



# Newsround February 2024

9 January – Guardian: EDF is planning to extend the life of four nuclear power stations in the UK and step up investment in its British nuclear fleet. The French energy company said it would make a decision on whether to extend the life of the four UK plants with advanced gas-cooled reactors (AGR) – Torness, Heysham 1 and 2, and Hartlepool – by the end of the year. This would require regulatory approval

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/jan/09/edf-energy-uk-nuclear-power-plants>

9 January - Scientists for Global Responsibility: Prof Steve Thomas, Greenwich University, assesses the considerable obstacles to the UK government's target for new nuclear power

<https://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/nuclear-power-and-net-zero-too-little-too-late-too-expensive>

9 January – Bridgwater Mercury: EDF is once again in talks with Somerset Council to negotiate an increase in workers at HPC. Cllr Leigh Redman, Bridgwater Town Council spokesperson for Nuclear Issues, said that the original Development Consent Order (DCO) signed by the Secretary of State, indicated that at peak the number of workers on site would be 5,600. This number was since raised to 8,600. Back in November 2023, EDF approached the Council to bring the workforce to over 10,000 as the project entered its 'peak construction phase'. There are now over 11,000 workers at Hinkley Point C, and EDF plans to increase to 15,000 in the near future

<https://www.bridgwatermercury.co.uk/news/24036533.edf-talks-somerset-council-workforce-increase/>

11 January – Guardian: The government has set out plans for what it claims will be Britain's biggest nuclear power expansion in 70 years, despite concerns about faltering nuclear output and project delays. Doug Parr, Greenpeace UK's chief scientist, said: "Every few months the government makes a grandiose public announcement about future nuclear in the hope that a big investor will believe the hype and step up to fund this 20th-century technology, but it isn't working. "The energy industry knows that the economic case for slow, expensive nuclear just doesn't add up, and the future is renewable,"

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/jan/11/uk-government-sets-out-plans-for-biggest-nuclear-power-expansion-in-70-years>

11 January – Stop Hinkley: The Stop Hinkley Campaign has described the Government's so-called Nuclear Roadmap as "pure fantasy"

<http://stophinkley.org/press-releases/nuclear-roadmap-is-pure-fantasy/>

12 January – Business Green: The Government's plan to relax planning rules in a bid to fast track development of Small Modular nuclear Reactors (SMRs) at more potential sites across the UK has been met with a mixed reaction from the green economy this week. While some have argued that eliminating siting restrictions for next-generation nuclear technologies would help to fast-track the growth of clean energy development in the UK, others have warned the measure risks causing harm to local communities

<https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4163321/nuclear-plan-relax-uk-planning-rules-small-reactors-draws-mixed-response>

13 January – Telegraph: Outsourcing Britain's nuclear renewal is insanity. Rolls-Royce's AMRs are an obvious way to break free of EDF's grip. Here we go again. Einstein's definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing and expecting different outcomes. You would think that the Government had learned its lesson on nuclear renewal after the debacle of HPC. Clearly not. Having already made the same mistake once, by pledging a replica of the ruinously costly HPC at Sizewell, ministers are doubling down and promising a third such monstrosity somewhere else

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/01/13/uk-go-full-nuclear-ensure-solutions-british/>

15 January – ITV: Sizewell C opponents warn Suffolk nuclear plant 'could be the new HS2'. Campaigners fighting a new nuclear power station on the Suffolk coast say they fear a shortfall in finance for the project could mean it becomes another HS2

<https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2024-01-15/coastal-nuclear-plant-could-be-new-hs2-warn-campaigners>

17 January – Bridgwater Mercury: Ten new roles have been created at HPC in order to kickstart EDF's second programme to help people return to work after a career break

<https://www.bridgwatermercury.co.uk/news/24056006.hinkley-point-c-launches-second-stem-returners-programme/>

17 January – Somerset County Gazette: The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has served four enforcement notices for fire safety shortfalls at HPC. Pre-planned inspections in November 2023 at the Unit 1 HR Building on the site led to ONR identifying the breaches and issuing the notices

<https://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/24055739.hinkley-c-site-fire-safety-fears-trigger-enforcement-notices/>

18 January – Ipswich Star: In one sense construction of SZC has already started. Land has been dug up, mature trees have been cut down, and one of the new entrances to the site is being cleared. However, the Final Investment Decision (FID), the point at which the various parties are committed to building the station is still, apparently, several months away - so Monday's (15/01/2024) ceremony really does look like nothing but a piece of political theatre

<https://www.ipswichstar.co.uk/news/24054795.opinion-sizewell-c-still-doesnt-engage-residents/>

