



# Next Generation nuclear industry council

## **Stepping into the Future**

Future Workforce Consultations  
for the UK Nuclear Industry

September 2022

# Executive Summary

What if we could transport ourselves to the future and ask tomorrow's workforce what their hopes, fears, motivations and preferences are?

We started this exercise with the question: if we asked the workforce of today what their desired future working environment would look like, what would they say? With this insight we could invest in helping nuclear organisations create an optimal working environment—one that could help boost and retain the UK's nuclear workforce, which is key to nuclear energy supporting the UK's Net Zero by 2050 goals and the ambition of the British Energy Security Strategy.

To obtain this insight the Next Generation Nuclear Industry Council (NGNIC) held a series of Future Workforce consultations. Hosted during 2021/2022, these consultations were designed to create a 'safe space' to understand the views of those working in the UK nuclear sector today. We also invited some people in education and from other industries that represent the type of people we hope will be attracted to join the nuclear sector in the future. 100 participants took part in the consultations, with participants broadly representing the diversity of the UK population which, in our view, is the diversity that should be championed for a future nuclear workforce.

Through small group consultations we were able to understand what people like and dislike about the nuclear sector currently, what type of working environment would attract or repel them, and their views on where time and effort should be invested to create and maintain the optimal working environment.

The discussions identified positive characteristics of today's working environment, including an appreciation of the **challenging and interesting nature of the work** alongside the **culture of collaboration**. However, this was coupled with the view that the sector is **not progressive** and is **slow, old fashioned** and **lacking**

**in diversity**. There was also an emphasis on the desire to work in an environment that had **inclusivity at its core**, which was sadly not the current reality for many of the participants taking part. Participants stressed the importance of career progression and supportive colleagues as key motivators for staying with an organisation, so the fact that they see exciting opportunities in the nuclear sector and feel supported by colleagues is a significant positive for the sector and retention.

Participants emphasised **three key areas** that should be central in the current & future nuclear working environment. These are:

- i) inclusive leadership,**
- ii) improving the image of the sector** and
- iii) long term investment in training, development and career pathways.**

From the consultations, it was apparent that participants felt **true accountability at leadership level and consequences for unacceptable behaviours** were currently lacking. We heard about personal experiences of many participants that were troubling, especially those that showed unacceptable behaviours we hoped had been wiped out decades ago which still remain prevalent and are widely unacknowledged by the sector.

We hope our findings motivate leaders to look closely at themselves, listen to their workforce and consider the structure and operation of their organisations, allowing them to take responsibility and be more accountable for creating the working environment that the future workforce will thrive in.

# Introduction

The Next Generation Nuclear Industry Council (NGNIC) is the shadow board to the Nuclear Industry Council and is made up of a group of professionals from across the UK nuclear sector.

One of the areas of focus of the NGNIC is Future Workforce, specifically looking at how to contribute to the attraction, recruitment, development and retention of a diverse and inclusive workforce to deliver on the objectives of the nuclear sector in the UK.

The NGNIC subgroup conducting these Future Workforce Consultations aimed to create highly

credible reference data for organisations and individuals in the nuclear sector to help them drive positive change. Employee focus groups are often carried out internally within organisations, but seldom shared across the industry.

The participants of these consultations represent organisations across the sector and across the UK. We hope that our findings will be used to validate the right behaviours, change the wrong behaviours and justify increased investment in creating the best possible working environment.

# Methodology

## Who took part in the consultations?

A key differentiator between this and previous industry initiatives is that these consultations engaged with 100 participants that closely resemble the diversity found across the UK population (based on 2011 census statistics), which is the baseline of diversity that the future nuclear sector workforce should aspire to in our view. We especially focused on inviting people from underrepresented groups to take part in the consultations, to understand their perspectives on how to **attract** and **retain** a more diverse workforce in the future.

While we did not have set quotas when inviting participants, we did attempt to ensure representation was at least in proportion to the UK population in terms of gender and ethnicity. For example, participants were roughly balanced in terms of gender and 23% were from Asian British, Black British and other minority ethnicities (based on the 2011 UK Census data that 18.12% of the UK population were Asian British, Black British or other ethnic minorities).

According to Scope, a charity focused on disability, 21% of working age adults in the UK have some form of disability (<https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures>), which compares to 11% of our participants that have a disability. According to the UK's Office for National Statistics, in 2019 93.7% of people in the UK identify as straight, and 6.3% as lesbian, gay, bisexual, other, do not know or prefer not to say. This compares with 6% of our participants that identified as LGBTQ+.

The 100 participants we engaged with provided valuable insights into what the workforce of the future are thinking and feeling. The participants in these consultations provided us with first-hand feedback on what the optimal nuclear sector working environment could look like in 2030 and beyond. Our consultations included representation of UK society across the following characteristics (including all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010):

**Age | Career Stage | Job Role | Ethnic Group | Gender  
Type of Organisation | Size of Organisation | Family Situation  
Employment | Disability | Nationality | Location | Religion/Beliefs  
Sexual Orientation | Education | Socio-economic**

Breaking this down into further detail, of the participants that took part:

- 51% were under 30 years old, 37% were 31-50 and 12% were over 50
- 5% were pre career, 52% were early career and 43% were mid-late career
- 77% of participants were white and 23% from other ethnic groups
- 49% were female, 47% male and 2% preferred to self-describe and 2% preferred not to say
- 74% were full time employees and 26% were working on a part time or flexible basis
- 71% worked for organisations with more than 500 staff and 29% in smaller organisations
- 11% reported to have some form of disability
- 90% were British, with 10% identifying as having non-British nationalities
- 58% were from the North of England, 34% from the South and Midlands, 4% from Wales and 4% from Scotland
- 6% were from the LGBTQ+ community
- 87% had a bachelor's degree or higher educational achievement
- 90% worked in the nuclear industry and 10% were from other relevant sectors
- 38% were in technical roles, 17% in management and 45% in a variety of other roles

## What were participants asked and how were consultations structured?

The consultations were designed to be a safe space for open communication and to be as interactive as possible. They were not recorded but notes were taken, and participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential.

