

## **HINKLEY POINT SITE STAKEHOLDER GROUP**

### **SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS ARISING AT THE MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM ON FRIDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2021**

- Mr Peter Evans, Hinkley Point B Station Director, reported on the station's continued high level of safety performance. He outlined the measures taken at the station to reduce the spread of coronavirus. Mr Evans referred to EDF's announcement that electricity generation at Hinkley Point B would come to an end by 15 July 2022 at the latest. It was planned that there should be two further periods of six months' operation of each reactor with outages in between these periods for graphite inspections. It was hoped that the Office for Nuclear Regulation's consent for returning the reactors to service would be received during the coming month.
- During the current outage of both reactors, it had been decided to refurbish a back-up feed system tank to modern construction standards. These tanks would be needed during operation and for a period following shutdown.
- Mr Evans reported on the failure of a joint in a control rod in a maintenance facility after it had been removed from the reactor. Investigations and inspections of other control rods had been undertaken in order to demonstrate that this problem did not affect other control rods and a safety case had been made supporting return to service.
- Mr Peter Montague, Hinkley Point A Site Closure Director reported on activities at the Site. He described actions taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus and pointed out that there had been no incidents or accidents on the Site. He described progress with the major programme of work to remove and despatch from site safely insulation materials potentially contaminated with asbestos.
- Mr Montague pointed out that monitoring of a large number of filters previously used in the liquid effluent plant had enabled these waste items to be classified as low level waste, thereby reducing the volume of intermediate level waste to be stored in the Site's interim storage facility.
- Mr Montague reported that factory acceptance tests had been completed on two items of plant designed for use at the A Site. One of these plants would process radioactive waste sludges, sand and resins and the other would compact steel drums containing wastes to reduce their volume.
- Members received reports from the NDA and from inspectors representing the Environment Agency and the Office for Nuclear Regulation. They also received a presentation from Prof Scott of Bristol University on fusion power and potential investment in a project to establish a technology park and a fusion power plant.

## HINKLEY POINT SITE STAKEHOLDER GROUP

### Minutes of the meeting held via Zoom on Friday 26 February 2021

#### **PRESENT**

Cllr M Caswell (Chairman)	-	Sedgemoor District Council
Mr P Montague	-	Site Director, Hinkley Point A
Mr P Evans	-	Station Director, Hinkley Point B

#### **Elected Members**

Mr A Debenham	-	Stop Hinkley
Cllr Ms A Bown	-	Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr H Davies	-	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Cllr B Eyley	-	Kilve Parish Council
Mr A Jeffery	-	Bridgwater & W Somerset Green Party
Cllr C Morgan	-	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Cllr M Phillips	-	Cannington Parish Council
Cllr E Plomgren	-	Holford Parish Council
Cllr L Redman	-	Bridgwater Town Council
Cllr Ms A Reed	-	Wembdon Parish Council
Cllr M Reid	-	Nether Stowey Parish Council
Ms M Smith	-	Forum 21
Cllr Ms L Whetlor	-	Somerset West and Taunton Council

#### **Co-opted Members**

Mr M Brown (Vice Chairman)

#### **Appointed Members**

Mr J Jenkin	-	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Mr J McNamara	-	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Ms N Barnes	-	Office for Nuclear Regulation
Mr D Knowles	-	Office for Nuclear Regulation
Ms T Braithwaite	-	Environment Agency
Ms V Thomas	-	Environment Agency
Mr D Bamsey	-	Sedgemoor District Council
Mr R Davies	-	Somerset County Council
Ms L Martin	-	Somerset County Council
Mr J Burton	-	Somerset West and Taunton Council

#### **EDF Energy**

Mr D Stokes  
Ms V Evans  
Mr M Pardo  
Mr D Uminski  
Mr D Hanmer

**Magnox**

Ms J Callander

Ms G Coombs

Mr O Yapp

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Prof T Smith	-	Bristol University
Mr J Townes	-	Bristol University
Corrinne Matthews	-	Heart of the South West LEP
Mr R Birkenhead		
Mr M J Davis	-	Secretary

**CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 1 Cllr Caswell welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Site Stakeholder Group for Hinkley Point A Site and Hinkley Point B Power Station. There were no changes in membership.
- 2 Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Short, Cllr Ms R Perrett Mr I Liddell-Grainger MP and Mr J Mason.
- 3 It was noted that there were sufficient members present to constitute a quorum for this meeting.
- 4 Mr Brown referred to a meeting with Chairs and Vice Chairs of the other SSGs which had been held virtually on the day prior to this meeting. He referred to discussions on an NDA initiative designed to develop an integrated waste management approach. He suggested and it was agreed that a presentation on this should be provided for members at the next meeting of this Group.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**(a) Accuracy**

- 5 The minutes of the meeting of this Group held via Zoom on 23 October were approved as a correct record.

**(b) Matters Arising**

- 6 There were no matters arising from the minutes which would not be covered in presentations later in the meeting.

## STATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT – HINKLEY POINT B

- 7 Mr Evans reported on activities and performance at the power station since the previous meeting of this Group, drawing particular attention to the following:
- (i) There had been a fatal road traffic accident recently in which a contractor's employee had been hit by a vehicle. Action was being taken to raise awareness of the dangers of speed when driving on local roads.
  - (ii) High standards of safety performance had been maintained at the station.
  - (iii) The Environment Agency had issued a warning letter in relation to the circumstances of the despatch of a consignment of desiccant referred to at the previous meeting. The circumstances of the event had been subjected to an independent review and issues had been addressed before a subsequent consignment had been processed.
  - (iv) Actions taken in response to the coronavirus pandemic now included the testing of all personnel on the site. Thermal imaging checked temperatures of all personnel on arrival.
  - (v) It had been announced that electricity generation on the B Station site would come to an end on 15 July 2022 at the latest. It was proposed that each of the reactors would operate for two further periods of six months with outages for graphite inspections between each of those two periods. It was hoped that consent for reactor start-up would be given by the ONR during the coming month; extensive commissioning checks were being undertaken and staff were undergoing training including use of the reactor simulator by operators.
  - (vi) During the outage of both reactors inspections had been undertaken on the backup feed system storage tanks. It had been found that some of the construction was not consistent with modern standards and a decision had been taken to overhaul the tanks. In addition to the role of these tanks during future operation, they would be required to be available for reactor cooling post shutdown.
  - (vii) In December, during checks of a control rod removed from the reactor, an articulated joint had failed, and the bottom segment of the control rod had fallen into the storage tube within the maintenance facility. Investigations had shown that the failure had been due to the fact that the material used in making this joint had not been as specified in the design. Further inspections had been carried out, including the examination of video records of control rods previously removed for maintenance, in order to demonstrate that this problem affected only this particular joint. A safety case had been produced to support return to service.

- (viii) There were currently 504 full-time EDF personnel at the station.
  - (ix) An exercise of the station's emergency arrangements was to be undertaken on 16 September and a security exercise was to take place on 21 July. It was possible that the site siren would sound during these exercises.
  - (x) Staff and contract partners at the Station had raised over £13000 for Prostate Cancer UK, EDF's chosen charity.
- 8 In response to questions from Cllr Morgan and Cllr Eyley, Mr Evans said that the control rod joint which had failed was of a substantial design and generally these were found to be in very good condition. This particular one had failed during normal routine checks of the articulation. This had been the first such failure during the operational life of the station.
- 9 Cllr Ms Bown expressed her appreciation of the Station's charitable fund-raising efforts and of the measures taken to provide a safe working environment during the coronavirus pandemic.
- 10 In reply to a question from Mr Jeffery, Mr Evans said that the results of the planned reactor inspections between future periods of operation would be submitted to ONR for assessment in the usual way.

#### **SITE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – HINKLEY POINT A SITE**

- 11 Mr Montague reported on activities at the A Site since the previous meeting, drawing particular attention to the following:
- (i) There had been no incidents or accidents at the Site since the previous meeting. It was now over 2 years since the last event involving time lost from work and almost 13 years since the last personal contamination event. The current focus was on safety of working at height and mental health issues; the next safety drive would be on attitudes during decommissioning, which needed to be vigilant and ready to find unexpected conditions.
  - (ii) Coronavirus measures included testing; there had been no positive test results recorded on the Site. Out of 850 tests undertaken in Magnox only two asymptomatic infections had been identified. There was good compliance with social distancing measures on the Site.
  - (iii) As part of an NDA sustainability project, attention was focused upon reducing energy consumption, including street lighting and the use of fans, and improving biodiversity on the Site.

