



**For Immediate Release
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Gambling with Public Safety at Hinkley Point B

EDF Energy has just announced that it intends to submit new safety cases to the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) to re-open Reactors 3 and 4 at Hinkley Point B. It currently expects reactor 4 to return to service on 26 February 2021 and reactor 3 on 12 March 2021. (1) The Stop Hinkley Campaign is calling for both reactors to remain closed.

Very recently, ONR gave permissions to EDF to re-start for six months two ancient, unsafe reactors at the Hunterston B nuclear power station – Hinkley Point B’s sister station - on the Clyde coast. Reactor 3 at Hunterston came back online at the beginning of September and Reactor 4 is due to start today. Like the Hinkley reactors these are among the oldest in the world and should have been closed over a decade ago. They have been shut for 2 ½ years in one case and 1 ½ years in the other because they were unsafe due to large numbers of cracks and the loss of graphite in their cores. These are fundamentally serious matters as these cores moderate the flow of neutrons which essentially power the reactors. The re-opening has provoked serious disquiet in the area around the reactors. (2)

The ONR claims that EDF has done computer modelling and made predictions that the reactors are likely to be safe for another six months. But EDF’s modelling in the past has a poor track record. The reality is that no one can predict with certainty how graphite cores will react more than a decade past their official closing dates. Even worse, the ONR has indicated they may even give longer permissions for up to a year.

ONR’s surprising decisions are an affront to any concept of the Precautionary Principle which says we should err on the side of safety. Instead ONR is effectively saying we are not 100% sure but go ahead anyway. This is unacceptable and we object in the strongest terms. As Cicero, the Roman consul, stated two thousand years ago, the safety of the people is the supreme law.

While the probability of a serious nuclear accident at Hinkley Point B remains low, the possible consequences are so large - the radioactive contamination of Central England – that such risks should not be undertaken by any reasonable authority. It is disturbing that the ONR has refrained from publishing any analyses of possible worst-case scenarios and their probabilities.

Stop Hinkley spokesperson Roy Pumfrey said:

“Nuclear engineer, the late John Large said more than a decade ago that it was gambling with public safety to allow reactors with cracks in their core to keep operating. (3) Every minute these reactors operate that gamble become riskier. We call upon the UK Government to intervene and request the ONR to re-consider their unwise decisions at Hunterston B and to refuse to accept EDF’s safety cases

for Hinkley Point B. It is EDF in Paris, France which will benefit from the restart of these reactors, but it is those of us who live in Somerset and middle England who are being exposed to these involuntary risks”

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Notes

- (1) EDF Energy 25th September 2020 <https://www.edfenergy.com/media-centre/news-releases/letter-hinkley-site-stakeholder-group-18-september-2020>
- (2) Morning Star 25th September 2020 <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/b/protests-mount-scotland-after-authorities-give-go-ahead-restart-dangerous-nuclear>
- (3) Guardian 5th July 2006
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2006/jul/05/energy.frontpagenews>