



BEIS Nuclear NGO Forum Minutes
Tuesday 30 June 2020
13:30 - 15:00
Microsoft Teams

1. Introduction

Co-Chairs of the Forum Stephen Speed (SS; Director, Nuclear, BEIS) and Professor Andrew Blowers (AB; Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group) opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. SS introduced the meeting etiquette for attendees wishing to contribute to the virtual meeting.

2. BEIS Update

SS informed the Forum that a number of colleagues from the BEIS Nuclear Directorate have been redeployed to help the Department's Covid-19 relief efforts.

SS provided an update to the Forum on BEIS matters, noting that there was less to update due to reduced capacity and Ministerial focus on the Covid response.

- **Covid-19 impact on National Nuclear Estate**

- Early in the Covid-19 pandemic the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) took the decision to take Sellafield and the Magnox sites to minimum staffing levels, with support from trade unions. As a result, processing work on the Sellafield site stopped, to reduce the number of employees needed on site. Sellafield/Magnox plan to work with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) to restart operations when it is safe to do so.
- The Government and EDFE have been monitoring absences from work across the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR) fleet, since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The AGR fleet has been successfully maintained throughout the pandemic.
- In March 2020 EDF also took the decision to bring the Hinkley Point C (HPC) site down to minimum staffing levels. The site remains at under half capacity. HPC work scheduling is on its critical path and EDF have worked closely with local authorities to develop best practice for transportation. One of the innovations they have worked on involved sending site images to ONR.

The NGOs questioned whether BEIS had instructed EDF to keep the HPC site open during the Covid-19 pandemic. SS responded by saying the choices EDF have made are entirely their own, within Government guidelines that clearly supported the continuing operation of the construction industry as far as it was safe to operate. BEIS are not in a position to instruct a privately financed project such as HPC on matters that lie within its discretion. SS also mentioned BEIS have assisted EDF to understand and adhere to Government guidance and assisted them in engaging with local authorities.



The NGOs questioned whether Sizewell B is safe to be operating with one turbine rather than two. SS reported that there is a safety case to justify Sizewell B operating at half power until mid-September and this has been accepted by the ONR.

3. NGO Update

AB began by summarising the concerns NGO members wanted to raise during the meeting and opened the floor to NGO members to contribute.

- **National Policy Statement (NPS)**

- AB highlighted that members were concerned about the fact that a new NPS has not yet been released and consequently public consultation on the revised NPS had not been possible despite work at Bradwell C, Sizewell C, HPC progressing.
- Members questioned when the Energy White Paper (EWP) or an updated NPS (EN-6) would be published, and when would stakeholders be given a chance to consult on these topics.
- Chris Bowbrick (CB) responded by saying that Government is progressing towards an NPS, this will include a public consultation where stakeholders will have a chance to express their views. CB noted that delays were contributed to by the Covid-19 pandemic but said that BEIS is not able to give any more information at this stage.
- NGO members acknowledged the understandable delays due to Covid-19 but questioned the reason for earlier delays to the EWP. AB expressed concern that the absence of the revised NPS and energy review had not impeded nuclear developers continuing with their plans.
- CB responded highlighting that throughout the course of the last year there have been changes to Government, the prorogation of Parliament and a general election which have all delayed the publication of the EWP. CB acknowledged the concerns, stated that events are able to happen in parallel and that these are not sequential activities as well as reminding the NGOs that there would be a consultation in due course.
- AB mentioned that the NPS could be pushed through retrospectively to enable the Bradwell site. SS responded by highlighting that Bradwell B is a privately held company. He expects the owners to engage with local people properly once the crisis is over.

- **How nuclear fits with policy at the strategic level?**

- Members questioned the status of the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) consultation and the Government's position on funding nuclear energy projects, noting that renewables provide a cheaper alternative.
- BEIS is aware of the need to publish the RAB consultation response but is not yet in a position to do so.



- SS then turned discussion to the Prime Minister's speech on infrastructure development on 29 June 2020. SS highlighted that the fiscal position has changed, and that Ministers will now be considering their priorities for new infrastructure development projects, for which the RAB model will be considered.
- AB questioned whether the Government's position remained the same as laid out in EN-1. SS confirmed that this will remain the position until it is superseded.
- SS advised the Forum that the NPS will bring the policy position forward from the existing EN-6 and BEIS will progress that work when it is ready to do so. In 2017, a Written Ministerial Statement on the topic of energy infrastructure was released to give developers the confidence to move forward.
- **Cost of HPC and Sizewell C**
 - Members asked whether BEIS had any further detail of the cost of HPC.
 - SS outlined that there are two units being built for HPC and we understand that Unit 2 will be cheaper than Unit 1. BEIS also understands that Sizewell C would have identical units (Units 3 and 4).
- **Moorside Clean Energy Hub**
 - Members asked whether BEIS officials had more information on the consortium proposing the Moorside Clean Energy Hub.
 - SS responded by highlighting that officials are aware of the consortium's proposal but that it was too early to comment further.
- **Report for Children with Cancer UK**
 - Members announced that they have authored a report on the effects of radiation for Children with Cancer UK. Richard Bramhall asked whether BEIS could engage COMARE on this piece of work.
 - Umran Nazir asked members to send the report to him to review and consider the next steps.

Action – SS to send AB the Written Ministerial Statement on Energy Infrastructure: Nuclear Power Generation.

4. Minister Nadhim Zahawi

SS introduced Minister Nadhim Zahawi to Co-Chair Andy Blowers and Forum members.

