing. This group meets twice a year, both at a ‘working level’ and at CEO-level, bringing the most senior representatives of the respective organisations together to bring focus and prioritisation to international activities on the BWRX-300. The most recent CEO level meeting, held in Washington DC to coincide with NRC’s annual regulatory information conference (RIC) in March 2025, was chaired by our Chief Executive/ Chief Nuclear Inspector. Our influence facilitated a shared recognition of the importance establishing regulatory confidence in the BWRX-300’s C&I architecture.

3.1.3. Holtec SMR-300

25. In June 2023 DESNZ requested ONR, the Environment Agency and NRW to undertake a two-step GDA for Holtec International’s SMR-160 reactor design. Prior to commencement of GDA, Holtec implemented a design change to increase the reactor power from 160MW electrical to 300MW electrical, resulting in the design being rebranded the SMR-300. GDA step 1 successfully completed in July 2024 (Ref. 5), with step 2 expected to complete in March 2026.
26. In August 2022 Holtec International began pre-application engagement with NRC over its plans to construct two SMR-160 (now SMR-300) units at the Palisades site in Michigan. Those engagements are continuing ahead of Holtec’s planned submission of a construction permit application in late 2026; these timescales go beyond the expected duration of GDA.
27. In August 2020 CNSC completed phase 1 of its vendor design review (VDR) process on the SMR-160. However, there has been no engagement between Holtec and CNSC since then and Holtec is not currently pursuing any plans to deploy the SMR-300 in Canada.
28. We will be the first regulator to make a formal judgement on the adequacy of the SMR-300 design. There is therefore limited opportunity for collaboration

during GDA, although our work could bring about efficiencies in other jurisdictions should design assessment be taken forward.

29. We are engaged in regular discussions with NRC and have reviewed its regulatory engagement plan with Holtec and observed a number of engagements between Holtec and NRC on matters of relevance to GDA, which has helped develop our understanding of the SMR-300 design. We have extended an offer to NRC to observe our GDA interactions with Holtec should they be of interest and have identified some areas where information exchange with NRC could benefit our assessment, for example the C&I and structural integrity topics.

3.2. Other activities

3.2.1. Advanced Modular Reactor research, development and demonstration programme

30. Since 2022 we have been providing support to the DESNZ AMR research, development and demonstration (RD&D) programme. The programme aims to demonstrate high-temperature-gas-cooled reactor (HTGR) by the 2030s, as well as developing coated particulate fuel CPF technology required for HTGRs and other AMR technologies.
31. As part of our work in this programme we have engaged with the Japanese NRA to share our regulatory approaches and to learn from NRA's experience of regulating construction and operation of a HTGR facility, including NRA's approach to assessment of reactor designs. We have also observed engagements between CNSC and NRC to establish a common regulatory position on the qualification of CPF (Ref. 6). These engagements helped develop our understanding of this novel technology and informed our support to the AMR RD&D programme.

3.2.2. Engagement with Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority

32. In January 2024 we signed an information exchange agreement with the Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority (HAEA) (Ref. 7). Under this agreement we are working with HAEA and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to explore opportunities for greater engagement with HAEA on assessment of new reactor designs. The first exploratory meeting is scheduled to take place early April 2025.

4. Potential future projects

4.1. Westinghouse AP300

33. In August 2024 we received a request from DESNZ to undertake a two-step GDA on Westinghouse Electric Company LLC's AP300 design. At the time of writing this report we are engaging with Westinghouse to establish cost recovery arrangements and agree a project schedule, although we anticipate the GDA will start later this year. The delay arises from a request from Westinghouse to pause the commencement of the project.
34. Since May 2023 Westinghouse has been engaged in pre-application activities with NRC ahead of an expected application for design certification of the AP300. Westinghouse has indicated that it intends to provide GDA submissions to UK regulators in parallel with submissions to NRC; this is expected to yield significant opportunities for collaboration and result in efficiencies for regulators and Westinghouse. We also expect there will be opportunities to leverage previous assessment work undertaken by ourselves and NRC on the Westinghouse AP1000 design, on which Westinghouse claims the AP300 is based.

