

24 June 2016

Introduction

This report covers the Environment Agency's regulation of Hinkley Point A & B nuclear sites and related issues for the period January 2016 to May 2016.

Radioactive substances regulation

We regulate radioactive waste disposals to the environment. We do this through environmental permits that contain limits and conditions aimed at minimising wastes and protecting the environment. We also check compliance with the permits by making regular inspections at Hinkley Point A & B.

Radioactive Substances Compliance Assessment Reports (RASCAR) detailing our inspections and any non-compliances found, are put on the Public Register^[1].

We maintain regular contact with the sites by telephone and e-mail in addition to our formal correspondence and visits to the sites.

Hinkley Point A

Our work at Hinkley Point A has been focussed on the following themes and issues in the last quarter:

- In May we visited site to undertake joint inspections with Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) as well as a series of update meetings. The first of these was on the site arrangements for event reporting and investigations. This included looking at the recent Sludge Canning Building event, which was linked to an issue with the suitability of air flows within the building. The second inspection was on management of change. This mainly focussed on how the site has responded to the recent fleet-wide changes both in structures and numbers of staff. Both

inspections involved staff interviews and a review of relevant documentation. No significant issues or non-compliances were identified but some observations were made.

- We have received and are reviewing two documents from Magnox on the plan to undertake milling of pond skips at HPA. The first of these attempts to optimise the plan to mill skips at HPA. However, this study identifies that the strategy to mill skips is unlikely to represent Best Available Technique (BAT). The second document then reviews the overarching strategy and concludes that milling is not BAT and that the Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) skips should be sent to HPA for interim storage with no milling taking place. The skips that are classified as Low Level Waste (LLW) will be sent directly for disposal and would not be sent to HPA. We plan to write to Magnox to respond to the two documents once our review is complete.
- We remain in dialogue with Magnox regarding the remediation of the historic diesel contamination on the HPA site. The site has applied to us for a number of permits to undertake this work and we are expediting these. Magnox plan to remediate the contamination in the summer of 2016 to ensure that it is not adversely affected by Hinkley Point C (HPC) site dewatering due later in the year.
- We continue to monitor the progress of the project to remove the remaining residues from the site storage tanks as well as the other waste projects on site, such as the sludge/resin tank consolidation and the Fuel Element Debris projects.

^[1] <https://www.gov.uk/access-the-public-register-for-environmental-information>

Hinkley Point B

Our work at Hinkley Point B has been focussed on the following themes and issues in the last quarter:

- In February we carried out an inspection focused on gaseous sampling cubicles. The operator has introduced a return-to-service document for sampling cubicle maintenance. This had improved their availability but will continue to pay close attention to this issue. No significant issues were identified during this inspection; however we identified a number of minor findings. One example of this was on the use of secondary flowmeters in the sampling cubicles. We also inspected the site's sewage treatment works, which serves Hinkley Point A as well as Hinkley Point B. No significant issues were identified in that inspection.
- In April we carried out an inspection focused on filtration systems in the aqueous effluent plant. The Vertical Gravity Separator (VGS), used to enhance oil removal from aqueous waste, has been a maintenance problem. No significant issues were identified during the inspection; however we identified two minor findings. One example was the need for clearer procedures relating to operation of the VGS.
- In May we carried out an inspection focused on Environmental Monitoring and the Combwich District Survey Laboratory (DSL). We noted an improvement to the way compliance, with the Laboratory's own permits, is checked and reported. No significant issues were identified during the inspection; however we identified a number of minor findings. One example was to recommend improvements to the radiochemistry laboratory on the power station to reduce the risk of contamination and the consequent creation of radioactive waste. We shared this finding with ONR as it is an area of joint interest.
- In May we also attended a workshop, led by the operator of Hinkley Point B, to consider whether existing plans will cope

with an extended nuclear emergency scenario.

Events and enforcement

In April the operator at Hinkley Point B reported that they had exceeded the aqueous waste accumulation time limit at the Combwich DSL. The report was also late as the problem had occurred early in March. There was no environmental impact; the waste was disposed of via the normal route back to the power station. We issued a RASCAR identifying two permit non-compliances and provided advice and guidance about checking and reporting compliance with the permits at the Combwich DSL.

There were no significant environmental events or enforcement at Hinkley Point A.

Discharge reports

The operators at Hinkley Point A and B are required to report liquid and gaseous discharges to the environment to us on a regular basis. We assess these to check compliance with the site permits. The site discharge reports and our assessments are placed on the public register and a digest of information is available via the Environment Agency application 'What's in your backyard?' facility ^[2].

Liquid and gaseous discharges from Hinkley Point A and B were within the permitted limits and notification levels during this period.

Environmental impact

Nuclear sites are required to carry out a rigorous environmental monitoring programme that requires the operator to monitor and assess the impact of their discharges on the environment.

Additionally, the Environment Agencies and Food Standards Agency carry out independent environmental monitoring around nuclear sites. The results of this work are published in our annual Radioactivity in Food and the Environment (RIFE) report.

^[2] <http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/default.aspx>

In the RIFE report the Hinkley Point sites are considered together for the purposes of environmental monitoring because the effects of both are on the same area. The report presents a yearly assessment of radiological dose to the group of people in the local population who are most exposed to radiation from the sites. In the latest report for 2014 (RIFE-20)^[3], the total radiation dose to this group of people as a result of discharges and radiation shine from the sites was very low at 0.022 mSv/year. This is about 2% of the Government dose limit of 1 mSv/year and even smaller compared to the average amount of radiation we all receive from natural sources, which is approximately 2.2 mSv/year.

Responding to the Stop Hinkley group

Our routine programme of environmental monitoring is designed to provide additional reassurance that the operators' environmental monitoring programmes are providing valid results. This, together with our regulation of emissions from the site, ensures that radiological doses to the most exposed members of the public continue to be low.

Following our meeting with the Stop Hinkley group in October 2015, we have undertaken some initial limited additional sediment sampling in the River Parrett (further sampling is due in the Summer of 2016). Whilst we believe our existing programme is suitable, this sampling will address some specific questions the group have raised. These samples will be analysed in the same way as our routine environmental monitoring samples. The results will be made available and also included in the RIFE report for 2016.

Consultation on guidance for the revocation of nuclear permits

Between February and May 2016, we held a public consultation on our proposed new guidance on "Requirements for Release of Nuclear Sites from Radioactive Substances Regulation".

The proposed new guidance has been produced jointly by the Scottish Environment

^[3] <https://www.gov.uk/monitoring-radioactivity>

Protection Agency (SEPA), the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

The consultation was hosted by SEPA on behalf all three environment agencies. Full details and the associated documents can be viewed on the SEPA "Consultation Hub" website^[4].

Further information

Further information on our role in regulating the use of radioactive substances and related activities on nuclear licensed sites can be found on the Environment Agency section^[5] of the GOV.UK website.

The Environment Agency's Lead Regulator for the Hinkley Point A site is Robert MacGregor. The Environment Agency's Lead Regulator for the Hinkley Point B site is Richard Lee.

Robert and Richard are both Nuclear Regulators and part of the national Nuclear Regulation Group (South) which is based at the Environment Agency's Wallingford office in Oxfordshire.

Robert and Richard undertake environmental regulation of radioactive substances on nuclear licensed sites in southern England. They work closely with the local Environment Agency teams in those areas as well as external bodies such as the Office for Nuclear Regulation.

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^[4] <https://consultation.sepa.org.uk/operations-portfolio/grr>

^[5] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nuclear-regulation-in-the-environment-agency>