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IR&D funding within the UKs NNL: an overview and IR&D case study

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Internally funded research and development (IR&D) is an integral part of the UK's National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) strategy. Over the past few decades, the UK has seen a decreasing trend in funding nuclear research, alongside a community at risk of losing leading researchers within 5-10 years and limited availability of facilities to support those researchers wishing to work in this field. Only recently has this begun to change, although a steady increase between 2000-2009 still leaves current funding levels at only 7% of what they were in 1980.

A significant (50%) increase of NNLs internal research budget emphasises this recent change of attitude within the UK. Internal research supports development and enhancement of NNLs technical reputation through new or novel projects, a key part of which is progression of junior technical staff. In addition, IR&D projects often provide funding for experts to interact with national and international collaborators, for example for development of joint research proposals which are actively encouraged through this programme.

A recent IR&D project, the aim of which was to carry out a feasibility study towards re-instating active fumehood DSC techniques on reactor irradiated materials, will be described. An irradiated austenitic steel (irradiated @ ˜500C for ˜60,000hrs to 5dpa in CO2) was studied as part of this programme, the initial results of which are described here, in addition to the assessment of the impact of research.

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