The group sizes were typically between 4-10 people per consultation, the duration was 1 hour, and they took place virtually in video meetings. In most cases,

participants had their cameras turned on and could both see and hear others in the group.

In advance of each consultation participants were asked to complete a pre-consultation survey. The survey included questions about their identity and the four key questions (shown below). Gaining responses to the questions in advance was valuable in setting the scene for each consultation.

Which positive words come to your mind when you think about the working environment and culture in the nuclear sector?

Which negative words come to your mind when you think about the working environment and culture in the nuclear sector?

Which words would you use to describe a working environment in which you would feel uncomfortable, unhappy, de-motivated and excluded?

Which words would you use to describe a working environment in which you would feel most comfortable, happy, motivated and included?

Each consultation was split into 3 sections:

1. **The Nuclear Sector today:** perspectives (positive & negative) on the current nuclear working culture and environment;
2. **Looking into the future:** perspectives (desirable & undesirable) on a future nuclear working culture and environment; and

3. **Where to invest time, effort and resources:** perspectives on how to get to the ideal future nuclear working culture and environment and what to address first.

There were also poll questions embedded throughout. Mentimeter was used as an online tool to facilitate information sharing during the consultations.

The following is a more detailed summary of the sections:

**Section 1: The Nuclear sector today** – Aimed at understanding what people think about the nuclear sector as a place to work now, in terms of working environment and culture. (For those that do not currently work in the sector, we were looking to understand their perceptions of the industry)

**Poll:** to what extent do you feel that you can be your true self at work currently? (0=not at all, to 10= absolutely 100%)

**Section 2: Looking into the Future** – Aimed at understanding the “undesirable” and “desirable” working environment and culture that participants would like to see in the future

**Poll:** How confident are you that the nuclear industry leadership will get us to the working environment and culture that you would like to see?

**Question:** Which industries and organisations do you feel come closest to your ideal working environment? (feel free to name as many as you like, and remember that this is based on your perception even if you have never worked in the industry or organisations named)

**Section 3: Where to invest time, effort and resources** – Discussion around how we get to the desired working environment and culture (referring to the desired working environment and culture discussed in Section 2 in which participants would feel most comfortable, happy, motivated and included). There were three questions in this section:

1. To evolve from the current to the desired working environment and culture, what would you address first and how?
2. If you had until 2030 to make improvements to the working culture, what are the items and tasks that would be on your medium (years 2-5) and long (5+ years) term plans?
3. What is working well already, that should be continued and built upon? (specific examples would be really useful to hear about)

The intention of conducting small group consultations was to maximise the interaction and the quality of information gained. Each session had three facilitators from the NGNIC.

Prior to each consultation, Mentimeter was pre-populated with the answers given to questions from Section 1 and 2 of the consultation and presented in word clouds. Gathering this information in advance enabled participants to have additional time to consider their responses and mitigate against group think during the consultations.

In Sections 1 and 2 the participants were presented with a word cloud on Mentimeter, pre-populated with the words they entered in the pre-consultation survey. They were then asked to enlarge words on the word cloud they particularly agreed with by entering them again as well as adding any new words. This method meant that the words participants wanted to stress most became larger on the screen and common themes could be identified. Participants were then asked to expand on their thoughts and provide more detail in discussion. This additional detail was captured alongside the data in Mentimeter.

The questions in Section 3 were addressed through group discussion.

Participants received an email after the consultation giving them an opportunity to provide any thoughts or comments that came to mind after the session.

Participants received an email after the consultation giving them an opportunity to provide any additional information that came to mind after the session.

# The Nuclear Sector Today

Which positive words come to your mind when you think about the working environment and culture in the nuclear sector?

## Word Cloud 1



**Observations/analysis:** This question allowed participants to think about the aspects of the current sector which provided them with a positive experience.

Participants highlighted many positive aspects of the sector's current working culture and environment. These are the elements which we can assume the workforce want to see more of in their current and future environment.

“The sector is great at group work which helps with sense of community.”

The most common positive characteristic associated with the current working environment is **Challenging**. For a sector that was kick-started in the UK in the 1950s it is extremely refreshing to hear participants highlighting the sector continued to provide them with challenge and stretch in their roles. A workforce that is challenged and views the sector as **Exciting** and **Interesting** is likely to be a workforce that is more engaged in our view. These traits are important to not only entice individuals (at all levels) to enter the nuclear sector but also to retain them.

New, vibrant **Opportunities** are key to bringing in more people and in maintaining the current workforce. It is also positive to see that the participants felt the sector provided career opportunities. Participants commented that this may be a result of the breadth of work the sector covers; from large scale new and existing nuclear plants, to decommissioning and radioactive waste management, Research and Development, defence, nuclear fuels and future



**Male-dominated** and **Lack of diversity** were raised by participants with striking frequency.

This is a concerning outcome for the sector as it stands today and is a clear call to action in terms of making sure that the nuclear workforce is reflective of the diversity of Britain today, or at the very least, representative of local regional diversity. These hallmarks of exclusivity and non-diversity ultimately depict an industry of the past, which will struggle to find a place amongst other innovative, and more forward-looking sectors if significant action is not taken in the near term.

“**The industry seems to be so constrained by history that it is really hard to make changes and we often end up with poor compromises.**”

More worrying terms such as **Discriminatory** and **Islamophobic** also appeared in this section of the consultation, which would indicate that the sector has not fully embraced a culture of diversity and inclusion and is in some areas failing to achieve a fundamental baseline of respect for people from diverse backgrounds. This raises serious concerns with the way the sector treats its workforce today. This must be a priority for the sector to address with immediate effect.

