



Press Release

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Doubt Cast on Integrity of Hinkley Reactor Design

Further doubt has been cast on the integrity of the new nuclear reactor design proposed for Hinkley Point in Somerset following a series of criticisms by French safety regulators.

Documents revealed this week in the French press¹ highlight a series of “gaps and weaknesses” in work being carried out on a new European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) by Electricite de France (EDF) at Flamanville in Normandy.

In a 20-page report the French Nuclear Safety Authority, ASN, highlights a number of deviations from construction requirements affecting essential parts of the reactor, including the steam generators, water injection filters and batteries used for the cooling system.

On the steam generators, the report says that “the quality of materials, taking into account their importance for safety, has not been demonstrated and their use (at Flamanville) is not possible”.

EDF wants to build two EPRs at Hinkley Point and recently received approval from West Somerset Council to carry out preparatory work at the site, including initial excavation of the reactor foundations.

According to the *Financial Times*², the Flamanville EPR is now expected to cost 6 billion Euros, compared with the original estimate of 3.3 bn Euros, and will not start operation before 2016, four years late.

“These reports cast further doubt on the integrity of the French reactor design, and - given the continued increase in costs - whether it will be economical to build in this country,” said Crispin Aubrey, spokesman for local campaign group Stop Hinkley. “This provides yet another reason why EDF should not be allowed to carry out any preparatory work at the site before it gets the go-ahead for the power station itself from the appropriate authorities.”

Earlier this year the ASN reported safety issues at 34 of the nuclear reactors which EDF operates in France³.

Stop Hinkley is opposed to the Hinkley Point “C” reactors because of the health and safety risks, including their legacy of highly radioactive waste, and because there are viable and safer alternatives for keeping the lights on.

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Contact: Crispin Aubrey, Press Officer, Stop Hinkley 01278 732921

References:

1. “Nuclear authority points to weaknesses in EPR reactor”, Le Monde, 24.8.11
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2. “EDF alerted over ‘gaps’ in nuclear plant”, Financial Times, 24.8.11
3. <http://groupes.sortirdunucleaire.org/blogs/inquietante-anomalie-de-serie-sur/>