



**Interview with George Beveridge, Deputy Managing Director, Sellafield Limited**

**Have you ever heard of the YGN and all the activities we do?**

I'm well aware of the YGN as I come across the organisation regularly and I'm also familiar with many of the events that the YGN hosts such as the Rough Guide to the Nuclear Industry (held at Sellafield) and the YGN Annual Dinner which I attended recently. I know that both YGN and Sellafield work closely with schools to promote science and engineering subjects which I think is important to encourage new entrants into the industry.



**How did you get involved in the Nuclear Industry?**

That's an interesting question. I've been in this industry for 25 years. I am originally from Aberdeen and my plan was to go into the oil and gas industry. I studied physics at Aberdeen University and spent my summers working in and around the oil and gas sector, however, when I graduated the oil prices collapsed and there were no jobs in Aberdeen. When I looked around at other options I saw that there was a lot going on in the nuclear sector at the time, particularly at Sellafield, with the construction of THORP and new and more modern waste management plants. In addition it wasn't too far from Scotland (and the Lake District has hills like Scotland!) so from a domestic point of view it wasn't too much of a change.

So that was my route into the nuclear industry and I've been here ever since.

**What is your current role and how does it make an impact on industry?**

My current role is Deputy Managing Director at Sellafield Ltd. Our executive structure here at Sellafield Ltd includes a Managing Director and two Deputy Managing Directors. We all have broad backgrounds in commercial, operational and project delivery roles. I tend to work mainly on the business support areas such as Commercial, Customer Relations, Finance, IT, Safety, HR, etc. However, we can all deal with any issue that arises. As a result, on a day to day basis, we're more or less interchangeable as an executive team; which is great from my point of view because it allows me to be involved in all aspects of the business.

Sellafield Site is the highest profile entity in the UK nuclear industry so how we manage the site reflects on the reputation of the entire industry. It is crucial that we deal with the hazards on the site in a timely and safe fashion. Our customer (the NDA) and UK Government expect us to accelerate the decommissioning programme. It is very important for public confidence in the entire industry, and particularly the new build programme, to show that we can effectively deal with the legacies of the past nuclear programme.

**How do you see the nuclear industry changing over the next 10 years and where do you see the biggest growth area for recruits?**

As an industry I think where we are today is a positive situation, probably more so than I would have predicted 10 years ago. The new build programme is a very exciting opportunity and I think over the next 10 years we'll see several new power stations under construction, potentially with the first wave coming on line at the end of this decade. That is clearly a growth area in this sector but decommissioning is just as important. The largest decommissioning programme in the UK is here at the Sellafield Site, the importance of which was recognised by the government in their recent spending review. The UK Government has maintained funding at a consistent level which allows us to continue to invest and accelerate some of the more hazardous decommissioning activities, whilst striving to be as effective and efficient as possible.

There are some key risks around skills which highlights that we need to encourage more young people to enter the industry. We need an aggressive skills programme to support the UK's nuclear



agenda to avoid competition between the new build programme and the decommissioning programme for resources. The industry as a whole should collaborate with groups such as the National Nuclear Academy to ensure that the whole industry has the skills it needs. In addition, there will also be international competition for UK resources as other countries develop their own nuclear programmes.

**The UK is increasing the programme for research and development- how do you think we can develop to become an international centre for excellence in this area?**

The UK, and especially West Cumbria, can become a centre for excellence for decommissioning and waste management. We have already seen positive steps with the establishment of the National Nuclear Laboratory. We can harness a lot of the practical hands on experience we actually have here at Sellafield and across the rest of the NDAs estate in terms of delivering the retrieval of waste, storage projects, and decommissioning projects.

West Cumbria, and in particular Sellafield Site and LLWR, already play a significant role in managing the UK radioactive waste and the local authorities have recently expressed an interest in potentially hosting the Geological Disposal Facility. I believe this, in conjunction with the Energy Coast initiative, could help transform West Cumbria into a real centre for excellence for nuclear technology, waste management and decommissioning. We can take that experience and export this knowledge around the world.