Minister Zahawi began by giving an overview of his background and his aspirations for nuclear in the UK. He stated he studied chemical engineering at university and went on to start his own business, YouGov in 2000.



- **Aspirations for Nuclear**

- Speaking to the Forum Minister Zahawi acknowledged that his opinions on nuclear were likely to differ from the Forum members. He noted members views on the safety of nuclear outlining that he believes they are manageable and are significantly outweighed by the pros.
- Minister Zahawi reiterated the Government's commitment to Net Zero by 2050. Highlighting that we need a diverse energy mix with an affordable source of baseload power, and Nuclear and CCUS are the only options to deliver this baseload. Without nuclear and CCUS we will not achieve Net-Zero.
- He stated that the nuclear industry provides investment across the country as well as several training opportunities such as apprenticeships.
- He also outlined that the UK insists on the highest safety standards and as such the UK regularly invites the International Atomic Energy Agency to review standards and the UK also has the ONR, an internationally recognised nuclear regulator.
- He finished by acknowledging that there are several nuclear power stations coming to the end of their lifetime and the Government will continue to work with EDF Energy and the UK regulators to ensure waste is dealt with responsibly. He stated the Government are taking this very seriously and work on a Geological Disposal Facility combined with investments in waste management demonstrate this.

He then opened the floor to NGO members for discussion.

David Lowry respectfully disagreed with Minister Zahawi's aspirations, highlighting concerns about nuclear power including waste management, time to implement and the cost of projects.

Minister Zahawi responded by saying that the Government are responsible for making progress in waste management and highlighted that if we want to reverse climate change nuclear power is critical.

The NGO's questioned Minister Zahawi on the position of EDF Renewables who are investing in a multitude of technologies, however, appear very hesitant on new nuclear.

Minister Zahawi reiterated that the future must be renewable-rich but does still require nuclear. Noting that EDF Energy is an important part of industry and he had not heard a lack of commitment from EDF Energy to deliver its nuclear projects.

Alison Downes raised concerns around the relationship between China General Nuclear (CGN) and the UK.

Minister Zahawi responded by highlighting that CGN are partner in HPC and in Bradwell B. He acknowledged lots of developers are interested in the UK and they will all be reviewed in line with UK's standards. He assured the NGO Forum that national security will be considered for all the sensitive sectors he works in.



The NGOs questioned whether BEIS have considered a no nuclear scenario and whether the Department plans to publish its modelling.

Minister Zahawi responded by stating that the EWP will set out a road map towards Net-Zero and ambitions for each mode of energy. The Department will endeavour to be as transparent as possible whilst adhering to commercial confidentiality.

AB closed the discussion respectfully disagreeing with Minister Zahawi's analysis for nuclear on the basis that it was not needed, it took too long to deploy, was too costly, dangerous and created a legacy of waste. Furthermore, the proposed sites for new nuclear stations were in coastal locations vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Minister Zahawi stated that there is evidence available that diverse energy mix is needed to deliver Net-Zero by 2050; lead by renewables and including advanced nuclear and other new technologies. As such the Government is supporting a number of innovation programmes and in the 2020 Budget committed to increasing R&D to £22bn by 2024-25.

Minister Zahawi closed by thanking the NGO members for their open communication.

SS and AB closed the meeting thanking those that joined the call for their time. AB raised concerns about the use of Microsoft Teams for future meetings. SS suggested he would have a follow up meeting with AB to discuss the next steps.

Action – Minister Zahawi's Private Office to chase letter from AB.

Review of Actions

Action – SS to send AB the written ministerial statement on Energy Infrastructure: Nuclear Power Generation.

Action – Minister Zahawi's Private Office to chase letter from AB.

5. Attendees

Attendees	Organisation
Minister Nadhim Zahawi	BEIS Minister for Business and Industry
NGOs	
Andy Blowers	Co-Chair of NGO Forum Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group
Peter Banks	Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group
Pete Wilkinson	Together Against Sizewell C
Chris Wilson	Together Against Sizewell C



Mike Taylor	Together Against Sizewell C
Alison Downes	Stop Sizewell C
Paul Collins	Stop Sizewell C
David Lowry	Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates
Katy Attwater	Stop Hinkley
Allan Jeffery	Stop Hinkley
Rod Donington-Smith	Cumbria Trust
Richard Bramhall	Low Level Radiation Campaign
Sean Morris	Nuclear Free Local Authorities
Jill Sutcliffe	Low Level Radiation and Health Conference
External Attendees	
Alan McGoff	Environment Agency
John McNamara	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
BEIS Officials	
Stephen Speed	Co-Chair of NGO Forum BEIS, Director, Nuclear Directorate
Umran Nazir	BEIS, Deputy Director, Decommissioning, Radioactive Materials and Geological Disposal
Chris Bowbrick	BEIS, Deputy Director, Nuclear Energy Generation and International
Katrina McLeay	BEIS, Deputy Director, Nuclear Safety and Resilience
Graham Webber	BEIS, Deputy Director, Non-Proliferation
David Wagstaff	BEIS, Deputy Director, Europe Nuclear Negotiations
Alasdair Harper	BEIS, Head of Advanced Nuclear Policy
Emma Darkins	BEIS, Senior Policy Advisor
Shah Bhatt	BEIS, NGO Secretariat
Sean Rooney	BEIS, NGO Secretariat
Ellie Perkins	BEIS, Note Taker
Ella Laws	BEIS, Note Taker