4.2. Last Energy

35. Last Energy has been participating in our early engagement framework since May 2024, through which we have been providing regulatory advice to inform its plans to develop and deploy PWR-20 microreactors in Great Britain. In January 2025 Last Energy entered the nuclear site licensing process pre application phase as it intends to obtain a nuclear site licence to construct and operate four PWR-20 units at the Llynfi site in South Wales. The PWR-20 has not been through the GDA process and so we will undertake assessment of the design in parallel with licensing of the corporate body (Ref. 8).
36. As of February 2025, Last Energy is progressing pre-application activities with the NRC relating to the sites for which it intends to apply for an early site permit (ESP) in June 2025.
37. As Last Energy progresses through the nuclear site licensing process we will engage with NRC to exchange information and explore opportunities for collaborative assessment of the design.

4.3. Newcleo

38. In September 2024 we commenced early engagement with Newcleo Ltd on its proposals to build and operate its LFR-AS-200 lead-cooled fast reactor technology in Great Britain. Subsequently it has submitted an application to

DESNZ to enter GDA in 2025. At the time of writing we are awaiting a decision from DESNZ on the outcome of Newcleo's application.

39. In June 2024 Newcleo completed the 'preparatory phase' of ASN's licensing process regarding its plans to construct a 30MW demonstration facility in France, which it hopes will be operational by 2030.
40. Should Newcleo's GDA application be successful we will engage with ASN to identify opportunities for information exchange and collaboration on Newcleo's reactor design.

4.4. TerraPower

41. In November 2024 we commenced early engagement with TerraPower LLC regarding proposals to deploy its Sodium sodium-cooled fast reactor technology in Great Britain. Through these engagements TerraPower has signalled an intention to apply for a GDA on the Sodium design.
42. In March 2024 TerraPower submitted a construction permit application to the NRC for construction of a single Sodium reactor at the Kemmerer Power Station in Wyoming. TerraPower has previously undertaken pre-application engagement with NRC since October 2021.
43. Should TerraPower be successful in any future GDA application we will engage with NRC to collaborate on the assessment of the Sodium design.

4.5. X-Energy

44. In March 2025 we commenced early engagement with X-Energy LLC on its proposals to deploy its Xe-100 high temperature gas reactor in Great Britain. Through these engagements X-Energy has signalled an intention to apply for a GDA on the Xe-100 design.
45. X-Energy has been engaged in pre-application activities with NRC since September 2018, and in January 2024 the Xe-100 completed phases 1 and 2 of CNSC's vendor design review process. Should any future GDA application be successful we will engage with NRC and CNSC to exchange information relating to the Xe-100 and explore opportunities for collaborative assessment of the design.

5. Recent activity

46. Table 1 sets out our recent international regulatory engagements on SMRs and SMRs. As this is the first progress update the table covers a six-month period from October 2024 to March 2025; future updates will be quarterly.

Table 1: International engagement from October 2024 – March 2025

Programme	Date	Activity	Outcomes
GE-Hitachi BWRX-300	November 2024	ONR and NRC observed a workshop on break exclusion zones held between CNSC and OPG.	Visibility of the evolving approach in this area in the most advanced BWRX-300 project, gaining confidence in its potential acceptability to ONR should it be proposed for a future UK project.
		We attended a six-party CEO meeting chaired by CNSC.	Influence and insights on the shared priorities for regulatory collaboration
	February 2025	We met with CNSC and NRC to discuss areas for collaboration, with standardisation of C&I design being identified as a particular topic of focus.	Way forward agreed at working level
	March 2025	We attended the latest six-party working level meeting, which took place prior to the CEO level meeting.	Collective governance and oversight of collaborative endeavours and prioritisation of future activities.
Our Chief Executive/Chief Nuclear Inspector chaired the latest six-party CEO level meeting between NRC, CNSC, TVA, OPG		Shared recognition of the importance of an ONR regulatory priority to secure	