“**From a technical point of view, there is no ability to challenge things. You have to be very political at work and stroke people’s egos. You have to play the game that’s been set up by previous generations.**”

“**Some organisations are in a time warp, taking you back to the 1980s! There is an atmosphere of comfort, full of micro-aggressions.**”

The pace and traditionalism of the sector were two further aspects identified with negative connotations by participants during this exercise, with **Slow**, **Stagnant**, **Old fashioned** and **Traditional** also coming to the fore. Similar themes were also seen referencing words such as **Indecisive**, **Not efficient**, **Closed-minded** and **Hierarchical**.

It is interesting to consider the potential link between these two themes - to what extent does a culture of ‘we’ve always done it this way’ impact on the speed of change within the sector?

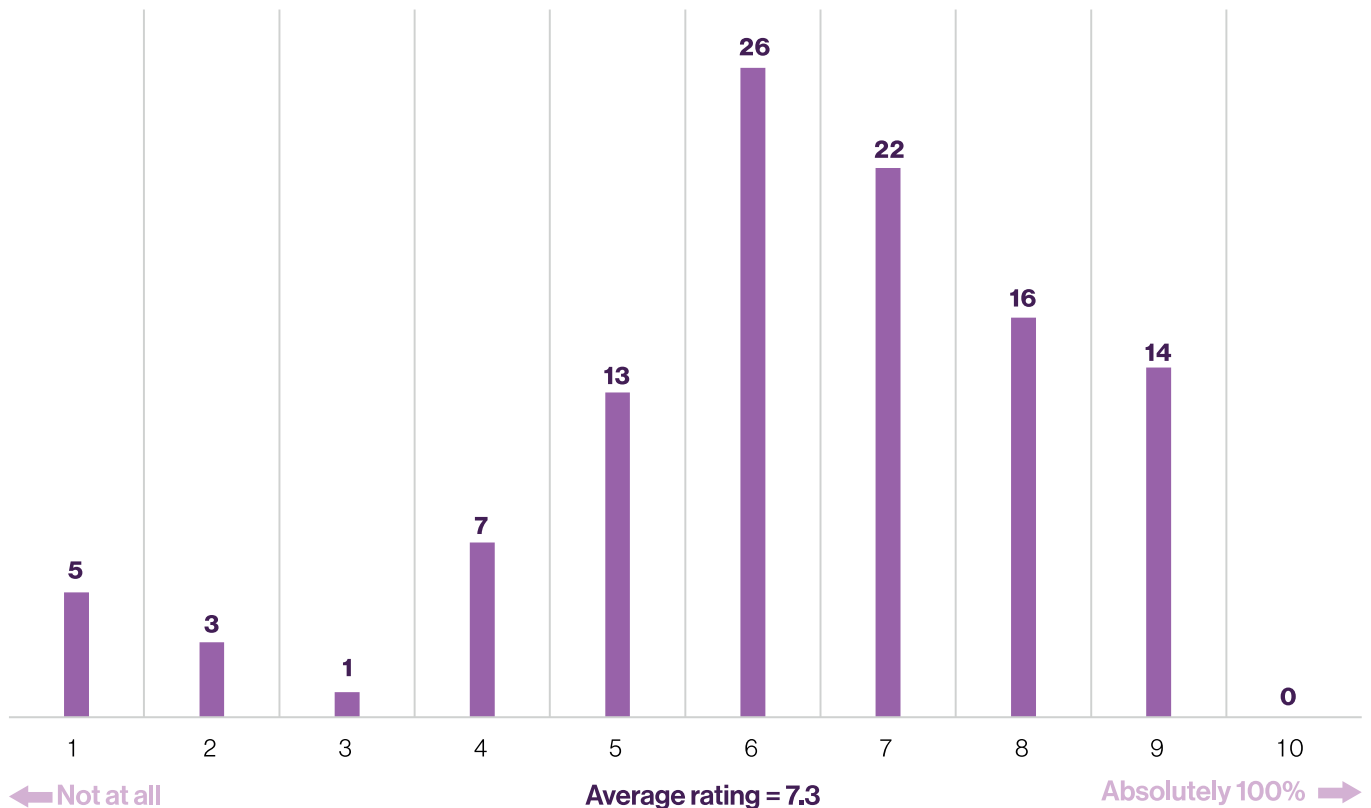
Looking towards the next generation of nuclear professionals who will enter the sector with new ideas and experiences, there is a clear gap between how participants in the consultations viewed the sector and how it would need to adapt to attract new minds. A key consideration for the sector will be on attracting new minds whilst also ensuring the existing workforce is brought onboard and has a key role in the future direction of the sector. New organisations, such as Great British Nuclear, Sizewell C and Rolls Royce SMR, have a great opportunity to design and build their workforces with these future insights in mind.

A final observation is the perception of nuclear as a sector that is **Misunderstood**. This perception was compounded by the appearance of terms such as **Secretive**, **Security Barrier**, and **Afraid**. All these terms indicate a lack of transparency within the sector, leading to a public misunderstanding of its purpose and activities. If the sector is to tackle its perception of being ‘misunderstood’, there is also a need to consider in more depth how it can more effectively position itself to create greater urgency and transparency to navigate future challenges and opportunities.



# Poll question: to what extent do you feel that you can be your true self at work currently?

**Table 1**



Whilst we lack comparison data about the extent people feel they can be themselves in other industries, this average score of 7.3 suggests a generally positive current situation in the UK nuclear sector.

It was raised and echoed by some participants that whilst they feel that they can be themselves, in doing so they perceive that there are some negative consequences, such as facing criticism or isolation as a result of deviating from the expected way of acting or thinking.

The result being that those who are able to be themselves in an environment where they are different in some way to the expected norm are penalised, and many succumb to the pressures of conforming and are not able to be their 'full-selves' at the workplace. For example, one participant said "I often tone down my accent to fit in".

A follow up study could examine this further to understand how this might be negatively impacting the workforce, especially through suppressing the benefits of diversity in organisations and penalising those with the courage to act or think differently. Minimising group think and increasing cognitive diversity are key drivers of the innovation needed within the nuclear sector.



Finally, it is useful to note other characteristics which were prominent in the desired future working environment but were less so or non-existent in the characterisation of the current perceived environment.

