EDF Energy's response to your questions

Q1. Do you agree that it is not realistic for the UK Government to wait until fast breeder reactor technology is commercially available before taking a decision on how to manage plutonium stocks?

Yes. While fast neutron reactors could in the future provide a way to utilise plutonium, they will not be constructed by utilities in the near future due to the technical development work that has still to be done and the currently abundant supplies of more economically attractive uranium fuel. In addition, a strategy which manages the UK existing plutonium stocks through recycling as MOx would not foreclose the fast reactor option since the plutonium necessary to start a programme of such reactors in the future could in due course be recovered from the reprocessing of spent MOx fuels if this was ever required as part of a future UK energy strategy.

By moving forward with the option of recycling plutonium in existing (i.e. thermal neutron) designs of reactors the UK strategy has the advantage of not being dependent on the development of new technologies. EDF Energy considers that Government is right to seek a solution for managing its existing stocks that has a prospect of being delivered in a planned way and to a timescale that is, so far as possible, within the UK's control.

Q2. Do you agree that the UK Government has got to the point where a strategic sift of the options can be taken?

Yes. The previous papers and consultations on this topic have correctly identified the possible options and enabled the key factors to be investigated. It is important that the UK continues to progress this work and this would not be practicable without assessing which of the available options is now worthy of further analysis.

Q3. Are the conditions that a preferred option must in due course meet the right ones?

The conditions listed (at para 5.3) are correct and should be applied to the assessment of the different possible scenarios for implementing the preferred option with an overall objective being the optimisation of the industrial infrastructure required, including making the most efficient use of already existing installations. We believe that progress on developing stakeholder understanding and acceptance is also a key condition for success.

Q4. Is the UK Government doing the right thing by taking a preliminary policy view and setting out a strategic direction in this area now?

Yes. The current proposal to focus on a single strategic option comes as the result of a cautious but systematic approach that has developed over the past several years. It is important that this process continues and the next logical step is to select the option that has best prospect of being worked up into a long term solution for the UK. Having got to this point, it would not be sensible to continue to spread the scarce

expert resource and funding among all the options considered. EDF Energy supports focusing on the best prospect and putting in hand the work necessary to establish whether or not, and then how to implement it.

Q5. Is there any other evidence Government should consider before coming to a preliminary view?

EDF Energy believes that all the key factors relevant to the alternative options have been identified and that any further evidence would not be such as to affect the choice of which option holds the best prospect of providing the UK with a long term solution.

Q6. Has the UK Government selected the right preliminary view?

EDF Energy's parent company has extensive experience in France with the routine reuse of plutonium within MOx fuel. This gives us confidence that this option can be technically feasible, safe and meet high standards of security and environmental protection. We agree that more work would be needed before an equivalent position could be reached with the alternative option whereby significant quantities of separated plutonium would be disposed of directly. EDF's experience therefore strongly supports the Government's preliminary view selection.

We do not, however, underestimate the challenge of taking this solution forward in the UK since there are technical, industrial, economic, planning and licensing factors that will need to be addressed in addition to the requirement of gaining stakeholder understanding and acceptance for the proposed option. It is important that the UK takes the time needed to do this work.

It is also important that this work be conducted in an open and measured way taking due consideration of the existing operational experience and industrial infrastructure in Europe.

Q7. Are there any other high level options that the Government should consider for long-term management of plutonium?

EDF Energy's view is that the Government has correctly identified the main alternative options as a result of its review processes that have led up to the current consultation. We do not believe any other credible option is available that would call into question the selection made in this consultation paper.