

Plutonium Consultation
3rd Floor Area C/D
Nuclear Policy Unit
Department of Energy And Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
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28th March 2011

Unite Response to the DECC Consultation on the Management of the UK's Plutonium Stock

Dear Sir

I write in response to your call for comments on the Management of the UK's Plutonium Stocks as set out the position of Unite as follows.

Unite believes that the current plan to store the UK Plutonium in a purpose built store (SPRS) at Sellafield should continue to be implemented but this is not, in our opinion, a credible medium/long term option.

Unite is a firm believer that the UK's Plutonium is a useful energy source and the Re-use option and 'burn' as MOX fuel in UK reactors (Private or State owned) is the correct way forward. Unite would not like to see the option of the use of Plutonium as a fuel for Fast Breeder Reactors totally ruled out for the future, if possible.

Unite firmly believe that it will be unavoidable that some form of immobilisation will be required regardless of the primary aim to Re-use. Therefore we believe that this technology needs to be progressed in tandem.

'Security of Supply' of energy to the UK is of vital importance. Unite have long had a clear view that the UK should have a balanced energy policy, of which new nuclear should play a significant part. We believe that the UK's Plutonium reserves should be included as part of this fuel mix.

The UK needs to be able to generate a larger base-load of energy that does not emit green house gases. The Re-use option would fit with this strategy.

The Re-use option would dramatically reduce the risk of proliferation and fits with current international treaties and conventions.

Assist and align with the current 'Socio-economics' involved with the decommissioning of the UK's legacy nuclear plants.

Unite also believes that the UK cannot continue to do nothing in regards to this subject, therefore we have listed some points below for consideration.

The UK needs a robust and coherent energy policy now.

Re-use technology is mature and available now (MOX fuel has been burnt in other countries reactors without safety issues).

Further storage facilities would need to be built if we continue to store and to further compound issues, there is no strategy at all past 2120.

Plutonium skills could become a big issue. The Re-use model could harness and develop the current UK workforce.

Start addressing the proliferation concerns in the best possible way.

Align with timescales in regards to 'socio-economic' plans for the UK's nuclear workforce.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Coyne
National Officer
Energy & Utilities