These include **Flexible, Valued** and **Clear Career Progression**. Interestingly, while participants saw **Opportunities** as a positive in the current working environment, they did not identify clarity of career progression as an existing reality. These are valuable prompts about where to focus attention when preparing for the future.

**“Companies need to be able to communicate wider purpose of the sector, not just their own mission.”**

Which words would you use to describe a working environment in which you would feel uncomfortable, unhappy, de-motivated and excluded?

### Word Cloud 4



**Observations/analysis** Similarly, it is interesting to look at how aligned the undesired future working environment is to the current perceived reality.

One of the most undesired characteristics of the future working environment is **Unsupportive**. The fact that **Supportive** appears a moderate number of times as a perceived characteristic currently is a good sign. However, there were some other negative words used to characterise the current reality that could lead to an unsupportive environment, such as **Cliquey, Remote, Exclusive, Political** and **Discriminatory**. Feedback from our consultations suggests that some people feel supported but there is also an opportunity to expand this so that a larger number of people also feel that way. Considering that **Unsupportive** is the

characteristic most undesired in the future working environment, there is a clear call to action here to build on good practice in supporting employees and provide a supportive working environment to all.

The second most frequently stated undesired characteristic is **No career progression**. This is contrasted against career **Opportunities** being frequently stated by participants in describing the current working environment. This could indicate that participants felt positive about the potential for future opportunities in the sector, through the development of new nuclear technologies and projects, but perhaps did not feel the same positivity towards existing career development opportunities and frameworks within the sector. The UK nuclear

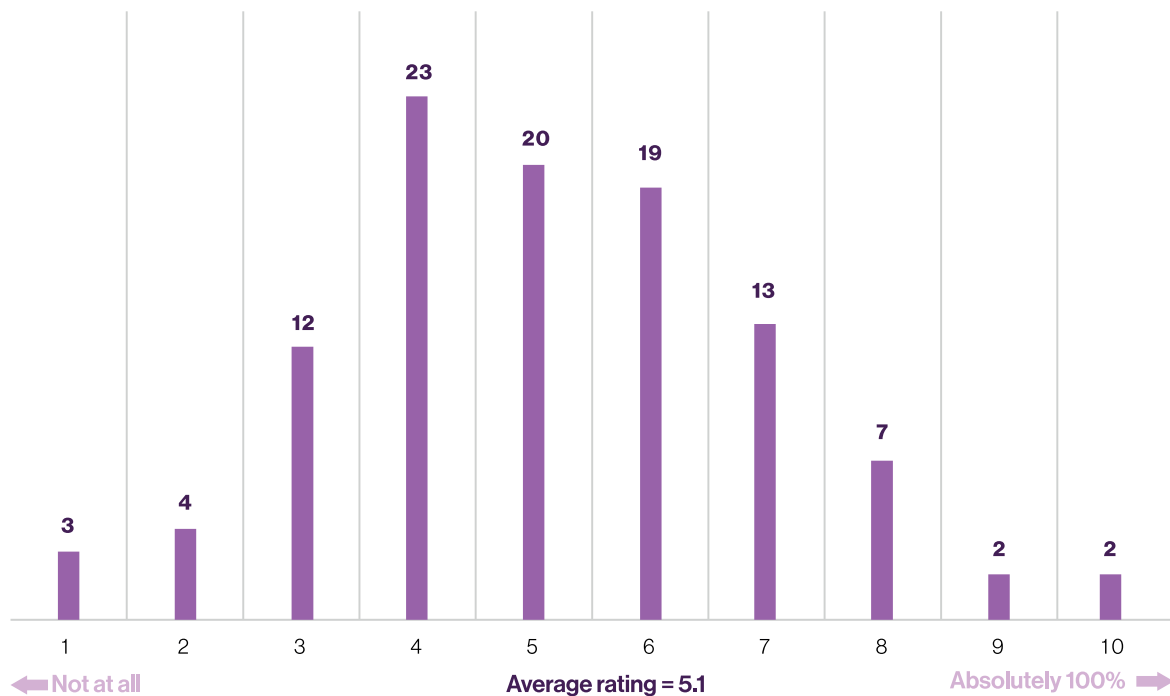
sector is on a long-term growth trajectory and there is a golden opportunity right now to map out and communicate career progression opportunities as a way of attracting people to the industry and retaining and motivating the current workforce.

In terms of correlation between what is undesired in the future and the current perceived reality, there are several characteristics appearing in the current negative perceived reality and the future undesired reality. These are areas for immediate focus and include **Non-diverse, Male dominated, Not inclusive, Slow, Outdated, Old Fashioned, Stale** and **Stagnant**. These findings reinforce the current widely discussed priorities of diversity and modernisation within the UK nuclear industry.

**“Lack of career development opportunities is a massive demotivator and a lot of young people don’t see career progression in nuclear”**

**Poll question:** How confident are you that the nuclear industry leadership will get us to the working environment and culture that you would like to see?

