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21 May 2025



I committed to write to you during Defence Orals on 19 May, regarding your concerns about lack of transparency around nuclear safety at HMNB Clyde (Faslane and Coulport sites).

Last year, this government's manifesto reinforced our triple lock commitment to the nuclear deterrent. This triple lock guarantees: (i) the building of the four Dreadnought nuclear submarines in Barrow; (ii) maintaining the UK's Continuous At-Sea Deterrent (CASD); and (iii) delivery of all future upgrades to ensure the safety and effectiveness of our deterrent.

Nuclear safety is of paramount importance and is a critical aspect of our commitments. As such, HMNB Clyde complies with international best practice as recommended by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Nuclear safety at these sites is independently overseen by the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), who have robust powers to address concerns and recommend changes where necessary. These structures ensure that nuclear safety is treated with the seriousness that it requires. This becomes even more important as this Government affirms its commitment to the strategic deterrent as the bedrock of our defence, and enacts plans to revitalise the UK's nuclear energy industry as part of the Prime Minister's Plan for Change.

Since assuming office, I have instituted a reset of the Ministry of Defence's relationship with Parliament. You will of course understand, that in the interests of national security the Department is constrained in the specifics that can be provided about its operations, however I have instructed the Department to be as transparent as it can be, wherever possible.

With this in mind, I have authorised the annual release of the statistics on Nuclear Site Event Reports (NSERs) for HMNB Clyde. These will be laid as a Written Ministerial Statement at the end of each financial year. NSERs are a means of classifying the significance of safety incidents and are recommended by the IAEA to ensure a robust

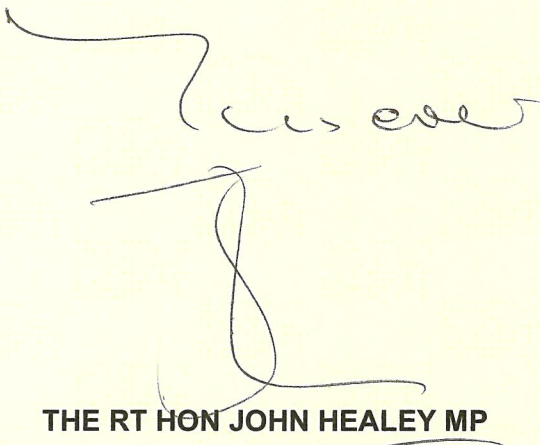
Dave Doogan MP
House of Commons

safety culture that learns from experience. This information has previously been provided on request, but in recognition of the importance of the subject, I am committing Defence to provide this information proactively to enhance parliamentary oversight. As such, the next proactive release of NSER data will be in April 2026.

The number of NSERs raised during the last financial year was released to you by the Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry on 8 May 2025 in response to a Parliamentary Question you tabled on 2 May 2025. While the Department cannot provide specific detail about each incident for security reasons, I can confirm that all reported events were categorised as of low safety significance. In accordance with the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES) significant safety incidents are categorised at the lowest level – level one of seven. Incidents that might fall into this category include equipment failures, human error, procedural failings or near-misses where no harm caused to the health of any member of Naval Base staff, any member of the public, or any resultant radiological impact to the environment.

You also raised a concern that information on major projects within the Defence Nuclear Enterprise were not being reported to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) – now succeeded by the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA). I can confirm that this is not the case. The IPA data was released on 16 January 2025 and includes information on all major Ministry of Defence nuclear programmes. You can access the latest information, covering 2024, on the Major Projects data page on gov.uk.

I trust that this response provides assurance of this Government's commitment both to nuclear safety as a critical aspect of nuclear deterrence and to improved transparency to Parliament about Defence business. I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Healey', is written over a horizontal line. Below the signature is a large, stylized blue ink flourish or scribble.

THE RT HON JOHN HEALEY MP

Secretary of State for Defence