20 January – Telegraph: A British nuclear startup (Newcleo) has dropped plans to build a pioneering power plant in Cumbria and will invest £4bn in France instead, after it was lobbied personally by Emmanuel Macron

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/01/20/newcleo-nuclear-start-up-drops-british-factory-plans-france/>

23 January – Times: The government has pledged an additional £1.3 billion in funding for SZC. A total of £2.5 billion has now been committed by the government to develop the SZC plant. The money will be put towards pre-construction preparation work, including making improvements to roads and rail lines around the Suffolk site

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sizewell-c-nuclear-plant-gets-extra-13-billion-from-ministers-tbrwr7bwz>

23 January – BBC: HPC costs could soar to £46bn. The final cost of HPC may soar by a third, according to EdeF. The completion date could also be delayed by three years to 2031. In 2022, the cost of the UK's first new nuclear plant since the 1990s was estimated at £26bn, with a target date for completion of June 2027. EdeF now estimates that the cost could hit £46bn, when taking price rises into account. In a letter to staff, Stuart Crooks, MD of HPC, said substantial design changes, required by ONR, meant there were 7,000 changes that needed to be made to the site, with 35% more steel and 25% more concrete needed than originally planned. UK bill payers will not be directly affected by those building cost and time overruns at HPC as EdeF agreed to shoulder the risk on the project in return for an agreed electricity price substantially higher than the average price in 2015 that would only rise in line with inflation

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-68073279>

24 January – FT: The French government is pressing the UK to help plug a multibillion-pound hole in the budget of nuclear power projects being built in Britain by France's electricity operator EDF. The call for a contribution from the UK is likely to cause tensions between Paris and London, a day after state-owned EDF admitted its construction of HPC would suffer further costly delays, taking the bill to as much as £46bn. The UK has said it will not put cash into HPC, which counts EDF as a majority shareholder, and is already backed by a government guarantee on its revenues once it is up and running. But Paris is pushing for a "global solution" that would also encompass funding issues at Sizewell C, said a French economy ministry official and another person close to the talks

<https://www.ft.com/content/3320c06e-7ce3-4a6b-ab22-4b8201a4cfca>

25 January – ONR: HPC Update. 'The reference reactor design (for HPC) was based on the Flamanville 3 reactor and, in 2012, there were a small number of significant design modifications proposed to adapt to UK regulations, informed by international good practice. During the following decade, further changes were proposed and included due to the Fukushima incident, international expectations and the experience from the EPR projects in Taishan, Flamanville and Olkiluoto. In relation to the volume of additional steel and concrete required at Hinkley Point C, we

do not recognise our regulatory requirements as being the principal factor in these increases, as they are broadly similar to the requirements in France.’ (as claimed by EdeF’s Stuart Crooks)

<https://news.onr.org.uk/2024/01/hinkley-point-c-project-update/>

27 January – Telegraph: Hinkley C is glowing on my doorstep, but that won't help us get a bus into town

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/columnists/2024/01/27/william-sitwell-hinkley-point/>

27 January – FT: “We have the expertise, the supply chains and the teams ready to build Hinkley Point C safely, on time and on budget,” Vincent de Rivaz, then chief executive of EDF, said in 2016 as the project to build the UK’s first nuclear power station since the 1990s got under way

<https://www.ft.com/content/55ef86b4-f55c-47a9-8121-c6c8cf6b5b18>

27 January – Guardian: Hinkley Point C woes threaten to break UK and France's nuclear fusion. The cross-Channel dream is turning sour as EDF's costs mount and Britain faces a long wait for the power to come on. French trade unions wield significant political clout. But in the summer of 2016 there was little they could do to stop the French government from investing in what would soon become the most expensive power station in the world. All six trade union representatives on the board of Électricité de France (EDF) voted against a deal to build a nuclear power station in the UK. It was just weeks after its finance chief, Thomas Piquemal, resigned from the company over fears that Hinkley Point C in Somerset was too great a risk. The project was approved by 10 in favour and seven against. In the last seven years these fears have proved well founded

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/jan/27/hinkley-point-c-woes-threaten-break-uk-france-nuclear-fusion>

31 January – Reuters: Britain has no plans to provide loan guarantees for HPC to ease the financing costs on French energy firm EDF, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman said

<https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/britain-not-planning-hinkley-point-c-loan-guarantees-downing-street-says-2024-01-31/>

2 February – Guardian: Anger at EDF proposals to flood wildlife-rich farmland as ‘compensation’ for killing millions of fish at nuclear site

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/02/odd-hinkley-point-c-salt-marsh-plan-has-somerset-locals-up-in-arms>