Programme	Date	Activity	Outcomes
		and GE-Hitachi, held to coincide with the NRC's annual RIC.	confidence in the BWRX-300's C&I architecture.
Holtec SMR-300	December 2024	We observed a public meeting between Holtec and NRC on Holtec's methodology for determining risk significant structures, systems and components for probabilistic safety assessment.	Greater understanding of Holtec's approach, to inform future assessment in this area. Improved understanding of NRC's requirements and alignment with UK expectations.
	February 2025	We observed a public meeting between Holtec and NRC on Holtec's proposed methodology for assessment of accident radiological consequences methodology.	Greater understanding of Holtec's approach and NRC requirements, to inform our future assessment in this area.
	March 2025	We observed a public meeting between Holtec and NRC regarding Holtec's proposals for emergency preparedness for the Palisades project.	Greater understanding of Holtec's proposals and NRC's requirements, to inform future assessment in this area.
General MoC	October 2024	We chaired a workshop with NRC, observed by CNSC, to share our experiences relating to graphite core safety.	Sharing our expertise to support NRC/CNSC learning in this area.
		In support of our work on the AMR RD&D programme, we observed a joint NRC/CNSC review of Ultrasafe Nuclear Corporation's (USNC) methodology for qualification of CPF for its micro modular	Knowledge and capability building. Awareness of NRC and CNSC expectations in this area, to inform our work on the AMR RD&D programme.

Programme	Date	Activity	Outcomes
		reactor (MMR). Further collaboration is on hold due to USNC filing for bankruptcy in the US.	
	February 2025	We met with CNSC to share our respective approaches to the regulation of nuclear site health and safety ('conventional' health and safety) in new build and decommissioning.	Common understanding of each regulators' expectations. Identification of areas for further discussion and information exchange (e.g. construction for decommissioning).
	March 2025	Our Chief Executive / Chief Nuclear Inspector participated in two panel discussions at the NRC's Regulatory Information Conference, on the subjects of risk-informed decision making and regulatory collaboration.	Sharing our long-established experience of risk-informed and enabling regulation, and demonstrating our commitment to regulatory collaboration on the assessment of reactors.
SMR Regulators' forum	November 2024	We attended the most recent meeting of the SMR regulators' forum, held at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna, at which a new chair from NRC and vice chair from ONR were elected. At the meeting we were asked to support a regional educational workshop in Poland in September 2025.	Demonstrating leadership on the international stage. Influencing common regulatory positions and advancing efforts towards greater standardisation.
IAEA NHSI	October/November 2024	We attended the third NHSI plenary meeting, held at the IAEA headquarters in October.	Influencing common regulatory positions and advancing efforts towards greater collaboration and harmonisation.

Programme	Date	Activity	Outcomes
		<p>Through our work on NHSI WG3 we have contributed to an IAEA technical document, due to be published, on leveraging regulatory reviews.</p> <p>We attended a meeting of WG3 to discuss areas which are subject to differing regulatory expectations in different countries.</p>	
CNRA WGNT	October 2024	<p>We chaired the fourth meeting of the WGNT.</p> <p>We contributed to a report on “Safety Classification for Pressure Boundary Components in Nuclear Power Plant – an Overview of International Practices”; this is currently going through the NEA’s publication process.</p>	<p>Demonstrating leadership on the international stage. Influencing common regulatory positions and advancing efforts towards greater standardisation.</p>
Other activities	February 2025	<p>We met with members of the Dutch ANVS, sharing our experience and explaining our regulatory expectations in support of its review of safety requirements for nuclear power plants.</p>	<p>Sharing our experience of assessing SMR designs and influencing other regulators to achieve greater international alignment.</p>