**What does your company do to encourage an educational programme in schools?**

The company has done a great deal of work with schools over the years. We provide educational resources to schools which they can access via a specific website. In addition to this we actively support the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) ambassadors' programme. Between our Risley and Sellafield sites we have over 250 people who are operating as ambassadors participating in a whole range of activities such as the engineering education scheme. We support career days at schools and have put on science and technology days, including some exciting robotics days for some of our schools in West Cumbria. These are great fun and good at getting young people interested in engineering.

Sellafield Ltd is one of the proud sponsors of the Westlakes academy in Egremont along with UCLan and the NDA. I personally take a particular interest in our sponsorship of the academy. I'm keen that Sellafield, with our massive resources in STEM areas, support the school as much as possible. For example, they recently had a shortage of maths teachers so we provided some of our Maths graduates to assist in the school.

**How would you convince a student or graduate to join your area of expertise?**

I believe we have a very good graduate programme here at Sellafield Ltd. During the first couple of years there is a structured development programme. Each graduate is assigned a mentor within the business who they can go to at any time for advice. The graduates have the opportunity to move around different areas of the business and there are a range of training and development opportunities during that time.

We are a large business with a diverse range of roles including almost all science and engineering disciplines. This includes some very exciting, cutting edge, work such as advanced modelling techniques in strategy, engineering and design areas. For example, we are at the leading edge in geographical mapping and information technology used for the planning of the decommissioning of this complex nuclear site.

The graduate programme is highly valued by the executive team, and I, in particular take significant interest in the programme, meeting fairly regularly with groups of graduates. I discuss with them how they're progressing, I provide advice, and have brokered development moves in some cases when we temporarily second people to other organisations.

**What does your company do to attract and retain younger staff?**



People generally these days are more mobile in terms of employers than in the past. Retention is important for us as we put a lot of effort into recruiting good people, and training them, so clearly if they only stay with Sellafield for a year or two then that's a disappointment.

One of the things we have developed here at Sellafield is a Technical Trainee Scheme where we recruit people direct from school after A levels. These entrants have good A levels but don't necessarily want to go to university. They want to go into employment but also want to continue to develop. This programme has been running for three years and I'm very supportive of it. During the first two or three years working for us we often sponsor participants through a foundation degree (supported by UCLan) and then they can choose whether to go onto a full degree into whatever their particular discipline is. The scheme participants are all local people who we have recruited from schools local to our sites and retention of scheme members is extremely high. Those in the Technical Trainee scheme do good work for us in the local schools and are great ambassadors for the business.

With the graduate community, some are local but many of them are not, you have to work harder to retain them. The fact that we've got a good scheme helps with retention certainly in the early years, then it's down to the development opportunities that we're able to offer. The senior management and executive team fully support that so people feel there are good opportunities here to stretch themselves based on performance.

**What do you think is the best piece of advice you can provide a younger member of industry?**

I would advise them to keep pushing the boundaries and stretch themselves in terms of personal development. People who choose to sit back and expect the organisation to manage their development and to bring opportunities to them will not achieve their full potential. The individual really has to do their bit and take control. Development is the responsibility of the individual, although there is a responsibility with the organisation to make sure there is a framework present and opportunities are available. You need to ensure, particularly in your early career, that you are being stretched close to the edge of your capabilities and it does not just become a comfortable environment. I believe it is in challenging environments that people learn most rapidly. I certainly found in my early career that getting significant responsibility at an early stage in your career is very important and can be a huge benefit in terms of accelerating you into positions later in your career.

My advice would be to look for opportunities to take significant responsibility early on. That doesn't have to be managing lots of people; there are a whole variety of ways you can take responsibility such as key assessment work vital for the business. Showing that you can deal with it early in your career can be a real game changer.

**Are all your young staff members of the YGN, if not, why not?**

Well I'm certainly aware that many of them are but it's probably not universal. I always highlight the existence of the YGN and raise awareness when interacting with young people.

**How can we support you? You support us in the future?**

I'm a great believer in the YGN. The YGN is an important enabler for our young people in terms of sharing how things are done at Sellafield and elsewhere in the UK industry or even overseas. It's a good way to bring new ideas and best practices into the business from elsewhere.

I will continue to support the YGN and encourage our staff to take leading roles in the organisation. This includes giving those individuals the necessary support and time to do that. I will be continuing to raise awareness of the YGN to groups of younger staff when I meet them.

**Thank you very much for your support of the YGN!**