

Nuclear New Build in the UK. A Focus on EDF Energy's Hinkley Point C Project

R. Mayson

Nuclear power has been a feature of life in the South West of England for decades. For more than fifty years, power plants at Hinkley Point have been part of the landscape and community, ever since construction of the first nuclear station began there in 1957. But we are now ready to begin a new chapter. With EDF Energy's plans for a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C progressing, we are poised to revitalise the UK nuclear industry with the first new nuclear power station to be built in the UK for a generation.

Durante décadas, la energía nuclear ha tenido una presencia en la zona suroeste de Inglaterra. Durante más de cincuenta años, las centrales nucleares en Hinkley Point han formado parte del paisaje y de la comunidad, desde los inicios de la construcción de la primera central nuclear en el año 1957. Sin embargo, ya estamos dispuestos a empezar un nuevo capítulo. Con el avance del plan de EDF Energía para una nueva central nuclear en Hinkley Point C, estamos preparados para revitalizar la industria nuclear británica con la primera central nuclear nueva que se habrá construido en el Reino Unido en una generación.



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New nuclear will make an important contribution to the UK's future needs for clean, secure and affordable energy. It will help to cut our carbon emissions and keep the lights on. Furthermore, with energy bills featuring high on consumers' agenda this winter, it is important to remember that nuclear power can help protect households and businesses from rising oil and gas costs, an issue that is coming to the fore across Europe and beyond.

At Hinkley Point C, a new nuclear station will generate sufficient electricity for five million homes and during each year of its planned 60 years of operation, it will avoid over 10 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions. We also believe new nuclear is part of the growth agenda for Britain. It will restart a nuclear construction industry after a gap of nearly twenty years and create jobs and business opportunities for decades to come, as well as new contracts for local firms and a multi-million pound investment to transform the local economy.

But our priority is to make sure this is done safely and with regard for

the local community. We will never prioritise profit over people. We understand the concerns people have about nuclear power - particularly following the events at Fukushima in Japan. That is why we welcomed the government's request for a report by Dr Mike Weightman the Chief Nuclear Inspector into the implications of the incident at Fukushima for the UK. It is why we are committed to implementing the Weightman report's final recommendations for us in full. Dr Weightman reaffirmed in his final report that the UK nuclear operations are safe, and that there are no safety issues that could prevent new nuclear from going ahead in the UK. Meanwhile in a twin process, the European Union has asked all nuclear operators to carry out stress tests on their plants. We have recently submitted our analysis, which shows that our plants are safe even in extreme scenarios. Our reports will now be analysed by the nuclear safety authority.

Which leads us to the economic case and the other steps that we now need to take to turn this major project



Infographic representation of Hinkley Point C. 'Courtesy of EdF Energy'.

into reality. We believe that getting more local people trained and into work is a priority. We'll be creating at least 5,000 jobs during the construction period, and 900 permanent jobs during operation. But its two decades since a new nuclear plant was built in the UK and we are having to almost recreate an industry to replace lost knowledge and expertise.

To help local people develop these necessary skills should the project go ahead, we'll be investing more than £20 million in partnerships with local colleges, including plans for a world class national training centre that will help revitalise an entire industry.

Students and teachers have told us how important the project is to the future of many young people in the local area. There will be a big boost to the regional economy, independently estimated to be worth up to £100 million during each year of construction and £40 million during each year of operation. Local firms, many of which are experiencing tough trading conditions, have told us they see Hinkley Point C as a lifeline. That's why more than 800 companies have already registered their interest for work on our supply chain and we've already committed to more than £200 million worth of contracts to UK firms. In difficult economic times, these are important contributions that can help boost the entire UK economy.

But we are aware that these opportunities do not exist in a vacuum and this project represents the biggest civil engineering project the UK has seen for a long time, far bigger than the Olympics.

And while it's a project of national importance, we are not developing our plans in isolation. We've been a part of local communities in the UK for over 50 years.

We know that our proposed development will bring benefits to these communities but, like any project of this magnitude during construction, it will also cause some disruption.

That is why we have approached this project in partnership, consulting for over two years on our plans with local people, listening to their concerns and wherever possible, adapting our plans to take these concerns into account.

Overall, we continue to make progress. By taking the EPR Pressurised Water Reactor through the Generic Design Assessment (GDA) process jointly with AREVA, we are finalising a reactor design that meets Britain's modern needs. In recent months, we have had encouraging signals from the both the Office of Nuclear Regulation and the UK Environment agency. At the end of last year, the ONR issued an Interim Design Acceptance Confirmation, and the Environment Agency issued an Interim Statement of Design Acceptability,

for the EPR. All areas requiring final resolution have been identified and detailed plans to address them to the satisfaction of ONR have been agreed. Additionally, together with AREVA, we have agreed a dedicated resolution plan for new issues that have been identified as a result of the events at Fukushima in 2011.

Meanwhile, the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) recently confirmed that our application for a new nuclear power plant at Hinkley Point had been accepted and will be taken forward for examination. This is another important milestone as we move ahead with our programme. As ever, we remain committed to consulting and listening in a spirit of openness and transparency.

Further progress was demonstrated by the co-operation agreement recently signed at the Franco-British Summit in Paris earlier this month.

These agreements included a £100 million contract to progress with preliminary works at the site, a Memorandum of Understanding with AREVA relating to the delivery of the nuclear steam supply system and central instrumentation and control systems for the Hinkley Point C project.

We believe new nuclear should play an important role in the UK's future energy mix and are determined to continue to work with the community to make this project a success.■