



Newsround April 2024

12 March – Bristol Post: Major project to harness Bristol Channel tidal power begins. "The potential for harnessing this tidal power has been the subject of discussion for decades, with some estimates suggesting it can provide up to seven per cent of the UK's electricity needs". Politicians and experts from both sides of the Bristol Channel will meet for the first time at the start of a project which could finally see the tidal power of the Severn Estuary harnessed to make electricity. The first meeting of the Severn Estuary Commission takes place at the Senedd in Cardiff on 12 March, with both the UK and Welsh Governments, and local council chiefs and mayors from both sides of the Bristol Channel, all backing the idea

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/major-project-harness-bristol-channel-9157251>

12 March - Pro-active Investor: Decisions over which firms will be selected to head up the rollout of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in the UK face delays on fears of legal action from those not chosen

<https://www.proactiveinvestors.co.uk/companies/news/1042846/mini-nuclear-rollout-delayed-over-legal-fears-reports-1042846.html>

12 March – CityAM: The UK's renewable energy sector has slammed the government's new commitment to develop gas-fired power stations to act as a back up to support green energy projects, arguing it cancels the government's intention to de-carbonise the electricity system by 2035

<https://www.cityam.com/concessions-to-the-gas-lobby-renewable-energy-sector-blasts-governments-gas-power-play/>

13 March - Nuclear Engineering International: Reflecting a growing interest in nuclear-powered shipping, the Nuclear Energy Maritime Organisation (NEMO) has been set up with its headquarters in London. NEMO will work with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to establish global standards and regulations for the deployment, operation and decommissioning of nuclear power in the maritime environment and promote commercialisation of nuclear power at sea

<https://www.neimagazine.com/news/newsnuclear-energy-maritime-organisation-launches-in-london-11597387>

14 March – Bloomberg: HSBC Holdings Plc is in talks with investment funds about loans to help to finance the construction of the UK's Sizewell C (SZC) nuclear plant, as the government steps up efforts to get a key energy project off the drawing board this year

<https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/uk-steps-up-sizewell-nuclear-push-with-state-backed-loans-1.2046821>

17 March – Times: SZC is not expected to be ready until 2035 at the earliest. The plant is a copy of HPC, although the team behind it insist that it will cost less because it has incorporated many of the design changes enforced on the earlier project. This month, SZC entered the second phase of a capital raise. It is understood that six investors are on the shortlist, including Enec of Abu Dhabi, and Centrica, the owner of British Gas. Julia Pyke (SZC) said the plant would expect to have a debt-to-equity ratio of 65 per cent. Based on the £20 billion estimate, this would imply £13 billion of debt against £7 billion of equity. "Even though nuclear is expensive to build, it saves money for consumers in the long run," said Pyke. "That's the basic case for doing it, alongside improving energy security and hitting net zero."

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/one-answer-to-britains-energy-problems-is-blowing-in-the-wind-gxpnl00zh>

18 March – Euractiv: EDF, the French state-owned energy giant, faces criticism for rising costs and delays in its nuclear projects; its existing reactors have also been encountering problems

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/frances-edf-faces-uphill-battle-as-europes-demand-for-nuclear-reactors-grows/>

21 March - Energy Live News: Ofgem flags concerns over SZC costs. The energy regulator has highlighted concerns in a letter to the Energy Secretary regarding potential modifications to the SZC project, emphasising the need for certainty in project costs. Ofgem has conveyed its concerns to the Energy Secretary regarding proposed modifications to the SZC project's Regulated Asset Base (RAB) licence

<https://www.energylivenews.com/2024/03/21/ofgem-flags-concerns-over-sizewell-c-costs/>

21 March - Suffolk News: Potential obstacles facing construction of new West Suffolk Hospital in Bury St Edmunds by 2030 include funding shortfall and development of SZC

<https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/bury-st-edmunds/news/this-is-why-sizewell-c-construction-poses-possible-risk-to-9358253/>

21 March Euractiv: Greenpeace activists disrupted the one-day Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels on Thursday (21 March), attended by some 40 delegations from across the world to explore the possibilities of collaborations in nuclear power

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/greenpeace-disrupts-international-nuclear-summit-in-brussels/>

22 March – Telegraph: Britain could be a world leader in nuclear power, but not with old technology. Britain is trying to launch a nuclear renaissance on the cheap. It can pioneer small modular reactors, or push its world-class breakthroughs in nuclear fusion, or make a giant national bet on a fleet of old-style reactors, but it cannot do all three under the current fiscal regime without spreading itself too thin