**Table 2**



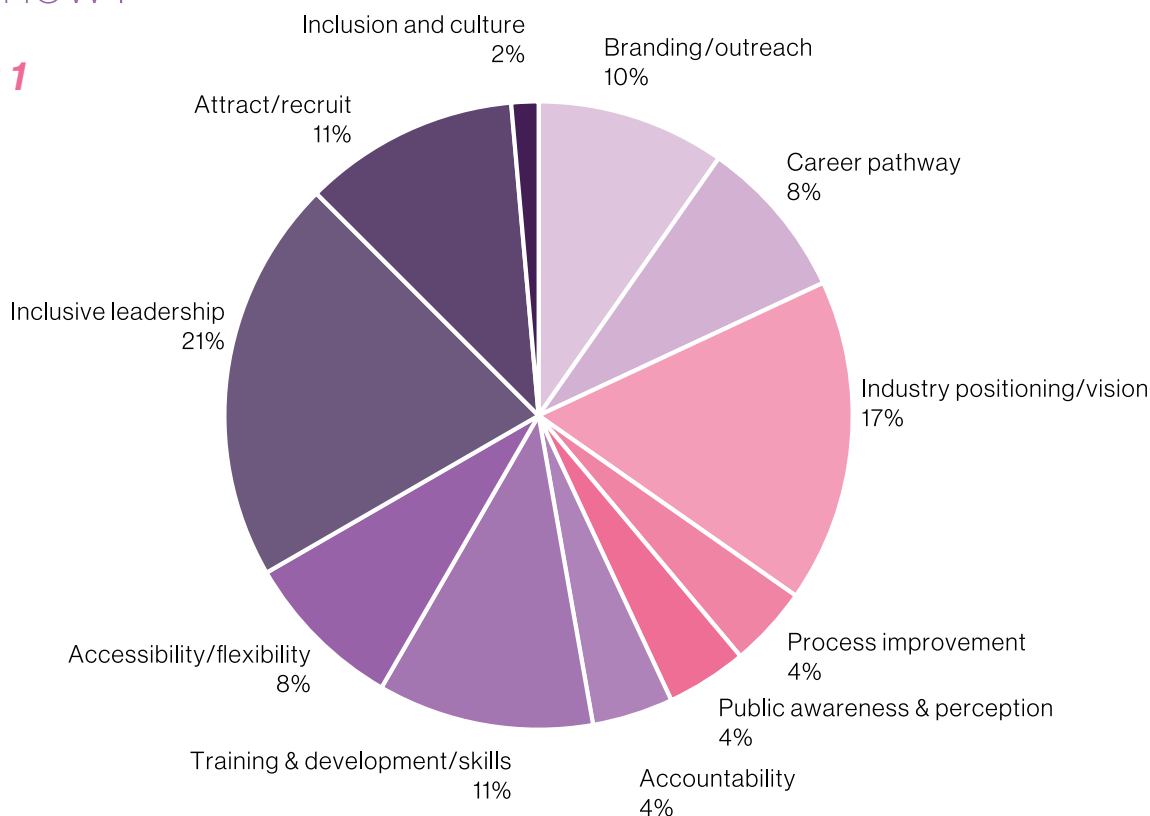
Whilst this is not a resounding vote of confidence in the leadership of the nuclear industry, the feedback we had from participants included this being a hard question to answer due to participants not having a holistic view of leadership across the industry. Scores were based on the current leadership of employers of the participants and/ or perceptions of leaders across the industry.

There is a correlation between the lack of diversity at the leadership level in the industry and the desired diversity and inclusivity in the future workforce. Questions were raised about whether the current leadership is setting the example, with its current make-up, for the wider workforce to follow. Many comments were made about some of the prominent negative perceived current characteristics being embodied in current leaders, such as “Slow”, “Male Dominated” and “Old fashioned”.

# Where To Invest Time, Effort and Resources

To evolve from the current to the desired working environment and culture, what would you address first and how?

**Chart 1**



**Analysis:** The area to address most urgently, making up 21% of all responses, is **Inclusive Leadership**. There were many calls for leaders to set an example by being visible role models, to develop their knowledge and understanding of lived experiences of underrepresented groups and to hold people they lead to account for unacceptable behaviours.

It was troubling to hear from multiple early career participants that had witnessed unacceptable behaviour being "swept under the carpet" or dealt with by a "slap on the wrist" and there were multiple calls for more leadership **Accountability** for unacceptable behaviour.

There were comments about empowering the younger generation to lead, an example being the recent activities of the Young Generation Network (YGN) in relation to COP26. "We need to communicate that everyone has a part to play in achieving the desired working environment of the future." We also heard

calls for more cohesion at a national level and for organisations such as the Nuclear Industry Association (NIA) or groups like the Nuclear Industry Council (NIC) to provide more sectoral leadership by exemplifying best-practice.

**“Technical experts are not always the best at people management. Just because you are technically competent, does not mean you are capable of managing people.”**

“Who are the “leadership” of the nuclear industry? It does not feel like they are an organised group.

The next areas to address are **Industry Positioning and Vision** (17% of responses) and **Branding and Outreach** (10% of responses). There were calls to be realistic about the current position of the industry and then set a vision for the future that everyone can buy in to.

Considerations raised when positioning the industry included avoiding over censorship, positioning the industry as a driver for positive change, matching industry values more closely to those of the younger generations, promoting successes, being brave and becoming more open. Comments around branding and outreach included creating awareness of nuclear energy as a low-carbon energy solution amongst younger school children, STEM outreach and improving the image of the industry to attract more talent.

“People are not educated about what diversity means. We need to address the knowledge gap- people don’t meet the required learning standards when it comes to diversity and inclusion.

Collectively, 22% of the suggestions of what to address urgently are related to **Attracting, Recruiting, Training and Developing People** in the workforce. As well as many comments around making the recruitment process more inclusive and working harder to reach and attract people from underrepresented groups, the participants were keen

to see an expansion of already successful initiatives such as nuclear graduates that are incredibly effective pipelines but are operating at a limited scale.

This is likely to be more effective and faster to market than the creation of new schemes. Many of the participants highlighted the need for enhanced investment in diversity and inclusion training for people at all levels within the workforce, going beyond the surface level training that is common and really educating and motivating people to drive change in behaviours and culture.

