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Draft National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6)

This draft National Policy Statement (NPS), together with the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy EN-1, is the primary decision-making guidance document for the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) when considering development consent applications for the construction of new nuclear power stations in England and Wales. It is part of a suite of NPS issued in draft by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change on 2nd November 2009. Consultation on the documents will run until 22 February 2010.

It is Government policy that the IPC should only be able to grant development consent for a new nuclear power station in relation to a site that the Government has assessed to be potentially suitable. A Strategic Siting Assessment was conducted in 2009 and ten potentially suitable sites were identified :

- Bradwell
- Braystones
- Hartlepool
- Heysham
- Hinkley Point
- Kirksanton
- Oldbury
- Sizewell
- Sellafield
- Wylfa

In the event that a development consent application for a new nuclear power station is submitted to the IPC for a site not listed in this NPS, that application would need to be decided by the Secretary of State. Such an application would need to demonstrate that the site is suitable for the deployment of a new nuclear power station by the end of 2025 and that it has met the Strategic Siting Assessment criteria.

The Government expects that a significant proportion of the 25GW of new non-renewable generating capacity will be filled by nuclear power and that it is in the public interest for new nuclear power stations to be constructed significantly earlier than 2025 to make a contribution in displacing CO2 as soon as possible. It is clearly stated that all ten sites are needed and they must be deployable by the end of 2025. The listed sites are not to be considered as alternatives to each other. The NPS does not rule out there being more than one reactor at each site.

The NPS states that the IPC should start its examination of development consent applications for new nuclear power stations on the basis that need has been demonstrated and should give this need, and the benefits of meeting it, substantial weight in determining the applications.

The case presented for nuclear power is that it :

- is low carbon - with similar lifecycle CO2 emissions than those from wind power and much less than fossil fuelled plant;
- contributes to energy security - by helping to ensure a diverse mix of technology and fuel sources;
- increases the diversity of fuels that we rely on and reduces the risks of interruptions to fuel supply;
- involves proven technology.
- In addition, it is considered to be economic, dependable and safe.

The NPS notes that there should be a clear division between the regimes for planning and regulation of the nuclear industry. The IPC should make its decisions in relation to a development consent application on the basis that:

- the relevant licensing and permitting regimes will be properly applied and enforced;
- it does not need to consider matters that are within the remit of the nuclear regulators; and that
- it should not delay a decision on whether to grant consent until completion of the licensing or permitting process.

Having said that, the IPC will need to be satisfied that the necessary licence, authorisation or permit can or

is likely to be issued in due course

The Government requires applications for thermal generating stations to either include combined heat and power (CHP) or contain evidence that the possibilities for CHP have been fully explored. However it recognises that in nuclear power stations may be remote from centres of population and that opportunities for viable CHP will be limited.

Applicants must consider the effects of climate change on any new nuclear power station during the planning and design of the station, during operation (including the period of waste storage) and where appropriate, decommissioning.

With regard to radioactive waste disposal, the Government is confident that a geological disposal facility could be built which would meet regulatory approval. However the timescale for this is lengthy with high level waste and spent fuel not being emplaced until 2075. It is accepted that interim storage arrangements may be needed for 160 years.

The Government expects that development consent applications should describe the key operational aspects of the power station, and in particular the infrastructure that has the potential to directly cause a radiological hazard such as the reactor building (including the associated turbine hall), spent fuel and intermediate level waste stores, within the boundary that was nominated in the Strategic Siting Assessment. However, applications for development consent may also include land outside that boundary for other aspects of the power station, such as car parks, access roads or marine landing facilities, or for construction and decommissioning of a nuclear power station.

Part 4 of the NPS sets out the basis for assessing proposals. It advises for a variety of topic areas (including many of those normally covered in an Environmental Impact Assessment) : what the applicant's own assessment should address and what key principles the IPC should adopt in its decision making. It also advises on the weight to be given to certain issues and on the treatment of mitigation measures, particularly how these may be enforced through conditions or obligations

"Nuclear Specific Impacts", impacts judged most likely to be associated with proposals for nuclear power stations, drawn to the attention of the IPC in this part of the NPS are:

- flood risk, (including tsunami and storm surge)
- water quality and resources
- coastal change
- biodiversity and geological conservation
- landscape and visual
- socio-economic
- human health and well being.

"Flags for local consideration" or specific siting considerations include :

- proximity to (civil) aircraft movements
- access to transmission networks
- (proximity) to significant infrastructure and resources
- emergency planning
- demographics.

Other considerations, such as geological conditions, are identified as being the responsibility of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate or other regulators. Any assessment will also need to cover those issues raised in the Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1).

Part 5 of the NPS sets out how each of the ten sites performed against the criteria used in the Strategic Site assessment and assesses the likelihood of the sites being deployed by 2025. It also highlights particular issues which the Government believes require further consideration either by the applicant, the regulators, the IPC or a combination of these.

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