

TWO MORE PLANNED UK NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS ABANDONED

Hot on the heels of the abandonment of plans by Toshiba to build a massive nuclear power station at Moorside in Cumbria (as reported in the November 2018 edition of this newsletter), another Japanese company, Hitachi, announced on 17th January that it had decided to “freeze” its plans to build similarly massive power stations at Wylfa in Anglesey and at Oldbury in Gloucestershire.

As with Toshiba over Moorside, the main reason Hitachi has in all likelihood given up on the projects is that it couldn't find any investors to share the enormous cost and risks of the project and wasn't prepared to carry on alone even though the loss estimated by the Nikkei business daily to Toshiba in freezing the project is around £21.4 billion.

The last throw of the dice for Hitachi was a proposal that a group of Japanese investors and the British government should each take a one-third stake in the project's equity. It appears that, in spite of its professed support for nuclear power, the UK government had found this proposed investment just a risk too far.

In his statement to the House of Commons explaining why the government had turned down the proposal from Hitachi and the Japanese Government, Greg Clark, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, allowed that the economic case for investment in nuclear power was worsening, something the anti-nuclear movement has been pointing out for some time.

To quote from his statement: “the economics of the energy market have changed significantly in recent years. The cost of renewable technologies such as offshore wind has fallen dramatically, to the point where they now require very little public subsidy and will soon require none...

“...this positive trend has not been true when it comes to new nuclear. Across the world, a combination of factors, including tighter safety regulations, have seen the cost of most new nuclear projects increase, as the cost of alternatives has fallen and the cost of construction has risen. This has made the challenge of attracting private finance into projects more difficult than ever, with investors favouring other technologies that are less capital-intensive upfront, quicker to build, and less exposed to cost overruns.”

However he went on to say that “[the UK] government continues to

believe...that nuclear has an important role to play in our future energy mix.” He explained in fact that the Government had been prepared to go a long way to satisfying Hitachi's request for support and was willing to consider taking a one-third equity stake in the project, to consider providing all of the required debt financing to complete construction and a “strike price” for electricity produced from Wylfa B of up to £75 per megawatt hour. However Hitachi turned down this offer as not generous enough.

Greg Clark's doubts about the economics of nuclear power even reach to plans to build at Sizewell and Bradwell. In his statement he says, “We need to consider a new approach to financing future projects, including those at Sizewell and Bradwell.”

However, to justify the claim that the UK is still supportive of nuclear power he says, rather lamely, “we are also exploring [ways] to put the UK at the forefront of various forms of nuclear innovation. We are therefore exploring whether advanced nuclear technologies, such as small modular reactors, could be an important source of low carbon energy in the future and are considering a proposal from a UK Consortium led by Rolls Royce that would result in a significant joint investment.”

So the UK government's 10-year old plan to build a new generation of nuclear power stations has been whittled down from an original ten to one being built at Hinkley and plans for two others, at Sizewell and Bradwell, apparently on hold. Meanwhile seven of the UK's eight existing nuclear power stations are due to shut down by 2030 with all their lives having been extended well beyond their original closure dates.

JAPANESE PLANS TO EXPORT NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY THWARTED

Japanese nuclear power companies have since Fukushima been making great efforts to involve themselves in building nuclear plants overseas, perhaps partly because of diminishing opportunities to build them in Japan.

With the decision by Hitachi Ltd. to “freeze” its plan to build two nuclear power reactors in the United Kingdom, all of the overseas nuclear power plant projects pursued by Japanese firms, with the backing of the Japanese government seeking to promote export of nuclear power technology as a pillar of its efforts to boost infrastructure sales in overseas markets, have now effectively been derailed.

In December Mitsubshi dropped out of a plan to build a 4-reactor nuclear

power station on the Black Sea coast of Turkey; in November the French government decided to halt research into building a new type of fast-breeder nuclear reactor, a joint project with Japan.

Earlier plans for Japanese makers to build plants in Lithuania and Vietnam were cancelled, while a civil nuclear cooperation pact signed with India in 2016 - which was aimed at paving the way for Japanese nuclear plant exports to the country - has not resulted in any deal.

SEND IT TO SELLAFIELD!

In November 2018 the Nuclear Information Service reported that the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) plans to send up to 5,000 barrels of Higher Activity Waste to Sellafield for treatment and storage. This is waste that derives from Aldermaston's production of nuclear warheads and so is military waste.

It reports that "Since the year 2000 AWE has been under pressure from its regulators to take action to reduce its holdings of radioactive waste, some of which dates back to the 1983 moratorium on waste being dumped at sea.

"This culminated in an improvement notice in 2015 from the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) which required AWE to produce a plan for dealing with its waste holdings...[The plan produced by AWE](#) to satisfy [this] notice concluded that sending the waste to be treated and stored at Sellafield would be preferable to building an on-site waste facility."

The waste will initially be transported by road from Aldermaston before loading onto trains for transport on to Sellafield.

It's not clear to me why transferring this waste to Sellafield, apart from the dangers involved in transport, is much preferable to holding it at Aldermaston.

Certainly it is goodish news for the people living around Aldermaston, but in adding to the enormous pile of civil radioactive waste at Sellafield already awaiting treatment it's not good news for the people living around Sellafield.

Perhaps the thinking is that there is so much radioactive waste there already some more will hardly be noticed; anyway, it might give more employment in an area where there are few other jobs and anyway they're only Northerners.

The real problem is that there is still no facility in the UK for storing radioactive waste safely and little prospect of any such being built in the foreseeable future.

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KICK NUCLEAR & NUCLEAR TRAINS

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REGULAR FRIDAY SOLIDARITY VIGILS

Every Friday (since August 2012): leafletting outside the Japanese Embassy, 101-104 Piccadilly (Green Park tube) from 10am-12.30pm; and then outside Tokyo Electric Power Co. offices, 14-18 Holborn (Chancery Lane tube) from 1-1.30pm. Held in solidarity with the anti-nuclear movement in Japan. Organised by: *Kick Nuclear* and *Japanese Against Nuclear UK* (JAN UK)

NEXT JOINT KN/NTAG PLANNING MEETINGS

Thursday January 31st, 7pm, at CND Office, Mordechai Vanunu House (Address above.)

FUKUSHIMA ANNIVERSARY EVENTS, 2019

Monday March 11th, 5.30-7.30pm: Vigil outside the Japanese Embassy, 101 Piccadilly, W1 (nearest tube: Green Park, with speakers, poetry and music.

Saturday March 16th: March from Japanese Embassy to Parliament for rally outside it, in Old Palace Yard with speakers, poetry and music also. Meet noon outside Japanese Embassy for march; rally from 2-3.30pm.

Tuesday March 19th, 7-9pm: Public meeting in Parliament with three Japanese women recounting how the continuing Fukushima disaster has affected and continues to affect their lives. Plus Dr. Ian Fairlie and another scientist (tba) on the continuing dangers from the ruined reactors.