

Press release

Fusion energy expert Prof Dennis Whyte appointed next UKAEA CEO

Professor Dennis Whyte has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of UKAEA Group.

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Professor Dennis Whyte, CEO at UK Atomic Energy Authority - Image credit United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

- Minister for Energy welcomes Professor Whyte to the UK to become CEO of UKAEA this autumn.
- UKAEA plays a key role in delivering the [UK's Fusion Strategy](#).

Professor Dennis Whyte has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Group (UKAEA) following an open international recruitment process, taking up the role this autumn as the UK progresses its work to commercialise fusion energy technologies.

Professor Whyte will steer UKAEA at a pivotal moment, with a mission to lead the delivery of sustainable fusion energy to maximise scientific and UK economic benefit. He will oversee the organisation's high-impact scientific and engineering work in fusion research and development, advance commercial pathways, strengthen international and industry partnerships and translate scientific innovation into practical outcomes.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fusion-energy-expert-prof-dennis-whyte-appointed-next-ukaea-ceo>

For over 70 years, UKAEA has helped shape the global development of fusion energy through world-leading science, engineering and innovation, building the expertise, facilities and competences needed to move fusion towards commercial reality.

In 2025, the UK Government confirmed a record £2.5 billion budget commitment for fusion research, development and innovation for the five-year period to 2030, as part of its [Industrial Strategy](#). Professor Whyte will play a central role in ensuring this investment strengthens the UK's position as a global fusion leader while supporting economic growth, innovation and industrial capability across the UK.

With UKAEA's Culham Campus continuing to grow as a world-leading hub for fusion research and innovation, Professor Whyte, as CEO of UKAEA Group, will lead a workforce of more than 2,600 people across four sites and will provide leadership to UKAEA group which includes the national laboratory and UK Fusion Energy Ltd.

In November 2024, UK Fusion Energy Ltd (previously known as UK Industrial Fusion Solutions) was established as a subsidiary company of UKAEA and represented a critical milestone in the evolution of the Group, with a mandate to deliver the STEP programme. STEP is the UK's programme to design and build a prototype power plant at West Burton in Nottinghamshire to demonstrate net positive energy.

Minister of State for Energy, Michael Shanks, said:

I am delighted to welcome Professor Dennis Whyte as the new CEO of UKAEA.

The UK is already a world leader in fusion research and innovation, and Professor Whyte's expertise will help strengthen our position at the forefront of this transformative technology.

His appointment comes at an exciting moment for the sector as we build on our record investment in fusion, supporting skilled jobs, driving innovation and helping deliver economic growth across the UK.

During his time at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Professor Whyte has deepened R&D excellence and driven advances in key areas including high-temperature superconducting magnets, radio frequency

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heating, demountable magnets for modular assembly and maintenance, and liquid immersion blankets for efficient heat removal.

Professor Whyte has published over 390 papers and articles and is one of the founders of the SPARC project, a collaboration between Commonwealth Fusion Systems (CFS) and MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Center. He co-founded CFS in 2018 as an MIT spinout to commercialise fusion technology developed through MIT research. In 2024, he also co-founded Rutherford Energy Ventures, which applies economic and investment frameworks derived from his MIT research. As a result of his move to the UK, he has been elected as a visiting professor in the University of Oxford's Department of Engineering Science. This reflects his international standing and will enable him to contribute his expertise to the advancement of UK academic research, teaching and innovation.

Incoming UKAEA CEO, Professor Dennis Whyte, said:

I am excited to be joining the exceptional team at UKAEA, which has a compelling plan for delivering commercial fusion energy, developing key technologies for fusion energy extraction, and the largest workforce in the world committed to advancing the development of fusion science and engineering in its widest forms.

My goal at MIT has been to develop bold innovators, not just scientists. Innovation happens when technical rigour meets entrepreneurial ambition. That mindset has helped launch breakthrough technologies, such as high-temperature superconducting magnets, from laboratory concepts into compelling efforts in the commercial space. This shows how education can accelerate the transition from fundamental science to real-world impact, all while inspiring the next generation of leaders who treat energy security with urgency.

I was born in Canada and have lived in the USA for many years as a Commonwealth citizen. I and my family are looking forward to living in the UK. I see this new role as an amplification of my previous efforts and look forward to building on the UK's world-leading legacy in fusion, working alongside the entire UK innovation ecosystem including universities, government, industry, investors and entrepreneurs.

UKAEA has a globally significant fusion legacy that has consistently delivered world-leading experimental validation of fusion as a potential future energy

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source, most notably through the Joint European Torus (JET). Operating for over 40 years at Culham, JET broke numerous world records and, until the end of December 2023, was one of the largest facilities to successfully demonstrate sustained fusion at high power using power plant grade fuel (deuterium and tritium).

Today, UKAEA continues this leadership through its flagship machine, the MAST Upgrade spherical tokamak, exploring compact and cost-effective future fusion power plants, and a suite of facilities addressing the outstanding challenges of fusion. MAST Upgrade addresses key design challenges such as excess heat management and plasma exhaust, which are major obstacles to commercial fusion.

UKAEA develops and nurtures future fusion talent who can maintain the UK's status as a global fusion hub while collaborating with international companies and academic organisations around the world, so that scientific and technological advances driven in the UK can benefit future generations.

UKAEA Chairman, Bernard Taylor, said:

The board and I are delighted that Professor Dennis Whyte will become UKAEA's next CEO in the autumn. We had a very broad and strong international search process and Dennis was the strongest candidate to lead UKAEA at this pivotal moment for fusion.

His long and broad experience will be a major asset to build on the UK's world-leading talent and facilities. He has already been part of the creation of one of the world's largest private sector commercial fusion companies as a spinout from MIT. He has a deep understanding of the major scientific and engineering disciplines required to maintain the UK's premier position in the world of fusion science and also how to overcome the challenges and apply that science to build a commercial fusion power plant. I look forward to working with him in the coming years on the next phase of UKAEA's mission in fusion science, engineering and commercialisation.

Tim Bestwick has had an outstanding year as UKAEA's CEO. Under his leadership, our strategy has been taken forward successfully at pace, and he has driven increased social and commercial impact through strategic investment. I have very much enjoyed working with him and I thank him, on behalf of the whole board, for everything he has done in his role as CEO of UKAEA Group.

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Watch the video announcing the appointment of Professor Whyte on YouTube: [Meet UKAEA's new CEO, Prof Dennis Whyte](#)