6. Lookahead

47. Table 2 sets out our anticipated international regulatory engagements over the coming quarter.

Table 2: Anticipated international engagement from April – June 2025

Programme	Date	Activity	Outcomes sought
GE-Hitachi BWRX-300	April 2025	We will hold a workshop and issue a joint report with CNSC and NRC on advanced construction techniques for the BWRX-300.	Leverage the work of the other regulators to rapidly come to a view on this novel aspect of the BWRX-300 in GDA.
		We will lead a meeting with CNSC and NRC to discuss BWRX-300 safety analysis reports	Conduct a collaborative review of emerging findings on common submissions. Identify additional areas for future collaboration activities.
	May 2025	There will be a trilateral regulatory engagement with GE-Hitachi regarding the BWRX-300 C&I design.	A shared understanding amongst the regulators of what is proposed for their country relative to the others, and who will receive first additional substantiation information. The intelligence gained will inform future collaborations on this topic.
Holtec SMR-300	April 2025	We will hold further discussions with NRC to align on topics for information exchange on the SMR-300 and develop a work plan.	Agreement of a programme of engagement to mutually develop understanding of the SMR-300 design and discuss areas of particular significance.

Programme	Date	Activity	Outcomes sought
	May 2025	We have extended an invitation to NRC to observe an engagement between ourselves and Holtec on C&I for the SMR-300.	Developing common understanding of the SMR-300 C&I design. Understanding of NRC expectations in relation to key aspects, e.g. diversity and defence-in-depth.
General MoC	April – June 2025	We will engage with NRC to explore the potential for information exchange and regulatory cooperation regarding the Westinghouse AP300, Last Energy PWR-20 and TerraPower Sodium designs.	Agreed plans for co-operation to align programmes, improve harmonisation and realise efficiencies to benefit all stakeholders.
		We will engage with NRC and CNSC to explore the potential for information exchange and regulatory cooperation regarding the X-Energy Xe-100 design.	
SMR Regulators' forum	April 2025	We will attend the next formal meeting of the SMR Regulators' forum to be held at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna.	Enhance nuclear safety by identifying and resolving common safety issues that may challenge regulatory reviews associated with SMRs and by facilitating robust and thorough regulatory decisions.
IAEA NHSI	April 2025	We will participate in the next NHSI WG3 meeting in April 2025. The meeting will discuss approaches for dealing with areas of regulatory differences between member states.	Develop a regulatory toolkit for dealing with and harmonising areas of regulatory difference resulting from design review.

Programme	Date	Activity	Outcomes sought
		We will participate in the first meeting of the newly established security working group.	The WG will identify nuclear security topics of shared interest among participating states and share regulatory approaches, good practices, and lessons learned related to the security of SMRs, with the aim of enhancing international collaboration in regulatory reviews.
CNRA WGNT	April 2025	We will chair the fifth meeting of the WGNT. The group will review its priorities and consider proposals put forward by task groups.	Demonstrating leadership and setting direction.
	June 2025	We will participate in a workshop, led by the structural integrity group, on qualification and through-life performance of materials in advanced reactors.	Influencing common regulatory positions and advancing efforts towards greater collaboration and harmonisation.
Other activities	April 2025	We will support the UK government at a US trade delegation visit to the UK, where we will meet with the US Nuclear Energy Institute and several US technology vendors.	Visibility of future demands on ONR's regulatory resources, and an opportunity to provide advice and remove barriers (real or perceived) to projects going forward in the UK.
		We will support the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office at the bilateral 'Chain Bridge Forum' between the UK and Hungary, where we will participate in a panel discussion on Hungarian-UK nuclear collaboration.	Assist the development and fostering of bilateral relations, the sharing of our experience, and explaining the outcomes of GDA to the benefit of interested stakeholders.

Programme	Date	Activity	Outcomes sought
		We will also meet with the Hungarian nuclear safety regulator (HAEA) to explore areas for future collaboration.	
	April – June 2025	We will engage with ASN to explore the potential for information exchange and regulatory cooperation regarding the Newcleo LFR-AS-200 design.	Agree plan for co-operation to align programmes, improve harmonisation and realise efficiencies to benefit all stakeholders.

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