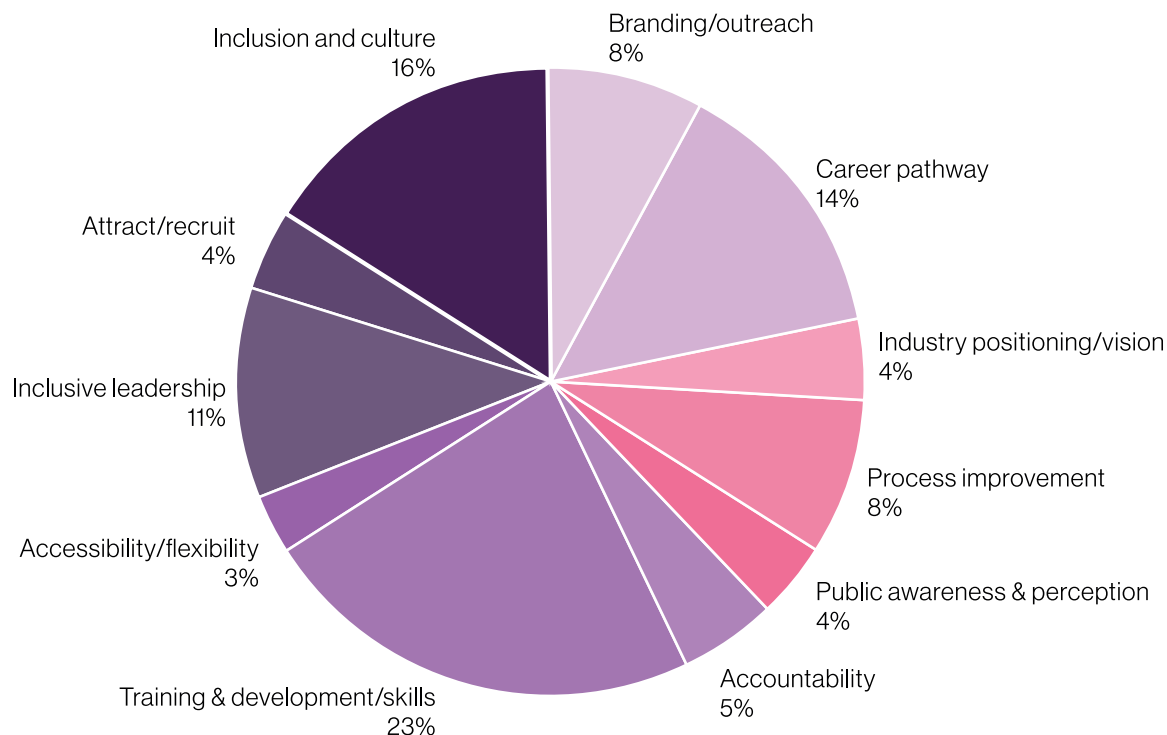
“We need to keep a watchful eye on newer people in the sector as they are more prone to facing discrimination.

There were also calls for clearer definitions for **Career Pathways** and how job roles are linked to the overall vision of a company. Suggestions such as investment in mentoring and reverse mentoring programmes were proposed. Considering that most participants see significant opportunities in the nuclear sector but may not necessarily see their own career paths in the context of the wider sector opportunities, the value of investing in creating and communicating career pathways would be well worthwhile.

“The narrative of nuclear careers for many has been around ‘falling into nuclear by accident’. There needs to be more consideration on what a career in nuclear could and should look like.

If you had until 2030 to make improvements to the working culture, what items and tasks would be on your medium (years 2-5) and long (5+ years) term plans?

**Chart 2**



**Analysis:** The three principal areas participants identified as essential components of the sectors medium and long-term plans were the following:

- Inclusion and Culture and Inclusive Leadership (27% combined)
- Training and Development (23%)
- Career Pathway (14%)

**Inclusion, culture and inclusive leadership**

The need for inclusion within a supportive culture and inclusive leadership framework was a priority for almost a third of participants: a result that has clear parallels with the rest of the responses in this section.

As a priority in both the medium and short-term, there was a recognition that the creation of an inclusive culture and leadership framework is something that needs to be anchored in a longer-term vision, but committed to action in the short-term. One participant expressed this message saying: “we need to appreciate it will take time, but there are steps we can be taking now.”

Elements that were raised as being important in establishing this culture and leadership were the importance of work/life balance and the continuation of flexible working instigated by the pandemic, inclusive boards, an increase in graduate and apprentice recruitment and the de-stigmatisation of stress, anxiety and mental health awareness. It was also raised that it would be a promising step forward if the sector were to see more non-STEM women in leadership roles.

In terms of leadership, one participant encouraged us to ask the hard question: “are our senior leaders really ambassadors?” There was a general sentiment that the current leadership needs to reflect the diversity of the workforce in order to be fully inclusive, whether that is in terms of gender, race or other protected characteristics. It was also noted that the younger generation had much to offer in terms of disruptive thinking and fresh energy to leadership roles.

Throughout the consultations, there was a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the current trajectory in relation to this topic, encapsulated in the following

comment: “We need to move away from the sense that people should be grateful for the scant progress to date—this is patronising, and people are getting very fed up.”

**Training and Development/skills**

As the next major segment of opinion, training and development and the skills agenda within nuclear were greeted with enthusiasm by participants. Several references were made to the need for an enhanced STEM programme, which ‘flies the nuclear flag’, and the need to rethink the traditional delivery of training and development by considering mechanisms such as reverse mentoring and other practices from other sectors and organisations whereby skills development isn’t simply characterised by the ‘old teaching the new.’

Participants also raised the requirement for the sector to adapt to a changing digital landscape, advocating the increased use of technology and automation, while also upskilling and re-skilling people to work in harmony with these changes.

The need for specific training in diversity and inclusion was also raised as a need of the sector, with one participant noting “we need to address the knowledge gap—people don’t meet the required learning standards when it comes to diversity and inclusion”.