- (iv) Some 68% of waste fine filters previously used in the liquid effluent plant had been monitored and found to be able to be classified as low level waste. This reduction in the inventory of waste would mean fewer ILW packages needed to be stored in the interim storage facility. It was hoped that retrievals of fuel element debris from the wet vault would be close to the target of 10 tonnes by the end of March.
  - (v) Good progress was being made with the major programme of asbestos removal, with asbestos containing materials removed being treated appropriately and some 62 tonnes of clean metal released for recycling.
  - (vi) Work within the sludge canning building had improved access for decommissioning work.
  - (vii) Analysis of samples of fuel element debris waste had been removed from the dry vault and characterised in order to determine waste packaging arrangements for these wastes.
  - (viii) Equipment which would process radioactive waste sludges, sands and resins had completed factory acceptance testing and would be installed on the Site. Factory acceptance testing had also been completed on a drum compactor which would achieve significant reduction in the volume of wastes packed in steel drums. This process would reduce the number of packages of these wastes to be stored in the storage facility.
  - (ix) Seven nuclear operative apprentices had been recruited and were making good progress on the Site.
- 12 In reply to a question from Cllr Plomgren, Mr Montague described arrangements for processing asbestos contaminated waste and the transfer of the waste to a licensed contractor for disposal. In response to the interest in the categorisation of these wastes expressed by Mr Jeffrey Mr Montague undertook to provide him with details of the criteria which determined these categorisations.
- 13 In response to questions from Cllr Davies, Mr Montague explained that the drum compaction equipment was designed to reduce the volume of the drums and hence reduce the number of packages containing these drums to be consigned to the storage facility. The concrete box package within which the compacted drums would be placed provided the containment of the waste materials. Mr Montague said that the company's proposal to receive at Hinkley Point waste materials despatched from other sites had not received the necessary planning consent. The company had not yet applied for a variation and was considering what further action might be taken.

## **UPDATE FROM THE NUCLEAR DECOMMISSIONING AUTHORITY**

- 14 Mr Jenkin provided an update on current activities within the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, drawing particular attention to the following:
- (i) NDA corporate staff continued to work largely from home unless access to office accommodation was essential.
  - (ii) Senior appointments made recently within NDA included Mr L Haynes as chairman of Dounreay, Mr M Rouse as managing director of Dounreay, Mr T Meggs as chairman of Sellafield Ltd and Mr M Walkingshaw as chairman designate of low level waste repository. A group leadership structure had been announced.
  - (iii) Consultations were complete on the NDA's draft Business Plan and the draft Strategy document, final drafts had been submitted for government approval and the approved documents would be published in late March.
  - (iv) Working groups had been established in Copeland and Allerdale to consider issues associated with the possible location of a geological disposal facility. This did not imply that the facility would inevitably be established in those areas; it was for other local areas to establish working groups if they wished to be considered as a potential host location.
- 15 In response to a comment made by Cllr Caswell, Mr Jenkins said that discussions were ongoing with EDF and the Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy in relation to arrangements for decommissioning of the AGR stations when they ceased generation. One option would be to pass responsibility for decommissioning those stations to the NDA but no conclusions had yet been reached in those discussions.
- 16 Mr Debenham asked about the size of the NDA budget and the financing of a geological disposal facility. Mr Jenkin said that for the coming year NDA's budget amounted to some £3.5 billion of which £2.7 billion was direct funding from government and £800 million represented income from commercial activities. Mr McNamara said that the costs of establishing a geological disposal facility would be large but that the investment in the project would provide considerable benefits to the local community hosting the facility. In response to a further question from Mr Jeffrey, Mr Jenkin said that EDF maintained a nuclear liabilities fund to cover the cost of decommissioning its stations; the NDA had an oversight role in relation to this fund on behalf of the Secretary of State.

