



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 5th December 2012

NFLA concerned about safety and waste issues in EDF's decision to extend to 2023 operations at Hinkley Point B and Hunterston B

The NFLA encourages the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency to carefully consider the safety and waste cases behind EDF's decision to prolong the operating life of its nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point B in Somerset and Hunterston B in Ayrshire (1).

The NFLA also believe that this is a premature decision given that the next Periodic Safety Review for the reactors is not due until 2015. As part of this process the sites will require new radioactive discharge authorisations – in the NFLA's view EDF is jumping the gun in saying therefore that the plants will be open until 2023.

Both Hinkley Point B and Hunterston B commenced operation in 1976, the same year as Reactor No 3 opened at Fukushima. It needs to be noted that one of the aging Fukushima reactors got a 10 year life extension just prior to the March 2011 disaster (2).

EDF confirmed in their press statement that they were satisfied that both reactors, despite their age, had passed a full technical and economic evaluation. In a separate comment given to the World Nuclear Association the ONR said they were 'broadly content' with the continued operation of the reactors, but would continue to oversee periodic safety reviews of both reactors (3).

The NFLA has been consistently concerned over the continued operation of older nuclear reactors, due to the effects of general and ongoing wear and tear as the equipment in the reactors ages. In 2006 for example, cracks were found in graphite moderator bricks at the Hinkley Point reactor (4) and in one of the two Hunterston reactors (5). Partially as a result of the cracks the power output at Hunterston has been significantly reduced to 890 MW, compared to its original annual output of 1,320 MW. Both reactors also only operate at 70% of their optimal load because of boiler temperature restrictions (6). It should also be noted that in the past two weeks the Hinkley site was seriously threatened by extensive flooding in the Somerset area and climate change studies suggest such scenarios will only get worse in the future (7).

In the NFLA's view this decision may also link in to the parallel upcoming decision by EDF on whether it moves ahead with a new nuclear reactor at Hinkley Point – is it an insurance policy in case it decides against the project?

Furthermore, the continued operation of the reactors will lead to the production of additional amounts of radioactive waste. This is at a time when it is clear with sufficient investment and imaginative vision a more enlightened energy policy of a wider renewable energy mix, energy efficiency and microgeneration will be more than adequate to power the UK, keep the lights on, create thousands of new jobs and not produce any additional radioactive waste (8).

NFLA Chair, Councillor Brian Goodall said:

"I'm a strong supporter of the Scottish Government's commitment against new build nuclear power stations in Scotland. But in light of the safety issues highlighted by Fukushima and the ongoing issues with the storage of waste it's important that we also now reconsider any possible extension of the lifespan of the Hunterston and Hinkley Point aging reactors. I urge the ONR and SEPA to be rigorous in evaluating the safety case for keeping these two facilities open."

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Ends

Further information - Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary - 0161 234 3244 or 07771 930186.

Notes to editors:

- (1) EDF media release, 4th December 2012
<http://www.edfenergy.com/media-centre/press-news/EDF-Energy-announces-seven-year-life-extension-to-Hinkley-Point-B-and-Hunterston-B-nuclear-power-stations.shtml>
- (2) New York Times, 22nd March 2011
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/22/world/asia/22nuclear.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- (3) World Nuclear Association Nuclear News, 4th December 2012
http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/RS-seven-more-years-for-hinkley-and-hunterstonB_041212a.html
- (4) Health and Safety Executive media release, 30th May 2006
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/releases/hinkleyb.htm>
- (5) Power-technology.com, 'Key information on Hunterston B nuclear reactor'
<http://www.powertechnology.com/projects/hunterstonnuclear>
- (6) This is Devon 4th Dec 2012
<http://www.thisisdevon.co.uk/story-17495127-detail/story.html>
- (7) The Guardian, 'UK nuclear sites at risk of flooding, report shows', 7th March 2012
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/mar/07/uk-nuclear-risk-flooding>
- (8) NFLA New Nuclear Monitor 30, 'A dash for gas, new nuclear or renewable alternatives?' November 2012
http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/nuclearmonitor/NFLA_New_Nuclear_Monitor_No30.pdf

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