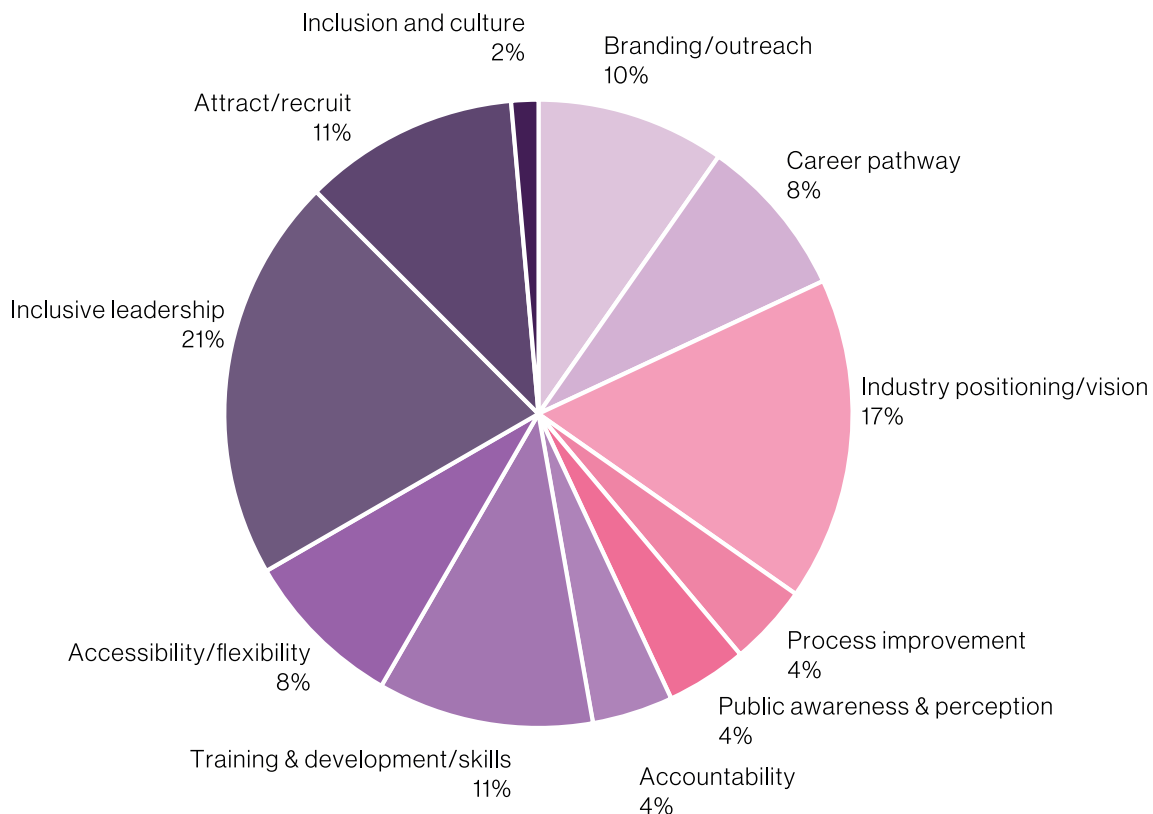
**Career pathway**

“The narrative of nuclear careers for many has been around ‘falling into nuclear by accident’. There needs to be more consideration on what a career in nuclear could and should look like.” This comment, made in one of the consultations highlights the current perceived lack of accessible career pathways into and through nuclear. In many senses, this links into the theme of public perception of the sector and the knock-on effect this has on people considering nuclear as a viable or attractive career pathway.

It was also suggested by participants that careers in nuclear can be too dependent on postcode, with lower paid jobs recruited in remote localities near the sites themselves, while Head Quarter chose to be based in the cities.

What is working well already, that should be continued and built upon?

**Chart 3**





**Analysis:** This question enabled a more open response from participants with 71% focusing on three key areas:

- Inclusion and culture (27%);
- Training and career development (28% combined); and
- Industry positioning (16%).

### **Inclusion and Culture**

Discussion with participants, throughout the consultation, highlighted the divergence between their own personal appetite for change and the speed of practical change occurring around them at both the organisational and sectoral level. Overwhelmingly, it was seen that there was a lot more for leadership, organisations and the sector to do to truly create inclusive working environments. This was clearly reflected by one participant who noted that “If we don’t do anything organisations will start getting called out publicly for their behaviour.”

Participants noted that enhancing inclusivity in the working environment often challenged traditional ways of working in the sector. There was agreement that a change across the sector could only occur once the sector was willing to acknowledge there was a problem and this required dialogue between individuals and across teams and organisations. It was noted, these conversations were happening, and this engagement needed to be built on to move the conversation forward and create a positive shift in culture across the sector. Facilitating more learning opportunities and discussion around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion were seen as a good starting point. Building on this platform, efforts need to be carefully calibrated to ensure progress is made and is visible.

**“Support networks and secondment opportunities: we need to highlight these best practices in the workforce.”**

The impact of the pandemic on traditional ways of working and ‘checking in on one another’ were highlighted as a prime example of how the conversation on mental wellbeing had been advanced. The lessons from the pandemic on remote working, the impact of isolation and re-assessing how teamwork was conducted to ensure all colleagues could participate were seen as positive steps towards enhancing workplace inclusivity.

A pride in the sector, and its important work, was evident throughout all the discussions. In tandem, the sector being well placed to show real leadership in the inclusivity space were also highlighted. Participants emphasised the appetite for change, talented UK workforce and nuclear’s geographical footprint as being key strengths that needed to be leveraged better by leadership to create more inclusive working environments and pipelines of talent.

### **Training, Development and Career Pathway**

Discussion on training, development and career pathways focused on more specific interventions. These included greater collaboration and engagement across the sector, and with other sectors, to share experiences, opportunities, and best-practices. An example of this included the creation of a ‘nuclear skills passport’ that could help to unlock greater opportunities and cross-sector movement in career choice.

In addition, it was also noted that sectoral and cross-sectoral support and employee networks could play a key in breaking down silo’s e.g., by sharing secondment opportunities, overlapping graduate programmes and best practices at a more micro level.

### **Industry positioning and vision**

UK nuclear’s ability to communicate the importance of nuclear energy, as part of the UK’s journey to Net Zero, to the wider public, students, especially STEM students, and overcoming its reputation as a mature and staid sector were seen by participants as critical factors for recruitment and retention. Greater co-ordination across the sector in targeting graduates, apprentices and highly skilled workers from other industries and strengthening connections to make nuclear a destination of choice was seen as key areas of focus for the sector.