## **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY REPORT**

- 17 Ms Thomas and Ms Braithwaite reported on the Environment Agency's monitoring and regulatory activities in relation to Hinkley Point A Site and B

Station. A report on those activities had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Particular attention was drawn to the following:

- (i) Hinkley Point B had responded very positively to the warning letter issued by EA in relation to breaches of permit conditions associated with a despatch of desiccant material during September. The breaches had minimal environmental impact but had a potential to cause harm. A second batch of this waste consigned during December had been in compliance with requirements. Miss Thomas felt it was unlikely that there would be another despatch of this material before decommissioning of the site.
- (ii) Throughout the period of the pandemic regular contact was maintained with the sites and inspections were continuing, including some undertaken jointly with Office for Nuclear Regulation inspectors.
- (iii) The Agency had requested an audit of processes following reported discrepancies between the analysis of samples from liquid effluent tanks undertaken on the A Site and those provided by a contracted laboratory.
- (iv) An investigation was in hand at Hinkley Point A to examine the circumstances associated with drums containing low level waste which were found to be leaking.

## **OFFICE FOR NUCLEAR REGULATION REPORT**

18 Mr Knowles and Ms Barnes reported on ONR's regulatory activities in relation to Hinkley Point B Station and A Site. Reports from the ONR on both sites had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Mr Knowles and Ms Barnes drew particular attention to the following:

- (i) Interactions with site personnel and inspections were continuing throughout the pandemic; the results of all inspections had been positive. Inspectors were satisfied with the measures taken at the sites to reduce the spread of coronavirus.
- (ii) The assessments of graphite safety cases, the control rod event, and the condition of the backup feed system tanks would all be taken into account by ONR in its decision relating to consent for re-starting the Hinkley B reactors. The target date for a decision on start-up was 15 March.

## **NUCLEAR FUSION REACTORS AND STEP**

19 Prof Scott explained the process of nuclear fusion and its potential advantages over other energy sources. He outlined the government's proposed investment in this technology which was directed towards the development of a STEP

- (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production) facility which might be in service by 2040. He said that the first step was to establish a technology business park where the various new technologies required to support such a project could be developed. The technology park itself would be a major undertaking, occupying possibly 100 Ha. Consideration was being given to the potential for locating these projects in the Hinkley Point area.
- 20 Prof Scott said that proposals were currently being developed for the location of the technology park and STEP facility in various parts of the country. Expressions of interest were to be submitted to the UKAEA by 31 March. UKAEA would then carry out a selection process and make a recommendation to government on the location of the facility.
- 21 During discussion the following points were noted:
- (i) Cllr Caswell asked that copies of the slides used by Prof Scott in his presentation should be made available to members.
  - (ii) Cllr Phillips asked what efficiency improvements were anticipated as he understood that earlier experimental fusion reactors had consumed more energy than they generated. Prof Scott said that the main improvements were in the means of achieving higher operating temperatures and in maintaining operating conditions for longer periods.
  - (iii) In response to comments from Mr Debenham, Prof Scott said that current fusion energy projects were demonstrating good progress in relation to planned costs and timescales. He said that some forms of energy production were required to meet intermittent gaps in the output of renewable sources.
  - (iv) Mr Jeffrey raised an objection to the inclusion of this topic on the meeting agenda; he felt that it was not appropriate business for this Group. Cllr Caswell said that in the past the Group had received presentations on various forms of alternative energy production. He felt it was appropriate for this Group to enable members to receive such information in an open and transparent way.
  - (v) Cllr Reid asked about the location of a potential site for these developments in this area. Mr Bamsey said that consideration was being given as to what sites might be available within appropriate timescales. These included the Hinkley Point site but other sites over a wider area were also being considered; similar processes were being undertaken in various other parts of the country.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

- 22 A report from Cllr Caswell as chairman of the Group had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Cllr Caswell drew attention to the changes in local government which were due to take place in the coming months. He said that it was not yet clear what form the new arrangements would take but it was clear that the membership of this Group would change. He proposed and it was agreed that Mr Brown should be asked to convene a sub-group after the May 2021 local government elections to consider and make recommendations in relation to the future membership of this Group.

## **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

- 23 No business.

## **DATE TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 24 It was noted that the next meeting of this Group was scheduled to be held on Friday 25 June 2021.

MJD

2 March 2021