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/03/22/britain-world-leader-nuclear-power-old-technology/>

22 March – Current: EDF has detailed five areas of the renewable sector that the firm believes require urgent attention from government in order to reach the net zero ambition already in place. First of these is the “immediate” need for a roadmap to Net Zero by 2050, for which EdeF argued that political leaders must listen to industry and be creative in delivering change to the regulatory environment. The manifesto also said that policymakers must be clear that communities also have a part to play in tackling the challenge by hosting renewable energy projects in their area. Secondly, EDF called for improvement to the Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme, which incentivises developers to invest in renewable energy projects. The third issue was that of grid connectivity, which is a problem that has been felt nationwide as many developers are waiting at least a decade for a connection date. EDF is also aware of the skills gap the clean energy sector is facing as the UK attempts its transition to Net Zero. Finally, EDF called for the development and then expansion of a domestic manufacturing sector within the renewables industry. The manifesto argued that without this, the UK would lose the opportunity to develop supply chain manufacturing capacity, and the UK's renewable sector would be put at significant risk

<https://www.current-news.co.uk/edf-uk-general-election-manifesto/>

23 March – Observer: Last week the government decided to refuse planning permission for a solar farm in Northamptonshire. This same government last month, possibly encouraged by a letter from the developers Mitsubishi to Rishi Sunak, approved 72 Upper Ground, a prominent, lumpen office block on the South Bank in London. In the first case they decided that “visual harm” outweighed economic benefits; in the second it was the other way round. The takeaway seems to be this: the carbon-belching construction of 79,000 sq metres of office space, the demand for which is unproven, matters more to them than the production of sustainable energy with estimated carbon savings of 11,000 tonnes a year

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/mar/23/political-ethics-of-eyesoires-lumpen-london-office-block-trumps-clean-energy>

25 March – Times: Energy prices may rise as Treasury ‘stifles’ offshore wind. Insufficient budget for wind farms will increase UK's reliance on foreign gas in ‘backwards step’, analysis suggests. A large proportion of farms that could be built in the future will miss out on financial support in this year's funding round, the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) said, because the budget set by ministers is insufficient

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/energy-prices-may-rise-as-treasury-stifles-offshore-wind-npm2rzdms>

25 March – East Anglian Daily Times (EADT): SZC buys plot of land from EDF Energy where nuclear power plant will be built. SZC has bought the freehold of the land earmarked for a new nuclear power station for an undisclosed sum. The deal - involving 895 acres of land - paves the way for the company to apply for a nuclear site licence for the site on the Suffolk coast once the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) completes its ongoing assessment, it said <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24209056.sizewell-c-buys-freehold-suffolk-nuclear-power-plant/>

28 March – ONR: The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has notified Sellafield Ltd that it will be prosecuted under the Nuclear Industries Security Regulations 2003. These charges relate to alleged information technology security offences during a four year period between 2019 and early 2023 <https://onr.org.uk/news/all-news/2024/03/onr-notifies-sellafield-ltd-of-intention-to-prosecute/>

28 March - West Somerset Free Press: A campsite near a West Somerset wedding venue will be able to house HPC workers until the end of 2028 after new plans were approved. The Quantock Lakes campsite, located off the A39 near the village of Nether Stowey, has been used to house people working on the new nuclear power station since September 2017 <https://www.wsfp.co.uk/news/campsite-near-west-somerset-wedding-venue-can-accommodate-hinkley-point-c-workers-until-end-of-2028-675758>

28 March – Montel: EDF plans to connect its new-generation nuclear power reactor in Flamanville to the national grid in the summer of 2024, suggesting a further slight delay in the start-up schedule, the French utility said late on Wednesday <https://montelnews.com/news/087a93d2-bd7a-4814-8f4d-d3afd6d4eb58/edf-vows-to-connect-french-epr-in-summer-2024>

29 March – BBC: Pontins Brean Sands: Seaside resort 'decimated' by EDF chalets deal <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-68674198>

1 April – Times: About half of British households think their property is unable to cope with hotter summer weather, which risks putting more pressure on bill payers and on the electricity grid, new research has found <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/half-of-households-say-their-homes-wont-cope-with-hotter-summers-fzhsqqxdn>

2 April – Les Echos: At Hinkley Point, immersed in the heart of the largest nuclear site in Europe. In the English countryside, EDF is trying as best it can to get the two EPR reactors ordered by the British out of the ground <https://www.lesechos.fr/industrie-services/energie-environnement/a-hinkley-point-plongee-au-coeur-du-plus-grand-chantier-nucleaire-deurope-2086123>