# Recommendations

## 1. Strengthening Investment in workforce

**initiatives** - We recommend a coordinated sector effort to support and fund meaningful initiatives. Addressing the image of the nuclear sector and training and development in diversity and inclusion are two areas that are significantly underinvested in, and both are perfectly suited to a national collaborative approach. Many of the workforce initiatives at industry level, regionally or nationally, are reliant on volunteer efforts and temporary secondments. There is also a disconnect between goals and objectives and the financial resources allocated to achieve them.

The volume of initiatives, in combination with the fact that organisations generally carry out their own initiatives internally has led to fragmentation which is a hindrance to meaningful joined-up sectoral progress. The logical next step is to work out how to effectively collaborate and focus resources on priority initiatives at a national level. The Government's commitment to the nuclear industry and the setting up of Great British Nuclear presents an opportunity to achieve this next step.

“We need to stop people being used as ‘poster campaigns’ while little inclusive activity is actually happening.”

## 2. Inclusivity becoming a priority focus across the UK nuclear workforce

**-** Based on the feedback we received, this is what the future workforce value the most and they do not generally consider the UK nuclear industry to be inclusive today. Leaders of organisations need to prioritise this cultural shift and lead by example, making the necessary investments and being held accountable for the outcomes.

This could be done in different ways, such as a sector charter, but however it is addressed, accountability is key. We hope that our future workforce consultations inspire an increase in employee consultations across the whole sector. Understanding what needs to change, which is likely to differ across different

organisations and regions, and then investing the resources necessary would lead to meaningful change. It would be incredibly valuable if there could be a national standard for measuring investment, activity and progress towards improving inclusivity, and a way of clearly distinguishing between posturing talk and meaningful action.

## 3. National co-ordination in developing Inclusive Leaders

**-** While we recognise that leadership training is difficult to coordinate at an industry level nationwide, we do recommend a coordinated national approach to training and developing leaders in inclusion and diversity. There is already a very strong culture of collaboration as well as an established norm of working in joint ventures and consortia, so the same approach should be taken to ensure that leaders within the industry have a common understanding of the lived experiences of those from underrepresented groups and how to hold people accountable for unacceptable behaviour, as well as ultimately being accountable as leaders.

One option could be to commission a professional learning and development organisation with strong credentials in inclusive leadership to carry out a study into what is happening at the organisation level and across the industry. This could then lead into the development of an inclusive leadership programme that is complimentary and builds on existing efforts, as well as ensuring that it is acceptable to all stakeholders. An inclusive leadership programme such as this could become a valuable tool in attracting and retaining talent as well as a signal that the industry collectively treats inclusive leadership as a top priority.

## 4. Make career pathways more visible

**-** A working environment with no career progression is what our participants told us would deter them most from joining, or staying in, an industry. This presents a huge opportunity for the nuclear sector, and we recommend that both the **opportunities** as well as the **career pathways** be clearly communicated to the existing workforce as well as to those that the industry wants to attract.

Our findings suggest that participants already see the opportunities in the nuclear sector, but career pathways are less clear. General awareness of

opportunities in the nuclear industry is low, so some nationally coordinated efforts to shine a spotlight on potential career pathways, including case studies of people that are enjoying successful careers in nuclear, would be highly impactful. An action like this could simultaneously show people already in the industry the paths open to them as well as attracting new talent to the industry.

#### **5. Invest in employer branding at a national sector level**

- These consultations have given us some valuable insights into what people want when working in the nuclear industry and we recommend that this information is considered in employer branding and careers material. For example, emphasising the **Challenging, Purposeful, Exciting** and **Interesting** nature of the work and the **Supportive** and **Collaborative** working environment. What could be more challenging, purposeful, exciting and interesting than being involved at the heart of the work to address climate change and energy security.

The nuclear sector has a golden opportunity to build awareness of its contribution to these two global priorities, and the UK is leading the way in terms of investment and action. We recommend that organisations allocate a meaningful proportion of their employer branding budget to a national, or international, pot that could be used to enhance public awareness and interest in nuclear's role in climate change and energy security. For this to happen, there needs to be a credible party at the centre with a plan that can inspire enough trust in the industry leaders to persuade them to contribute to collective action.

**“We could create an inclusive language guide and a guide to inclusive conversations.”**

#### **6. Empower the next generations to lead**

Leadership need not be the exclusive domain of senior executives within the sector. As mentioned in this report, the Young Generation Network's (YGN) leadership at COP26 is an excellent example of the huge leadership potential that exists within the wider workforce. We recommend that an integrated approach to leadership of the nuclear sector at a national level be developed, harnessing the potential

of the younger generations, for many of whom achieving NetZero by 2050 is a career purpose.

This could be achieved through many different avenues, but to highlight a few:

- If the weighting in promotion criteria was adjusted to increase the value of inclusive leadership skills as well as technical skills, then it could accelerate career progression for younger leaders at the same time as improving inclusion.
- If organisations such as the YGN were to have a more central role in the industry then it would accelerate the virtuous circle of opportunity, empowerment and career progression.
- If experienced leaders prioritised succession planning and were held accountable for bringing new leaders through the ranks, then it would also refresh leadership more regularly and act as a retention booster.

#### **7. Remove the costs of people being themselves**

Multiple participants felt that being their true selves comes at a cost. The result being that those who are able to be themselves in an environment where they are different in some way to the expected norm are penalised, and many succumb to the pressures of conforming and are not able to be themselves.

A good follow up study would be to look deeper into this and understand how this might be negatively impacting the workforce, especially through suppressing the benefits of diversity in organisations and penalising those with the courage to act or think differently. Nuclear is not alone in this challenge and we would suggest looking across other sectors, such as pharma or tech, for examples of how this issue has been successfully addressed. This recommendation goes hand in hand with creating an inclusive environment. We have singled it out because there were numerous accounts given by participants on this topic and it deserves specific attention.

**“Invest in schemes – it is so hard to get resources to get things done right now eg EDI work. There are loads of ideas and not enough resources to deliver them.”**