2 February - Private Eye: In 2021, EDF was formally told it must fit an acoustic fish deterrent (AFD) system to the massive seawater intakes of the HPC cooling system. It was considered necessary to "protect the marine life of the Severn Estuary catchment area and its nine great rivers: Parrett, Avon, Severn, Wye, Usk, Ebbw, Rhymney, Taff, Ely and their tributaries where many fish species go to breed". Without the AFD it is estimated that 22 billion fish would be ingested over the planned 60-year life of the plant, of which half would be killed in the process. Not so final. EDF appealed against this but, in 2022, the then Environment Secretary, George Eustice, refused the appeal in definitive terms: "The decision on this appeal is final [and] can only be challenged in the courts by judicial review." Final? EDF, which has been running rings around the government and bullying ministers (Eyes passim) since it bought the British nuclear fleet in 2008, simply went regulator-shopping on the basis that energy ministers are more likely to be sympathetic. And so it proves: the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has been reduced to the role of consultee on the "final final" decision, which will now be taken elsewhere – with no judicial review required

[https://www.private-eye.co.uk/sections.php?issue=1616%C2%A7ion\\_link=columnists](https://www.private-eye.co.uk/sections.php?issue=1616%C2%A7ion_link=columnists)

6 February – Lancs Live: There is no better place to build a new nuclear power station than Cumbria. That was the clear message at a public meeting in Whitehaven, organised by pro-growth campaign group Britain Remade

<https://www.lancs.live/special-features/public-meeting-overwhelmingly-backs-new-28573872>

7 February - Burnham-on-sea.com : Burnham-On-Sea and Highbridge town councillors have called on EDF to rethink its plans to remove an acoustic fish deterrent system at Hinkley Point C, warning that millions of fish could be killed without proper controls in place

<https://www.burnham-on-sea.com/news/millions-of-fish-at-risk-as-hinkley-plans-to-remove-fish-deterrent-system-say-burnham-councillors/>

8 February - Teesside Gazette: Teesside nuclear power plant plans outlined by US company Westinghouse. The plans could see four small nuclear plants, the first private new nuclear in the UK, being built on the north side of the Tees

<https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/teesside-nuclear-power-plant-plans-28596091>

8 February - Beyond Nuclear: The nuclear industry is rattled by an Opinion piece appearing in the January 31, 2024 edition of the energy trade journal Utility Dive. The article, astutely entitled "The collapse of NuScale's project should spell the end for small modular nuclear reactors," is an extensively documented study of yet another nuclear folly

<https://beyondnuclear.org/first-smr-domino-falls-potentially-to-start-cascade/>

10 February - West Somerset Free Press: National Grid and its twelve specialist contractors are celebrating a total of four million hours worked on the Hinkley Connection Project while maintaining a world-class safety performance. The project runs for 35 miles from Bridgwater to Avonmouth, and will connect six million homes and businesses to electricity generated by Hinkley Point C

<https://www.wsfp.co.uk/news/national-grid-marks-four-million-hours-worked-to-connect-homes-to-hinkley-electricity-665350>

10 February - Hull Daily Mail: Call to withdrawal from Holderness nuclear waste site talks amid tourism and farming 'fears'. South East Holderness' Cllr Lyn Healing and Cllr Sean McMaster said the area had already experienced creeping industrialisation in recent years

<https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/call-withdrawal-holderness-nuclear-waste-9087294>

11 February – FT: The British government is seeking to take control of a key site in Wales earmarked for a nuclear power plant as part of wider plans to revamp nuclear technology for the UK. State-owned Great British Nuclear is in early-stage discussions with Hitachi, owner of the land in Wylfa in Anglesey, an island off north Wales, to buy the site with a view to finding a new private sector partner to develop a station there

<https://www.ft.com/content/2e7928c7-ad7f-4ac4-88d8-8cde95ee1a00>

12 February – Times: One of Britain's oldest steelmakers has developed a manufacturing technique that could drastically reduce the time and cost to produce mini nuclear power stations, which have been proposed as one way to bridge the nation's energy gap. Sheffield Forgemasters has become the first to use the so-called electron beam welding method to produce one of the core parts of a small modular reactor (SMR) at scale

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/revolutionary-welding-method-cuts-time-to-make-mini-nuclear-reactors-7f9239lrv>

13 February – Guardian: MPs have warned that a planned fleet of small nuclear reactors are unlikely to contribute to hitting a key target in decarbonising Britain's electricity generation, as the government opened talks to buy a site in Wales for a new power station. The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) said that ministers' approach to developing factory-built nuclear power plants "lacks clarity" and their role in hitting a goal of moving the grid to clean energy by 2035 was unclear

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/feb/13/planned-uk-nuclear-reactors-unlikely-to-help-hit-green-target-say-mps>

**Roy Pumfrey for Stop Hinkley February 2024**