2 April - Power Technology: France's nuclear power output hit its highest levels in three years in the first quarter of 2024 as the country recovers from its 2022 output crisis. Utilities produced 4.11 million kilowatt-hours of electricity from nuclear plants in the first three months of 2024, up 13.4% from the same period last year, according to data compiled by the London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) and analysed by Reuters. This is the highest output of nuclear energy since 2021, suggesting a successful recovery by EDF after power stations were badly hit by repairs at the end of 2022 and beginning of 2023. Production plunged more than 22% in 2022 year-on-year, hitting the country's lowest nuclear output levels in three decades. Last year, EDF posted record net losses for 2022 after electrical output from its ageing French nuclear fleet saw serious decline amid necessary maintenance. Full-year results for 2023 were more optimistic, with the company returning to profit despite soaring costs at its two new nuclear projects – HPC and SZC. Nuclear output last year recovered around 14% as reactors came back online, but overall production remains below previous peaks as maintenance work continues. The average age of France's nuclear reactors is 36 years. No new power plants have been brought online this decade, but the government has said this year that it will need to build at least 14 new reactors if it is to meet its energy transition goal of reducing fossil fuel dependence from 60% to 40% by 2035 <https://www.power-technology.com/news/france-nuclear-output-three-year-high/>

4 April – EADT: Network Rail is to spend £2.6 billion maintaining and renewing track around East Anglia over the next five years - but there is no sign yet of major improvements to speed up services. But one thing residents of east Suffolk will notice is a procession of freight trains using the line through Woodbridge, Melton and Wickham Market every night heading for SZC. The nationalised company's strategic business plan for the next five years until April 2029 talks about safety work on level crossings and improving the route to Sizewell
<https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24229281.night-trains-sizewell-set-rumble-east-suffolk/>

5 April – Energy Live News: The Nuclear Industry Association has submitted a proposal for regulatory consideration of Newcleo's lead-cooled fast reactor, marking the first application for justification of advanced nuclear technology in the UK. Justification is a regulatory process mandating a government decision before introducing any new class or type of practice involving ionising radiation in the UK
<https://www.energylivenews.com/2024/04/05/uk-considers-first-advanced-nuclear-design-in-a-decade/>

5 April - Proactive Investor: Rolls-Royce Holdings PLC shares faced a blow as X-energy and Cavendish Nuclear were awarded £3.34 million from the government to build SMRs in Hartlepool. These funds will aid X-energy and Babcock International PLC owned Cavendish's plans to build 12 SMRs in the County Durham town by the early 2030s
<https://www.proactiveinvestors.co.uk/companies/news/1044518/ora-banda-mining-progresses-riverina-and-sand-king-underground-gold-mines-1044518.html>

5 April – Montel: EDF has found cracks on its Paluel 2 (1.3 GW) nuclear reactor in the north of France, a company spokeswoman told Montel on Friday, confirming prior comments by the firm's executive director Cedric Lewandowski. Questioned by a parliamentary committee late on Thursday, Lewandowski said the French state-run firm had "recently" found traces of corrosion at its Blayais 4 (910 MW) and Paluel 2 reactors
<https://montelnews.com/news/df0e8352-e018-4d1d-af96-63266d385d3c/edf-confirms-corrosion-cracks-on-paluel-2-1-3-gw-reactor>

7 April – Evening Standard: Zaporizhzhia: Russia claims Ukrainian drone hit dome of nuclear power plant. Radiation levels at Russian-held nuclear plant remain normal and no serious damage was reported. Russia has claimed a Ukrainian drone hit the dome above the nuclear reactor at Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant on Sunday
<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/zaporizhzhia-ukraine-war-russia-nuclear-plant-drone-b1149957.html>

8 April – EADT: Bosses of the SZC project have outlined the steps they are planning to take in a bid to reduce disruption to communities living along the East Suffolk rail line. Much of the material for the new power station is due to be brought to the SZC site by rail and last week's Network Rail masterplan for the next five years outlined how that would start. A proposal to build a new loop at Wickham Market station which would have allowed freight trains to use the line during the day was ruled out years ago on cost grounds. Now all the materials will have to be brought to Sizewell at night when there are no passenger trains running - and there are already proposals that they should not run through Leiston at night. Now SZC has emphasised its intention to ensure other communities do not face night-time disturbance either
<https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24236942.will-sizewell-stop-night-trains-disturbing-suffolk-towns/>

Roy Pumfrey for Stop Hinkley April 2024